

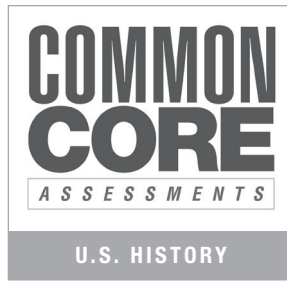
U.S. HISTORY

# Writing the Constitution

# COMMON CORE

*A S S E S S M E N T S*

**MindSparks**  
CHALLENGING STUDENTS TO THINK HISTORICALLY



# Writing the Constitution

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# Teacher Introduction

These Common Core History Assessments have been designed to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they learn about the Colonial era. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

Similar sets of assessments are available (or planned) for each unit in a typical American history class.

## ★ *Historical Thinking and the Challenge of the Common Core*

This set includes nine assessments aligned with the first nine Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standards. We have left out the tenth Common Core History/Social Studies Reading standard, which does not lend itself to assessments of the sort provided here. The set also includes two writing tasks aligned with two key Common Core History/Social Studies Writing Standards.

These Common Core standards challenge history teachers to develop in students the complex literacy skills they need in today's world and the ability to master the unique demands of working with historical primary and secondary source texts. The Common Core standards are supportive of the best practices in teaching historical thinking. Such practices include close reading, attending to a source's point of view and purpose, corroborating sources, and placing sources in their historical context. These are the skills needed to make history less about rote learning and more about an active effort to investigate and interpret the past.

These assessments are also useful in many ways for ELA teachers. They assess many of the skills specified in the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards, which put a good deal of emphasis on the reading of informational texts. The Anchor Standards form the basis for all of the various Common Core standards for English Language Arts.

## ★ *What Are These Assessments Like?*

- *A group of nine reading skills assessments and two writing tasks for each major era of American History*

Each reading skills assessment is based on one of the key Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standards. Two writing tasks are based on the first two College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing, which are the basis for the Common Core History/Social Studies Writing Standards. The two writing standards focus on writing arguments to support claims and writing informative/explanatory texts.

- *Based on primary or secondary sources*

In most cases, one primary source is used. In some cases, an assessment is based on more than one primary source or on a primary and a secondary source. The sources are brief. In most cases, texts have been slightly altered to improve readability, but without changing meaning or tone.

- *Brief tasks promoting historical literacy*

For each assessment, students write brief answers to one or two questions. The questions are not tests of simple factual recall. They assess the student's mastery of the skills addressed by that assessment's Common Core History/Social Studies Standard.

- *Two versions of each of the nine reading standards assessments*

A *Basic* and an *Advanced* version of each assessment are provided. The *Basic* Assessment addresses the Common Core Standard for grades 6–8. The *Advanced* Assessment is based on the Common Core Standard for grades 9–10 and grades 11–12 combined. Each version uses the same source or sources. In some cases, sources have been somewhat shortened for the *Basic* version.

- *Easy to use both as learning and assessment tools*

These assessments do not take valuable time away from instruction. The primary sources and background information on each source make them useful mini-lessons as well as tools to assess student historical thinking skills. The sources all deal with themes and trends normally covered when teaching the relevant historical era.

- *Evaluating student responses*

Brief but specific suggestions are provided defining acceptable and best responses to each question asked in the assessment. The suggestions are meant to aid in evaluating students, but even more importantly they are a way for teachers to help students better understand and master the skills on which the assessment is focused.

# Writing the Constitution Assessment 1

Basic Level

## Teacher Instructions

Based on Common Core Reading Standard 1 for grades 6–8

### ★ Key Ideas and Details

1. (6–8) Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

### ★ Using this Assessment

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*Writing the Constitution: Assessment 1* is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 1 for grades 6–8. It asks students to cite specific textual evidence from two documents. It also challenges students to adapt that reading skill to the unique demands of thinking historically as they carefully interpret textual evidence in a primary source from a time in the past and a secondary source account of that same time in the past.

### ★ Evaluating Student Responses to this Assessment

Acceptable responses to the first assessment question should refer to specific details such as Congress's inability to tax the states, its inability to force them to tax themselves and grant Congress funds, its failure to pay creditors and the mistrust that will instill in other potential creditors, etc. As in such phrases as: "Those who lent us money... are defrauded"; "I cannot see that a single state has raised the taxes"; "Confederation has been given no power to compel them to obey." Acceptable responses to the second assessment question should note some of the details in Document 2 that repeat, clarify, or add to Document 1's description of the weaknesses in the Articles. Best responses will also use the biographical details about Morris to help explain his own deep concern about the financial problems Congress faced under the Articles.

## Writing the Constitution: Assessment 1

**Directions:** This exercise asks you to read a primary source document and a secondary source document carefully and answer questions about specific details in the documents. In order to better understand the documents, read and make use of the source information located just below each document. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

**CCS Standard 1:** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

### Document 1: A Primary Source

*Since we have not provided funding for our debts, the interest on them cannot be paid. Those who lent us money and trusted us in the hour of distress are defrauded. To expect that under such circumstances others will trust the government would be folly. To expect that foreigners will trust a government which has no credit with its own citizens must be madness. The whole cost therefore of the war must be borne in the present moment.*

*I wish to God that I could say the government had even the appearance of general vigor and exertion. But the truth is very different. The United States called for eight million of dollars early last November. Of that, the first quarterly payment was to have been made on next April one. But I cannot see that a single state has raised the taxes.*

*Whenever the several states are so negligent, the Confederation has been given no power to compel them to obey. While it confers on congress the privilege of asking everything, it assures each state the right of granting nothing. Since the Congress cannot compel the states to make a grant of money, they must at least take care to prevent the states from making an unnecessary expenditure of those moneys which are in our possession.*

**Source Information:** This document is part of a letter dated February 11, 1782, from Robert Morris to John Hanson, President of the Congress of Confederation. This Congress was the governing body for the United States under the Articles of Confederation, from 1781 to 1789. At the time Morris wrote this letter, he was the nation's Superintendent of Finance. In this passage, Morris discusses problems he sees arising out of weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation. Adapted from the version of the letter on the internet at the National Humanities Center Resource Toolbox: Making the Revolution: America, 1763–1791.

Source: "Founders on the Defects of the Articles of Confederation." *National Humanities Center*. Accessed August 4, 2013. <http://www.nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/makingrev/constitution/text1/foundersdefectsarticlesconf.pdf>.

**Document 2: A Secondary Source**

By 1786, many of the leaders of the American Revolution, including George Washington, were on the edge of despair. One of those most in despair was Robert Morris. Born in England, he came to America at age 13. He became a very wealthy Philadelphia merchant and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. As a delegate to the Continental Congress, he was in charge of financing the Continental Army. In carrying out his duties, he often spent large sums of his own money. Under the Articles of Confederation, Morris served as Superintendent of Finance. In this office, he often spent his own money to support the government, all the while pressuring the states to contribute their full share. He was therefore aware of the weakness of the central government under the Articles of Confederation, the first constitutional framework for the United States. Under the Articles, each state remained sovereign. Congress had no power to tax. It could ask the states for funds, but could not force them to provide the money. It could not prevent the states from regulating commerce or printing their own money. It had no executive branch able to enforce its own laws. And when Shays Rebellion broke out in western Massachusetts, Congress could not organize a military force of its own to restore order. In this context, it is understandable that Morris became an especially fierce advocate for the stronger federal government created by the Constitution of 1787.

**Source Information:** This document is a secondary source account about Robert Morris and the Articles of Confederation. A secondary source is an account of past events written later by someone who did not experience or take part in those events. As a secondary source, this document is not evidence from the time of the Articles of Confederation. It is a later account by someone writing about that time. This particular historical account was written in 2013 specifically for use as part of this activity.

**Assessment Questions**

1. Robert Morris's central idea is that Congress under the Articles of Confederation is too weak. Underline or highlight at least three sentences or parts of sentences in which Morris details the harm he thinks this weakness causes. Explain these in your own words.
2. What details in Document 2 help you to better understand why Morris is as upset as he is about the Articles of Confederation?



# Writing the Constitution Assessment 1

*Advanced Level*

## Teacher Instructions

*Based on Common Core Reading Standard 1 for grades 9–12*

### ★ *Key Ideas and Details*

- 1. (9–10)** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- 1. (11–12)** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

### ★ *Using this Assessment*

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*Writing the Constitution: Assessment 1* is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 1 for grades 9–10 and 11–12 combined. It asks students to cite specific textual evidence from two documents. It also challenges students to adapt that reading skill to the unique demands of thinking historically as they carefully interpret textual evidence in a primary source from a time in the past and a secondary source account of that same time in the past. As called for by the Common Core standard for grades 11–12, it also prompts students to relate the textual details to “an understanding of the text as a whole.”

### ★ *Evaluating Student Responses to this Assessment*

Acceptable responses to the first assessment question should refer to specific details such as Congress's inability to tax the states, its inability to force them to tax themselves and grant Congress funds, its failure to pay creditors and the mistrust that will instill in other potential creditors, etc. Document 2 repeats many specifics mentioned in Document 1, but it also adds details about the central government's lack of an executive branch, its inability to raise a military force to restore order after Shays' Rebellion, the states' ability to regulate commerce on their own, etc. Acceptable responses to the second assessment question should note that Morris's expertise as a wealthy merchant enabled him to better understand the nation's financial issues under the Articles. His use of his own personal wealth to support the Continental Army and the Confederation Congress adds a personal motive to the depth of his concern about the financial problems Congress faced.

## Writing the Constitution: Assessment 1

**Directions:** This exercise asks you to read a primary source document and a secondary source document carefully and answer questions about specific details in the documents. In order to better understand the documents, read and make use of the source information located just below each document. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

**CCS Standard 1: (9–10)** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information. **(11–12)** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

### Document 1: A Primary Source

*Since we have not provided funding for our debts, the interest on them cannot be paid. Those who lent us money and trusted us in the hour of distress are defrauded. To expect that under such circumstances others will trust the government would be folly. To expect that foreigners will trust a government which has no credit with its own citizens must be madness. The whole cost therefore of the war must be borne in the present moment.*

*I wish to God that I could say the government had even the appearance of general vigor and exertion. But the truth is very different. The United States called for eight million of dollars early last November. Of that, the first quarterly payment was to have been made on next April one. But I cannot see that a single state has raised the taxes.*

*Whenever the several states are so negligent, the Confederation has been given no power to compel them to obey. While it confers on congress the privilege of asking everything, it assures each state the right of granting nothing. Since the Congress cannot compel the states to make a grant of money, they must at least take care to prevent the states from making an unnecessary expenditure of those mon-  
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# Student Handout

## Document 2: A Secondary Source

By 1786, many of the leaders of the American Revolution, including George Washington, were on the edge of despair. One of those most in despair was Robert Morris. Born in England, he came to America at age 13. He became a very wealthy Philadelphia merchant and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. As a delegate to the Continental Congress, he was in charge of financing the Continental Army. In carrying out his duties, he often spent large sums of his own money. Under the Articles of Confederation, Morris served as Superintendent of Finance. In this office, he often spent his own money to support the government, all the while pressuring the states to contribute their full share. He was therefore aware of the weakness of the central government under the Articles of Confederation, the first constitutional framework for the United States. Under the Articles, each state remained sovereign. Congress had no power to tax. It could ask the states for funds, but could not force them to provide the money. It could not prevent the states from regulating commerce or printing their own money. It had no executive branch able to enforce its own laws. And when Shays' Rebellion broke out in western Massachusetts, Congress could not organize a military force of its own to restore order. In this context, it is understandable that Morris became an especially fierce advocate for the stronger federal government created by the Constitution of 1787.

**Source Information:** This document is a secondary source account about Robert Morris and the Articles of Confederation. A secondary source is an account of past events written later by someone who did not experience or take part in those events. As a secondary source, this document is not evidence from the time of the Articles of Confederation. It is a later account by someone writing about that time. This particular historical account was written in 2013 specifically for use as part of this activity.

## Assessment Questions

1. Compare Documents 1 and 2. Describe some details about the Articles that are in both Document 1, as well as other details in Document 2 that add to Document 1's description.
2. In Document 2, what details about Morris himself help you to understand his point of view about the Articles?

# Writing the Constitution Assessment 2

Basic Level

## Teacher Instructions

Based on Common Core Reading Standard 2 for grades 6–8

### ★ Key Ideas and Details

- 2. (6–8)** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

### ★ Using this Assessment

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*Writing the Constitution: Assessment 2* is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 2 for grades 6–8. It asks students to summarize the central ideas in a source from the text itself without imposing ideas or attitudes external to the text. This is not easy to do. This activity assesses the ability to read closely in order to build an overall understanding of the source out of the text itself.

### ★ Evaluating Student Responses to this Assessment

Acceptable responses to the first assessment question should see that Jefferson approves of rebellion as a way to signal to officials that real violations of rights need to be addressed. Best responses will note that Jefferson does not say rebellion is always good or that those rebelling should not be punished. He simply wants officials to treat rebellions with some understanding and moderation. Answers to the second assessment question should note that Jefferson makes two points about the rebellion: It arose out of real grievances, but it did lead to “unjustifiable acts.” These two things mean officials should punish the uprising, but in a moderate, even hopeful way.

## Writing the Constitution: Assessment 2

**Directions:** This exercise asks you to read one primary source document carefully and answer questions about specific details in the document. In order to better understand the document as a historical primary source, read and make use of the source information located just below the document itself. When you have studied the document and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

**CCS Standard 2:** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

### Primary Source Document

*I am anxious to learn your sentiments on the late troubles in the Eastern states. So far as I have yet seen, they do not appear to threaten serious consequences. Those states have suffered by the stoppage of their commerce, which has not yet found other markets. This causes money to be scarce and makes the people uneasy. This uneasiness has produced absolutely unjustifiable acts. However, I hope these acts will not provoke severe punishment from the governments.... Those who are more fearful than hopeful may fear too much from these sorts of disorder. They may conclude too hastily that nature makes men unsuited for any other government but that of force. This is a conclusion not founded in truth nor experience....*

*I hold it that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical. Unsuccessful rebellions indeed generally reveal real violations of the rights of the people. This truth should render honest republican governors so mild in their punishment of rebellions as not to discourage them too much. It is a medicine necessary for the sound health of government.*

**Source Information:** In the 1780s, the Massachusetts legislature passed higher taxes to pay off the state's Revolutionary War debt. At the same time, a poor economy was hitting indebted farmers hard. Creditors who loaned them money were suing thousands of them. Courts were selling off the farmers' lands to pay their debts. In 1786, Revolutionary War soldier Daniel Shays led an uprising of angry farmers seeking to shut down those courts. Fears of anarchy led to calls for a much stronger federal government. Thomas Jefferson responded to Shays' Rebellion in a different way. This document is adapted from part of a January 30, 1787, letter Jefferson wrote from Paris, France, to James Madison. Adapted from the version of the letter on the internet at the National Humanities Center Resource Toolbox: Making the Revolution: America, 1763–1791.

Source: "Founders on the Defects of the Articles of Confederation." *National Humanities Center*. Accessed August 4, 2013. <http://www.nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/makingrev/constitution/text1/foundersdefectsarticlesconf.pdf>.



## **Assessment Questions**

1. Jefferson's central idea in this passage deals with the idea of rebellion. At one point, he says, "a little rebellion now and then is a good thing." Based on details in the letter, explain why he thinks rebellion may be a good thing.
2. How does this central idea about rebellion help explain Jefferson's attitude about Shays' Rebellion, specifically, as expressed in the first paragraph?

# Writing the Constitution Assessment 2

*Advanced Level*

## Teacher Instructions

*Based on Common Core Reading Standard 2 for grades 9–12*

### ★ *Key Ideas and Details*

- 2. (9–10)** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
- 2. (11–12)** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

### ★ *Using this Assessment*

These Common Core History Assessments are intended to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they study and master the content covered in their American History coursework. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

*Writing the Constitution: Assessment 2* is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 2 for grades 9–10 and grades 11–12 combined. It asks students to summarize the central ideas in a source from the text itself without imposing ideas or attitudes external to the text. This is not easy to do. Moreover, when it comes to the unique demands of thinking historically, we do also want students to use knowledge of historical context to help them interpret sources. But that sort of contextualizing also demands that students suspend their own present-day ideas while studying a source. This activity assesses the ability to read closely in order to build an overall understanding of the source out of the text itself.

### ★ *Evaluating Student Responses to this Assessment*

Acceptable responses to the first assessment question should choose phrases or sentences from the last part of the passage—for example, Jefferson's statement that "a little rebellion now and then is a good thing," or that public turbulence is an evil that can be "productive of good." They should note that Jefferson is not saying rebellion is always a good thing, but that officials should treat it with moderation and learn from the message it sends. Acceptable answers to the second assessment question may vary. In general, answers should note that Jefferson views Shays' Rebellion as a response to real grievances, even though he still thinks it led to "unjustifiable acts." His three types of government help reinforce the point that rebellions are a small price to pay for the liberty and happiness a more republican form of government provides.

## Writing the Constitution: Assessment 2

**Directions:** This exercise asks you to read one primary source document carefully and answer questions about specific details in the document. In order to better understand the document as a historical primary source, read and make use of the source information located just below the document itself. When you have studied the document and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

**CCS Standard 2: (9–10)** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text. **(11–12)** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

### Primary Source Document

*I am anxious to learn your sentiments on the late troubles in the Eastern states. So far as I have yet seen, they do not appear to threaten serious consequences. Those states have suffered by the stoppage of their commerce, which has not yet found other markets. This causes money to be scarce and makes the people uneasy. This uneasiness has produced absolutely unjustifiable acts. However, I hope these acts will not provoke severe punishment from the governments.... Those who are more fearful than hopeful may fear too much from these sorts of disorder. They may conclude too hastily that nature makes men unsuited for any other government but that of force. This is a conclusion not founded in truth nor experience.*

*Societies exist under three distinct forms:*

- 1. Without government, as among our Indians.*
- 2. Under governments where the will of everyone has a just influence, as is the case in England in a slight degree, and in our states in a great one.*
- 3. Under governments of force: as is the case in all other monarchies and in most of the other republics.*

*To have an idea of the curse of existence under governments in number 3, they must be seen. They are governments of wolves over sheep. Governments in my number 1 may be the best, but I believe they are inconsistent with any large population. My number 2 has a great deal of good in it. Under such government, the mass of mankind enjoys a wonderful degree of liberty and happiness. It has its evils too, the principal of which is the turbulence to which it is subject. But even this evil is productive of good.... I hold it that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical. Unsuccessful rebellions indeed generally reveal real violations of the rights of the people. This truth should render honest republican governors so mild in their punishment of rebellions as not to discourage them too much. It is a medicine necessary for the sound health of government.*

**Source Information:** In the 1780s, the Massachusetts legislature passed higher taxes to pay off the state's Revolutionary War debt. At the same time, a poor economy was hitting indebted farmers hard. Creditors who loaned them money were suing thousands of them. Courts were selling off the farmers' lands to pay their debts. In 1786, Revolutionary War soldier Daniel Shays led an uprising of angry farmers seeking to shut down those courts. Fears of anarchy led to calls for a much stronger federal government. Thomas Jefferson responded to Shays' Rebellion in a different way. This document is adapted from part of a January 30, 1787, letter Jefferson wrote from Paris, France, to James Madison. Adapted from the version of the letter on the internet at the National Humanities Center Resource Toolbox: Making the Revolution: America, 1763–1791.

Source: "Founders on the Defects of the Articles of Confederation." *National Humanities Center*. Accessed August 4, 2013. <http://www.nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/makingrev/constitution/text1/foundersdefectsarticlesconf.pdf>.

# Student Handout

## Assessment Questions

1. Underline or highlight a sentence that you think best sums up Jefferson's central idea in this letter. Explain your choice.
2. In the first part of the letter, Jefferson comments on Shays' Rebellion in Massachusetts. Then he expresses some thoughts about three types of government. Briefly explain how each of these two parts of the letter help to develop or support Jefferson's central idea.

# Writing the Constitution Assessment 3

Basic Level

## Teacher Instructions

Based on Common Core Reading Standard 3 for grades 6–8

### ★ Key Ideas and Details

- 3. (6–8)** Identify key steps in a text’s description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).

### ★ Using this Assessment

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*Writing the Constitution: Assessment 3* is designed to measure students’ ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 3 for grades 6–8. It asks students to follow the way a set of ideas or sequence of events in a text interact together to describe a process or develop a central idea. This activity assesses the student’s ability to read closely in order to understand various connections between each detail and the next in a text.

### ★ Evaluating Student Responses to this Assessment

Acceptable responses to the first assessment question should describe details in sequence accurately, as for example: 1) While Holland was with General Lincoln’s troops, he first heard that Shays was hoping to seize weapons at the U.S. Arsenal in Springfield. 2) Lincoln’s forces halted at Brookfield for the night. 3) The next day, while still marching with Lincoln, Holland heard that a battle had taken place in Springfield. 4) Soon he learned more from Shays’ retreating forces and saw them carrying out two dead men. Responses to the second assessment question should add the following details: At Springfield, Holland learned from General Shepard that Shays had advanced on the Arsenal even after being warned that he would be fired on. Shepard fired a warning cannon shot. Shays continued to advance. Shepard then fired a cannon into Shays’ force and scattered it.



## Writing the Constitution: Assessment 3

**Directions:** This exercise asks you to read one primary source document carefully and answer a question about specific details in the document. In order to better understand the document as a historical primary source, read and make use of the source information just below the document itself. When you have studied the document and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

**CCS Standard 3:** Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).

### Primary Source Document

*News arrived that Shays with his division were on their march to Springfield to get possession of the Continental stores (arms, ammunition, etc.) deposited in the Arsenal there. On being informed of Shays movements, General Lincoln marched immediately to Brookfield where we halted for the night. On the next day we continued our march to Springfield. Whilst on our march sometime before noon, the news arrived that Shays had reached Springfield and had an engagement with General Shepard who, with a detachment of Government troops, was there guarding the United States property in the Arsenal. We had not yet heard the particulars of the battle, but we soon met some stragglers from Shays retreating army, and among other things a span of horses and sleigh with two of their dead men in it. These stragglers informed us of the fate of the battle ...*

*It was very unpleasant to me to find that one of the dead men brought from the field of battle (if so it may be called) whose name was Spicer had served three years in the same regiment with me in the late Revolutionary War and was a townsman of mine.*

*On our arriving at Springfield we found Shays had made a rapid retreat as was reported. General Shepard gave us the following account of the transaction. Shays with his Army were found to be marching rapidly over the Plains to Springfield Hill where the Continental stores were deposited and guarded by General Shepard. He immediately sent one of his camp assistants with a flag to inform Shays that if he advanced any further he should immediately fire upon him. Shays returned no answer but continued his March more rapidly. Shepard ordered his field pieces to be loaded immediately some with balls and grape shot, for the front guard had now advanced within gunshot. As they continued to advance, he ordered one of the pieces which was loaded with round shot to fire on them, but to elevate the piece in such a manner as to go over their heads. This was done immediately. When they then quickened their march instead of halting, he then ordered another piece to be well loaded and to take as good aim as possible at the main body, which was immediately done, the consequence of which was a very rapid and disorderly retreat and three men left dead on the ground and one mortally wounded.*

**Source Information:** In 1786, Revolutionary War soldier Daniel Shays led an uprising of angry and indebted farmers in Massachusetts. The rebellion's high point was a bloody clash with General William Shepard's Massachusetts state militia at the U.S. Arsenal in Springfield on January 25, 1787. Captain Park Holland fought against Shays. He was with Benjamin Lincoln's forces and was not in Springfield on January 25. Here he relates what he learned of that battle at the time. This passage is adapted from part of a longer account Holland wrote in 1834.

Source: Holland, Park. "Excerpts from the Journal of Park Holland." *Shays' Rebellion and the Making of a Nation*. Accessed August 4, 2013. [http://shaysrebellion.stcc.edu/shaysapp/artifact\\_trans.do?shortName=journal\\_holland&page=p004](http://shaysrebellion.stcc.edu/shaysapp/artifact_trans.do?shortName=journal_holland&page=p004).

### **Assessment Questions**

1. Briefly explain the following: When and where did Holland first learn what Shays was trying to do? When and where did he learn of General Shepard's fight with Shays' forces? What did he learn about this fight *before* he arrived in Springfield?

2. What important details about the battle did he learn from General Shepard's account?

# Writing the Constitution Assessment 3

*Advanced Level*

## Teacher Instructions

*Based on Common Core Reading Standard 3 for grades 9–12*

### ★ *Key Ideas and Details*

- 3. (9–10)** Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.
- 3. (11–12)** Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

### ★ *Using this Assessment*

These Common Core History Assessments are intended to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they study and master the content covered in their American History coursework. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

*Writing the Constitution: Assessment 3* is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 3 for grades 9–10 and grades 11–12 combined. It asks students to follow the way a set of ideas or sequence of events in a text interact together to describe a process or develop a central idea. The activity assesses the student's ability to read closely in order to understand various connections between each detail and the next in a complex text. It also asks them to evaluate the explanation offered in the passage and consider how adequate it is.

### ★ *Evaluating Student Responses to this Assessment*

Acceptable responses to the first assessment question should describe details in sequence accurately, as for example: While Holland was with General Lincoln's troops, he first heard that Shays was hoping to seize weapons at the U.S. Arsenal in Springfield. The next day, while still marching, Holland heard that a battle had taken place in Springfield and soon learned more from Shays' retreating forces. He saw them carrying out two dead men. At Springfield, Holland learned many details from General Shepard, such as that Shays had advanced on the Arsenal. He was warned, and a warning cannon shot was fired over him. When he continued to advance, Shepard fired a cannon again, this time into Shays' force, which scattered. Acceptable responses to the second assessment question may vary. Some may credit the account as highly reliable given that Holland did get eyewitness accounts from both sides and was on the scene just after the battle. Others may wonder at the lack of any description of the battle by Shays' men and by the fact that Holland seems not to have been sympathetic to the rebels.

## Writing the Constitution: Assessment 3

**Directions:** This exercise asks you to read one primary source document carefully and answer questions about specific details in the document. In order to better understand the document as a historical primary source, read and make use of the source information just below the document itself. When you have studied the document and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

**CCS Standard 3: (9–10)** Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them. **(11–12)** Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

### Primary Source Document

*News arrived that Shays with his division were on their march to Springfield to get possession of the Continental stores (arms, ammunition, etc.) deposited in the Arsenal there. On being informed of Shays movements, General Lincoln marched immediately to Brookfield where we halted for the night. On the next day we continued our march to Springfield. Whilst on our march sometime before noon, the news arrived that Shays had reached Springfield and had an engagement with General Shepard who, with a detachment of Government troops, was there guarding the United States property in the Arsenal. We had not yet heard the particulars of the battle, but we soon met some stragglers from Shays retreating army, and among other things a span of horses and sleigh with two of their dead men in it. These stragglers informed us of the fate of the battle ...*

*It was very unpleasant to me to find that one of the dead men brought from the field of battle (if so it may be called) whose name was Spicer had served three years in the same regiment with me in the late Revolutionary War and was a townsman of mine.*

*On our arriving at Springfield we found Shays had made a rapid retreat as was reported. General Shepard gave us the following account of the transaction. Shays with his Army were found to be marching rapidly over the Plains to Springfield Hill where the Continental stores were deposited and guarded by General Shepard. He immediately sent one of his camp assistants with a flag to inform Shays that if he advanced any further he should immediately fire upon him. He returned no answer but continued his March more rapidly. Shepard ordered his field pieces to be loaded immediately some with balls and grape shot, for the front guard had now advanced within gunshot. As they continued to advance, he ordered one of the pieces which was loaded with round shot to fire on them, but to elevate the piece in such a manner as to go over their heads. This was done immediately. When they then quickened their march instead of halting, he then ordered another piece to be well loaded and to take as good aim as possible at the main body, which was immediately done, the consequence of which was a very rapid and disorderly retreat and three men left dead on the ground and one mortally wounded.*

**Source Information:** In 1786, Revolutionary War soldier Daniel Shays led an uprising of angry and indebted farmers in Massachusetts. The rebellion's high point was a bloody clash with General William Shepard's Massachusetts state militia at the U.S. Arsenal in Springfield on January 25, 1787. Captain Park Holland fought against Shays. He was with Benjamin Lincoln's forces and was not in Springfield on January 25. Here he relates what he learned of that battle at the time. This passage is adapted from part of a longer account Holland wrote in 1834.

Source: Holland, Park. "Excerpts from the Journal of Park Holland." *Shays' Rebellion and the Making of a Nation*. Accessed August 4, 2013. [http://shaysrebellion.stcc.edu/shaysapp/artifact\\_trans.do?shortName=journal\\_holland&page=p004](http://shaysrebellion.stcc.edu/shaysapp/artifact_trans.do?shortName=journal_holland&page=p004).

# *Student Handout*

## **Assessment Questions**

1. Briefly summarize in order what Holland learned about Shays' Springfield battle from rumor, from the Shays' rebels and from General Shepard.
2. What gives you confidence that this account is reliable, and is there anything about it that leads you to question its reliability?



# Writing the Constitution Assessment 4

Basic Level

## Teacher Instructions

Based on Common Core Reading Standard 4 for grades 6–8

### ★ *Craft and Structure*

- 4. (6–8)** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

### ★ *Using this Assessment*

These Common Core History Assessments are intended to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they study and master the content covered in their American History coursework. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

*Writing the Constitution: Assessment 4* is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 4 for grades 6–8. It asks students to recognize that words and phrases must be understood in relation to the meaning of the text as a whole. In seeking to understand historical sources, this is an especially important challenge. Words and phrases need to be understood as they were used within their historical context. This activity assesses the student's ability to read closely in order to understand terms in these ways.

### ★ *Evaluating Student Responses to this Assessment*

Acceptable responses to the first assessment question should demonstrate that students understand the underlined phrases themselves. Good responses to the second assessment question will rewrite the paragraph and its phrases while maintaining their meaning in context. Here is one possible model of such a paragraph:

*Due to a lack of cash in the state, we petitioners cannot pay debts in suits against us. We could cover these debts if our property were accepted in payment. Instead it is simply taken from us. Many of us are in jail, our debts are unpaid, and our property is losing value. This only harms us and our creditors. Therefore, please pass an act allowing us to use our personal property and real estate to pay our debts. If parties in a suit cannot agree, let the towns choose men to assess the value of the property involved. They can decide what part of it to assess in a way that is fair to both to creditor and debtor.*

## Writing the Constitution: Assessment 4

**Directions:** This exercise asks you to read one primary source document carefully and answer questions about specific details in the document. In order to better understand the document as a historical primary source, read and make use of the source information just below the document itself. When you have studied the document and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

**CCS Standard 4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

### Primary Source Document

*We petitioners of the town assembly show that from the extreme scarcity of cash in the interior parts of this Commonwealth we are reduced to the most distressing situation by suits being daily begun against the inhabitants of this as well as many other parts of this Commonwealth. These inhabitants have sufficient property to discharge their debts were that property to be accepted in payment for the same. But as the situation of our affairs are at present, our property is torn from us.*

*Our jails are filled and still our debts are not paid. But our property is daily diminishing, greatly to the injury of the debtors and in many cases of little advantage of the creditors as well. Therefore we beg your honors would take our situation into consideration and do something for our relief by passing an act making all real and personal estate a lawful tender to satisfy debt payment, with the appraisal of the property done by men chosen by the towns for that purpose, when the parties cannot agree upon the choice of such persons. These persons shall also determine what part of the debtor's estate shall be reappraised for the creditor most to his advantage and the least detrimental to the debtor*

*Or devise some other method to relieve the distresses of your petitioners as you in your wisdom shall think best.*

**Source Information:** In the years leading up to Shays' Rebellion, Massachusetts passed higher poll and real estate taxes to pay off the state's war debt. The taxes had to be paid in gold and silver, rather than goods, produce, or paper currency. The slow economy and a shortage of gold and silver currency made this very difficult. Creditors desperately tried to collect on all private debts, leading to thousands of lawsuits. A petition from the town of Athol to the Legislature in May, 1786, begged the Legislature to provide relief. This document is adapted from part of that petition.

Source: Goddard, Simon, John Foster, Aaron Oliver, Stephen Earls, and Dan Felton. "Petition to the General Court from the Town of Athol - text only." *Shays' Rebellion and the Making of a Nation*. Accessed September 4, 2013.  
[http://shaysrebellion.stcc.edu/shaysapp/artifact\\_trans.do?shortName=petition\\_athol&page=.](http://shaysrebellion.stcc.edu/shaysapp/artifact_trans.do?shortName=petition_athol&page=)



# Writing the Constitution Assessment 4

*Advanced Level*

## Teacher Instructions

*Based on Common Core Reading Standard 4 for grades 9–12*

### ★ *Craft and Structure*

- 4. **(9–10)** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.
- 4. **(11–12)** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines *faction* in *Federalist* No. 10).

### ★ *Using this Assessment*

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*Writing the Constitution: Assessment 4* is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 4 for grades 9–10 and grades 11–12 combined. It asks students to recognize that words and phrases must be understood in relation to the meaning of the text as a whole. In seeking to understand historical sources, this is an especially important challenge. Words and phrases need to be understood as they were used within their historical context. This activity assesses the student's ability to read closely in order to understand terms in these ways.

## ★ *Evaluating Student Responses to this Assessment*

Acceptable responses to the first assessment question will rewrite the paragraph and its phrases while maintaining their meaning in context. Here is one possible model of such a paragraph:

*Due to a lack of cash in the state, we petitioners cannot pay debts in suits against us. We could cover these debts if our property were accepted in payment. Instead it is simply taken from us. Many of us are in jail, our debts are unpaid, and our property is losing value. This only harms us and our creditors. Therefore, please pass an act allowing us to use our personal property and real estate to pay our debts. If parties in a suit cannot agree, let the towns choose men to assess the value of the property involved. They can decide what part of it to assess in a way that is fair to both to creditor and debtor.*

Responses to the second assessment question may vary, but they should note that these petitioners identify themselves as men with some property. The fact that they were able to borrow money suggests they had enough wealth to convince creditors to lend to them. On the other hand, they are clearly not wealthy enough to draw on cash reserves of their own.



## Writing the Constitution: Assessment 4

**Directions:** This exercise asks you to read one primary source document carefully and answer questions about specific details in the document. In order to better understand the document as a historical primary source, read and make use of the source information just below the document itself. When you have studied the document and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

**CCS Standard 4: (9–10)** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science. **(11–12)** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines *faction* in *Federalist* No. 10).

### Primary Source Document

*We petitioners of the town assembly show that from the extreme scarcity of cash in the interior parts of this Commonwealth we are reduced to the most distressing situation by suits being daily begun against the inhabitants of this as well as many other parts of this Commonwealth. These inhabitants have sufficient property to discharge their debts were that property to be accepted in payment for the same. But as the situation of our affairs are at present, our property is torn from us.*

*Our jails are filled and still our debts are not paid. But our property is daily diminishing, greatly to the injury of the debtors and in many cases of little advantage of the creditors as well. Therefore we beg your honors would take our situation into consideration and do something for our relief by passing an act making all real and personal estate a lawful tender to satisfy debt payment, with the appraisal of the property done by men chosen by the towns for that purpose, when the parties cannot agree upon the choice of such persons. These persons shall also determine what part of the debtor's estate shall be reappraised for the creditor most to his advantage and the least detrimental to the debtor*

*Or devise some other method to relieve the distresses of your petitioners as you in your wisdom shall think best.*

**Source Information:** In the years leading up to Shays' Rebellion, Massachusetts passed higher poll and real estate taxes to pay off the state's war debt. The taxes had to be paid in gold and silver, rather than goods, produce, or paper currency. The slow economy and a shortage of gold and silver currency made this very difficult. Creditors desperately tried to collect on all private debts, leading to thousands of lawsuits. A petition from the town of Athol to the Legislature in May, 1786, begged the Legislature to provide relief. This document is adapted from part of that petition.

Source: Goddard, Simon, John Foster, Aaron Oliver, Stephen Earls, and Dan Felton. "Petition to the General Court from the Town of Athol - text only." *Shays' Rebellion and the Making of a Nation*. Accessed September 4, 2013.  
[http://shaysrebellion.stcc.edu/shaysapp/artifact\\_trans.do?shortName=p petition\\_athol&page=.](http://shaysrebellion.stcc.edu/shaysapp/artifact_trans.do?shortName=p petition_athol&page=)



# Writing the Constitution Assessment 5

*Basic Level*

## Teacher Instructions

*Based on Common Core Reading Standard 5 for grades 6–8*

### ★ *Craft and Structure*

**5. (6–8)** Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).

### ★ *Using this Assessment*

These Common Core History Assessments are intended to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they study and master the content covered in their American History coursework. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

*Writing the Constitution: Assessment 5* is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 5 for grades 6–8. It asks students to pay attention to a text's "structure"—that is, to the overall pattern or organizational arrangement of its headings, sentences, paragraphs, stanzas, chapters, as well as its various stylistic features. These formal elements can contribute to a text's meanings in many ways. This activity assesses the student's ability to read closely in order to understand the impact of the way one historical primary source is structured to present its information.

### ★ *Evaluating Student Responses to this Assessment*

Acceptable responses to the first assessment question should sum up the writer's views of Federalists and Anti-Federalists as being either for or against the Constitution, no matter what. He then offers his own compromise view in favor of the Constitution if a bill of rights is added. As to the second assessment question, responses should note that its paragraph sequence is well designed to present a comparative problem. The first paragraph states the problem as the writer sees it, the next two compare two extreme views, and the last three paragraphs challenge those views by contrasting them with the author's own.

## Writing the Constitution: Assessment 5

**Directions:** This exercise asks you to read one primary source document carefully and answer questions about specific details in the document. In order to better understand the document as a historical primary source, read and make use of the source information located just below the document itself. When you have studied the document and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

**CCS Standard 5:** Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).

### Primary Source Document

*I find that all are clearly agreed in the truth of this position—that an energetic Federal Government is essential to our happiness and existence as a nation. The only thing, therefore, remaining to be decided is whether under this constitution our essential freedom can be maintained?*

*A hot-brained Federalist will tell you that the constitution must be adopted without limitations or reserve. I have known some to go so far as to call for tarring and feathering such as were of different sentiment.*

*The Antifederalists in general are more moderate but equally obstinate. Some of them would reject the whole constitution, purely because some few parts of it do not meet with their approval.*

*Persons of the above description are swayed by passions, not by reason. They should not be regarded by the honest and sensible part of the community.*

*I really think that if a bill of rights had accompanied our new constitution, little or no opposition would have been made to it. It may be true that it is defective, but none have yet been able to show that it is materially so. However, we have much reason to expect amendments, if necessary, from our representatives who will act under it in the first session of Congress.*

*Therefore, let those who call themselves Federalists lay aside a little of their arrogance. Let them unite with their brethren in recommending a bill of rights which is, in fact, the best security we can have against despotism. If they do this, I flatter myself that our state will not be the last that shall agree to this constitution.*

**Source Information:** The Constitutional Convention finished its work on September 17, 1787. After that, the states debated the proposed Constitution and organized ratification conventions to vote for or against it. This document is part of a letter about how best to debate the Constitution. It was signed by someone using the name “Medium,” and it appeared in *the Hampshire Chronicle*, Springfield, Massachusetts, December 25, 1787. Adapted from the version of the letter on the Internet at the National Humanities Center Resource Toolbox: Making the Revolution: America, 1763–1791.

Source: “On the Bill of Rights, 1787-1789.” *National Humanities Center*. Accessed August 4, 2013. <http://www.nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/makingrev/constitution/text5/billofrights.pdf>.

# Student Handout

## Assessment Questions

1. This letter writer opposes both Federalists and Anti-Federalists. Briefly explain why he disagrees with them and what his own opinion is.
2. This letter writer is making a comparison of viewpoints. Think about the structure of this text. That is, think about the way its six paragraphs are organized. How does the structure of the text help the writer make a clear comparison of viewpoints?

# Writing the Constitution Assessment 5

*Advanced Level*

## Teacher Instructions

*Based on Common Core Reading Standard 5 for grades 9–12*

### ★ *Craft and Structure*

- 5. (9–10)** Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.
- 5. (11–12)** Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

### ★ *Using this Assessment*

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*Writing the Constitution: Assessment 5* is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 5 for grades 9–10 and grades 11–12 combined. It asks students to pay attention to a text's "structure"—that is, to the overall pattern or organizational arrangement of its headings, sentences, paragraphs, stanzas, chapters, as well as its various stylistic features. Students should see how structure is deliberately used to enable the text to achieve certain goals. Such formal elements can contribute to a text's meanings in many ways. This activity assesses the student's ability to read closely in order to understand the impact of the way one historical primary source is structured to present its information.

### ★ *Evaluating Student Responses to this Assessment*

Acceptable responses to the first assessment question should see that "Medium" fits with the author's view that his view is a reasonable middle position between two extremes. Responses should then sum up the writer's views of Federalists and Anti-Federalists and contrast both with his own compromise view in favor of the constitution if a bill of rights is added. As to the second assessment question, responses should identify the text structure as consistent with a comparative task such as the one this writer sets for himself. The paragraph sequence is well designed to present such a comparative problem. The first paragraph states the problem as the writer sees it, the next two compare two extreme views, and the last three paragraphs challenge those views by contrasting them with the author's own.



## Writing the Constitution: Assessment 5

**Directions:** This exercise asks you to read one primary source document carefully and answer questions about specific details in the document. In order to better understand the document as a historical primary source, read and make use of the source information just below the document itself. When you have studied the document and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

**CCS Standard 5: (9–10)** Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis. **(11–12)** Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

### Primary Source Document

*I find that all are clearly agreed in the truth of this position—that an energetic Federal Government is essential to our happiness and existence as a nation. The only thing, therefore, remaining to be decided is whether under this constitution our essential freedom can be maintained?*

*A hot-brained Federalist will tell you that the constitution must be adopted without limitations or reserve. I have known some to go so far as to call for tarring and feathering such as were of different sentiment.*

*The Antifederalists in general are more moderate but equally obstinate. Some of them would reject the whole constitution, purely because some few parts of it do not meet with their approval.*

*Persons of the above description are swayed by passions, not by reason. They should not be regarded by the honest and sensible part of the community.*

*I really think that if a bill of rights had accompanied our new constitution, little or no opposition would have been made to it. It may be true that it is defective, but none have yet been able to show that it is materially so. However, we have much reason to expect amendments, if necessary, from our representatives who will act under it in the first session of Congress. In short, we cannot risk much, provided we are previously secured by a bill of rights. This with the Antifederalist seems to be the thread on which hangs suspended all their hopes and wishes.*

*Therefore, let those who call themselves Federalists lay aside a little of their arrogance. Instead of abusing their fellow citizens, let them endeavor to convince them of the necessity of embracing the constitution as it stands, the impracticability of securing a better one, and that anarchy will be the consequence of its rejection. Let them unite with their brethren in recommending a bill of rights which is, in fact, the best security we can have against despotism. If they do this, I flatter myself that our state will not be the last that shall agree to this constitution.*

**Source Information:** The Constitutional Convention finished its work on September 17, 1787. After that, the states debated the proposed Constitution and organized ratification conventions to vote for or against it. This document is part of a letter about how best to debate the Constitution. It was signed by someone using the name “Medium,” and it appeared in *the Hampshire Chronicle*, Springfield, Massachusetts, December 25, 1787. Adapted from the version of the letter on the Internet at the National Humanities Center Resource Toolbox: Making the Revolution: America, 1763–1791.

Source: “On the Bill of Rights, 1787-1789.” *National Humanities Center*. Accessed August 4, 2013. <http://www.nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/makingrev/constitution/text5/billofrights.pdf>.

**Assessment Questions**

1. This writer signed his letter with the name “Medium.” Explain how this name helps him reinforce the basic message of his entire letter.
2. Think about the structure of this six-paragraph letter. How does this text structure help “Medium” achieve his purpose in writing the letter?

# Writing the Constitution Assessment 6

*Basic Level*

## Teacher Instructions

*Based on Common Core Reading Standard 6 for grades 6–8*

### ★ *Craft and Structure*

- 6. (6–8)** Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author’s point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

### ★ *Using this Assessment*

These Common Core History Assessments are intended to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they study and master the content covered in their American History coursework. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

*Writing the Constitution: Assessment 6* is designed to measure students’ ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 6 for grades 6–8. It asks students to note a text’s point of view as expressed by looking closely at details in the text itself. These details may take the form of emotional language, distorted or exaggerated descriptions, stereotyped labeling, etc. However, even a text with a neutral tone may express bias or point of view by selectively emphasizing some facts while omitting others. Therefore, students also need to go outside the text to interpret point of view by considering sourcing information such as the author’s background, purpose and audience. In addition, students need to see that when sources express conflicting points of view they may still be reliable in certain ways—for example, by what they share in common or by backing up their claims with solid evidence.

### ★ *Evaluating Student Responses to this Assessment*

Acceptable answers to the first assessment question should note that both writers oppose slavery, but disagree as to the Constitution’s impact on it. “Adelos” strongly insists the Constitution will undermine Massachusetts’ own ban on slavery. He says a vote for the Constitution “will take away those rights” to liberty for all individuals. “Anthony” disagrees. He accepts that the Constitution does not ban slavery outright because slavery is partly under state control. However, he thinks the “new system” does ensure that slavery will be abolished over time “gradually.” Answers to the second assessment question should note the much stronger language about slavery by “Adelos,” who refers to “wretched Africans,” “sordid” masters, and a slave trade carried on “by violence and rapine.” “Anthony” is much more measured in tone, saying we must “temper our feelings of humanity with political wisdom.” Opinions may vary as to whether these differences express actual differences of opinion about slavery itself.

## Writing the Constitution: Assessment 6

**Directions:** This exercise asks you to read two primary source documents carefully and answer questions about specific details in them. In order to better understand these documents as historical primary sources, read and make use of the source information located just below each document. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

**CCS Standard 6:** Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

### Document 1: A Primary Source

*It is strange, I say, if the people of Massachusetts should agree to this Federal Constitution after establishing a constitution of their own beginning with these words, "All men are born free and equal." As a result of our state constitution, we have emancipated many wretched Africans, and delivered them from masters more sordid to them (many of them) than they were to the brutal herd. I cannot see but the first moment we adopt the Federal Constitution as it stands, we tear down our own to its very foundation. We agree that freedom and equity are the natural rights of every man born into the world. However, if we vote this, we vote to take away those rights. Whether we go ourselves to Africa to procure slaves, or employ others to do it for us, or purchase them at any rate of others, it matters not a whit. It is an old saying and a true one, "The partaker is as bad as the thief." It is well known that this trade is carried on by violence and rapine. Even murder is not, I presume, out of the question. Who gave mankind a right thus to play the devil with one another?*

**Source Information:** In the Constitutional Convention of 1787, several debates had to do with slavery. The main one was not about the morality of slavery itself, at least not directly. It was about whether slaves should be counted for purposes of a state's taxes and its representation in Congress. In a key compromise, the delegates decided to count three-fifths of each state's slaves for these purposes. Slavery was also debated later, as people argued over whether or not to ratify the Constitution. This document is adapted from one statement about this. It is by someone identified as "Adelos." It appeared in the *Hampshire Gazette* of Northampton, Massachusetts, on February 6, 1788, as quoted in *A Necessary Evil? Slavery and the Debate Over the Constitution*, ed. John P. Kaminski (Columbia, S.C., 1999). Slavery was banned in Massachusetts in 1783.

Source: Kaminski, John P., ed. *A Necessary Evil? Slavery and the Debate Over the Constitution*. Columbia, S.C.: Model Editions Partnership, 1999.

# Student Handout

## Document 2: A Primary Source

*The acts [allowing slavery] that some states see fit to adopt regarding their internal concerns may be repugnant to our notions of justice. Yet shall we therefore refuse to confederate with them? “Brutus” himself surely could not have this in mind. Does he wish the slaves to be emancipated! It is a demand of humanity, and we do not hesitate to join with him most cordially. But even in pursuing this laudable goal, we ought to temper the feelings of humanity with political wisdom. Great numbers of slaves becoming citizens might be burdensome and dangerous to the public. This subject surely engaged the attention of the late respectable Convention. But given the immensity of the problem, it was not their proper duty to establish those many specific rules, which belong partly to federal and partly to state legislation. They probably went as far as policy would justify or practicality allow. The friends to liberty and humanity may look forward with satisfaction to a time when slavery will not exist in the United States. Meanwhile, the enlightened patriot should approve of the new system, which will make its abolition gradual.*

**Source Information:** This document is adapted from a statement about the Constitution by someone calling himself “Mark Anthony,” writing in the *Boston Independent Chronicle*, January 10, 1788. In this statement, “Anthony” disagrees with an earlier article by someone calling himself “Brutus.” Brutus was strongly opposed to slavery.

Source: Kaminski, John P., ed. *A Necessary Evil? Slavery and the Debate Over the Constitution*. Columbia, S.C.: Model Editions Partnership, 1999.

## Assessment Questions

1. These writers do not disagree as much about slavery as they do about the Constitution. What is the main difference between them regarding the Constitution?
2. Notice the words and phrases each uses to discuss slavery. Do these suggest any differences in their attitudes toward slavery itself? Why or why not?

# Writing the Constitution Assessment 6

*Advanced Level*

## Teacher Instructions

Based on Common Core Reading Standard 6 for grades 9–12

### ★ *Craft and Structure*

- 6. (9–10)** Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.
- 6. (11–12)** Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

### ★ *Using this Assessment*

These Common Core History Assessments are intended to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they study and master the content covered in their American History coursework. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

*Writing the Constitution: Assessment 6* is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 6 for grades 9–10 and grades 11–12 combined. It asks students to note a text's point of view as expressed by looking closely at details in the text itself. These details may take the form of emotional language, distorted or exaggerated descriptions, stereotyped labeling, etc. However, even a text with a neutral tone may express bias or point of view by selectively emphasizing some facts while omitting others. Therefore, students also need to go outside the text to interpret point of view by considering sourcing information such as the author's background, purpose and audience. In addition, students need to see that when sources express conflicting points of view they may still be reliable in certain ways—for example, by what they share in common or by backing up their claims with solid evidence.

### ★ *Evaluating Student Responses to this Assessment*

Acceptable answers to the first assessment question should note that both writers oppose slavery, but disagree as to the Constitution's impact on it. "Adelos" says the Constitution will undermine Massachusetts' own ban on slavery. He insists a vote for the Constitution "will take away those rights" to liberty for all individuals. "Anthony" disagrees. While he admits the "new system" does not ban slavery now, he thinks it ensures that it will be abolished over time "gradually." While the two men agree in opposing slavery, the best answers will note the much stronger language about slavery by "Adelos," who refers to "wretched Africans," "sordid" masters, and a slave trade carried on "by violence and rapine." "Anthony" is much more measured in tone, saying we must "temper our feelings of humanity with political wisdom." Answers to the second assessment question should note that neither writer provides any detail about the Constitution's actual rules regarding slavery. Mainly the two men present their opinions only, not any reasoning about what they are based on.



## Writing the Constitution: Assessment 6

**Directions:** This exercise asks you to read two primary source documents carefully and answer questions about specific details in them. In order to better understand these documents as historical primary sources, read and make use of the source information just below each document. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

**CCS Standard 6: (9–10)** Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts. **(11–12)** Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

### Document 1: A Primary Source

*It is strange, I say, if the people of Massachusetts should agree to this Federal Constitution after establishing a constitution of their own beginning with these words, "All men are born free and equal." As a result of our state constitution, we have emancipated many wretched Africans, and delivered them from masters more sordid to them (many of them) than they were to the brutal herd. I cannot see but the first moment we adopt the Federal Constitution as it stands, we tear down our own to its very foundation. We agree that freedom and equity are the natural rights of every man born into the world. However, if we vote this, we vote to take away those rights. Whether we go ourselves to Africa to procure slaves, or employ others to do it for us, or purchase them at any rate of others, it matters not a whit. It is an old saying and a true one, "The partaker is as bad as the thief." It is well known that this trade is carried on by violence and rapine. Even murder is not, I presume, out of the question. Who gave mankind a right thus to play the devil with one another?*

**Source Information:** In the Constitutional Convention of 1787, several debates had to do with slavery. The main one was not about the morality of slavery itself, at least not directly. It was about whether slaves should be counted for purposes of a state's taxes and its representation in Congress. In a key compromise, the delegates decided to count three-fifths of each state's slaves for these purposes. Slavery was also debated later, as people argued over whether or not to ratify the Constitution. This document is adapted from one statement about this. It is by someone identified as "Adelos." It appeared in the *Hampshire Gazette* of Northampton, Massachusetts, on February 6, 1788, as quoted in *A Necessary Evil? Slavery and the Debate over the Constitution*, ed. John P. Kaminski (Columbia, S.C., 1999). Slavery was banned in Massachusetts in 1783.

Source: Kaminski, John P., ed. *A Necessary Evil? Slavery and the Debate Over the Constitution*. Columbia, S.C.: Model Editions Partnership, 1999.

## Document 2: A Primary Source

*The acts [allowing slavery] that some states see fit to adopt regarding their internal concerns may be repugnant to our notions of justice. Yet shall we therefore refuse to confederate with them? "Brutus" himself surely could not have this in mind. Does he wish the slaves to be emancipated! It is a demand of humanity, and we do not hesitate to join with him most cordially. But even in pursuing this laudable goal, we ought to temper the feelings of humanity with political wisdom. Great numbers of slaves becoming citizens might be burdensome and dangerous to the public. This subject surely engaged the attention of the late respectable Convention. But given the immensity of the problem, it was not their proper duty to establish those many specific rules, which belong partly to federal and partly to state legislation. They probably went as far as policy would justify or practicality allow. The friends to liberty and humanity may look forward with satisfaction to a time when slavery will not exist in the United States. Meanwhile, the enlightened patriot should approve of the new system, which will make its abolition gradual.*

**Source Information:** This document is adapted from a statement about the Constitution by someone calling himself "Mark Anthony," writing in the *Boston Independent Chronicle*, January 10, 1788. In this statement, "Anthony" disagrees with an earlier article by someone calling himself "Brutus." Brutus was strongly opposed to slavery.

Source: Kaminski, John P., ed. *A Necessary Evil? Slavery and the Debate Over the Constitution*. Columbia, S.C.: Model Editions Partnership, 1999.

## Assessment Questions

1. Do these writers disagree more about slavery or more about the Constitution? To support your answer, cite details in the words and phrases each writer uses to express his point of view.
2. Note how each writer explains his view of the Constitution's likely effect on slavery. Are the views each expresses about this well-reasoned, or are they mere expressions of feeling or opinion? Explain your answer.

# Writing the Constitution Assessment 7

*Basic Level*

## Teacher Instructions

*Based on Common Core Reading Standard 7 for grades 6–8*

### ★ *Integration of Knowledge and Ideas*

- 7. (6–8)** Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

### ★ *Using this Assessment*

These Common Core History Assessments are intended to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they study and master the content covered in their American History coursework. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

*Writing the Constitution: Assessment 7* is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 7 for grades 6–8. It asks students to do something historians must do all the time—integrate evidence found in several primary sources presented in a variety of visual and textual formats.

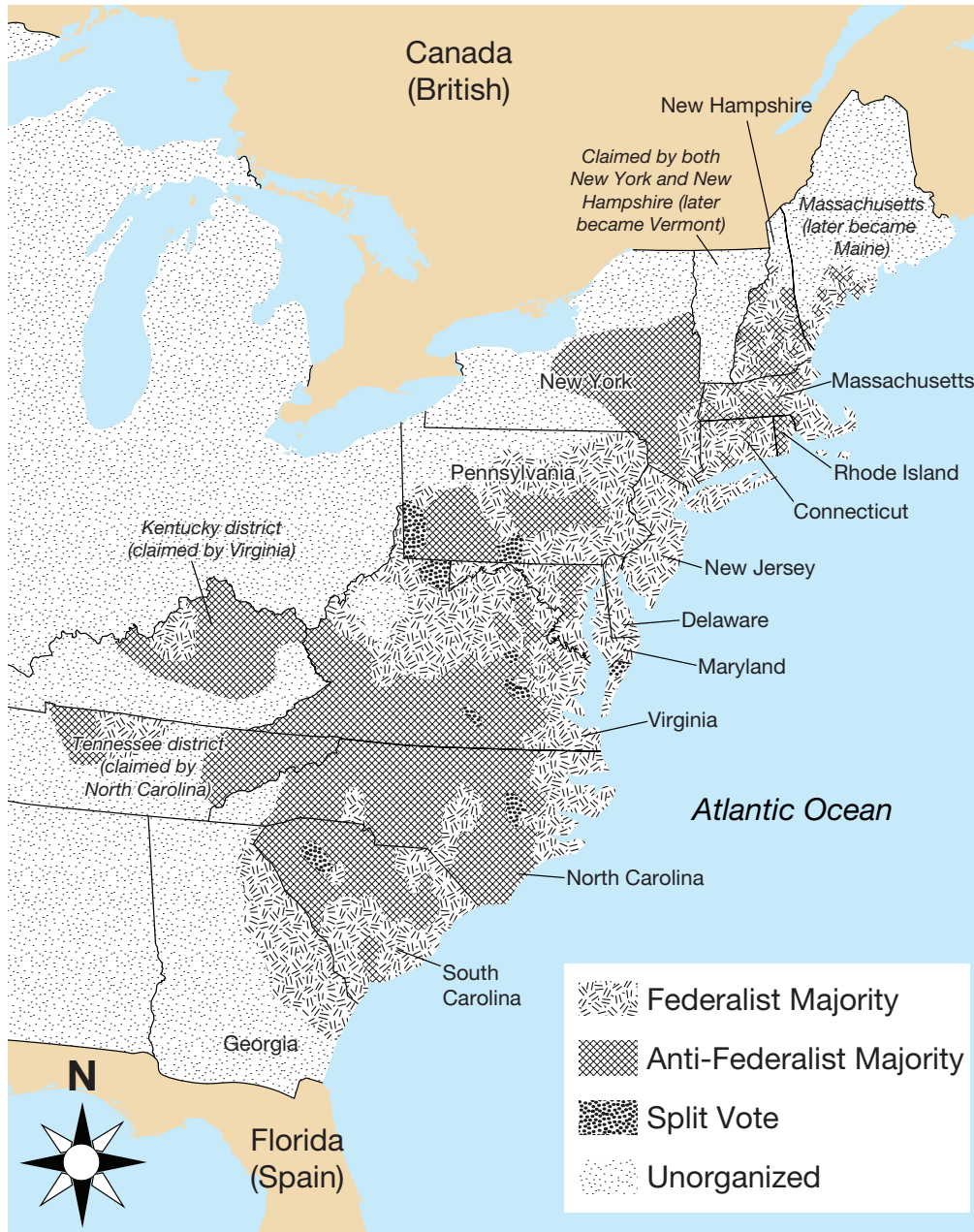
### ★ *Evaluating Student Responses to this Assessment*

Acceptable responses to the assessment question should note that all three documents offer evidence that clashes with the statement. The map (Document 1) shows that support for Federalists was strongest in coastal regions and weakest in western frontier regions within many states. The background information about Amos Singletary as well as his words (Document 2) suggest he saw the wealthy and powerful as the real beneficiaries of the Constitution, as in his references to its supporters as “lawyers, and men of learning, and monied men.” The table (Document 3) shows the vote to have been very close in some states, but unanimous in others, suggesting again wide geographic differences in support for the Constitution.

## Writing the Constitution: Assessment 7

**Directions:** This exercise asks you to study three documents carefully and answer questions focused on what these sources have in common. In order to better understand the documents and their importance as historical evidence, read and make use of the source information located just below or next to each document itself. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the assessment question that follows.

**CCS Standard 7:** Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.



**Federalist and Anti-Federalist Voting Strength, 1787–1790**

Source: "Anti-Federalists." *United States American History*. Accessed August 4, 2013.  
<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h374.html>.

### Document 1: A Map

#### Source Information:

The Constitutional Convention finished its work on September 17, 1787. But it was still up to the states to decide whether or not to ratify (that is, approve) the Constitution. They were to make this decision in state conventions organized for that purpose. Eligible voters chose delegates to these conventions who either favored or opposed the Constitution. Those who favored the Constitution were known as "Federalists." "Anti-Federalists" opposed the Constitution. This map shows areas where each side won a majority of votes, as well as areas where the vote was evenly split. In the late 1700s, population was heaviest in the wealthier commercial coastal areas to the east. It thinned out into the poorer frontier regions to the west.

# Student Handout

## Document 2: A Written Primary Source

*We contended with Great-Britain, some said for a threepenny duty on tea; but it was not that; it was because they claimed a right to tax us and bind us in all cases whatever. And does not this Constitution do the same? Does it not take away all that we have—all our property? Does it not lay all taxes, duties, imposts, and excises? And what more have we to give? They tell us Congress won't lay taxes upon us, but collect all the money they want by impost. I say, there has always been a difficulty about impost. Whenever the General Court was going to lay an impost, they would tell us it was more than trade could bear, that it hurt the fair trader, and encouraged smuggling; and there will always be the same objection: they won't be able to raise money enough by impost, and then they will lay it on the land, and take all we have got. These lawyers, and men of learning, and monied men, that talk so finely and gloss over matters so smoothly, to make us poor illiterate people swallow down the pill, expect to get into Congress themselves; they expect to be the managers of this Constitution and get all the power and all the money into their own hands, and they will swallow up all us little folks, like the great Leviathan, Mr. President; yes, just as the whale swallowed up Jonah."*

**Source Information:** Amos Singletary was born in 1721 in a small frontier town in central Massachusetts. He ran a gristmill, served as a justice of the peace, was elected to the state legislature, and was a delegate to the Massachusetts ratifying convention of 1788. He opposed ratification of the Constitution. This document is adapted from part of a speech Singletary gave at the convention on January 25, 1788. From Jonathan Elliot's *Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution, as Recommended by the General Convention at Philadelphia, 1787*, vol. 2, (Philadelphia, 1881) pp. 101–102.

Source: Elliot, Jonathan, ed. 1836. *The Debates in the Several State Conventions of the Adoption of the Federal Constitution*, Vol. II (Mass., Conn., NH, NY, Penn, Maryland). Online Library of Liberty. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/simple.php?id=1906>.

## Document 3: A Comparative Table

State	Date of Vote	Vote in Convention	Rank in Population
Delaware	Dec. 7, 1787	Unanimous	13
Pennsylvania	Dec. 12, 1787	46 to 23	3
New Jersey	Dec. 18, 1787	Unanimous	9
Georgia	Jan. 2, 1788	Unanimous	11
Connecticut	Jan. 9, 1788	128 to 40	8
Massachusetts	Feb. 7, 1788	187 to 168	2
Maryland	Apr. 28, 1788	63 to 11	6
South Carolina	May 23, 1788	149 to 73	7
New Hampshire	June 21, 1788	57 to 46	10
Virginia	June 26, 1788	89 to 79	1
New York	July 26, 1788	30 to 27	5
North Carolina	Nov. 21, 1789	195 to 77	4
Rhode Island	May 29, 1790	34 to 32	12

**Source Information:** This table shows the outcome of the vote in each state's ratification convention. It also shows when that vote was taken and where the state ranks in population. Table adapted from *The American Pageant*.

Source: Kennedy, David M., Lizabeth Cohen, and Thomas Andrew Bailey. *The American Pageant*. 12th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002.

### **Assessment Question**

“Federalists and Anti-Federalists were fairly even in strength within each state and region, and within every social class and income group.” Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? Support your answer with specific details from *each* of these three documents.



# Writing the Constitution Assessment 7

*Advanced Level*

## Teacher Instructions

*Based on Common Core Reading Standard 7 for grades 9–12*

### ★ *Integration of Knowledge and Ideas*

- 7. (9–10)** Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.
- 7. (11–12)** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

### ★ *Using this Assessment*

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*Writing the Constitution: Assessment 7* is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 7 for grades 9–10 and 11–12 combined. It asks students to do something historians must do all the time—integrate evidence found in a wide variety of primary sources presented in many visual and textual formats. It also asks them to judge the relative strengths and weaknesses of visual as compared with written sources.

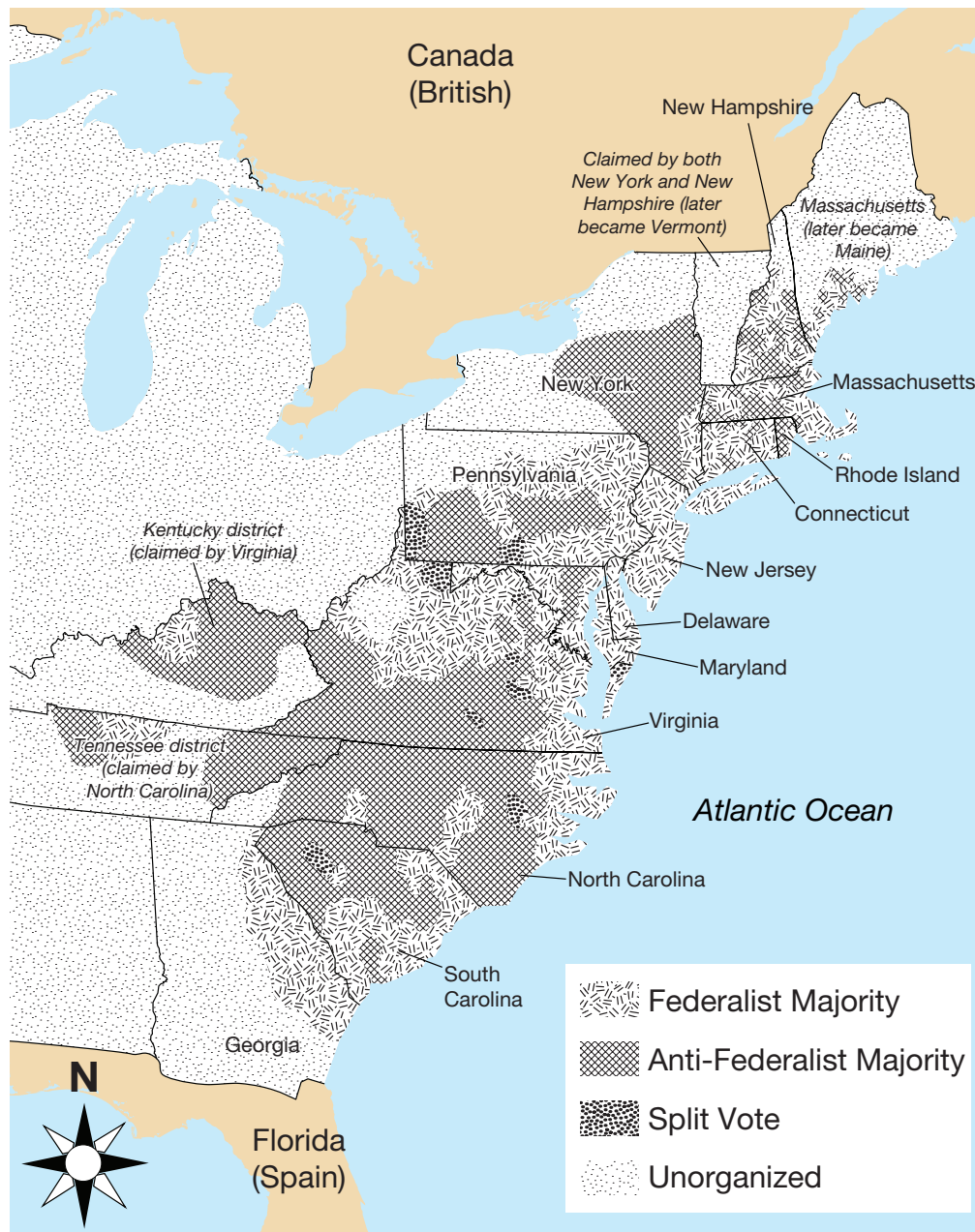
### ★ *Evaluating Student Responses to this Assessment*

Acceptable responses to the assessment question should note that all three offer evidence that Federalists and Anti-Federalists were quite unevenly distributed across geographical regions and among social and income groups. The map (Document 1) shows that support for Federalists was strongest in wealthier and commercial coastal regions and weakest in poorer western frontier regions within many states. The background information about Amos Singletary (a man of modest means from a rural frontier town) as well as his words (Document 2) suggest he saw the wealthy and powerful as the real beneficiaries of the Constitution, as in his references to its supporters as “lawyers, and men of learning, and monied men.” The table (Document 3) shows the vote to have been very close and late in some states, but unanimous and early in others (mainly smaller ones), suggesting again wide geographic differences in support for the Constitution. Acceptable responses to the second assessment question should recognize that it is hard to generalize from just one man’s point of view. They should indicate a need for more sources from people of varied backgrounds to make more reliable generalizations about any relationship between a person’s attitude to the Constitution and that person’s social, economic or geographic background.

## Writing the Constitution: Assessment 7

**Directions:** This exercise asks you to study three documents carefully and answer questions focused on what the sources have in common. In order to better understand these documents and their importance as historical evidence, read and make use of the source information just below or next to each document itself. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

**CCS Standard 7: (9–10)** Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text. **(11–12)** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.



**Federalist and Anti-Federalist Voting Strength, 1787–1790**

Source: "Anti-Federalists." *United States American History*. Accessed August 4, 2013.  
<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h374.html>.

### Document 1: A Map

#### Source Information:

The Constitutional Convention finished its work on September 17, 1787. But it was still up to the states to decide whether or not to ratify (that is, approve) the Constitution. They were to make this decision in state conventions organized for that purpose. Eligible voters chose delegates to these conventions who either favored or opposed the Constitution. Those who favored the Constitution were known as "Federalists." "Anti-Federalists" opposed the Constitution. This map shows areas where each side won a majority of votes, as well as areas where the vote was evenly split. In the late 1700s, population was heaviest in the wealthier commercial coastal areas to the east. It thinned out into the poorer frontier regions to the west.

# Student Handout

## Document 2: A Written Primary Source

*We contended with Great-Britain, some said for a threepenny duty on tea; but it was not that; it was because they claimed a right to tax us and bind us in all cases whatever. And does not this Constitution do the same? Does it not take away all that we have—all our property? Does it not lay all taxes, duties, imposts, and excises? And what more have we to give? They tell us Congress won't lay taxes upon us, but collect all the money they want by impost. I say, there has always been a difficulty about impost. Whenever the General Court was going to lay an impost, they would tell us it was more than trade could bear, that it hurt the fair trader, and encouraged smuggling; and there will always be the same objection: they won't be able to raise money enough by impost, and then they will lay it on the land, and take all we have got. These lawyers, and men of learning, and monied men, that talk so finely and gloss over matters so smoothly, to make us poor illiterate people swallow down the pill, expect to get into Congress themselves; they expect to be the managers of this Constitution and get all the power and all the money into their own hands, and they will swallow up all us little folks, like the great Leviathan, Mr. President; yes, just as the whale swallowed up Jonah."*

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Source: Elliot, Jonathan, ed. 1836. *The Debates in the Several State Conventions of the Adoption of the Federal Constitution*, Vol. II (Mass., Conn., NH, NY, Penn, Maryland). Online Library of Liberty. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/simple.php?id=1906>.

## Document 3: A Comparative Table

State	Date of Vote	Vote in Convention	Rank in Population
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**Source Information:** This table shows the outcome of the vote in each state's ratification convention. It also shows when that vote was taken and where the state ranks in population. Table adapted from *The American Pageant*.

Source: Kennedy, David M., Lizabeth Cohen, and Thomas Andrew Bailey. *The American Pageant*. 12th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002.

## **Assessment Questions**

1. What can you infer from these documents about the geographic, social and economic differences, on average, between Federalist and Anti-Federalist voters? Use details from *all three* of these documents to support your answer.
2. Document 2 is the only written account among these three documents. What other kinds of written accounts would help you to more reliably address the previous question?

# Writing the Constitution Assessment 8

*Basic Level*

## Teacher Instructions

*Based on Common Core Reading Standard 8 for grades 6–8*

### ★ *Integration of Knowledge and Ideas*

**8. (6–8)** Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

### ★ *Using this Assessment*

These Common Core History Assessments are intended to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they study and master the content covered in their American History coursework. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

*Writing the Constitution: Assessment 8* is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 8 for grades 6–8. It asks students to pay attention to the way a text reasons about its factual claims and to distinguish between these and expressions of opinion. This could mean paying close attention to the factual evidence offered or to the reasoning process and logic used to support a claim—as well as an ability to distinguish these from the text's biases or expressions of opinion. This activity assesses the student's ability to read closely in order to understand a text in these ways.

### ★ *Evaluating Student Responses to this Assessment*

Responses to the first assessment question should explain Washington's reasoning, which is that the new nation is headed into "anarchy and confusion" because there is no central power able to check the disorders ("Thirteen sovereignties pulling against each other..."). If the "wise and good" work hard enough to create a stronger, "more energetic" constitution, that could restore order and hope for the future. Responses to the second assessment question should note how Washington emphasizes the dire situation with phrases such as "no day was ever more clouded," or how he describes the opponents of stronger government as "self-interested, scheming, disaffected and desperate characters" who want to "drag down this rising empire." Answers to the question may vary. Some may see this language is unnecessary, while others may see it as adding force and motivating Madison to work harder to deal with the problem Washington spells out.

## Writing the Constitution: Assessment 8

**Directions:** This exercise asks you to read one primary source document carefully and answer questions about specific details in the document. In order to better understand the document as a historical primary source, read and make use of the source information located just below the document itself. When you have studied the document and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

**CCS Standard 8:** Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

### Primary Source Document

*No morning ever dawned more favorable than ours did—and no day was ever more clouded than the present! Wisdom and good examples are necessary at this time to rescue the political machine from the impending storm. Without some alteration in our political creed, the system we have been seven years raising at the expense of much blood and treasure must fall. We are fast verging to anarchy and confusion! How melancholy is the thought that in so short a space we should have made such large strides towards fulfilling this prediction of our transatlantic foes: “Leave them to themselves and their government will soon dissolve.” Will not the wise and good strive hard to avert this evil? Or will their passivity allow ignorance and self-interested, scheming, disaffected and desperate characters to drag down this rising empire in wretchedness and contempt? What stronger evidence can be given of the lack of energy in our governments than these disorders? If there exists no power to check them, what security has a man of life, liberty, or property? To you, I am sure I need not add any more on this subject. The consequences of a lax or inefficient government are too obvious to be dwelt on. Thirteen sovereignties pulling against each other, and all tugging at the federal head, will soon bring ruin on the whole. However, a liberal and energetic Constitution, well guarded and closely watched to prevent encroachments, might restore us to that degree of respectability and consequence to which we had a fair claim and the brightest prospect of attaining.*

**Source Information:** This document is adapted from part of a letter George Washington wrote to James Madison on November 5, 1786. It expresses his views as of late 1786 about the problems he saw the nation facing under the Articles of Confederation.

Adapted from the version of the letter on the Internet at the National Humanities Center Resource Toolbox: Making the Revolution: America, 1763–1791.

Source: “Founders on the Defects of the Articles of Confederation.” National Humanities Center. Accessed August 4, 2013. [nationalhumanities-center.org/pds/makingrev/constitution/text1/foundersdefectsarticlesconf.pdf](http://nationalhumanities-center.org/pds/makingrev/constitution/text1/foundersdefectsarticlesconf.pdf).

### Assessment Questions

1. George Washington uses highly emotional language in this letter to James Madison. Ignore all the emotional language and summarize the actual argument he makes. That is, briefly, what does he say is happening, why, and what solution does he suggest?
2. Now underline or highlight phrases that add emotional force to this reasoned argument. Do you think this emotional language helps Washington to make his argument to Madison? Why or why not?



# Writing the Constitution Assessment 8

*Advanced Level*

## Teacher Instructions

*Based on Common Core Reading Standard 8 for grades 9–12*

### ★ *Integration of Knowledge and Ideas*

- 8. (9–10)** Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author’s claims.
- 8. (11–12)** Evaluate an author’s premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

### ★ *Using this Assessment*

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*Writing the Constitution: Assessment 8* is designed to measure students’ ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 8 for grades 9–10 and grades 11–12 combined. It asks students to pay attention to the way a text backs up or seeks to explain its factual claims. This could mean paying close attention to the factual evidence offered in the text as compared with expressions of opinion. Or it could mean attention to the reasoning process and logic used to support a claim. It may also require students to examine underlying assumptions and bias in order to see how they shape or distort the reasoning process presented by the text. This activity assesses the student’s ability to read closely in order to understand a text in these ways.

### ★ *Evaluating Student Responses to this Assessment*

Responses to the first assessment question should explain that Washington’s claim is that the new nation is headed into a time of “anarchy and confusion” with dangerous uprisings such as Shays’ Rebellion. He sees this as due to the lack of an effective central government able to check the chaos of “thirteen sovereignties pulling against each other...” Rather, he believes a stronger, “more energetic” constitution could restore order and hope for the future. Responses to the second assessment question should highlight such phrases as “no day was ever more clouded,” or the description of opponents of stronger government as “self-interested, scheming, disaffected and desperate characters” who want to “drag down this rising empire.” Some may see this emotional language as unnecessary or exaggerated, while others may see it as adding force to Washington’s argument. Best answers will note that Washington’s audience in this private letter, James Madison, was an important figure whom Washington especially wanted to arouse and motivate.



## Writing the Constitution: Assessment 8

**Directions:** This exercise asks you to read one primary source document carefully and answer questions about specific details in the document. In order to better understand the document as a historical primary source, read and make use of the source information located just below the document itself. When you have studied the document and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

**CCS Standard 8: (9–10)** Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author’s claims. **(11–12)** Evaluate an author’s premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

### Primary Source Document

*No morning ever dawned more favorable than ours did—and no day was ever more clouded than the present! Wisdom and good examples are necessary at this time to rescue the political machine from the impending storm. Without some alteration in our political creed, the system we have been seven years raising at the expense of much blood and treasure must fall. We are fast verging to anarchy and confusion! How melancholy is the thought that in so short a space we should have made such large strides towards fulfilling this prediction of our transatlantic foes: “Leave them to themselves and their government will soon dissolve.” Will not the wise and good strive hard to avert this evil? Or will their passivity allow ignorance and self-interested, scheming, disaffected and desperate characters to drag down this rising empire in wretchedness and contempt? What stronger evidence can be given of the lack of energy in our governments than these disorders? If there exists no power to check them, what security has a man of life, liberty, or property? To you, I am sure I need not add any more on this subject. The consequences of a lax or inefficient government are too obvious to be dwelt on. Thirteen sovereignties pulling against each other, and all tugging at the federal head, will soon bring ruin on the whole. However, a liberal and energetic Constitution, well guarded and closely watched to prevent encroachments, might restore us to that degree of respectability and consequence to which we had a fair claim and the brightest prospect of attaining.*

**Source Information:** This document is adapted from part of a letter George Washington wrote to James Madison on November 5, 1786. It expresses his views as of late 1786 about the problems he saw the nation facing under the Articles of Confederation.

Adapted from the version of the letter on the Internet at the National Humanities Center Resource Toolbox: Making the Revolution: America, 1763–1791.

Source: “Founders on the Defects of the Articles of Confederation.” National Humanities Center. Accessed August 4, 2013. [nationalhumanities-center.org/pds/makingrev/constitution/text1/foundersdefectsarticlesconf.pdf](http://nationalhumanities-center.org/pds/makingrev/constitution/text1/foundersdefectsarticlesconf.pdf).

### Assessment Questions

1. Washington uses a great deal of highly emotional language in this letter. However, he also makes a reasoned case about a problem that concerns him. Explain the reasoned case he makes, and cite the phrases where he makes it.
2. Highlight some of Washington’s more stirring and emotional phrases. Why do you think Washington used this strong language in a private letter to James Madison?

# Writing the Constitution Assessment 9

Basic Level

## Teacher Instructions

Based on Common Core Reading Standard 9 for grades 6–8

### ★ Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

**9. (6–8)** Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

### ★ Using this Assessment

These Common Core History Assessments are intended to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they study and master the content covered in their American History coursework. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

*Writing the Constitution: Assessment 9* is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 9 for grades 6–8. It asks students to understand the relationship between primary and secondary sources. This means students must know the difference between the two kinds of sources—that primary sources provide the evidence for secondary source claims and interpretations. This should lead them to adopt a critical approach to secondary sources themselves. That is, such secondary accounts should not be regarded as final and complete. They are interpretations of the past, not the past itself. Students should learn to weigh secondary source accounts against the relevant primary source evidence.

### ★ Evaluating Student Responses to this Assessment

Acceptable responses to the first assessment question should cite some of Parenti's words to clarify why he views the Constitution as a conservative document supportive of a wealthy elite. For example, his claim that the Constitution's "checks and balances" perpetuate elite class power and his claim that its restraints on majority rule ("a system of minority locks and dams") are designed to "resist the pressure of popular tides." Answers to the second assessment question may vary. Most will see Hamilton's favoring of the "the rich and well born" (Document 2) as supporting Parenti, whereas Smith (Document 3), who sees himself as a "plain man," a farmer, seem to show that many who were not rich and powerful favored the Constitution. On the other hand, some may say Smith does suggest "the lawyers, and men of learning, and moneyed men" favor the Constitution strongly.

## Writing the Constitution: Assessment 9

**Directions:** This exercise asks you to read three documents carefully and answer questions about specific details in them. One document is a secondary source; the other two are historical primary sources. In order to better understand the documents, read and make use of the source information located just below each document. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

**CCS Standard 9:** Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

### Document 1: A Secondary Source

If the founders sought to restrain power through a system of “checks and balances,” they seemed chiefly concerned with restraining mass power, while assuring the perpetuation of their own class power.... In sum, the Constitution was consciously designed as a conservative document, elaborately equipped with a system of minority locks and dams in order to resist the pressure of popular tides. It furnished special provisions for the slaveholding class. It provided ample power to build the state services and protections needed by a rising [wealthy middle class]. For the founders, liberty meant something different from democracy. It meant liberty to invest, speculate, trade, and accumulate wealth without encroachment by the common populace.

**Source Information:** This document is a small passage from a recent secondary source interpretation of the U.S. Constitution. The excerpt is from “Constitution for the Few: Looking Back to the Beginning,” by Michael Parenti, on the website of the International Endowment for Democracy.

Source: Parenti, Michael. “A Constitution for the Few: Looking Back to the Beginning.” International Endowment for Democracy. Accessed August 4, 2013. Accessed August 4, 2013. [http://www.iefd.org/articles/constitution\\_for\\_the\\_few.php](http://www.iefd.org/articles/constitution_for_the_few.php).

### Document 2: A Primary Source

*All communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are the rich and well born, the other the mass of the people. The voice of the people has been said to be the voice of God; and however generally this maxim has been quoted and believed, it is not true in fact. The people are turbulent and changing; they seldom judge or determine right. Give therefore to the first class a distinct, permanent share in the government. They will check the unsteadiness of the second, and as they cannot receive any advantage by a change, they therefore will ever maintain good government.*

**Source Information:** Alexander Hamilton was a delegate for New York at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. He later became the nation’s first Secretary of the Treasury during George Washington’s presidency and played a major role in the early years under the new Constitution. Another New York delegate, Judge Robert Yates, took notes on the speeches at the convention. On June 18, he reported Hamilton’s comments as Hamilton introduced his own plan of government. This document is an excerpt of Yates’ notes of what Hamilton said. Yates was a political opponent of Hamilton. Adapted from Henry Cabot Lodge, ed., *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*, 12 vols. (New York, 1904), I, p. 401.

Source: Hamilton, Alexander, and Henry Cabot Lodge. *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*. New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1904.

# Student Handout

## Document 3: A Primary Source

*I am a plain man, and get my living by the plough. I have lived in a part of the country where I have known the worth of good government by the lack of it. There was a black cloud that rose last winter [Shays' Rebellion]. It brought on a state of anarchy, and that led to tyranny.... Our distress was so great that we should have been glad to snatch at anything that looked like a government....*

*Now, Mr. President, when I saw this Constitution, I found that it was a cure for these disorders. It was just what we wanted. I got a copy of it, and read it over and over. I had been a member of the Convention to form our own state constitution, and had learned something of the checks and balances of power. I found them all here.... I don't think the worse of the Constitution because lawyers, and men of learning, and moneyed men, are fond of it.... Some gentlemen think that our liberty and property are not safe in the hands of moneyed men, and men of learning. I am not of that mind.... These lawyers, these moneyed men, these men of learning, are all embarked in the same cause with us, and we must all swim or sink together.*

**Source Information:** Jonathan Smith was a member of the Massachusetts state legislature from a small town in western part of that state. He was also a delegate to the Massachusetts ratifying convention of 1788 where he favored ratification of the Constitution. This document is adapted from a speech Smith gave at the convention on January 25, 1788. From Jonathan Elliot's *Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution, as Recommended by the General Convention at Philadelphia, 1787*, vol. 2, (Philadelphia, 1881) pp. 102-104.

Source: Elliot, Jonathan, ed. 1836. *The Debates in the Several State Conventions of the Adoption of the Federal Constitution*, Vol. II (Mass., Conn., NH, NY, Penn, Maryland). Online Library of Liberty. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/simple.php?id=1906>.

## Assessment Questions

1. In Document 1, Michael Parenti claims that the Constitution is a “conservative document” designed to protect the power of the wealthy. Cite at least two details in the passage that help to show what Parenti means by this claim.
2. Explain how Document 2 and Document 3 either support or do not support the claim Parenti makes about the Constitution in Document 1.

# Writing the Constitution Assessment 9

*Advanced Level*

## Teacher Instructions

*Based on Common Core Reading Standard 9 for grades 9–12*

### ★ *Integration of Knowledge and Ideas*

- 9. (9–10)** Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.
- 9. (11–12)** Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

### ★ *Using this Assessment*

These Common Core History Assessments are intended to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they study and master the content covered in their American History coursework. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

*Writing the Constitution: Assessment 9* is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 9 for grades 9–10 and grades 11–12 combined. It asks students to understand the relationship between primary and secondary sources. This means students must know the difference between the two kinds of sources—that primary sources provide the evidence for secondary source claims and interpretations. This should lead them to adopt a critical approach to secondary sources themselves. That is, such secondary accounts should not be regarded as final and complete. They are interpretations of the past, not the past itself. Students should learn to weigh secondary source accounts against the relevant primary source evidence.

### ★ *Evaluating Student Responses to this Assessment*

Acceptable responses to the first assessment question should recognize that Hamilton defends a strong central government controlled by the wealthiest class. He hopes for a government of “the first class” (that is, “the rich and well born”) who are more dependable than the “turbulent” masses. However, Hamilton was only one delegate, and the best answers will insist on more varied evidence—other delegates' views, transcripts of debates in the Convention, etc. Answers to the second assessment question could see Document 3 as challenging Parent in that Smith identifies himself as a “plain man,” a farmer,” who nevertheless likes the Constitution as a way to preserve order without turning the nation into a monarchy. Smith says the Constitution is favored by “the lawyers, and men of learning, and moneyed men,” but thinks they do so because they have the same interests as everyone else. On the other hand, some may see this comment as admitting that the Constitution was the work of wealthy commercial elites, and so Smith could be seen as somewhat backing up what Parenti claims.

## Writing the Constitution: Assessment 9

**Directions:** This exercise asks you to read three documents carefully and answer questions about specific details in them. One document is a secondary source; the other two are historical primary sources. In order to better understand the documents, read and make use of the source information located just below each document. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

**CCS Standard 9: (9–10)** Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources. **(11–12)** Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

### Document 1: A Secondary Source

If the founders sought to restrain power through a system of “checks and balances,” they seemed chiefly concerned with restraining mass power, while assuring the perpetuation of their own class power. They supposedly had a “realistic” opinion of the rapacious nature of human beings—readily evidenced when they talked about the common people—yet they held a remarkably sanguine view of the self-interested impulses of their own class, which they saw as inhabited largely by virtuous men of “principle and property”.... In sum, the Constitution was consciously designed as a conservative document, elaborately equipped with a system of minority locks and dams in order to resist the pressure of popular tides. It furnished special provisions for the slaveholding class. It provided ample power to build the state services and protections needed by a rising [wealthy middle class]. For the founders, liberty meant something different from democracy. It meant liberty to invest, speculate, trade, and accumulate wealth without encroachment by the common populace.

**Source Information:** This document is a small passage from a recent secondary source interpretation of the U.S. Constitution. The excerpt is from “Constitution for the Few: Looking Back to the Beginning,” by Michael Parenti, on the website of the International Endowment for Democracy.

Source: Parenti, Michael. “A Constitution for the Few: Looking Back to the Beginning.” International Endowment for Democracy. Accessed August 4, 2013. Accessed August 4, 2013. [http://www.iefd.org/articles/constitution\\_for\\_the\\_few.php](http://www.iefd.org/articles/constitution_for_the_few.php).

### Document 2: A Primary Source

*All communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are the rich and well born, the other the mass of the people. The voice of the people has been said to be the voice of God; and however generally this maxim has been quoted and believed, it is not true in fact. The people are turbulent and changing; they seldom judge or determine right. Give therefore to the first class a distinct, permanent share in the government. They will check the unsteadiness of the second, and as they cannot receive any advantage by a change, they therefore will ever maintain good government.*

**Source Information:** Alexander Hamilton was a delegate for New York at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. He later became the nation’s first Secretary of the Treasury during George Washington’s presidency and played a major role in the early years under the new Constitution. Another New York delegate, Judge Robert Yates, took notes on the speeches at the convention. On June 18, he reported Hamilton’s comments as Hamilton introduced his own plan of government. This document is an excerpt of Yates’ notes of what Hamilton said. Yates was a political opponent of Hamilton. Adapted from Henry Cabot Lodge, ed., *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*, 12 vols. (New York, 1904), I, p. 401.

Source: Hamilton, Alexander, and Henry Cabot Lodge. *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*. New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1904.



### Document 3: A Primary Source

*I am a plain man, and get my living by the plough. I have lived in a part of the country where I have known the worth of good government by the lack of it. There was a black cloud that rose last winter [Shays' Rebellion]. It brought on a state of anarchy, and that led to tyranny.... Our distress was so great that we should have been glad to snatch at anything that looked like a government. Had any person able to protect us come and set up his standard, we should all have flocked to it, even if it had been a monarch, and a monarch might have proved a tyrant. So you see that anarchy leads to tyranny.*

*Now, Mr. President, when I saw this Constitution, I found that it was a cure for these disorders. It was just what we wanted. I got a copy of it, and read it over and over. I had been a member of the Convention to form our own state constitution, and had learned something of the checks and balances of power. I found them all here.... I don't think the worse of the Constitution because lawyers, and men of learning, and moneyed men, are fond of it.... Some gentlemen think that our liberty and property are not safe in the hands of moneyed men, and men of learning. I am not of that mind.... These lawyers, these moneyed men, these men of learning, are all embarked in the same cause with us, and we must all swim or sink together.*

**Source Information:** Jonathan Smith was a member of the Massachusetts state legislature from a small town in western part of that state. He was also a delegate to the Massachusetts ratifying convention of 1788 where he favored ratification of the Constitution. This document is adapted from a speech Smith gave at the convention on January 25, 1788. From Jonathan Elliot's *Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution, as Recommended by the General Convention at Philadelphia, 1787*, vol. 2, (Philadelphia, 1881) pp. 102-104.

Source: Elliot, Jonathan, ed. 1836. *The Debates in the Several State Conventions of the Adoption of the Federal Constitution*, Vol. II (Mass., Conn., NH, NY, Penn, Maryland). Online Library of Liberty. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/simple.php?id=1906>.

### Assessment Questions

1. Some historians think Hamilton in Document 2 supports Parenti's claim about the Constitution in Document 1. Other historians would say Hamilton's statement is not enough evidence to prove that Parenti is correct. With which view do you agree more? Why?
2. How might Document 3 be used to challenge Parenti's claim? Could it also be used to support that claim? Explain your answer.



# Writing the Constitution

*Writing Assignment 1*

## Teacher Instructions

*The College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard for Writing*

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

*[This standard is the basis for the corresponding No. 1 Common Core Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects.]*

## ★ *Using this Assessment*

These Common Core History Assessments are intended to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they study and master the content covered in their American History coursework. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

*Writing the Constitution: Writing Assessment 1* is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard for Writing 1. The Anchor Standards are the basis on which the various Common Core History/Social Studies Standards are based. This assessment asks students to write an essay that makes meaningful claims and that develop those claims using relevant evidence and sound reasoning. The essay should make clear the strengths and limitations of the claims it makes while also considering possible challenges or counter claims.

## ★ *Evaluating Student Responses to Writing Assignment 1*

Essays for this assignment should be scored according to these criteria.

- How well does the essay state a claim addressing all elements of the prompt?
- Does the essay use evidence from all or most of the documents assigned for this task?
- Is the evidence explained effectively using careful reasoning and a logical flow of one idea to the next?
- Does the essay defend the claim in relation to any relevant alternative claims?
- Are ideas presented using precise language, effective transitions, and domain-specific vocabulary?
- Does the essay include an effective conclusion supporting its claims?
- How well does the essay follow rules of usage, spelling and punctuation?

## Writing the Constitution: Writing Assignment 1

**The Standard:** Write a brief essay that presents a well-reasoned argument focused on historical content.

### The Question

Using your background history knowledge and the primary source documents listed here, explain why you *do or do not agree* with the following statement: *“The problems the new nation faced under the Article of Confederation were serious, but they could have been resolved by the states without creating the new U.S. Constitution in 1787.”*

**Documents:** Base your essay on the primary and secondary source documents in all of the Writing the Constitution Assessments.

### Instructions

- Write a brief well-organized essay that includes an introduction, one to three internal paragraphs, and a conclusion.
- Introduce a specific claim that you can defend in response to the question.
- Support your claim with an argument based on evidence from the documents and sound reasoning about that evidence.
- Consider other possible claims that may differ from your own.
- Include related outside information based on your background knowledge of history.
- Use transitions and a logical arrangement of ideas to connect all parts of your essay to the claim you are making.
- Write a conclusion that follows from the argument your essay has made.

# Writing the Constitution

*Writing Assignment 2*

## Teacher Instructions

*The College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard for Writing*

2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

*[This standard is the basis for the corresponding No. 2 Common Core Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects.]*

### ★ Using this Assessment

These Common Core History Assessments are intended to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they study and master the content covered in their American History coursework. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

*Writing the Constitution: Writing Assessment 2* is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard for Writing 2. The Anchor Standards are the basis on which the various Common Core History/Social Studies Standards are based. This assessment asks students to write an essay that uses sources effectively to provide strong support and evidence clarifying and explaining a central idea or set of ideas and concepts.

### ★ Evaluating Student Responses to Writing Assignment 2

Essays for this assignment should be scored according to these criteria.

- How well does the introduction address the prompt with a clear, well-defined central idea and a preview of supporting ideas?
- Does the essay use evidence from many of the documents assigned for this task?
- Is the evidence used effectively to support the essay's key ideas and concepts?
- Does the essay engage in careful reasoning and a logical flow of one idea to the next?
- Are ideas presented using precise language, effective transitions, and domain-specific vocabulary?
- Does the essay include an effective conclusion supporting its key ideas?
- How well does the essay follow rules of usage, spelling and punctuation?

## Writing the Constitution: Writing Assignment 2

**The Standard:** Write an informative/explanatory essay clearly describing and explaining historical events and trends.

### The Question

It is early in 1787. Pretend you are an official in the Massachusetts state government. Some members of the Massachusetts state legislature know you and know you favor the creation of a stronger federal government. They hear that several people from Massachusetts are going to Philadelphia to meet in May to consider changes to the Articles of Confederation. They want you to explain why such a gathering is needed. They have asked you to write a report explaining the conditions and events that have led you to your views about this. Your task in this assignment is to write an essay in response to their request.

**Documents:** Base your essay on the primary and secondary source documents in all of the Writing the Constitution Assessments.

### Instructions

- Write a brief well-organized essay that includes an introduction, one to three internal paragraphs, and a conclusion.
- Introduce the topic with a clear, well-defined central idea and preview in a general way other key ideas your essay will develop.
- Support each of your key ideas with evidence from many of the documents and with sound reasoning about that evidence.
- Include related outside information based on your background knowledge of history.
- Use transitions and a logical arrangement of ideas to connect the major parts of your essay.
- Write a conclusion that follows from and summarizes the main points your essay has made.

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[http://www.iefd.org/articles/constitution\\_for\\_the\\_few.php](http://www.iefd.org/articles/constitution_for_the_few.php).