

American Government & Politics: A Christian Worldview.
Interpretation Showdown, Part 2 (15–20 Minutes)

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

Goal

The second round of students learning 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, which will certainly vary!
4. If necessary, push students to see how these phrases could be “interpreted” to give the U.S. government to violate individual rights and/or to dangerously empower the U.S. government.

Wrap-up/Debrief

Ask students these questions (they’re the same ones from Part 1; see if students remember!):

- 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 2

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 – “Habeas Corpus”

“The privilege of the writ of habeas corpus shall not be suspended, unless when in cases of rebellion or invasion the public safety may require it.” (Article I, Section 9)

Broad Nationalist Interpretation –

Anti-Federalist Objection –

ROUND 2 – “Commander in Chief”

“He [the President] shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States....” (Article II, Section 2)

Broad Nationalist Interpretation –

Anti-Federalist Objection –

ROUND 3 – “Private Property Taken”

“Nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.” (Fifth Amendment)

Broad Nationalist Interpretation –

Anti-Federalist Objection –

ROUND 4 – “Freedom of Speech”

“Congress shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech....” (First Amendment)

Broad Nationalist Interpretation –

Anti-Federalist Objection –

