

Federalists & Anti-federalists Lesson Plan

Central Historical Question:
What types of government did Federalists and Anti-Federalists prefer?

Materials:

- Copies of Federalist Document: Alexander Hamilton
- Copies of Anti-Federalist Document: Melancton Smith
- Copies of Federalist/Anti-Federalist Graphic Organizer
- Copies of Federalists/Anti-Federalists Chart

Plan of Instruction:

1. Introduction: Mini-lecture on Constitution:

- *The Constitutional Convention met in 1787 to draft a new Constitution.*
- *One of the biggest debates at the Constitutional Convention was over representation—populous states wanted proportional representation, and emptier states wanted equal representation. The Great Compromise solved the problem. Congress would have two legislative houses—a Congress (with 2 Senators from each state) and a House of Representatives (with 1 Representative for every 30,000 people).*
- *Anti-Federalists thought that the solution was not good enough. They wanted more representation. They worried that 1 person could not adequately represent 30,000 people. Federalists disagreed.*
- *After the Constitution was written, it had to be ratified by 9 states. There were very extensive debates between Federalists (who supported the Constitution) and Anti-Federalists (who opposed a strong central government).*
- *Today, we are going to read some documents from the New York Constitution Ratification Convention in June 1787, which was from the most heatedly debated of all the states.*

2. Hand out Alexander Hamilton and Melancton Smith Documents. Have students read and fill in Graphic Organizer.

3. Discussion:

- What was Hamilton's position on representation?
- What was Smith's position?

- What arguments did they make in support of their claims?
 - Based on these arguments, what type of people would you guess tended to be Federalists? Anti-Federalists?
 - If you could have chosen, what side would you have supported?
 - Do you see versions of these issues being debated today?
4. Hand out Federalist/Anti-Federalist chart to summarize differences between two groups.
5. What actually happened?
- New York ratified the Constitution by a vote of 30-27 (the narrowest margin of victory of any state that met in 1787-88).
 - The Anti-Federalists lost the battle but won the war. The first 10 amendments to the Constitution—the Bill of Rights—were ratified in 1791. These addressed many of the issues that the Anti-Federalists raised in the conventions.
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Citations:

Melancton Smith, Speech, June 21, 1788.

http://teachers.sduhsd.k12.ca.us/tpsocialsciences/american_govt/antipapers/msmith.htm

Alexander Hamilton, Speech, June 21, 1788. <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch13s38.html>

Document A: Anti-Federalist Position (Modified)

Melancton Smith, June 21, 1788

Representatives should be a true picture of the people. They should understand their circumstances and their troubles. Therefore, the number of representatives should be so large that both rich and poor people will choose to be representatives.

If the number of representatives is small, the position will be too competitive. Ordinary people will not attempt to run for office. A middle-class yeoman (farmer) will never be chosen. So, the government will fall into the hands of the few and the rich. This will be a government of oppression.

The rich consider themselves above the common people, entitled to more respect. They believe they have the right to get anything they want.

Document B: Federalist Position (Modified)

Alexander Hamilton, June 21, 1788

The Anti-Federalists seem to think that a pure democracy would be the perfect government. Experience has shown that this idea is false. The ancient democracies of Greece were characterized by tyranny and run by mobs.

The Anti-Federalists also argue that a large representation is necessary to understand the interests of the people. This is not true. Why can't someone understand fifty people as well as he understands twenty people?

The new constitution does not make a rich man more eligible for an elected office than a poor person. I also think it's dangerous to assume that men become more wicked as they gain wealth and education. Look at all the people in a community, the rich and the poor, the educated and the ignorant. Which group has higher moral standards? Both groups engage in immoral or wicked behavior. But it would seem to me that the behavior of the wealthy is less wicked and sinful.

Federalist and Anti-federalist Graphic Organizer

Name _____

| | Document A: Anti-Federalists Melancton Smith | Document B: Federalists Alexander Hamilton |
|--|--|--|
| Is this person happy with how the new Constitution deals with representation? | | |
| What kind of government would this person like to see? | | |
| Find a quote to support your claim. | | |
| Based on this document, what sort of people in society would support this point of view? | | |

| Federalists | Anti-Federalists |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Jay – all known as “Publius” (Federalist Papers)● Property owners, landed rich, merchants● Believed in elitism. Saw themselves and those of their class as most fit to govern.● Powerful central government. 2-house legislature. Representative democracy, with single representatives for 30,000 people. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Thomas Jefferson, “Brutus” and “Cato”● Small farmers, shopkeepers, laborers● Believed in the decency of the common man and in participatory democracy (closer to direct democracy). Viewed elites as corrupt. Sought greater protection of individual rights.● Wanted stronger state governments at the expense of the federal government. Frequent elections, smaller districts, more direct democracy. |