

Activity 2**Document-Based Activity**
Debating the Constitution**Using Source Materials**

HISTORICAL CONTEXT In May 1787 delegates met in Philadelphia to revise the Articles of Confederation. By September these men had written a Constitution, thereby proposing a new system of government. Each state then organized a ratifying convention to vote on the new document. Meanwhile, the Constitution was fiercely debated in the press, in public meetings, and on street corners. By July 1788, despite opposition from those who feared that a central government would have too much power, 11 states had ratified the document—two more states than necessary for it to become law. By 1790 all 13 states had approved the Constitution.

TASK Using information from the documents and your knowledge of American history, answer the questions that follow each document in Part A. Your answers to the questions will help you write the Part B essay.

Part A

DIRECTIONS Examine the following documents and answer the short-answer questions that follow each document.

DOCUMENT 1

The day on which we adopt the present proposed plan of government, from that moment we may Justly date the loss of American liberty . . . why is not the liberty of the press provided for? why will the Congress have power to alter the plan . . . of [choosing] Representatives? why will they have power to lay direct Taxes? why will they have power to keep Standing Armies in time of peace? why will they have power to make laws in direct contradiction to the forms of government established in the Several States?

—David Redick, Pennsylvania Supreme Executive Council
Letter to William Irvine, supporter of the Constitution, September 24, 1787

1. What does David Redick believe will happen if the Constitution is adopted?

2. What does Redick dislike about the proposed system of government?
