



Writing Activity: The Power of the Purse (Extension Activity)

Students will explore the concepts of separation of powers, checks and balances, and the power of the purse. They will evaluate excerpts from *The Federalist*, no. 51 and no. 58, and then answer the prompts on this worksheet with 1 or 2 well-structured paragraphs. *Note: Students should focus on the bold/underlined sections as they consider these excerpts.

Overview of *The Federalist Papers*: *The Federalist Papers* are a series of 85 essays written by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison. They were designed to explain particular provisions of the US Constitution in detail and encourage those who were hesitant about signing it. *The Federalist Papers* are often used today to help interpret the intentions of those who drafted the Constitution.

Read Excerpt #1: *"In order to lay a due foundation for that separate and distinct exercise of the different powers of government, which to a certain extent is admitted on all hands to be essential to the preservation of liberty, it is evident that each department should have a will of its own; and consequently should be so constituted that the members of each should have as little agency as possible in the appointment of the members of the others. . . ."*

Federalist no. 51 - James Madison

Read Excerpt #2: *"The House of Representatives cannot only refuse, but they alone can propose, the supplies requisite for the support of government. They, in a word, hold the purse, that powerful instrument by which we behold, in the history of the British Constitution, an infant and humble representation of the people gradually enlarging the sphere of its activity and importance, and finally reducing, as far as it seems to have wished, all the overgrown prerogatives of the other branches of the government. This power over the purse may, in fact, be regarded as the most*

complete and effectual weapon *with which any constitution can arm the **immediate representatives of the people**, for obtaining a redress of every grievance, and for carrying into effect every just and salutary measure. . . ."*

Federalist no. 58 - James Madison

Prompt #1: Why do you think Madison called control over money "the most powerful weapon of the people"?

Prompt #2: How does giving the House of Representatives the power of the purse protect liberty and fairness?

Prompt #3: Imagine if only the president or the Senate controlled money. What problems could be faced?