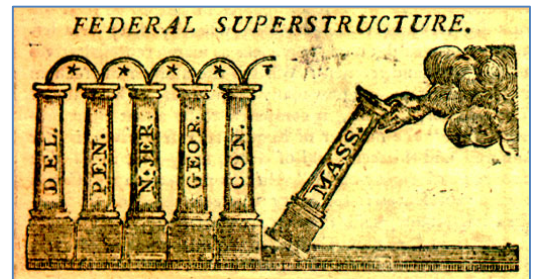


Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Debate over Ratification of the U.S. Constitution



## Part I: Metaphorical Descriptions of the Constitution

While modern Americans tend to refer to the Constitution in the most reverent terms, in the era of the ratification debates, the descriptions of the document were not always so flattering. Read the following list of metaphors and determine if each conveys a positive or negative image of the U.S. Constitution.

Metaphor	Positive	Negative
Child of Mutual Concessions		
Engine of Destruction		
Federal Chariot		
Fiery High-Blooded Steed		
Gilded Pill		
Harbor Attainable		

Metaphor	Positive	Negative
Home-Bred Monster		
New Breeches		
Orphan		
Pandora's Box		
Tottering Pile		
Young Lion		

(Source: Center for the Study of the American Constitution, UW-Madison; <http://history.wisc.edu/csac/>)

Select one metaphor: \_\_\_\_\_

- Explain what the metaphor implies about the new Constitution and what element of the document may have prompted such a description.

## Part II: Arguments in Favor of and Against Ratification

Read each of the following statements and determine if the author is a federalist (supports ratification) or an anti-federalist (opposes ratification). Categorize each argument based on its focus, for example: economic, legal, social, etc.

Author	Quote	Federalist	Anti-Federalist	Category
James Madison	Among the numerous advantages promised by a well constructed union, none deserves to be more accurately developed than its tendency to break and control the violence of faction... <sup>1</sup>			

Nicholas Collin	...a fatal disunion would inevitably produce the horrid calamities of civil wars and foreign conquest... the constitution now offered does not assume an inch of unnecessary power, perhaps it is rather <i>too free</i> ; if it is not received the people are too bad to be happy – but I am confident that a great majority have sense and goodness enough to accept with joy <i>the only salvation from impending ruin.</i> <sup>ii</sup>			
Philadelph- hiensis	I fear they have found you off your guard, and taken you by surprise: these aspiring men have seized the government, and secured all power, as they suppose, to themselves, now openly browbeat you with their insolence, and assume majesty; and even treat you like menial servants... <sup>iii</sup>			
George Mason	By requiring only a majority to make all commercial and navigation laws, the five Southern States (whose produce and circumstances are totally different from those of the eight Northing and Eastern States) will be ruined... merchants of the Northern and Eastern States not only to demand an exorbitant freight, but to monopolize the purchase of commodities, at their own price... to the great injury of the landed interests, and the impoverishment of the people... <sup>iv</sup>			
James Madison	The house of representatives will derive its powers from the people of America... So far the Government is national not federal. The Senate on the other hand will derive its powers from the states ... and these will be represented on the principle of equality in the Senate... So far the government is federal, not national.... The proposed Constitution therefore, is in strictness neither a national nor a federal constitution; but a composition of both... <sup>v</sup>			
Amos Singletary	These lawyers, and men of learning, and moneyed men, that talk so finely, and gloss over matters so smoothly, to make us poor illiterate people swallow down the pill, expect to get into Congress themselves... and then they will swallow up all us little folks, like the great Leviathan. <sup>vi</sup>			
Patrick Henry	Have they said, we the States? Have they made a proposal of a compact between the States? If they had, this would be a confederation: It is otherwise most clearly a consolidated government. The question turns, Sir, on that poor little thing – the expression, <i>We, the people</i> , instead of the States of America. <sup>vii</sup>			
Elbridge Gerry	...there is no adequate provision for a representation of the people; that they have not security for the right of election; that some of the powers of the legislature are ambiguous, and others indefinite and dangerous; that the executive is blended with, and will have an undue influence over, the legislature; that the judicial department will be oppressive; that treaties of the highest importance may be formed by the President with the advice of two thirds of a quorum of the Senate; and that the system is without the security of a bill of rights... <sup>viii</sup>			

- Explain which side you believe presented the stronger arguments.
- What was the greatest area of concern to the anti-federalists quoted above?

Why do you believe they were most worried about that area of the Constitution?

- What was the strongest defense of the federalists quoted above?

Why do you believe they focused on that element of the Constitution for their defense?

### Part III: Ratification by the Numbers

Use the ratification map to answer the following questions.



- Which state(s) had the strongest support for ratification?
- Which state(s) had the strongest opposition to ratification?
- What social or geographic differences could account for the variance in attitude toward the Constitution?
- Summarize the information on the map noting trends among regions.

Use the ratification chart to answer the following questions.

State	Dates of Convention	Ratification Vote
Delaware	Dec. 3-7, 1787	30 - 0
Pennsylvania	Nov. 20 –Dec. 15, 1787	46 - 23
New Jersey	Dec. 11-20, 1787	38 – 0
Georgia	Dec. 25, 1787-Jan. 5, 1788	26 – 0
Connecticut	Jan. 3-9, 1788	128 – 40
Massachusetts	Jan. 9-Feb. 7, 1788	187 - 168
Maryland	April 21-29, 1788	63 – 11
South Carolina	May 12-24, 1788	149 – 73
New Hampshire	Feb. 13-22, 1788 (1 <sup>st</sup> Session) June 18-21, 1788 (2 <sup>nd</sup> Session)	57 - 47
Virginia	June 2-27, 1788	89 – 79
New York	June 17-July 26, 1788	30 - 27
North Carolina	July 21-Aug. 4, 1788 (1 <sup>st</sup> Convention) Nov. 16-21, 1789 (2 <sup>nd</sup> Convention)	194 - 77
Rhode Island	March 1-6, 1790 (1 <sup>st</sup> Session) May 24-29, 1790 (2 <sup>nd</sup> Session)	34 – 32

- Which state had the closest vote for ratification?

Does this correspond to the percentages shown on the map?

- Which states had the most one-sided vote for ratification?

Does this correspond to the percentages shown on the map?

- Which state took the longest amount of time in convention to ratify the Constitution?

- Why might three of the states have needed multiple sessions or conventions to achieve ratification?

(Source: Center for the Study of the American Constitution, UW-Madison; [http://history.wisc.edu/csac/documentary\\_resources/ratification.htm](http://history.wisc.edu/csac/documentary_resources/ratification.htm))

<sup>i</sup> James Madison, Federalist 10; Digital History; [http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtID=11&psid=3798](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=11&psid=3798)

<sup>ii</sup> Foreign Spectator (Nicholas Collin), Philadelphia Independent Gazetteer, Oct. 2, 1787; The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution Digital Edition, ed. John P. Kaminski, Gaspare J. Saladino, Richard Leffler, Charles H. Schoenleber and Margaret A. Hogan. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009; Canonic URL: <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/RNCN-03-13-02-0128> [accessed 27 Jan 2012]; Original Source: Commentaries on the Constitution, Vol XIII: Commentaries on the Constitution, No. 1

<sup>iii</sup> Philadelphiensis V, Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, Dec 19, 1787; The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution Digital Edition, ed. John P. Kaminski, Gaspare J. Saladino, Richard Leffler, Charles H. Schoenleber and Margaret A. Hogan. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009; Canonic URL: <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/RNCN-03-15-02-0006> [accessed 27 Jan 2012]; Original Source: Commentaries on the Constitution, Vol XV: Commentaries on the Constitution, No. 3

<sup>iv</sup> George Mason, "Objections of the Hon. George Mason, One of the Delegates from Virginia in the Late Constitutional Convention, To the Proposed Federal Constitution; Assigned as His Reasons for Not Signing the Same," Oct. 1787; TeachingAmericanHistory.org

<sup>v</sup> Publius (James Madison): The Federalist 39, New York *Independent Journal*, 16 January 1788

<sup>vi</sup> Amos Singletary, 1788; Digital History; [http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtID=11&psid=3798](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=11&psid=3798)

<sup>vii</sup> Patrick Henry: Speech in the Virginia Convention, 5 June 1788

<sup>viii</sup> Elbridge Gerry, Letter to the Massachusetts State Legislature Explaining His Reasons for Not Signing the Constitution, 1787; Digital History, [http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtID=11&psid=4519](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=11&psid=4519)