



American Heritage Discussion Series: Learners with Littles

Session 2 Study Guide – Federal Constitution-Making

Overall Essential Questions

1. What ideas and events influenced the delegates at the 1787 Constitutional Convention?
2. What were some of the arguments supporting the new federal constitution?

The Peacemaker’s Journey & The Great Law of Peace by the Onondaga Historical Association, Senate Resolution 331 (1988) —Essential Question: What influence did the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy) have on the U.S. Constitution?

- What is the founding story of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy)?
- What was The Great Law of Peace?
- How did the United States Senate recognize the influence of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy) on the U.S. Constitution?

Articles of Confederation by Extra History—Essential Question: What issues emerged after the War of Independence that made the American victory and the union precarious?

- What governmental issues did the new United States have under the Articles of Confederation?

Excerpts from the Debates in the 1787 Constitutional Convention concerning the Slave Importation Clause—Essential Question: Was it possible to create a union that included the southern states without making accommodations for slavery?

- What were some of the views about slavery some of the delegates expressed in the Constitutional Convention while debating the possible end to the Transatlantic Slave Trade?

Benjamin Franklin’s Closing Speech at the Constitutional Convention—Essential

Question: How does Franklin encourage support for the new constitution?

- Why does Benjamin Franklin “give his consent” to the new federal constitution, while also acknowledging it contains errors?
- What does Franklin encourage others to do while considering the proposed constitution?

Excerpt from Federalist 10 by Publius, Excerpt from Federalist 51 by Publius—Essential

Question: What are some arguments that supported the proposed constitution?

- What is the main argument of Federalist 10?
- What does Federalist 10 say about the concept of plurality in the extended republic?
- What does this famous line from Federalist 10 mean: “Liberty is to faction what air is to fire, an aliment without which it instantly expires. But it could not be less folly to abolish liberty, which is essential to political life, because it nourishes faction, than it would be to wish the annihilation of air, which is essential to animal life, because it imparts to fire its destructive agency.”
- What is the main argument of Federalist 51?
- What does this famous line from Federalist 51 mean: “If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.”