

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Understanding the Federalists and Anti-federalists

The anti-federalists were a group of statesmen that took issue with parts of the Constitution and refused to ratify it until their concerns were addressed. Read the following excerpts from their writing to learn a few of their main concerns.

Anti-Federalist #46

My object is to consider that undefined, unbounded and immense power which is comprised in the following clause—“And to make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the foregoing powers, and all other powers vested by this constitution in the government of the United States; or in any department or offices thereof.” Under such a clause as this, can anything be said to be reserved and kept back from Congress?... Where then is the restraint? How are Congress bound down to the powers expressly given? ... In giving such immense, such unlimited powers, was there no necessity of a Bill of Rights, to secure to the people their liberties? Is it not evident that we are left wholly dependent on the wisdom and virtue of the men who shall from time to time be the members of Congress? And who shall be able to say seven years hence, the members of Congress will be wise and good men, or of the contrary character?

Anti-Federalist #84

For [the Constitution] being a plan of government received and ratified by the whole people, all other forms which are in existence at the time of its adoption, must yield to it. . . . Ought not a government, vested with such extensive and indefinite authority, to have been restricted by a declaration of rights? It certainly ought. So clear a point is this, that I cannot help suspecting that persons who attempt to persuade people that such reservations were less necessary under this Constitution than under those of the States, are wilfully endeavoring to deceive, and to lead you into an absolute state of vassalage.

1. What is the anti-federalists' main concern with the Constitution?

2. How do they propose to solve that concern?

