

## Unit 3

# Deconstructed DBQ Document Set and Teacher Context

## Teacher Resource

### Resource Overview

This document provides teacher support for implementing the Unit 3: Constitution and Ratification. Deconstructed DBQ in the middle school classroom. It includes five documents, each designed to help students explore connections to the DBQ question while understanding the relevant historical context.

Use the context in this document to guide your students in making these connections and help them engage with the primary sources effectively.

**Scaffolding note:** For students who need additional support, you can assign or allow them to choose 2-3 documents. For students who need more of a challenge, provide all documents and require them to use each source at least once in their analysis.

### Document Exposure Table

This table shows where each primary source in the Deconstructed DBQ appears throughout the unit. Use this overview to help with lesson planning, reinforce key concepts, or activate prior-knowledge before students engage with the full DBQ.

**Teacher note:** As students move through the curriculum, they encounter more documents overall, but each one appears fewer times. This gradual decrease in exposure is intentional—it helps shift the responsibility for document analysis to the student, supporting the development of independent thinking and source analysis skills over time.

Document	New or Repeated Exposure	Unit Resources Using the Document
Document A: Brutus 1 by Robert Yates (1787)	Repeated	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <i>Federalists vs. Anti-Federalists</i> Lesson Plan</li><li>2. <i>Sorting Views of the Federalists and Anti-Federalists</i> Lesson Plan</li></ol>

Document B: Thomas Jefferson to James Madison (1787)	New	
Document C: Constitution Preamble (1787)	Repeated	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Constitutional Principles: Representative Government</i> Video Viewing Guide</li> <li>2. <i>Federalists vs. Anti-Federalists</i> Lesson Plan</li> </ol>
Document D: James Madison to Thomas Jefferson (1788)	Repeated	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Constitutional Principles: Representative Government</i> Video Viewing Guide</li> <li>2. <i>Federalists vs. Anti-Federalists</i> Lesson Plan</li> </ol>
Document E: Federalist #51 James Madison (1788)	Repeated	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Constitutional Principles: Representative Government</i> Video Viewing Guide</li> <li>2. <i>Federalists vs. Anti-Federalists</i> Lesson Plan</li> <li>3. <i>Sorting Views of the Federalists and Anti-Federalists</i> Lesson Plan</li> </ol>

## Document Set with Teacher Context

Each Deconstructed DBQ document includes background information to help teachers understand each source. The information is organized by key concepts addressed in the DBQ question.

**Scaffolding note:** You can share some or all of this information with students to help them better understand the documents.

## Documents

### Document A: *Brutus 1* by Robert Yates (1787)

“In so extensive a republic, the great officers of government would soon become above the control of the people, and abuse their power to the purpose of **aggrandizing** themselves, and oppressing them. The people, in general, would be acquainted with very few of their rulers. The elections in so large a republic will be managed by few men, meeting together and agreeing upon the candidates whom they please, and they will, by such means, always elect those who will be **subservient** to their views. This will be the case in a large republic; but in a small one, the interest of the public will be more readily perceived, better understood, and more within the reach of every citizen; abuses of power could be examined with more ease and be corrected sooner.”

**aggrandizing:** increasing power, wealth or status

**subservient:** obedient, submissive, obey without questioning

## Teacher Context

*Brutus 1*, likely written by Robert Yates, is one of the most well-known Anti-Federalist papers. Published in 1787, it outlined an argument in opposition to the proposed Constitution. *Brutus 1* was written under the pseudonym "Brutus," likely to protect the identity of the writer. In it, he argued that the Constitution would create a federal government that was too powerful and distant from the people, ultimately leading to tyranny. He feared that a large republic would make it difficult for citizens to hold their leaders accountable and that representatives would act in their own self-interest rather than in the public's best interest. *Brutus* also expressed concerns about the Necessary and Proper Clause and the Supremacy Clause, believing these provisions would give the federal government unlimited power, eroding state sovereignty and individual rights.

## Principles Highlighted in Brutus 1

1. **Limited Government** – Brutus feared that the new Constitution would create a central government too strong to be effectively checked by the people or the states.
2. **Republicanism and Representation** – He argued that in a large republic, elected officials would be too distant from the people, leading to corruption and a lack of true representation. He believed that a smaller republic would better reflect the will of the people.
3. **Federalism** – Brutus emphasized the importance of state governments in protecting individual liberties and maintaining government accountability. He worried that the Constitution would strip states of their power.
4. **Protection of Individual Rights** – He expressed concerns that the Constitution lacked a Bill of Rights to safeguard fundamental liberties, a key issue that Anti-Federalists later pushed for.

## Stance on the Constitution

Brutus opposed the ratification of the Constitution, arguing that it concentrated too much power in the hands of the federal government at the expense of state authority and individual freedoms. He predicted that the federal government would expand its power over time, reducing the influence of the people.

## Impact on the Federalist vs. Anti-Federalist Debate

Brutus's arguments played a crucial role in the ratification debate by highlighting Anti-Federalist concerns about centralized power. Federalists, led by figures like Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, countered these concerns in *The Federalist Papers*, particularly in *Federalist #10* and *Federalist #51*. Madison argued that a large republic would actually prevent the rise of factions and tyranny, as competing interests would balance each other out.

Brutus's emphasis on the need for a Bill of Rights influenced the eventual addition of the first ten amendments to the Constitution in 1791. The Anti-Federalists' insistence on protecting individual liberties ultimately shaped the Constitution by ensuring explicit protections for speech, religion, and due process.

In summary, *Brutus 1* was a foundational Anti-Federalist text that raised critical concerns about federal power, representation, and individual rights. While the Federalists won the ratification debate, Brutus's arguments contributed to lasting discussions on government accountability and the protection of personal freedoms.

## Document B: Thomas Jefferson to James Madison (1787)

First the **omission** of a bill of rights providing clearly & without the aid of **sophisms** for freedom of religion, freedom of the press, protection against standing armies, restriction against monopolies, the eternal & unremitting force of the habeas corpus laws, and trials by jury in all matters of fact triable by the laws of the land & not by the law of Nations. To say, as **Mr. Wilson** does, that a bill of rights was not necessary because all is reserved in the case of the general government which is not given, while in the particular ones all is given which is not reserved, might do for the Audience to whom it was addressed, but is surely a **gratis dictum**, opposed by strong inferences from the body of the instrument, as well as from the omission of the clause of our present confederation which had declared that in express terms ... . Let me add that a bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth, general or particular, & what no just government should refuse or rest on inference ... .

**omission:** lack of including

**sophisms:** an argument used to deceive

**Mr. Wilson:** James Wilson, a Federalist that argued against the need for a Bill of Rights

**gratis dictum:** an opinion

### Teacher Context

In this letter, Thomas Jefferson expresses his concerns about the proposed Constitution, specifically its lack of a bill of rights. While he does not completely oppose the Constitution, he believes that essential individual liberties must be explicitly protected. Jefferson argues that fundamental rights such as freedom of religion, freedom of the press, protection against standing armies, and trial by jury should be clearly stated rather than left to interpretation. He criticizes the argument made by Federalist James Wilson that a bill of rights is unnecessary because any powers not granted to the federal government are automatically reserved to the people or the states. Jefferson insists that a just government should not rely on assumptions but should explicitly safeguard citizens' rights.

Principles Highlighted in the Document

- 1. **Protection of Individual Rights** – Jefferson strongly advocates for explicit protections of fundamental freedoms, arguing that all governments should guarantee these rights.
- 2. **Limited Government** – He is concerned about the potential for government overreach and emphasizes the need for legal safeguards against abuses of power.
- 3. **Rule of Law & Due Process** – His support for habeas corpus and trial by jury underscores his commitment to ensuring that legal protections are upheld for all citizens.

Stance on the Constitution

Jefferson does not outright reject the Constitution, but he believes it is incomplete without a bill of rights. He sees this omission as a significant flaw that needs to be corrected. His position aligns with the Anti-Federalists, who demanded explicit protections for individual liberties before they would support ratification. However, unlike some Anti-Federalists who wanted to reject the Constitution outright, Jefferson appears more open to compromise.

Impact on the Federalist vs. Anti-Federalist Debate

Jefferson’s insistence on a bill of rights influenced the ratification debate by reinforcing Anti-Federalist concerns about the potential dangers of a powerful federal government. The Federalists, led by figures like James Madison and Alexander Hamilton, initially argued that a bill of rights was unnecessary because the Constitution already limited government power. However, pressure from Jefferson and the Anti-Federalists eventually led to the addition of the Bill of Rights in 1791 as the first ten amendments to the Constitution.

Jefferson’s arguments played a key role in shaping American political thought, reinforcing the principle that governments must explicitly guarantee personal freedoms. His influence ensured that the new government would prioritize individual rights, setting a precedent for constitutional protections that endure today.

Document C: Constitution Preamble (1787)

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do <b>ordain</b> and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.	<b>ordain:</b> create officially
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## Teacher Context

The Preamble to the Constitution serves as an introduction to the document, outlining the fundamental purposes and guiding principles of the new government. It begins with the phrase “*We the People*,” emphasizing that the authority of the government comes from the citizens. The Preamble states the key objectives of the Constitution, including forming a stronger union, ensuring justice, maintaining peace within the country, providing defense against external threats, promoting the well-being of citizens, and protecting liberty for future generations. While the Preamble itself does not grant any specific powers, it establishes the overarching goals of the Constitution and reflects the Framers' vision for the new government.

### Principles Highlighted in the Document

1. **Popular Sovereignty** – The government derives its power from the people, reinforcing the idea that authority is not imposed by a monarch or ruling elite but established by the collective will of the citizens.
2. **Justice and Rule of Law** – The Constitution aims to create a legal system that upholds fairness and ensures equal protection under the law.
3. **Federalism and National Unity** – The phrase “a more perfect Union” highlights the need for a stronger central government to replace the weaker Articles of Confederation while still balancing power between states and the national government.
4. **Liberty and Future Generations** – The Constitution is designed to protect individual freedoms not just for the present but for future Americans.

### Stance on the Constitution

As the introduction to the Constitution, the Preamble reflects the Federalist vision of a strong but just government that balances national unity with individual rights. It establishes a broad framework for governance that prioritizes stability, security, and the well-being of the people. Federalists saw the Preamble as evidence that the new government would serve the interests of all citizens, not just a privileged few. However, Anti-Federalists were skeptical, arguing that without explicit protections (such as a bill of rights), the Constitution could still enable government overreach.

### Impact on the Federalist vs. Anti-Federalist Debate

The Preamble played a significant role in the ratification debate by framing the Constitution as a means to create a just and functional government that served the people. Federalists used the Preamble to argue that the Constitution would provide stability and protection while ensuring that the government remained accountable to the people. Anti-Federalists, however, remained concerned that the document did not go far enough in explicitly protecting individual rights. Their insistence on additional safeguards ultimately led to the adoption of the Bill of Rights in 1791, ensuring that

the Constitution's broad goals were accompanied by specific protections for personal freedoms.

**Document D: James Madison to Thomas Jefferson (1788)**

<p>What use then it may be asked can a bill of rights serve in popular Governments? I answer the two following which though less essential than in other Governments, sufficiently recommend the precaution. 1. The political truths declared in that solemn manner acquire by degrees the character of fundamental <b>maxims</b> of free Government, and as they become incorporated with the national sentiment, counteract the impulses of interest and passion. 2. Altho' it be generally true as above stated that the danger of oppression lies in the interested majorities of the people</p>	<p><b>maxims:</b> truths</p>
<p>rather than in <b>usurped</b> acts of the Government, yet there may be occasions on which the evil may spring from the latter sources; and on such, a bill of rights will be a good ground for an appeal to the sense of the community. Perhaps too there may be a certain degree of danger, that a succession of artful and ambitious rulers, may by gradual &amp; well-timed advances, finally erect an independent Government on the subversion of liberty. Should this danger exist at all, it is prudent to guard <b>agst.</b> it, especially when the precaution can do no injury. At the same time I must own that I see no tendency in our governments to danger on that side.</p>	<p><b>usurped:</b> illegal or by force</p> <p><b>agst:</b> against</p>



## Teacher Context

In this letter, James Madison responds to Thomas Jefferson's concerns about the absence of a bill of rights in the U.S. Constitution. While Madison had previously argued that a bill of rights was unnecessary in a government based on popular sovereignty, he acknowledges that such a document could still serve important purposes. He outlines two main benefits: first, a bill of rights would help establish fundamental principles of free government, shaping national beliefs over time. Second, while the greatest threat to liberty often comes from the tyranny of the majority rather than government overreach, a bill of rights could still serve as a safeguard against potential abuses of power. Although Madison remains skeptical that the federal government will become oppressive, he concedes that taking precautions against such a possibility is wise.

### Principles Highlighted in the Document

1. **Republicanism** – Madison discusses the balance between majority rule and the protection of minority rights, a key principle in a representative democracy.
2. **Checks Against Tyranny** – Even though Madison does not see an immediate threat of government oppression, he concedes that a bill of rights could serve as a defense against gradual power accumulation.

### Stance on the Constitution

Madison, a leading Federalist, initially did not believe a bill of rights was necessary, arguing that the Constitution's structure already protected liberties. However, in this letter, he acknowledges the practical and symbolic importance of such a document. He still maintains that the greater threat to liberty comes from majority rule rather than from government overreach, but he concedes that adding explicit protections is a reasonable precaution. This shift in Madison's perspective would eventually lead to his role in drafting the Bill of Rights.

### Impact on the Federalist vs. Anti-Federalist Debate

Madison's letter reflects the growing Federalist willingness to compromise on the Bill of Rights. While the Anti-Federalists had strongly opposed ratification without explicit protections for individual liberties, Madison and other Federalists came to see the Bill of Rights as a way to ease those concerns without fundamentally altering the Constitution's framework. His arguments helped pave the way for the first ten amendments, which were adopted in 1791. This compromise played a crucial role in securing broader support for the new government while addressing fears of centralized power.

Ultimately, Madison's evolving stance on the Bill of Rights illustrates how the ratification debate shaped the early development of the Constitution, reinforcing the idea that constitutional principles should be both structurally embedded and explicitly stated.

## Document E: *Federalist* #51 James Madison (1788)

“Ambition must be made to counteract ambition. The interest of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place. It may be a reflection on human nature, that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government. But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place **oblige** it to control itself.”

**oblige:** to make (someone or something) act

### Teacher Context

In *Federalist* # 51, James Madison addresses the need for a government that can both govern effectively and restrain itself from abusing power. He argues that because human nature is flawed—since “if men were angels, no government would be necessary”—a well-structured government must be designed to prevent tyranny. Madison proposes that ambition should be counteracted by ambition, meaning that competing interests within the government will serve as checks against one another. This reflects the broader *Federalist* argument that the Constitution’s system of separation of powers and checks and balances will safeguard liberty by ensuring that no single branch becomes too powerful.

#### Principles Highlighted in the Document

1. **Separation of Powers** – Madison emphasizes that the executive, legislative, and judicial branches must be distinct and have the ability to check one another to prevent abuse.
2. **Checks and Balances** – Government must be structured so that each branch has the power to resist encroachments from the others, ensuring a balance of power.
3. **Limited Government** – Even though the government must have enough authority to maintain order, it must also have internal controls to prevent it from becoming oppressive.

## Stance on the Constitution

Madison strongly supports the Constitution, arguing that its structure naturally protects against tyranny. He believes that a well-designed system of government—rather than relying on the virtue of individual leaders—is the key to preserving liberty. By distributing power across different branches and levels of government, the Constitution ensures that ambition and self-interest work to prevent any single person or group from gaining too much control.

## Impact on the Federalist vs. Anti-Federalist Debate

Federalists used *Federalist* #51 to defend the Constitution against Anti-Federalist claims that the new government would become too powerful. Madison's argument reassured skeptics that the Constitution contained built-in protections against tyranny. However, Anti-Federalists remained concerned that these structural safeguards were not enough and continued to push for explicit protections of individual rights, leading to the eventual adoption of the Bill of Rights.

Madison's ideas in *Federalist* #51 continue to be foundational in American political thought, shaping discussions about the balance of power, the role of government, and constitutional protections against tyranny.

