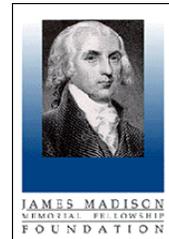


# Constitutional Conversations Study Guide

## The Printers' Role in Ratification (3:45)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z9wLVrvKEG4>



### Summary

*This short video examines the role played by America's newspaper printers in the ratification debates. Over 80% of all papers supported the new Constitution and played*

*a significant role in supporting the Federalist cause. Professor John Kaminski explains how and why the newspapers helped to drive the ratification debates.*

**Courses appropriate for this segment:** United States History, American Government

**Grade level:** 10<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade

### RECALL QUESTIONS

1. About how many papers were being published during the ratification debates?
2. How were these papers distributed geographically? How many were printed in the North vs. the South? Were more published in cities or rural areas?
3. How many were federalist-oriented? Anti-federalist? Neutral?
4. Which side of the ratification debate published first in the newspapers?

### CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. How did the federalists benefit from publishing after the anti-federalists had printed their objections to the Constitution?
2. Why do you think newspapers were the chosen media to publish opinions on the ratification debates?
3. Most papers were clearly federalist-leaning. Do you think the ratification debates would have been more robust had there been more anti-federalist or neutral papers?

### ASSESSMENT OR ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Students may read the coverage of the ratification debates over a number of weeks in the major newspapers. They can trace the different arguments presented over those weeks and compare the newspaper topics to the Constitutional Convention timelines recorded by Madison – what were newspapers covering while the Constitutional Convention met? Do their arguments overlap?

2. Students may choose a topic and read articles from two contemporary news sites that cover the same topic (preferably from the same publication date). Students may write an analysis in which they compare the coverage of the two sites, explain the bias from both sites, and theorize why the site covers the issue like it did.

## ANSWERS FOR RECALL QUESTIONS

1. 90 newspapers
2. 60 in North, 30 in South. Most published in cities (especially in the South); in the North in states like Connecticut there were more published in towns
3. 80 federalist, 6 anti-federalist, 6 neutral
4. Anti-federalists

## SUGGESTED ANSWERS FOR CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. They were able to respond to the objections of the Constitution instead of trying to come up with all the possible ways to convince readers of its value to the nation. Federalists could disprove/appease the fears of the anti-federalists, which convinced people that the Constitution was worth having.
2. Newspapers were cheap; they could be spread throughout the states quickly; they could exchange news with other papers across the country so more people could hear the arguments on the ratification debates.
3. Students may say more neutral/anti-federalists papers would have given more arguments that the federalists may have responded to or incorporated into the Constitution's creation. Or, they may argue that the nature of the federalist publications (anti-federalist arguments followed by a federalist rebuttal) covered both sides of the issue and still provided a robust debate.

## CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

1. Have students pair up and read articles from an anti-federalist and federalist newspaper (from around the same publication dates.) They could use a t-chart to compare views about strong/weak central government, the Articles of Confederation, and Bill of Rights.
2. Assign students a position: anti-federalist or federalist. Have them write an editorial/letter to the editor for an actual newspaper of the period that explains their position. Students should include the newspaper name, town, and state where they would have submitted their editorial.