

Lesson Outline: The Convention and The Bill of Rights

I. Challenges Under the Articles of Confederation

1. Funding the Federal Government

- Population determined by census impacted:
 - Representation in the House of Representatives.
 - Percentage of federal debt owed by each state (appropriation of debt).
- Dual-purpose census discouraged states from inflating population figures.

2. Ineffectiveness of the Articles

- Weak central authority unable to:
 - Fund itself effectively.
 - Resolve disputes among states.
 - Address economic instability and external threats.
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II. The Constitutional Convention

1. Secrecy and Debate

- Deliberations held in secret to promote open and honest discussions.
- James Madison's detailed notes later used to address public concerns.
- Presented to the states on **September 28, 1787**.

2. Federalist and Anti-Federalist Perspectives

- **Federalists:**
 - Advocated for a limited, defined central government.
 - Promoted ratification through the **Federalist Papers** (Madison, Hamilton, Jay).
 - **Anti-Federalists:**
 - Wanted guarantees to limit central authority further.
 - Emphasized the need for a **Bill of Rights**.
 - Common ground:
 - Agreement on creating a constitution for a limited federal government.
 - Disagreement on methods to secure state and individual freedoms.
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III. The Bill of Rights Debate

1. Anti-Federalist Concerns

- Feared the absence of a Declaration of Rights at the federal level.
- Believed a Bill of Rights was essential to:
 - Limit government power.
 - Protect individual liberties.

2. Resolution

- Agreement to add a Bill of Rights after ratification.
 - Ensured the Constitution's acceptance in states wary of federal overreach.
 - The Bill of Rights later reinforced constitutional principles without altering its core structure.
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IV. Ratification Process

1. State Ratification Timeline

- **Delaware:** First state to ratify (**December 7, 1787**).
- **New Hampshire:** Ninth state to ratify (**June 21, 1788**), making the Constitution binding.
- **Rhode Island:** Last to ratify due to concerns over sovereignty.

2. Constitutional Framework

- Article VI, Clause 2: Constitution as the supreme law of the land.
 - Federalism: States retain significant power while the federal government operates within enumerated limits.
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V. The Constitution's Design

1. A Constitutional Republic, Not a Democracy

- Republic based on representation and rule of law.
- Contrast with democracy (majority rule) that could enable injustices like slavery.
- All states required to be constitutional republics.

2. Three Branches of Government

- **Legislative:** Bicameral Congress (House and Senate) defined in Article I.
 - **Executive:** Limited powers of the President outlined in Article II.
 - **Judiciary:** Least powerful branch under Article III.
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VI. Constitutional Amendments

1. Article V: Process for future amendments.

- Amendments must adhere to the outlined procedures to be valid.
 - Safeguards the integrity and intent of the Constitution.
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VII. Key Takeaways

1. Balance of Power

- Federal government: Limited and defined by enumerated powers.
- States: Retain significant autonomy and act as checks on federal overreach.

2. The Tenth Amendment

- Powers not delegated to the federal government are reserved for states and the people.

3. Legacy

- The Constitution established a framework for a functional and balanced government.
 - Federalist and Anti-Federalist debates ensured protections for both state and individual rights.
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Multiple Choice Questions

1. What was one of the main financial problems under the Articles of Confederation?
 - a) Excessive taxation on the states
 - b) No mechanism to collect federal revenue
 - c) Federal overreach in state taxation
 - d) Overproduction of currency
2. How was the census used under the new Constitution?
 - a) To assign military drafts
 - b) To determine state representation and federal debt allocation
 - c) To set state boundaries
 - d) To calculate federal tax rates
3. Why were the debates at the Constitutional Convention held in secret?
 - a) To avoid public criticism
 - b) To protect against foreign spies
 - c) To allow free and open discussion among delegates
 - d) To prevent Anti-Federalists from disrupting the process
4. Which documents were written to address Anti-Federalist concerns about the Constitution?
 - a) The Declaration of Independence
 - b) The Federalist Papers
 - c) The Articles of Confederation
 - d) The Bill of Rights
5. What was a primary concern of the Anti-Federalists?
 - a) The lack of a Bill of Rights in the original Constitution
 - b) The establishment of a monarchy
 - c) Excessive power given to the states
 - d) Unregulated interstate commerce
6. Which state was the first to ratify the Constitution?
 - a) Virginia
 - b) Pennsylvania
 - c) Delaware
 - d) Rhode Island
7. How many states needed to ratify the Constitution for it to become binding?
 - a) All 13 states
 - b) 7 states
 - c) 9 states
 - d) 10 states
8. What was the purpose of the Bill of Rights?
 - a) To amend the flaws in the Constitution
 - b) To limit state powers
 - c) To enumerate the rights of individuals and limit federal power
 - d) To create a stronger executive branch
9. According to the Federalists, what was the intent of the central government under the Constitution?
 - a) To have general and unlimited powers
 - b) To be a limited government with enumerated powers
 - c) To consolidate all state powers
 - d) To operate as a monarchy

10. What does Article VI, Clause 2 of the Constitution establish?
- The process for ratifying amendments
 - The Constitution as the supreme law of the land
 - The powers of the judiciary
 - The rules for federal taxation
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Answer Key

- b) No mechanism to collect federal revenue
- b) To determine state representation and federal debt allocation
- c) To allow free and open discussion among delegates
- b) The Federalist Papers
- a) The lack of a Bill of Rights in the original Constitution
- c) Delaware
- c) 9 states
- c) To enumerate the rights of individuals and limit federal power
- b) To be a limited government with enumerated powers
- b) The Constitution as the supreme law of the land

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think it was important to assign federal debt and representation based on state population? How do you think this system helped or hurt the smaller states?
- The debates at the Constitutional Convention were held in secret. Do you think this was the right decision? Why or why not?
- What do you think were the most significant differences between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists? Which side's arguments make more sense to you and why?
- The Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution after much debate. Why do you think some people believed it was necessary, and others thought it wasn't?
- The Constitution established a system of checks and balances between the three branches of government. Can you think of a modern example where these checks and balances worked (or didn't work)? Why is this system important?