

The States and the Ratification Process: Using Geography To Teach the Ratification of the Constitution

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Links to Primary Sources to Support the Lesson:

1. A [packets of maps](#) illustrating the votes in each state's convention.
2. A [web page containing essays](#) relating to the states and the ratification process.

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will interpret maps
- Students will analyze maps in the context of support or opposition to the Constitution
- Students will make connections between geography and politics

Procedures:

- 1) Using one of the maps as an example (New York would work well for this) have the whole class contribute to a discussion about where support for the Constitution was strongest and where it was weakest. Invite speculation about why it seems to break down along geographical lines.
- 2) Form smaller groups and give each group a different map of a state where the vote was somewhat close: New Hampshire, Virginia, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. (Save Rhode Island for later, since they do not ratify until last. Use as a follow up.) Encourage students to talk about what the maps can tell them. Possible questions:
 - What patterns are there in the areas that support or don't support the Constitution in each state? Do they tend to be near each other or scattered? What geographical features unite or divide them?
 - Does an area's proximity to a city have an effect on its support for the Constitution? Why?
 - Does proximity to a port city have an effect? Why or why not?
 - Is an area more likely to support the Constitution if it is closer to the ocean? Why or why not?
- 3) Connecticut, Maryland, South Carolina can be added to the list for small group work, or be examined by the class as a whole later. Do these states follow the same pattern as the others? What could be the reasons for support for/opposition to the Constitution to be concentrated in the areas where it is?

Extending the lesson:

- Consider the case of Rhode Island, but in the context of its late ratification and the pressure of being “outside” the union for a short time. Do the same geographical influences hold true for Rhode Island? Where does support for the Constitution seem strongest? Where weakest? Why?
- Use supporting primary source material from the CSAC website (see link above) to look at the stated issues of the time regarding support or opposition to the Constitution in a chosen state. Are issues of commerce and banking linked to geography? Where is political power concentrated in the state? What occupations or even social classes were more likely to support the Constitution and why?
- What geographical issues might lie behind the ratification in Delaware, New Jersey, and Georgia?

*Note: Map and introductory essay for North Carolina were not yet available when this lesson was created. Feel free to add North Carolina to the Rhode Island extension idea when it is available.

State Conventions Vote and Population Information

State	Vote	Population (Approx)	Ratio (Approx)
Delaware	30-0	59,000	1/1960
Pennsylvania	46-23	434,000	1/6300
New Jersey	38-0	184,000	1/4800
Georgia	26-0	82,600	1/3200
Connecticut	128-40	238,000	1/1400
Massachusetts	187-168	379,000	1/1100
Maryland	63-11	320,000	1/4300
South Carolina	149-73	249,000	1/1100
New Hampshire	57-47	142,000	1/1400
Virginia	89-79	748,000	1/4400
New York	30-27	340,000	1/5900
North Carolina	194-77	394,000	1/1400
Rhode Island	34-32	69,000	1/1000
	1071-577	3,638,000	1/3000