



Federalist 54 (Excerpt)

Close-Reading Directions

- **First Read:** Students follow along as the text is read aloud.
- **Second Read:** Students read and annotate the text using the symbols in the Annotation Station, below.
- **Third Read:** Students read and summarize each paragraph in the column provided.

Source

James Madison or Alexander Hamilton, “The Apportionment of Members Among the States” (Federalist 54), New York Packet, February 12, 1788, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed54.asp.

Note

Explain to students that Federalist 54 is a primary source document, written using the acceptable language of the time. Today, we would replace the word ‘slave’ with ‘enslaved person’ to honor the human life of that individual.

Annotation Station

○ Circle words you don’t know, and take a moment to find the definition.

Highlight in **YELLOW** phrases that confuse you. Use context clues to try and figure out their meaning.

Highlight in **RED** examples of the dangers or restrictions faced by the individuals.

Highlight in **GREEN** examples of rights and freedoms enjoyed by the individuals.

☆ Star the items that make you wonder and wish to explore further.

Section

Primary Source: Federalist 54

Summary in Your Own Words

1

To the People of the State of New York: THE next view which I shall take of the House of Representatives relates to the appointment of its members to the several States which is to be determined by the same rule with that of direct taxes.



Section	Primary Source: Federalist 54	Summary in Your Own Words
2	<p>It is not contended that the number of people in each State ought not to be the standard for regulating the proportion of those who are to represent the people of each State. The establishment of the same rule for the appointment of taxes, will probably be as little contested; though the rule itself in this case, is by no means founded on the same principle. In the former case, the rule is understood to refer to the personal rights of the people, with which it has a natural and universal connection. In the latter, it has reference to the proportion of wealth, of which it is in no case a precise measure, and in ordinary cases a very unfit one. But notwithstanding the imperfection of the rule as applied to the relative wealth and contributions of the States, it is evidently the least objectionable among the practicable rules, and had too recently obtained the general sanction of America, not to have found a ready preference with the convention.</p>	



Section	Primary Source: Federalist 54	Summary in Your Own Words
3	<p>All this is admitted, it will perhaps be said; but does it follow, from an admission of numbers for the measure of representation, or of slaves combined with free citizens as a ratio of taxation, that slaves ought to be included in the numerical rule of representation? Slaves are considered as property, not as persons. They ought therefore to be comprehended in estimates of taxation which are founded on property, and to be excluded from representation which is regulated by a census of persons. This is the objection, as I understand it, stated in its full force. I shall be equally candid in stating the reasoning which may be offered on the opposite side. “We subscribe to the doctrine,” might one of our Southern brethren observe, “that representation relates more immediately to persons, and taxation more immediately to property, and we join in the application of this distinction to the case of our slaves. But we must deny the fact, that slaves are considered merely as property, and in no respect whatever as persons. The true state of the case is, that they partake of both these qualities: being considered by our laws, in some respects, as persons, and in other respects as property.</p>	



Section	Primary Source: Federalist 54	Summary in Your Own Words
4	<p>Let the case of the slaves be considered, as it is in truth, a peculiar one. Let the compromising expedient of the Constitution be mutually adopted, which regards them as inhabitants, but as debased by servitude below the equal level of free inhabitants, which regards the SLAVE as divested of two fifths of the MAN. “After all, may not another ground be taken on which this article of the Constitution will admit of a still more ready defense? We have hitherto proceeded on the idea that representation related to persons only, and not at all to property. But is it a just idea? Government is instituted no less for protection of the property, than of the persons, of individuals. The one as well as the other, therefore, may be considered as represented by those who are charged with the government.</p>	
5	<p>I must confess that it fully reconciles me to the scale of representation which the convention have established. In one respect, the establishment of a common measure for representation and taxation will have a very salutary effect. As the accuracy of the census to be obtained by the Congress will necessarily depend, in a considerable degree on the disposition, if not on the co-operation, of the States, it is of great importance that the States should feel as little bias as possible, to swell or to reduce the amount of their numbers. Were their share of representation alone to be governed by this rule, they would have an interest in exaggerating their inhabitants. Were the rule to decide their share of taxation alone, a contrary temptation would prevail. By extending the rule to both objects, the States will have opposite interests, which will control and balance each other, and produce the requisite impartiality.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">PUBLIUS.</p>	