

Activity 2**Document-Based Activity****Debating the Constitution****DOCUMENT 4**

Before You Read The following words in the document below may be new to you: *insurgency*, *impunity*, *abetted*, *candor*. You may want to use a dictionary to look them up.

The constitution has labored in Massachusetts exceedingly more than was expected. The opposition has not arisen from a consideration of the merits or demerits of the thing itself, as a political machine, but from a deadly principle levelled at the existence of all government whatever. The principle of insurgency expanded, deriving fresh strength and life from the impunity with which the rebellion of last year was suffered to escape. It is a singular circumstance, that in Massachusetts the property, the ability, and the virtue of the State, are almost solely in favor of the constitution. Opposed to it are the late insurgents, and all those who abetted their designs, constituting four fifths of the opposition. A few, very few indeed, well meaning people are joined to them. The friends of the constitution in that State, without overrating their own importance, conceived that the decision of Massachusetts would most probably settle the fate of the proposition. They therefore proceeded most cautiously and wisely, debated every objection with the most guarded good nature and candor, but took no questions on the several paragraphs, and thereby prevented the establishment of parties. This conduct has been attended with the most beneficial consequences.

—Henry Knox, Secretary of War
Letter to George Washington, February 10, 1788

1. According to Secretary of War Knox, why do the “insurgents” in Massachusetts oppose the Constitution?

2. How does Knox describe the character and conduct of those in the state who support the Constitution?
