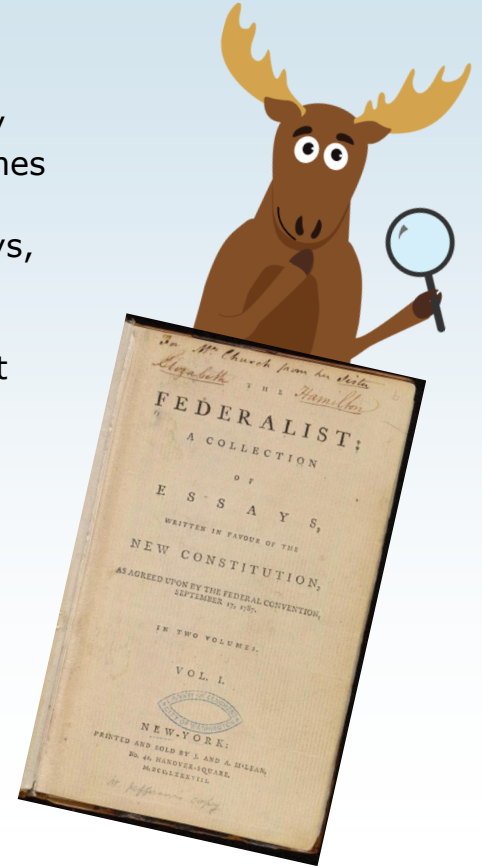


THE FEDERALIST PAPERS

What are the *Federalist Papers*?

The Federalist Papers are a collection of 85 essays written by three of the Constitution's framers—Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay. They were published in New York newspapers from October 1787 until April 1788. In the essays, the authors—who all published under the same name, "Publius"—laid out why Americans should support the Constitution. The articles explained how the new government would work and argued that the system of government established by the Constitution would be the best means to promote the common good while still protecting Americans' rights and freedoms. Ratification was hotly debated in New York, and the state was one of the last to ratify the Constitution. The essays were widely read, though, both in New York and in newspapers in other parts of the country. Once the Constitution was adopted, the essays were published together as a book called *The Federalist Papers*. They are considered the best explanation of the American system of government.



Federalist No. 51 excerpt

On Federalism and Limiting the Powers of Government

[The greatest security] against a gradual concentration of the several powers in the same department, consists in giving to those who administer each department the necessary constitutional means and personal motives to resist encroachments of the others. The provision for defense must in this, as in all other cases, be made commensurate to the danger of attack. Ambition must be made to counteract ambition. The interest of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place. It may be a reflection on human nature, that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government. But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. . . .

There are, moreover, two considerations particularly applicable to the federal system of America, which place that system in a very interesting point of view. First. In a single republic, all the power surrendered by the people is submitted to the administration of a single government; and the usurpations are guarded against by a division of the government into distinct and separate departments. In the compound republic of America, the power surrendered by the people is first divided between two distinct governments, and then the portion allotted to each subdivided among distinct and separate departments. Hence a double security arises to the rights of the people. The different governments will control each other, at the same time that each will be controlled by itself. Second. It is of great importance in a republic not only to guard the society against the oppression of its rulers, but to guard one part of the society against the injustice of the other part. Different interests necessarily exist in different classes of citizens. If a majority be united by a common interest, the rights of the minority will be insecure.

