

Sphere Summit  
Lesson Plan

**Federalists and Anti-Federalists; Discourse Without the Duels**

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Learning Goal: Students will evaluate the arguments of the Federalists and Anti-Federalists using American history to prove the effectiveness of their positions. The civil discourse component of this lesson comes from articulating each position clearly for more effective understanding and actively listening to one another in order to build consensus.

Documents: Federalist 10, 51, 84; Brutus 1, Centinel 1, Bill of Rights

Class activity:

Hook: Have students respond to the question as a “Take a Stand” activity. The teacher will place two signs on opposite ends of the classroom, one will say “federalists” and the other will be “anti-federalists.” “Looking back over the last 227 years” Or, “Reviewing the historical context”), which side was more right, the Federalists or Anti-federalists?”

Resources to provide to students:

Excerpts of federalist and anti-federalist writings for students to examine (Federalist 10, 51, 84; Brutus 1, Centinel 1, Bill of Rights)

Specific scenarios of public opinion statements (“The Supreme Court has too much power”, “I believe that when I turn 65 I should have access to government sponsored health care”, “Gun ownership is a natural right,” “States should have the power to make all decisions that are binding upon people living within the state,” etc.)  
Historical government actions/activities (i.e., Patriot Act, Roe v. Wade, War Powers Act, New Deal, Watergate, Little Rock Nine, etc.)

\*The teacher could also use other resources like political cartoons, tweets, infographics or quantitative analysis charts to have students analyze and decide where to place evidentially.

Lesson Flow:

Working in small groups, students will read excerpts of the documents and complete a simple T-chart of the arguments of the federalists and anti-federalists to organize into main ideas/key points: teacher leads brief collective discussion or groups do a “group share” to evaluate the work of the group.

The teacher will distribute the scenarios/historical actions and tell students to write 2-3 sentences describing whether each supports the arguments of the federalists or anti-federalists. These statements will require a consensus decision of their group. For AP Government teachers, this can mirror the writing style of evidence in the argumentative essay.

Take a Stand: Have students take a stand on a continuum between Federalists and Anti-Federalists using the original question. This time, students should stand as a continuum based on their personal opinion rather than the group consensus. The teacher will ask some students to clarify to the group why they placed themselves in the place where they did, providing evidence from the writings, the scenarios or the historical events. Students may want to volunteer, or the teacher may call on specific students (note: if all students are clearly to one side or another and one or two are outliers, that can serve as a good opportunity to have a different opinion articulated)