



## ACTIVITY:

# Welcome to the Convention: Census Data Observations

**Teacher instructions:**

This activity allows students to explore the debate about congressional representation at the Constitutional Convention.

1. Before the activity, sort your students into as many as 12 groups, assigning them states represented at the Constitutional Convention. You can simplify this activity for smaller classrooms by assigning students to one of two states, Delaware or Pennsylvania. When assigning states, be sure maintain a balanced number of large and small states.
  - New Hampshire
  - Massachusetts
  - Connecticut
  - New York
  - New Jersey
  - Pennsylvania
  - Delaware
  - Maryland
  - Virginia
  - North Carolina
  - South Carolina
  - Georgia
2. Next, give each student a copy of the invitation handout below, with their assigned state in the slot at the bottom of the page. Ask students to gather in their state groups.
3. Give the groups 10 minutes to read through the worksheet, evaluate the census image, and answer the questions on the sheet. Remind them that they will need to be able to articulate their argument for why the NJ or VA plan is better.
4. Have each group report back out to the classroom.
5. Select two representative students to articulate the arguments for the NJ and VA plans; lead them through a debate with the following questions:
  - Why is your plan the best one for our country?
  - Why is the other plan not realistic?
  - Is there a third way you'd want to pursue if possible?
6. Conclude by sharing the slide from 2.1 Constitutional Convention about Roger Sherman and the Great Compromise.
  - How would students have solved this issue if they were at the Convention?
  - Would the way we count representation be different if the Convention were held today?

*Dear Fellow Delegates,*

*Welcome back to Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. We are ready to start another day of our convention. As you know, we have each been selected to represent our home state during these proceedings. Our original purpose was to discuss the defects found in our current government under the Articles of Confederation and fix them. However, as you know, we decided that the problems were so great that it would be better to write an entirely new government. Currently, we are debating about how each state should be represented within our legislative branch. Today we must settle this debate. Begin thinking about what would be best for your state.*

*Remember, whatever is said in these meetings is to be held in the strictest of confidence and should not be shared with anyone! Thank you again for representing your state and helping to secure the best possible government for our country.*

*Sincerely,  
George Washington*

**You are representing the state of:** \_\_\_\_\_



## FIRST CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES.

*Population of the United States as returned at the First Census, by states: 1790.*

DISTRICT.	Free white males of 16 years and upward, including heads of families.	Free white males under 16 years.	Free white females, including heads of families.	All other free persons.	Slaves.	Total.
Vermont.....	22,435	22,328	40,505	255	116	285,539
New Hampshire.....	36,086	34,851	70,160	630	158	141,885
Maine.....	24,384	24,748	46,870	538	None.	96,540
Massachusetts.....	95,453	87,289	190,582	5,463	None.	378,787
Rhode Island.....	16,019	15,799	32,652	3,407	948	68,825
Connecticut.....	60,523	54,403	117,448	2,808	2,764	237,946
New York.....	83,700	78,122	152,320	4,654	21,324	340,120
New Jersey.....	45,251	41,416	83,287	2,762	11,423	184,139
Pennsylvania.....	110,788	106,948	206,363	6,537	3,737	434,373
Delaware.....	11,783	12,143	22,384	3,899	8,887	359,094
Maryland.....	55,915	51,339	101,395	8,043	103,036	319,728
Virginia.....	110,936	116,135	215,046	12,866	292,627	747,610
Kentucky.....	15,154	17,057	28,922	114	12,430	73,677
North Carolina.....	69,988	77,506	140,710	4,975	100,572	393,751
South Carolina.....	35,576	37,722	66,880	1,801	107,094	249,073
Georgia.....	13,103	14,044	25,739	398	29,264	82,548
Total number of inhabitants of the United States exclusive of S. Western and N. territory.....	807,094	791,850	1,541,263	59,150	694,280	3,893,635
S. W. territory.....	6,271	10,277	15,365	361	3,417	35,691
N. ".....						

<sup>1</sup> The census of 1790, published in 1791, reports 16 slaves in Vermont. Subsequently, and up to 1860, the number is given as 17. An examination of the original manuscript returns shows that there never were any slaves in Vermont. The original error occurred in preparing the results for publication, when 16 persons, returned as "Free colored," were classified as "Slave."

<sup>2</sup> Corrected figures are 85,425, or 114 less than figures published in 1790, due to an error of addition in the returns for each of the towns of Fairfield, Milton, Shelburne, and Williston, in the county of Chittenden; Brookfield, Newbury, Randolph, and Stratford, in the county of Orange; Castleton, Clarendon, Hubbardton, Poultney, Rutland, Shrewsbury, and Wallingford, in the county of Rutland; Dummerston, Guilford, Halifax, and Westminster, in the county of Windham; and Woodstock, in the county of Windsor.

<sup>3</sup> Corrected figures are 59,096, or 2 more than figures published in 1790, due to error in addition.

**GROUP MEMBER NAMES:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Welcome to the Constitutional Convention! This convention is focused on setting up our new U.S. government will work. Your job today is to decide how representation should be allocated in Congress.**

Use the 1790 U.S. Census Data on the back of this worksheet to answer the following questions about your state.

**YOUR STATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL POPULATION:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Find your state on the census. Would you consider your state a large or small state based on population? Explain your answer.

**TWO PLANS HAVE BEEN PROPOSED BY DELEGATES AT THE CONVENTION:**

**NEW JERSEY PLAN:** Each state should be equally represented in Congress, and they should each send the same number of representatives to make decisions for us. That way, big states won't have too much power. States like ours shouldn't be taken advantage of just because we're small!

**VIRGINIA PLAN:** We should base each state's representation in Congress on the population of the state itself. If we have three times as many people in Virginia as in New Jersey, we should have three times the votes as they do! It's not fair to deny people a voice in the legislature.

2. In your own words, describe the Virginia and New Jersey plans above.

3. Based on the census data you saw on the back of this sheet, which plan would best serve your state's interests and why?

4. Prepare to share your thoughts with the other delegates! Write down the argument you will use to convince people from other states to agree you about which plan is better.