Ratification of the Constitution: Pinwheel Discussion
In Partnership with Teaching American History

Task: Read the provided primary sources and answer the guiding questions to prepare to discuss perspectives on the ratification of the Constitution, including: Federalists who didn't want a Bill of Rights, Federalists who were willing to include a Bill of Rights, and Antifederalists.

Perspective #1:
Federalists who do not support the ratification of the Constitution with a Bill of Rights

Primary Source	Guiding Questions	Your notes & responses
"Wilson's State House Speech"(1787)	*What is Wilson's central argument about the ratification of the Constitution without a Bill of Rights? This speech by Wilson upset a lot of prominent opposition politicians and writers. What is so provocative about this speech?*	
Federalist 84	*What are the rights that Publius claims are listed in the proposed Constitution? Why does Publius think the Constitution is a bill of rights?*	
"The House Version" (1789)	*Why did the House reject James Madison's proposal to incorporate the Bill of Rights into the main body of the original Constitution? What alterations did the House make to Madison's version?*	

Grab-N-Go © 2026 by lilyPD is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/

Perspective #2:
Federalists who are willing to support the ratification of the Constitution with a Bill of Rights

Primary Source	Guiding Questions	Your notes & responses
"The New York Ratifying Convention" (1788)	*What is the difference between the adoption of the Constitution with previous or conditional amendments and adoption with subsequent or recommended amendments? What are the differences between the content of the twenty-five items in the Bill of Rights proposed at the New York convention and the thirty-one items in the proposed amendments?*	
"The Virginia Ratifying Convention" (1788)	*Do previous amendments open the door to the possibility of secession? How does the discussion over how to adopt the Constitution enhance our understanding of what is and is not a republican and a federal government?*	
"Madison Argues for a Bill of Rights" (1789)	*What is James Madison's case for the adoption of a bill of rights? Where would he place these thirty-nine constraints on the reach of the federal government? Before the Constitution? Within the Constitution? Or after the Constitution?*	

Grab-N-Go © 2026 by lilyPD is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/

Perspective #3:
Antifederalists

Primary Source	Guiding Questions	Your notes & responses
"Objections at the Constitutional Convention"(1787)	*Are there similarities among the objections to the Constitution listed by Edmund Randolph, Elbridge Gerry, and George Mason? Does their dissent demonstrate an admirable feature of the American experiment? Other delegates had reservations, yet they still signed. Does it strike you as odd that Edmund Randolph, who introduced and defended the Virginia Plan, objected to signing the Constitution?*	
"The Dissent of the Minority" (1787)	*What rights did the Pennsylvania Minority consider to be essential?*	
"Lee to Randolph" (1787)	*What rights are essential to Richard Henry Lee? Why does the proposed Constitution contain the potentiality to make these rights vulnerable?*	

Grab-N-Go © 2026 by lilyPD is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/

Provocateur Group:

Skim primary sources in the Teaching American History collection & develop your own questions for each perspective

Primary Source	Notes	Your questions
Perspective #1: Federalists who do not support the ratification of the Constitution with a Bill of Rights		
Perspective #2: Federalists who are willing to support the ratification of the Constitution with a Bill of Rights		
Perspective #3: Antifederalists		

Grab-N-Go © 2026 by lilyPD is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/