

A Visual Interpretation of Ratification Metaphors

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Primary Sources Used to Support the Lesson:

Metaphors, Similes, and Analogies Used to Describe the Constitution during the Ratification Debate

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will explore metaphor as a rhetorical strategy in the ratification of the Constitution
- Students will bridge written metaphor to visual representation
- Students will evaluate metaphors to identify meaning and significance

Procedures:

- 1) Define **metaphor**. Using common and popular examples, explain that an author uses a metaphor when he or she states that something is but does not use “like” or “as.”
 - a. For example: The snow was a blanket, the world is a stage, you are my sunshine.
 - b. Ask the students to practice generating their own metaphors for high interest topics:
 - i. Ex: The football game was....; the dance is; my weekend is
- 2) Connect to historical content
 - a. Metaphors were frequently used in the debates about the ratification of the constitution
 - b. Both those who supported and those who opposed the constitution used metaphors to build their argument.
 - c. Share list of [metaphors from CSAC website](#) with students. Using a resource to look up unfamiliar terms, ask students to select a metaphor they understand and can explain.
- 3) Create a visual interpretation of the metaphor they have selected. Ask: What simple image could summarize this metaphor?
 - a. Helpful devices may include: speech bubbles, stick figures, simple illustrations, labels, arrows
 - b. Write the metaphor clearly on the page. Below the image, include the historical citation of when this was used and where it was printed.
- 4) Organize the visual interpretations
 - a. Create a spectrum across the classroom with ends reading “positive interpretation of the Constitution” and “negative interpretation of the Constitution.”
 - b. Have students tape the visual interpretations in their appropriate location on the spectrum.
- 5) Gallery Walk
 - a. Give the students 5-10 minutes to stroll the images created by their classmates. Have them track their answers to these questions on a note sheet.
 - i. Which metaphors would most likely persuade someone NOT to ratify the Constitution? Why?
 - ii. Which metaphors would most likely persuade someone to ratify the

Constitution? Why?

- b. Give the students post-it notes to offer feedback on the writing their peers have done. Project sentence starters, like
 - i. I like how you...
 - ii. It makes sense how you...
 - iii. One question I have about this metaphor is...
 - iv. A connection I can make is...
 - v. I wonder how...
- 6) Reflection
- a. Ask the students to draw conclusions about the trends in the metaphors we studied. What strategies were the most powerful? What strategies were the most persuasive? What did the metaphors have in common? How can a metaphor be an effective rhetorical strategy, historically and presently? What perspectives were missing from the metaphors our class drew?

Extending the lesson:

- Research the historical circulation of the papers who published these metaphors. Given circulation numbers, which metaphors were most likely to be heard? Which areas were the most vocal in using metaphor to build an argument about ratification?
- Use supporting primary source material from the [CSAC website](#) to identify key figures who might endorse selected metaphors.
- Connect with another teacher or content expert who teaches a similar topic. Arrange a cross-class gallery walk to solicit feedback about the visual metaphors by individuals beyond just students in your school.
- Research contemporary use of metaphor by political leaders. Compare modern with historical use.