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**Federalist vs. Antifederalist/Jefferson vs. Hamilton**

**Colonial American History Debates**

Overview

The debates that took place in the colonial America, shortly the formation of our nation, between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton had a profound effect on our political history. The first Secretary of State in American history (Jefferson) and the first Secretary of the Treasury (Hamilton) had disagreements about the size and role of the new national government of the United States, and those disagreements generated factions which would evolve into the first political parties in America.

The opposing political rhetoric and argumentation fomented by their two factions – Hamilton’s Federalists and Jefferson’s Anti-Federalists – had its origin in the deliberations and disputes of the constitutional convention of 1787. Both men vied for influence within the first president George Washington’s administration (1789 – 1797), and both men’s factions conducted public projects of persuasion, writing in newspapers, broadsheets, and pamphlets, the political media of the late 18th century.

There was little of consequence related to the founding of the United States’ political and even economic systems that the Federalist vs. Antifederalist debates didn’t address or touch on, but three of the most fundamental and widely-resonating issues were the debates over the creation of a national bank, the enumerated versus implied powers of the U.S. Congress, and the balance of national and state governmental powers. These are the three debatable issues, then, for this project.

**Should the new U.S. national government establish a national bank?**

**Should the powers of the new U.S. national government be strictly limited to**

**those ‘enumerated’ in the U.S. Constitution, or should it be given powers ‘implied’ by the document?**

**Should the new U.S. national government be more powerful or less powerful**

**than state governments?**

Students will engage in “published” debates, taking on the roles of Federalist or Antifederalist leaders and writers of the period. Students will use primary and secondary texts to learn and understand historical content, which includes the prevalent controversies at the constitutional convention and thereafter among the nation’s founding leaders in addition to essential principles of civics and governance that have determined the development of American political institutions and discourse from the colonial period through the present. Students will also practice and enhance their thinking and reasoning skills, engaging the historical subject matter by making the best arguments they can defending their faction’s position on the key controversy, then responding to the arguments of their peers representing the opposite faction, and finally making a refutational rejoinder to the other faction’s rebuttal of their initial argument.

Method and Procedure

1. Students should be divided into groups of six. (If there is a number of students not divisible by six, a remainder of four or five should establish its own group; three or fewer, and the students should be added to other groups to make seven.) Each group of six should be divided again into teams of three.

2. One team should be assigned to the Federalist side, one to the Antifederalist side. On the Federalist side, each student should adopt one of the Federalist leaders’ names: Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, or James Madison. On the Antifederalist side, each student should become either Thomas Jefferson, Melancton Smith, or Patrick Henry.

3. The three debatable issues should be introduced, defined, and initially explicated. Within each team, Federalist and Antifederalist, each student should select one of the three debatable issues to argue and write about.

4. Content instruction should take place for each of the three debatable issues. Instruction should focus on the arguments made by the Federalists and Antifederalists on the issues. Content instruction can include the Gilder-Lehrman presentation on the debate over the national bank (which is included in the ACE resources folder).

5. Videos should be part of the content instruction portion of this project. Scenes from Lin-Manuel Miranda’s “Hamilton: The Musical” should certainly be part of the video set. Here are recommended videos:

 Federalists vs. Antifederalists, Prof. Carol Berkin, Baruch College, CUNY

 <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/multimedia#!87246>

“Hamilton: The Musical,” Cabinet Battle #1

 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MW_HPrEmvaA>

 “Hamilton: The Musical,” My Shot

 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5D5Y3mpqo0>

 “Hamilton: The Musical,” Alexander Hamilton

 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XHt7Q18q118>

6. Content instruction should also include the distribution of Document Excerpts. The teacher should guide discussion through these excerpts to help students identify argumentative claims that can be made from them on either side of the debatable issues.

7. Within each team, each of the now named Federalists or Antifederalists should take on one of the three debatable issues so that all three issues are covered. Then each student should complete an Argument Builder to create two full arguments to develop the argumentative position their faction would have taken on their debatable issue.

8. The Argument Builders should be collected and reviewed. Brief feedback should be provided on each builder, or (if time doesn’t allow for this) a set of “analytics” on the builders overall should help students revise their arguments before writing their initial argument essays.

9. Each student should write an argument essay of about 500 words (about two pages) that will appear as an “opinion piece” in a 1791 newspaper that each team will create, either *The Federalist Times* or *The Antifederalist Beacon*. This essay should make two arguments to develop the writer’s position, but it should not address counter-arguments (those will come in the ensuing exchange). It should use this outline:

 I. Introduction

 A. Summary of the controversy

 B. Statement of the writer’s position

 II. Argument 1

 A. Argumentative claim

 B. Evidence and reasoning 1

 C. Evidence and reasoning 2

 III. Argument 2

 A. Argumentative claim

 B. Evidence and reasoning 1

 C. Evidence and reasoning 2

 IV. Conclusion

 A. Summary of arguments and position

 B. Statement of the significance of the issue within the wider historical context

10. Each student’s argument essay should be exchanged with the opposing team member who has the same debatable issue – e.g., the Federalist and Antifedederalist who are both writing about the national bank should exchange their essays. Students should then complete Counter-Argument Builders, in which they create one or two counter-arguments to respond to each of the other side’s two arguments. Counter-arguments can either be “critical” – i.e., critiquing the other side’s evidence and reasoning – or “independent” – i.e, counter-arguments that contain their own evidence and reasoning – but either way they must be directly responsive to the other side’s arguments.

11. Each student should write a rebuttal to their counterpart’s original essay, using their Counter-Argument Builder and turning its content into a short (about 250 word) essay that rebuts the other side’s arguments. This rebuttal should follow the following outline.

 I. Introduction

 A. Reference to the other side’s essay and its position

 B. Statement of the writer’s position

 II. Rebuttal to Argument 1

 A. Summary of the other side’s first argument

 B. Counter-argument 1

 C. Counter-argument 2

 III. Rebuttal to Argument 2

 A. Summary of the other side’s second argument

 B. Counter-argument 1

 C. Counter-argument 2

12. Each student should then exchange their rebuttal essay with their counter-part and should complete the Argument Tracker and Refutation Builder document. This instrument is designed to ensure that the student is following the development (or “flow”) of the arguments and counter-arguments and is now in a position to refute the counter-arguments raised by the other side to their arguments.

13. Using the Refutation Builder as a guide, each student should write a short rejoinder (about 250 word) essay that refutes the other side’s counter-arguments. This rejoinder essay should follow the following outline.

 I. Introduction

 A. Re-statement of the writer’s position and reference to the other writer’s

submission of a rebuttal essay

 B. Statement of purpose: In this rejoinder to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I will attempt to

refute his counter-arguments and re-establish the truth of my position, that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

 II. Refutation of the Counter-Arguments to Argument 1

 A. Re-statement of the first argumentative claim

 B. Summary of counter-argument 1

 C. Refutation of counter-argument 1

 D. Summary of counter-argument 2

 E. Refutation of counter-argument 2

III. Refutation of the Counter-Arguments to Argument 2

 A. Re-statement of the first argumentative claim

 B. Summary of counter-argument 1

 C. Refutation of counter-argument 1

 D. Summary of counter-argument 2

 E. Refutation of counter-argument 2

IV. Conclusion

 A. Summary of the key evaluation between the arguments that favors the

writer’s position

 B. Re-statement of that position and its significance within the wider historical

context

14. Each team should now have nine short essays, three on each issue: the original “opinion piece” on the issue, the rebuttal from the other faction, and the rejoinder to that rebuttal. Those nine pieces should be organized and assembled into an issue of either *The Federalist Tribune* or *The Antifederalist Beacon*. Students can use one of the template apps below to create their historical newspaper. They should work in teams to produce one “issue” of their newspaper per team, so that it contains all nine short essays in it. Students can be told that they can earn a small portion of bonus points for creative design of their newspaper.

Google Docs Newspaper Templates

[https://drive.google.com/templates?type=docs&q=newspaper&sort=user&view=public&ddrp=1#](https://drive.google.com/templates?type=docs&q=newspaper&sort=user&view=public&ddrp=1)

ReadWriteThink (NCTE) Newspaper Template

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/printing-press-30036.html>

Educational Technology Newspaper Templates

<http://www.educatorstechnology.com/2015/12/5-handy-google-docs-templates-for-creating-class-newspapers.html>

To create individual “newspaper clippings”:

<https://www.fodey.com/generators/newspaper/snippet.asp>

15. Teams should submit their final version of their newspaper, along with each student’s pre-writing instruments: their completed Argument Builders, Counter-Argument Builders, and Argument Tracker and Refutation Builders. The pre-writing instruments can either be assessed separately or they can be used to help support the assessment of the essays. Each student should be graded on the basis of his or her three pieces of writing (compositely): the original “opinion piece,” the rebuttal, and the rejoinder. The ACE Argument Writing Assessment Rubric and Form should be used for this purpose.