SS.7.C.1.8 Benchmark Clarification 1: Students will identify the viewpoints of the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists about the ratification of the U.S. Constitution.

The Federalists, who spread their views in writings called the Federalist Papers, wanted the states to ratify the Constitution as written in 1787. This would create a federal system of government in the United States where the central government would share power with the states. Federalists believed that the way the government was set up under the new Constitution provided protection for people’s rights in the following ways:

- Constitutional big ideas such as separation of powers and the system of checks and balances protected the people because no branch of government could get too strong.
- By not listing specific rights in the Constitution, the people were protected better than they would be if the rights were actually listed. This is because it is impossible to list all of the rights of the people. Listing any specific rights might have meant the government could violate any unenumerated (not listed) rights.
- Federalists thought that the Constitution would better unite the country and would lead to the growth of more business than would be possible if the Articles of Confederation were kept as the system of government.

The Anti-Federalists, who published their views as the Anti-Federalist Papers, were against the ratification of the Constitution and only wanted to make minor changes to the government as set up under the Articles of Confederation. They thought that the Constitution made a national government that was too strong and thought that the Constitution shouldn’t be passed for the following reasons:

- Too much power would be taken away from the states.
- The Constitution needed a specific listing of rights to protect the people from the national government.
- The national government would be allowed to keep an army in times of peace.
- The “necessary and proper” clause, also known as the “elastic clause,” of the Constitution would give too much power to the Congress.
- The Executive Branch would be too strong.
- The system of government (federalism) described in the Constitution was too new and untested – few governments around the world had tried such a method.
- The way that the Constitution was to be ratified would conflict with the Articles of Confederation (which required unanimous consent of all 13 states for any amendments; the ratification of the Constitution required 9 of 13 states in order for the new government to take effect).
- A country the size of the United States could not be governed by one central government.

Anti-Federalist Papers - a series of essays written to counter and defeat the proposed U.S. Constitution
Anti-Federalists - a group of people in the early United States who opposed ratification of the U.S. Constitution because they feared a strong national government and a lack of protection for individual rights
Federalist Papers - a series of essays written to explain and defend the proposed U.S. Constitution
Federalists - a group of people in the early United States who favored the establishment of a strong national government and who worked for ratification of the U.S. Constitution
necessary and proper clause - the power of Congress to make laws they view as necessary and proper to carry out their enumerated powers; also known as the elastic clause
ratify - to confirm by expressing consent, approval, or formal sanction