**Lesson Plan: Constitution Ratification Debate Project**

With Selected *Anti-Federalist* and *Federalist Papers*

**LESSON AT A GLANCE**

**Grade Level:** 10-12

**Lesson Length:** 1-2 Class Sessions (depending on time needed to facilitate the document analysis)

**Overview**  
The focus of the ratification debate project for students at this level is to explore the arguments for and against the Constitution before its ratification. Students will examine primary documents and draw upon them throughout a simulated ratification debate.

Throughout the activity, students will develop an understanding of the Constitution from different perspectives while practicing reading comprehension of complex primary documents and writing skills.

**Objectives**

*Students will:*

* Explore and synthesize information related to the founding of the U.S. government
* Compare and contrast the arguments of the Anti-Federalists and Federalists
* Read primary documents for detail
* Demonstrate comprehension through experiential response

**Standards**

**National Standards Addressed: National Council for the Social Studies**

* **II** (time, continuity, and change)
* **V** (individuals, groups, and institutions)
* **VI** (power, authority, and governance)
* **X** (civic ideals and practices)

**North Carolina Essential Social Studies Standards Addressed**

* **FP.C&G.1** (Analyze the foundations and development of American government in terms of principles and values.)
* **FP.C&G.2** (Analyze government systems within the United States in terms of their structure, function and relationships.)
* **FP.C&G.3**(Analyze the legal system within the United States in terms of the development, execution and protection of citizenship rights)
* **FP.C&G.5** (Analyze how political and legal systems within and outside of the United States provide a means to balance competing interests and resolve conflicts.)

**Materials:** Selected *Anti-Federalist* and *Federalist Papers*, assigned by topic. See table below. The papers can be found online:

* Federalist Papers: <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/fed-antifed/outline/>
* Anti-Federalist Papers: <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/fed-antifed/timeline-antifederalist/>

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| **Debate Topic** | **Republican Nature of Constitution** | **The  Bill of Rights** | **The**  **Judiciary** | **The President** | **The House of Representatives** | **The Senate** |
| **Anti- Federalist Paper** | Brutus #1 | Richard H. Lee to Edmund Randolph, 16 Oct 1787 | Brutus XI | Luther Martin: Genuine Information, Baltimore *Maryland Gazette*, 29 Jan 1788 | Luther Martin: Genuine Information, Baltimore *Maryland Gazette*, 1 Jan 1788, George Mason Speech, VA Ratifying Convention 4 June 1788 | Federal Farmer, 8 Nov 1787 |
| **Federalist Paper** | Federalist #39 | Federalist #84 | Federalist #78 | Federalist #67,#69 | Federalist #35, #52 | Federalist #55, #56 |

**During Instruction**

Depending on the grade level and reading abilities of each class, the document analysis can be facilitated as independent work, collaborative group work, or whole class instruction.

* **Step One:** Students will first analyze the arguments of the Federalists and Anti-Federalists in order to correctly identify the groups’ main ideas for themselves. They will read pages in their history or political science textbooks. Using information in this reading, they will draw conclusions about both groups’ views on republican government, the Bill of Rights, and the power of the proposed national institutions of governments.
* **Step Two:** Assign a *Federalist* or *Anti-Federalist Paper* to each student so that the debate will be equally balanced between the two groups. More than one student may be assigned to a *Paper,* depending on the class size. Depending on the students’ reading levels, facilitate the document analysis as independent work, collaborative group work, or whole class instruction.
* **Step Three:** Give each student the handout titled, “Ratification Debate Project,” and review the instructions with the students. Provide time for questions from the students.
* **Step Four: Conduct the simulated debate.**
  + Call the debate to order; the teacher is the presiding officer. (Note: this will not be in a particular state, since the selected *Papers* are an amalgam of the writings.)
  + For the first half of the debate, discuss each topic for an allotted time (4-6 minutes per topic. Start with the “Republican Nature of the Constitution,”“the Bill of Rights,” and continue to the right of the above table).
  + For the last half of the debate, allow the students to respond to any of the arguments outlined by the opposing side. You may want to insert specific questions, such as, “why do the Anti-Federalists feel as if the Constitution provides for too little representation?” or “Federalists, why does this document better provide for republican government than the previous structure, outlined in the Articles of Confederation?”
  + Near the end of the class period, allow for the students to vote for or against ratification. They may very well stay in character for the vote, and that is quite fine.
  + Collect the student’s writing, and assess their work based upon the rubric (found at the end of the following student handout).
* **Step Five: Extend the Lesson**
  + Facilitate a discussion with the students about what decision they would have made in the 1780s. Would they have voted up or down regarding ratification?
  + Have the students bring in news items that demonstrate how the arguments of the 1780s are reflected in today’s political and civil discourse.
  + Have students explore your class library, or online resources, to read another *Paper* and contrast it to their assigned *Paper* in the debate.
  + Show the docudrama, *Empire of Reason*, which asks:what would the ratification period have looked like if television existed in the 1780s?

**Ratification Debate Project**

**1. Your Overall Tasks**  
(a) to read one Federalist or Anti-Federalist Paper, closely examining the arguments within  
(b) to participate in a simulated ratification debate as an Anti-Federalist or Federalist

(c) to present the ideas in your paper (as if you authored it), and to respond to the arguments made during the debate

**2. Your Role**

As the author of the assigned paper, you will make arguments in support of or in opposition to the proposed Constitution. Your goal is to convince the convention leader (played by the teacher) that ratification is or is not necessary.

**3. The Writing**(a) Write down and **explain** at least **five key arguments** from your paper. Bullet points are fine.   
(b) Within your writing, you should include **two quotes** that best reveal your arguments. Explain how these quotes connect to your ideas as a whole (and think about this: how do the quotes reveal the whole text?). You can also refer to your notes and the textbook to explain how the arguments in your paper reveal those made by the group as a whole.   
(c) **The writing should be about 250 words.** (See rubric below).

(d) Bring your assigned paper, with your writing, on the day of the debate.

**4. The Ratification Debate Rubric**

In a simulated debate, the class will discuss the ratification of the Constitution. You will be graded on your participation in the debate, as the author of the Federalist of Anti-Federalist paper. Your grade will be based upon the following rubric:

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| **Category and Explanation** | **Possible Points** |
| **Preparation:**  Have you explained at least five key arguments?  Have you identified at least two quotes from the paper, explained them, and incorporated them into your arguments? | 40 |
| **Participation:**  Have you contributed thoughtful arguments in the debate?  Have you listened and responded to the arguments made by your opponents during the debate? | 40 |
| **Reasonableness:**  To what extent did you respond with reasonable, on-point arguments? | 20 |
| **Total Points** |  |