

American Government & Politics: A Christian Worldview.
Interpretation Showdown, Part 1 (15–20 Minutes)

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

Goal

Students see how Nationalists could interpret actual constitutional wording broadly—and why (the real) Federalists were concerned about it.

Instructions

1. Together, read the instructions.
2. Give students 8-10 minutes to answer the questions INDIVIDUALLY, then in pairs/small groups.
3. Ask for volunteers to share their answers.

Wrap-up/Debrief

Ask students:

- Which phrase was easiest to “stretch”?
- Which wording seemed the most dangerous—something that could lead to “misinterpretation” by government officials who seek power over others?
- Were Federalists’ fears reasonable?
- What is inherently iffy about phrasing that everyone agrees immediately can be “interpreted” in different ways?

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Interpretation Showdown, Part 1

Each one of the quotes below is pulled directly from the U.S. Constitution. For each quote:

- Explain how a Nationalist could interpret it broadly.
- Explain why a Federalist might object.

Be creative, but believable!

ROUND 1 – “Necessary and Proper”

“The Congress shall have Power...to make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers....” (Article I, Section 8)

Broad Nationalist Interpretation –

Anti-Federalist Objection –

ROUND 2 – “General Welfare”

“The Congress shall have Power To lay and collect Taxes...to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States....” (Article I, Section 8)

Broad Nationalist Interpretation –

Anti-Federalist Objection –

ROUND 3 – “Supreme Law of the Land”

“This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof...shall be the supreme Law of the Land...” (Article VI)

Broad Nationalist Interpretation –

Anti-Federalist Objection –

ROUND 4 – “Regulate Commerce”

“The Congress shall have Power...To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States....” (Article I, Section 8)

Broad Nationalist Interpretation –

Anti-Federalist Objection –

