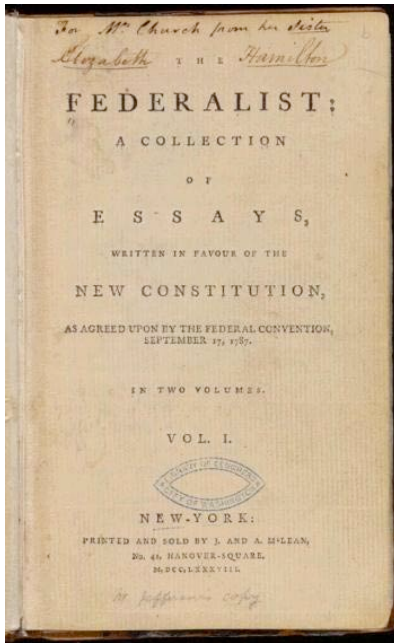


**Oakland Unified School District
8th Grade – U.S. History Assessment
Fall Semester, 2008-2009
Student DBQ Assessment Packet**

Topic:

Was the creation of the U.S. Constitution good for the people of the United States?



PART ONE: What are the most important duties of a good government?

Decide which of the following duties are very important and which are less important.

Label the very important duties with a “+” and the less important duties with a “-.”

_____ protect the rights of individuals (for example, speech, religion, privacy, rights of people accused of crimes)

_____ stop individual leaders from gaining too much power

_____ have the power to defend the country, provide services, and resolve disagreements

_____ protect its least fortunate people

_____ allow local governments to have some power

_____ discuss important decisions publicly, so that all people can listen and make comments

List two important duties of a good government that are not listed above:

a. _____

b. _____

Look at the items that you marked as *very important*. Why do you think that these duties of government are very important?

Look at the items that you marked as *less important*. Why do you think that these duties of government are less important?

PART TWO: Primary Sources – Statements made by people who were living at the time of the creation of the Constitution.

In your opinion, does the quote suggest that the Constitution was good for the people? Circle your choice in each box.

Source #1

<p>“It must be by this time evident to all men of reflection that the Articles of Confederation is a system so incredibly vicious and unsound that it needs an entire change.” - Alexander Hamilton, 1787 <i>Delegate from New York to the Constitutional Convention and supporter of the Constitution</i></p>	<p>Good Not Good</p>
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Source #2

<p>“In the government of America, the power surrendered by the people is first divided between two distinct governments (state level and national level). The different governments will control each other, at the same time that each will be controlled by itself. Therefore, a double security exists to protect the rights of the people.” - James Madison, quote from Federalist no. 51, 1788 <i>Madison is often considered the “Father of the Constitution,” as his ideas formed the basis of much of the Constitution.</i></p>	<p>Good Not Good</p>
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Source #3

<p>"We contended with Great Britain because they claimed a right to tax us and bind us in all cases whatever. And does not this Constitution do the same? These lawyers, and men of learning, and moneyed men that talk so finely to make us poor illiterate people swallow down the pill – they expect to be managers of this Constitution, and get all the power and all the money into their own hands, and then they will swallow up all us little folk.” - Amos Singletary, 1788 <i>An anti-federalist farmer from the state of Massachusetts.</i></p>	<p>Good Not Good</p>
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Source #4

<p>“A bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth, and what no government should refuse.” - Thomas Jefferson, letter to Madison, 1788 <i>Jefferson was ambassador to France and was absent from the Constitutional Convention</i></p>	<p>Good Not Good</p>
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Source #5

<p>“These States, who have been fighting for liberty and consider themselves as the highest and most noble example of it, cannot agree to any political Constitution, unless it indulges and allows them to enslave their fellow men.” - Samuel Hopkins, 1788 <i>An abolitionist (a person against the idea of slavery) from Connecticut,</i></p>	<p>Good Not Good</p>
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Source #6

<p>“Checks and balances among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches controls the abuses of government. It will ensure that no individual or group will gain too much power. Ambition must be made to counteract ambition. In building a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty is that you must first allow the government to control the governed; and also force it to control itself.” - James Madison, quote from Federalist no. 51, 1788</p>	<p>Good Not Good</p>
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Primary Source Responses

In the space provided, write what you think the author of each statement was saying about the Constitution.

<p>“It must be by this time evident to all men of reflection that the Articles of Confederation is a system so incredibly vicious and unsound that it needs an entire change.”</p> <p>- Alexander Hamilton, 1787</p>	<p>Hamilton <u>suggests</u> that the Constitution was good because</p>
<p>“In the government of America, the power surrendered by the people is first divided between two distinct governments (state level and national level). The different governments will control each other, at the same time that each will be controlled by itself. Therefore, a double security exists to protect the rights of the people.”</p> <p>- James Madison, 1788</p>	<p>Madison <u>illustrates</u> that the Constitution was</p>
<p>“We contended with Great Britain because they claimed a right to tax us and bind us in all cases whatever. And does not this Constitution do the same? These lawyers, and men of learning, and moneyed men that talk so finely to make us poor illiterate people swallow down the pill – they expect to be managers of this Constitution, and get all the power and all the money into their own hands, and then they will swallow up all us little folk.”</p> <p>- Amos Singletary, 1788</p>	<p>Singletary <u>argues</u> that the Constitution was</p>

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- James Madison, 1788

PART THREE: Secondary Source Analysis – Statements made by historians about the Constitution

*In your opinion, does the quote suggest that the Constitution was good for the people?
Circle your choice in each box.*

Historian #1

<p>“The Three-Fifths Compromise provided what might be called negative representation for slaves, as it actually increased the power of their masters in the legislature and therefore contributed to the continuation of slavery.”</p> <p>- from “Slavery and the Constitution,” Robin Einhorn, 2007</p>	<p>Good</p> <p>Not Good</p>
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Historian #2

<p>“Particularly through its amendments, the Constitution guarantees every American fundamental rights and protections. Our Constitution created an effective national government, one that balances a wide range of powers with specific limits... Despite the fact that it has existed for over two hundred years, the Constitution has continued to satisfy the needs of a nation that has grown enormously in size and population, and has seen a vast growth in both its international and national responsibilities.”</p> <p>- from <u>Our Constitution</u>, Donald Ritchie, p. 10, 2006</p>	<p>Good</p> <p>Not Good</p>
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Historian #3

<p>“For Indians, the first Americans, the Revolution and the Constitution meant total disaster. Until 1776 they had been able to join sides with European invaders who were fighting each other. Now the United States stood supreme. The Indians who lived east of Mississippi quickly learned that they were unprotected. Settlers who wanted their land usually got it.”</p> <p>- from <u>Who Built America?</u>, Herbert Gutman, p. 175, 1988</p>	<p>Good</p> <p>Not Good</p>
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Historian #4

<p>“Some scholars think the creation of the Constitution was a coup d’etat (<i>seizure of an existing government by a small group</i>) because this process did not follow the laws of the Articles of Confederation. It also ignored the original instructions of Congress and the states that any changes to the Articles must be approved by the states. These scholars believe that if a popular election had been held, the majority of voters would have rejected the Constitution.”</p> <p>- from “Constitutional Convention,” Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia 2008</p>	<p>Good</p> <p>Not Good</p>
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Secondary Source Responses

In the space provided, write what you think the author of each statement was saying about the Constitution.

“The Three-Fifths Compromise provided what might be called negative representation for slaves, as it actually increased the power of their masters in the legislature and therefore contributed to the continuation of slavery.”

- from “Slavery and the Constitution,”
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“Particularly through its amendments, the Constitution guarantees every American fundamental rights and protections. Our Constitution created an effective national government, one that balances a wide range of powers with specific limits... Despite the fact that it has existed for over two hundred years, the Constitution has continued to satisfy the needs of a nation that has grown enormously in size and population, and has seen a vast growth in both its international and national responsibilities.”

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- from “Constitutional Convention,” Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia 2008

PART FOUR: Thinking again; important duties of a good government...

Think about what you have learned about the Constitution. Then look at the following list of the duties of government, which is the same as the list in Part One.

If a duty was very important to the writers of the Constitution, and was included in the Constitution, mark it with a “+.” If a duty was less important to the writers, and is not emphasized in the Constitution, mark it with a “-.”

_____ protect the rights of individuals (for example, speech, religion, privacy, rights of people accused of crimes)

_____ stop individual leaders from gaining too much power

_____ have the power to defend the country, provide services, and resolve disagreements

_____ protect its least fortunate people

_____ allow local governments to have some power

_____ discuss important decisions publicly, so that all people can listen and make comments

Compare your responses from Part One with the responses above. What similarities and differences do you notice?

Are your ideas about the duties of a good government similar to the ideas of the writers of the Constitution? Explain and give examples.

PART FIVE: Final Assignment - Planning the Essay

The Question:

Was the creation of the U.S. Constitution good for the people of the United States?

1. Write your thesis statement in the space below. This statement is your answer to the above question.

2. What information and evidence will you use to support or back up your statement?
(Jot down four pieces of evidence or information from the packet)

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

3. What information or evidence will you use to develop a counter argument? Why are people who argue for the other positions wrong?
(Jot down two pieces of evidence or information from the packet)

a. _____

b. _____

Writing the Essay:

Check the box that represents your judgment.

- I think** that the creation of U.S. Constitution was good for the people of the United States of America.
- I do not think** that the creation of the U.S. Constitution was good for the people of the United States of America.

Now that you have made your judgment your task is to support this decision by writing an essay that responds to the following question:

“Was the creation of the U.S. Constitution good for the people of the United States?”

Write a multi-paragraph essay that answers this question. Your answer should support your opinion with

- information learned in class
- evidence that supports each reason in the form of either primary or secondary source (*remember to introduce and explain how the quote supports your thesis*)
- acknowledgement of other positions and counterarguments

Use the checklist below to make sure that your essay is well written and complete. Begin your essay on the following page.

An excellent piece of historical writing contains the following:

- ___ A title that prepares the reader for the specific topic and content of the essay
- ___ A thoughtful, well-developed thesis that clearly identifies your point-of-view and argument on the question.
- ___ An introduction that contains the thesis, maps out (identifies) the major reasons used to support your thesis, and controls the flow of the essay.
- ___ Body paragraphs, each addressing one of your major reasons, which contain a topic sentence and supporting evidence, and link back to the argument (thesis) you make in your introduction
- ___ Use of primary and secondary sources, connection between sources, and explanation of what sources mean
- ___ Counterargument - identification and response to different ideas about the creation of the Constitution.
- ___ Fluid writing, precise and lively language, and organization that moves your argument forward
- ___ A confident conclusion that summarizes arguments and adds significance

