

GEOGRAPHY WORKSHEET 7**Region*****Ratification of the Constitution***

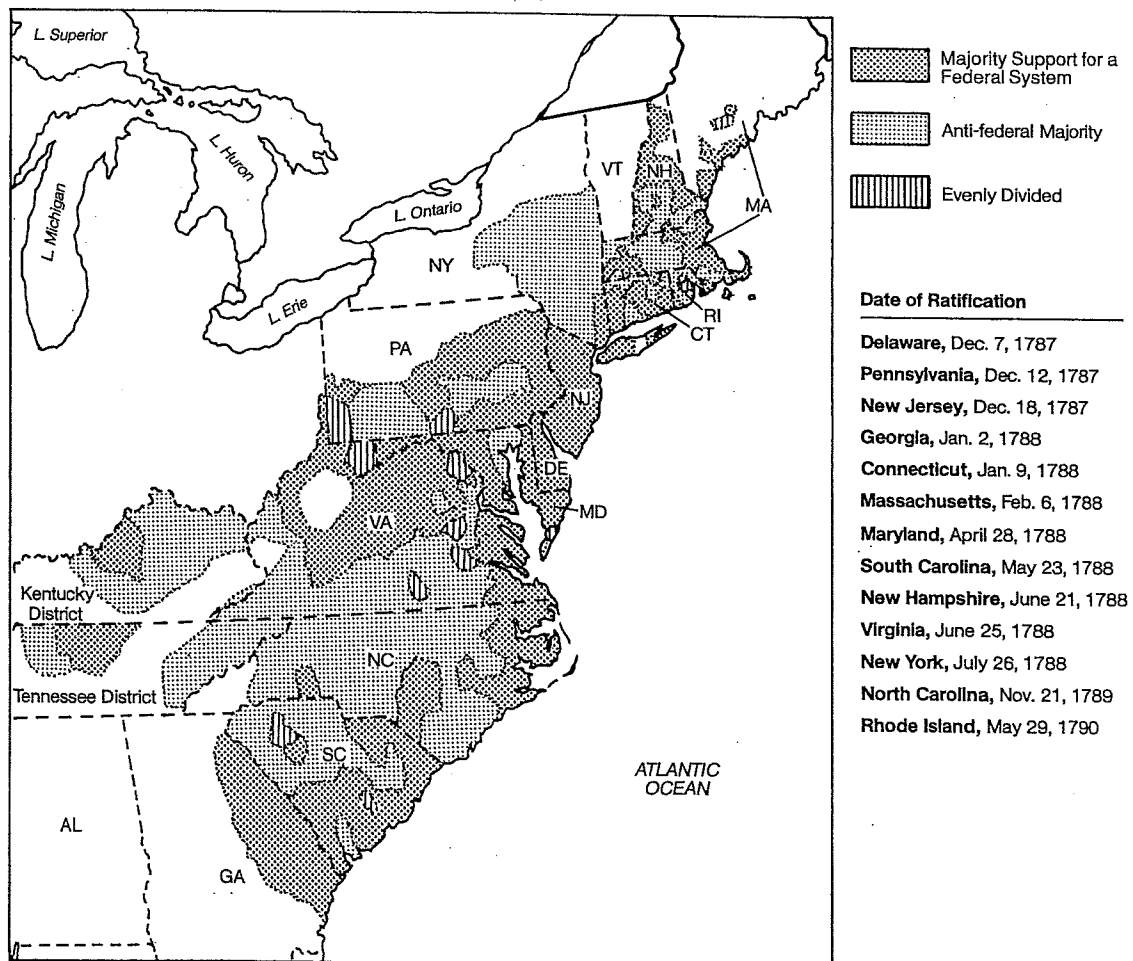
Directions: Read the paragraphs below and study the map carefully. Then answer the questions that follow.

On September 17, 1787, thirty-nine of the forty-two remaining delegates to the Constitutional Convention signed the Constitution. Their summer's work was over. Three days later, the Congress sent the Constitution to the thirteen states, specifying that at least nine ratifying conventions must accept it in order for it to become effective. For the next eight months, the merits of the Constitution were debated in newspapers and pamphlets and from speaker's platforms. The public debate mirrored the secret debates of the delegates during the summer of 1787.

As the map shows, areas of majority support for a federal system—*that is, areas that supported the Constitution*—stretched the length of the Atlantic coast and into parts

west of the thirteen states. The Constitution was to replace the creaky machinery of the Articles of Confederation with a far more flexible system of government. Nevertheless, and despite its compromises and its elaborate checks and balances, the document aroused opposition. Critics—called anti-Federalists by the Federalist friends of the Constitution—feared that a strong President would wish to become a king, that states' rights would be scuttled, and that debtors would be at the mercy of the wealthy.

Most of the objections were answered to the satisfaction of the majorities in most of the ratifying conventions. The one objection that did sway many conventions was that the Constitution had no bill of rights.

Ratification of the Constitution, 1787-1790

The rights that delegates wanted set down in writing were already a part of English common law and of several state constitutions. As such, scarcely anyone disputed their worth. Those who did questioned whether the federal government had any business in prescribing the basic rights of individuals. A government that could grant such rights, they said, could also take them away.

People who wanted a written bill of rights argued that citizens had to be able to defend their interests. They could do so only if they were free to speak, to publish, and to assemble without government interference. Their rights to do so, advocates said, must be written down in clear language. There should be no mistaking the meaning of citizen's rights. The conventions agreed, and many of them made the attachment of a bill of rights a condition of ratification. The protections of the resulting Bill of Rights came to be regarded as so fundamental that not until 1990 was an attempt made in Congress to alter them.

The debate over ratification was influenced by regionalism, economic interests, and the prestige of the prominent persons on both sides. Farmers and other rural residents, together with some small-business people, sided with Patrick Henry in opposing ratification. Commercial interests, the owning classes, and residents of cities and large towns favored it. As potent as any argument was the fact that George Washington supported the Constitution. The opinion of the hero of the American Revolution carried great weight.

On June 21, 1788, the New Hampshire convention became the ninth state to ratify the Constitution. From that date, the United States was a going concern.

Understanding Main Ideas

1. What were the main arguments of the anti-Federalists against the ratification of the Constitution?

Extending Graphic Skills

2. Which state was the first to ratify the Constitution the last?

3. Which state's ratification tipped the scale? Why? When did this state ratify the Constitution?

4. Judging from the map, which states were totally in favor of a Federalist system?

Understanding Geography

5. Why are the areas of Federalist majority found mostly along the Atlantic seacoast?

6. Why are the areas of anti-Federalist majority often found inland, in rural areas?

7. New York state shows a large area of anti-Federalist majority. How do you think New York ratified the Constitution?
