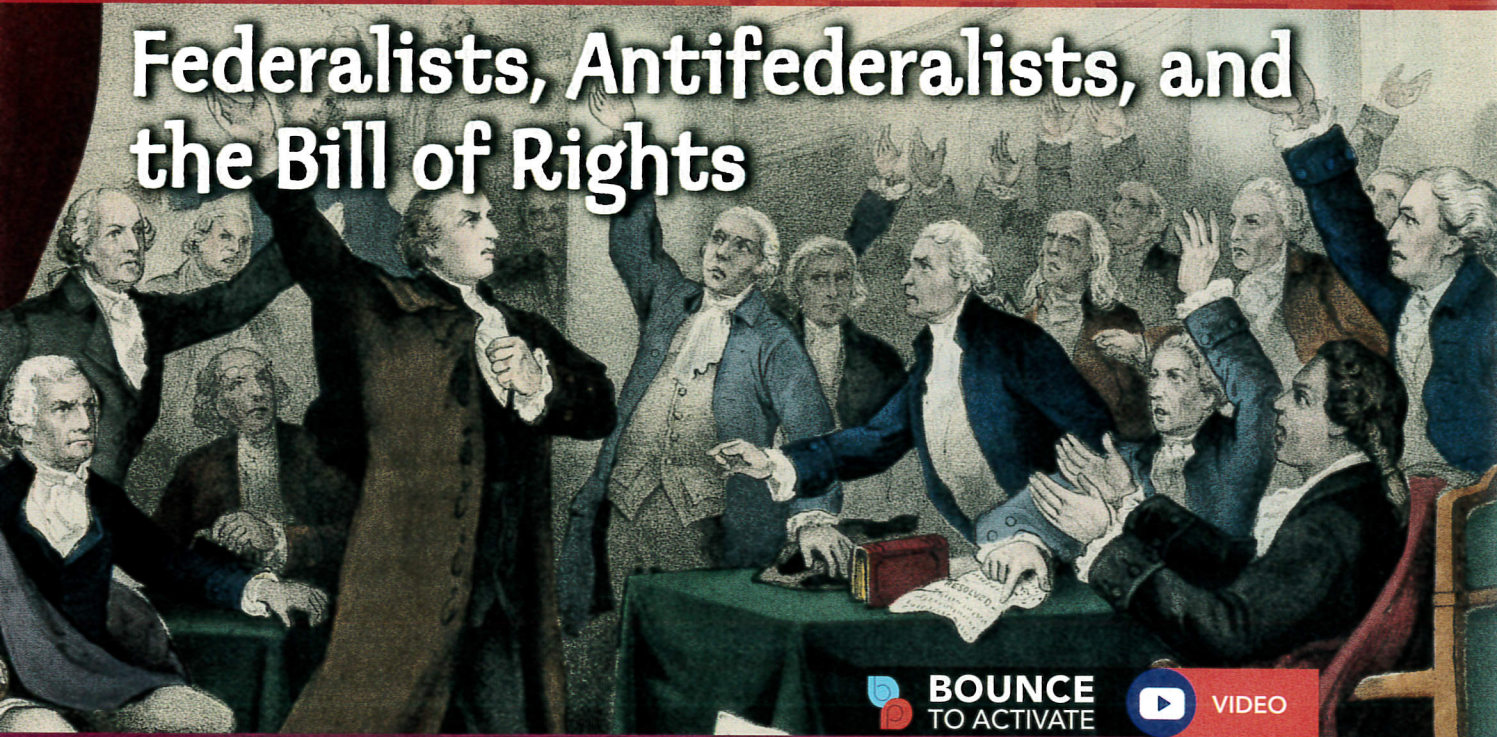


LESSON 4

Federalists, Antifederalists, and the Bill of Rights



 **BOUNCE**
TO ACTIVATE

 **VIDEO**

GET READY TO READ

START UP


Study the image of Patrick Henry. Write a sentence about something you feel strongly about.

GUIDING QUESTIONS


- What were the main arguments for and against ratifying the Constitution?
- Why did Antifederalists insist on adding a bill of rights to the Constitution?
- What difficulties were encountered during the process of ratification?

TAKE NOTES

Literacy Skills Sequence

Use the graphic organizer in your  Active Journal to take notes as you read the lesson.

PRACTICE VOCABULARY

Use the vocabulary activity in your  Active Journal to practice the vocabulary words.

Vocabulary

ratify

Federalist

Antifederalist

Federalist Papers

amend

Academic Vocabulary

statute

compel

The Framers of the Constitution sent the document to Congress, along with a letter from George Washington. Washington warmly approved the document. He predicted that the Constitution would “promote the lasting welfare of that country so dear to us all.”

The Federalists and the Antifederalists Debate

The Framers had set up a process for the states to approve, or **ratify**, the new government. The Constitution would go into effect when at least 9 of the 13 states had ratified it. In 1787 and 1788, voters in each state elected delegates to special state conventions. These delegates would decide whether to ratify the Constitution.

For Ratification: The Arguments of the Federalists

In every state, heated debates took place. Supporters of the Constitution called themselves **Federalists** because they favored a strong federal, or national, government. They called people who opposed the Constitution **Antifederalists**.

Did you know?

When he was just 14, Alexander Hamilton was helping run a business on St. Croix, managing men much older than himself.

Federalists argued that the Articles of Confederation left too much power with the individual states. This imbalance produced a dangerously weak central government. Disputes among the states, Federalists said, made it too difficult for the government to function.

Federalists believed that the Constitution gave the national government the authority it needed to function effectively. At the same time, they said, the Constitution still protected the rights and powers of the individual states.

Federalists James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay wrote a series of essays, known today as the **Federalist Papers**. Their purpose was to explain and defend the Constitution. They used pen names, but most people knew who they were. Today, the Federalist Papers remain among the best discussions of the political theory behind the American system of government.

Courts still refer to the *Federalist Papers* in making decisions about the principles and role of government. In this way, they have had a lasting influence on the U.S. system of government.

Against Ratification: The Arguments of the Antifederalists

Antifederalists felt that the Constitution made the national government too strong and left the states too weak. They also thought that the Constitution gave the President too much power. Patrick Henry of Virginia protested:

Primary Source

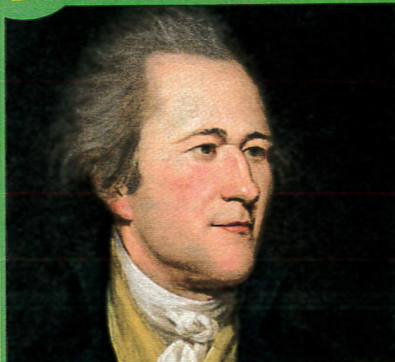
"This Constitution is said to have beautiful features, but . . . they appear to me horribly frightful. . . . Your President may become king."

—Patrick Henry, Speech to the Virginia Convention, June 1788

5 BIOGRAPHY Things to Know About

ALEXANDER HAMILTON

First U.S. secretary of the treasury 1755–1804



- Hamilton was born on the British island of Nevis in the West Indies.
- He represented New York State at the Constitutional Convention.
- He wrote more than 50 of the 85 Federalist Papers, in which he argued forcefully for a strong central government.
- He was killed in a duel with rival Aaron Burr.
- He was the subject of an award-winning musical that opened on Broadway in 2015.

Critical Thinking If he had not been killed in a duel, do you think Hamilton would have become President? Why or why not?

Most people expected George Washington to be elected President. Antifederalists admired Washington, but they warned that future Presidents might lack Washington's honor and skill. For this reason, they said, the office should not be too powerful.

 **READING CHECK** **Identify Main Ideas** What issues of power led Antifederalists to oppose the Constitution?

Why Did Antifederalists Demand a Bill of Rights?

The chief objection of Antifederalists was that the Constitution did not have a specific bill, or list, of guaranteed protections of individual rights. Federalists held that it was impossible to list all the natural rights of people. Besides, they said, the Constitution protected citizens well enough as it was.

Antifederalists responded that a bill of rights was needed to protect such basic liberties as freedom of speech and religion. Unless these rights were spelled out, they could be too easily ignored or denied by the government. Americans, after all, had just fought a revolution to protect their freedoms against a too-powerful government. Violations of those freedoms were the main grievances cited in the Declaration of Independence. Antifederalists argued that a bill of rights was needed to address those grievances.

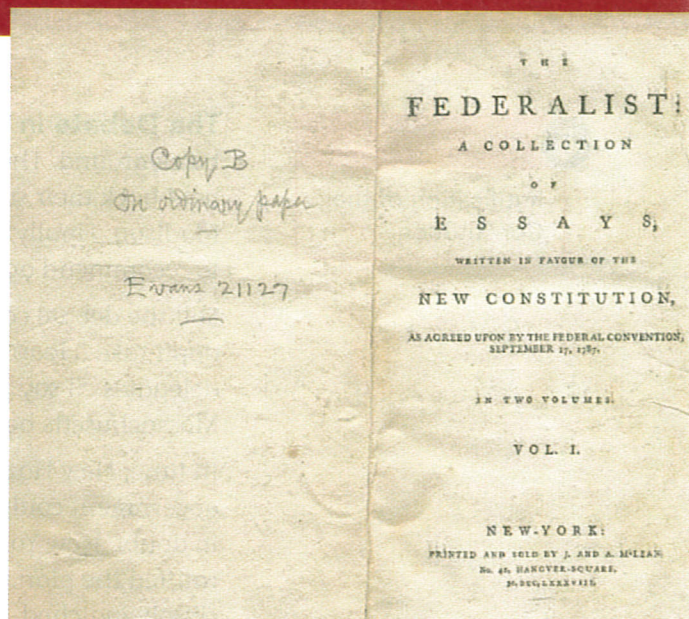
Under the new Constitution, the President would have veto power over Congress—the people's representatives. Surely placing so much power in one man's hands, the Antifederalists argued, likewise demanded the protection of a bill of rights.

One of the strongest supporters of a bill of rights was George Mason of Virginia. In 1776, Mason had written the bill of rights for Virginia's constitution. After the Constitutional Convention refused to include a bill of rights, Mason joined the Antifederalists. He wrote a pamphlet opposing the ratification of the Constitution. The pamphlet was titled, simply, "Objections to This Constitution of Government." Its opening words were equally direct: "There is no Declaration of Rights."

 **READING CHECK** **Identify Supporting Details** What was the purpose of George Mason's pamphlet?

The Ratification Process

One by one, the states voted. Delaware led the way, ratifying on December 7, 1787. Five days later, with the strong support of James Wilson, Pennsylvania ratified the Constitution. New Jersey soon followed. In these states, as in the states that ratified later, the main cause behind ratification was that Federalists were able to convince a majority of delegates that the Constitution would bring an improved system of government.



Analyze Images The *Federalist essays* presented the argument for a strong central government. **Infer** What might have happened if these essays had not been written?



INTERACTIVE

Federalists versus Antifederalists



INTERACTIVE

Ratification of the Constitution

The Debate in New England Massachusetts was the first key battleground. There, the old patriots Sam Adams and John Hancock held back their support. The delay seemed “very ominous,” wrote Madison. Finally, Adams and Hancock convinced the state convention to recommend adding a bill of rights to the Constitution.

Still the debate continued. “Some gentlemen say, don’t be in a hurry . . . don’t take a leap in the dark,” a Federalist farmer told his fellow delegates. “I say . . . gather fruit when it is ripe.” In February 1788, Massachusetts became the sixth state to ratify.

In June, New Hampshire joined ranks as the ninth state. The new government could now go into effect. Still, the nation’s unity remained in doubt. New York and Virginia, two of the largest states, had not yet ratified the plan. In both states, Federalists and Antifederalists were closely matched.

A Vote to Ratify After Long Debates In Virginia, Patrick Henry, George Mason, and Governor Edmund Randolph led the opposition. Still a spellbinding speaker, Henry at one point spoke for seven hours. Soft-spoken James Madison could not match Henry’s dramatic style. Yet his arguments in favor of the Constitution were always clear, patient, and to the point.

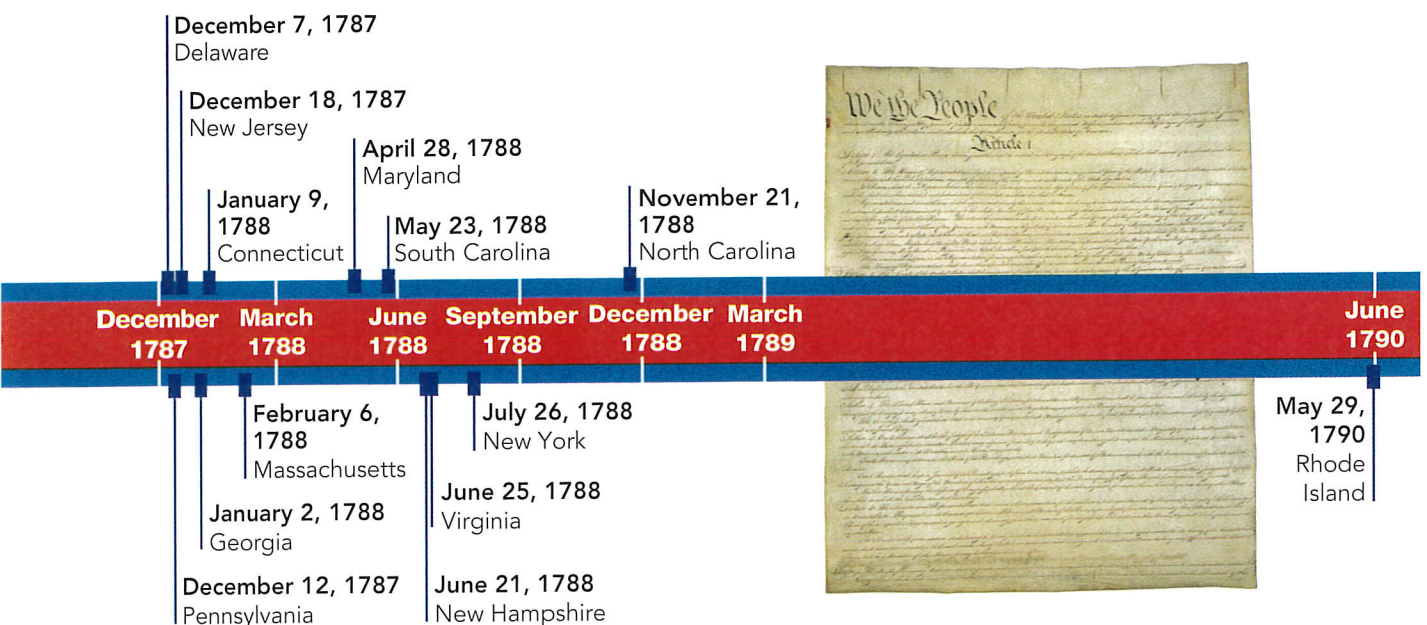
The tide finally turned when Governor Randolph changed his mind. He gave his support only when the Federalists promised to support a bill of rights. Virginia voted to ratify in late June.

In New York, the struggle went on for another month. In July 1788, the state convention voted to ratify. North Carolina followed in November 1789. Only Rhode Island, which had refused to send delegates to the Constitutional Convention, remained. On May 29, 1790, Rhode Island

Analyze Timelines

Ratifying the Constitution was a long process, taking a year and a half. **Sequence** Which was the first state to vote for ratification? Which was the last?

Voting for Ratification

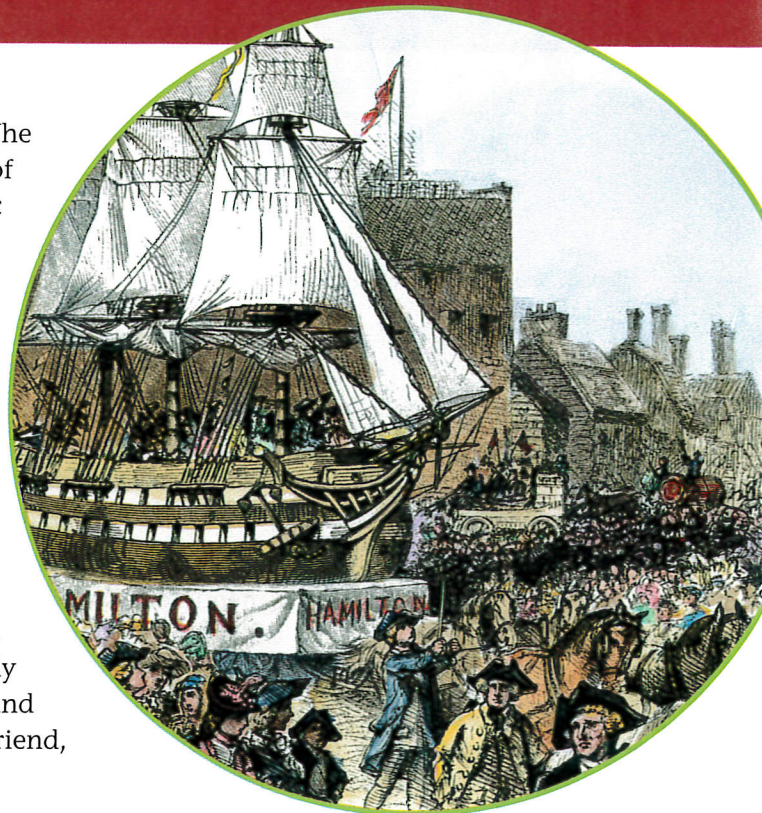


became the last state to ratify the Constitution. The effect of ratification was to create a new system of government for the United States, the same basic system that remains in effect today.

Celebration of a New

Constitution Throughout the land, Americans celebrated the news that the Constitution was ratified. The city of Philadelphia set its festival for July 4, 1788.

A festive parade filed along Market Street, led by soldiers who had fought in the Revolution. Thousands cheered as six colorfully outfitted horses pulled a blue carriage shaped like an eagle. Thirteen stars and stripes were painted on the front, and the Constitution was raised proudly above it. Benjamin Rush, a Philadelphia doctor and strong supporter of the Constitution, wrote to a friend, "Tis done. We have become a nation."



READING CHECK Identify Cause and Effect What factor encouraged many states to vote for ratification?

New Amendments

Americans voted in the first election under the Constitution in January 1789. As expected, George Washington was elected President, while John Adams was elected Vice President.

After the election the Congress met in New York City, which was chosen as the nation's capital. Congress quickly turned its attention to adding a bill of rights to the Constitution. Several states had agreed to ratify the Constitution only on the condition that a bill of rights be added.

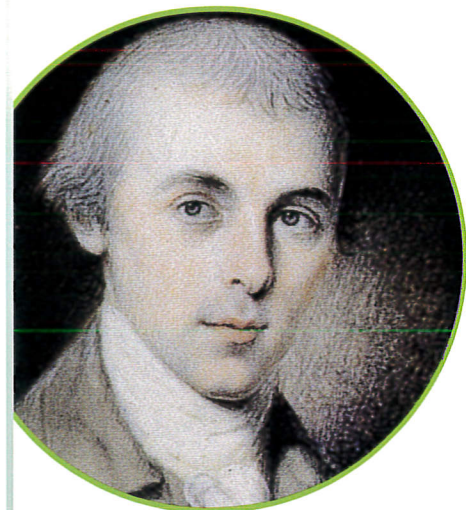
Amending the Constitution The Framers had established a way to **amend**, or change, the Constitution to modify the rules for the national government. They did not want people to make changes lightly, however. Thus, they made the process of amending the Constitution fairly difficult. In 1789, the first Congress proposed a set of 12 amendments, written by James Madison. As required by the Constitution, the amendments then went for ratification by the states, three fourths of which had to ratify an amendment for it to take effect. By December 1791, three fourths of the states had ratified 10 of the 12 amendments. Together, these 10 amendments became known as the Bill of Rights.

The Bill of Rights James Madison insisted that the Bill of Rights does not *give* Americans any rights. The rights listed, he said, are natural rights that belong to all human beings. The Bill of Rights simply prevents the government from taking these rights away.

Some of the first 10 amendments were intended to prevent the kind of abuse Americans had suffered under British rule.

Analyze Images A parade in New York celebrates the Constitution's ratification.

Infer Why do you think people dedicated a float to Alexander Hamilton?



Analyze Images James Madison supported the separation of church and state. **Compare and Contrast** How did Madison's stance differ from Patrick Henry's?

Academic Vocabulary

statute • *n.*, a law or rule

compel • *v.*, to force

For example, the Declaration of Independence had condemned the king for forcing colonists to quarter, or house, troops in their homes and for suspending trial by jury. The Third Amendment forbids the government to quarter troops in citizens' homes without their consent. The Sixth and Seventh Amendments guarantee the right to trial by jury.

Religious Freedom Other amendments protected individual rights, as many states had already done. A forerunner of the First Amendment was the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, written by Thomas Jefferson and made a state law in 1786. The **statute** said that "No man shall be **compelled** to frequent or support any religious worship . . . or otherwise suffer, on account of his religious opinions or belief."

Religious freedom became the very first right listed in the First Amendment. Jefferson later wrote that the First Amendment built "a wall of separation between Church & State." James Madison supported Jefferson's belief that the state, or government, should not promote religion. But not all founders agreed. Patrick Henry wanted Virginia to establish Christianity as the state religion. Others insisted that only Christians should be allowed to hold office. Still, the First Amendment made it clear that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." The First Amendment also emphasized a key element of the republic: freedom of speech, or people's right to express their point of view without fear of government punishment.

With the Bill of Rights in place, the new framework of government was complete. Over time, the Constitution would grow and change along with the nation.

READING CHECK **Identify Supporting Details** What amendments make up the Bill of Rights in the Constitution?

Lesson Check

Practice Vocabulary

1. What was the key argument that the **Federalists** made to persuade states to **ratify** the Constitution?
2. Why did **Antifederalists** insist on a **bill of rights**?

Critical Thinking and Writing

3. **Summarize** the procedure for ratifying the Constitution.
4. **Express Problems Clearly** In June 1788, when nine states had approved the Constitution, it was officially ratified. Why did the issue of ratification still seem unsettled?
5. **Writing Workshop: Use Credible Sources** In your Active Journal, make a list of sources you might use to support or oppose claims regarding this question: How much power should the federal government have, and what should its responsibilities include?