

Formative Assessment: Evaluating Evidence



Thinking historically means identifying the evidence related to a claim, assessing its validity, and corroborating it by comparing multiple sources' interpretations of events, developments, or processes.

Directions: Review the following documents and answer the questions on evaluating evidence that follow. The multiple choice questions for this formative assessment are Weighted Multiple Choice (WMC) Questions. This means that there is only one *incorrect* answer, but the other 3 choices are weighted. The *best* answer is 3 points, the *second-best* answer is 2 points, and the *third-best* answer is 1 point. The *incorrect* answer is 0 points.

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Source: Virginia House Of Delegates, *Virginia Resolution*, December 21, 1798. [Library of Congress](#).

That this assembly most solemnly declares a warm attachment to the Union of the States, to maintain which it pledges all its powers; and that for this end, it is their duty to watch over and oppose every infraction of those principles which constitute the only basis of that Union, because a faithful observance of them, can alone secure its existence and the public happiness...

That the General Assembly doth particularly protest against the palpable and alarming infractions of the Constitution, in the two late cases of the "Alien and Sedition Acts" passed at the last session of Congress; the first of which exercises a power nowhere delegated to the federal government, and which by uniting legislative and judicial powers to those of executive, subverts the general principles of free government; as well as the particular organization, and positive provisions of the federal constitution; and the other of which acts, exercises in like manner, a power not delegated by the constitution, but on the contrary, expressly and positively forbidden by one of the amendments thereto; a power, which more than any other, ought to produce universal alarm, because it is levelled against that right of freely examining public characters and measures, and of free communication among the people thereon, which has ever been justly deemed, the only effectual guardian of every other right.



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1. Select the piece of evidence from the above document that *best* supports the claim: **To protect democracy, states must resist federal abuses of power.**
 - A. "exercises... a power expressly and positively forbidden by one of the amendments... which... ought to produce universal alarm"
 - B. "exercises a power no where delegated to the federal government, and... subverts the general principles of free government"
 - C. "this assembly most solemnly declares a warm attachment to the Union of the States"
 - D. "it is their duty to watch over and oppose every infraction of those principles"

2. Justify your choice in the space below.



1. Select the piece of evidence from the above document that *best* supports the claim: **To protect democracy, states must resist federal abuses of power.**
 - A. "exercises... a power expressly and positively forbidden by one of the amendments... which... ought to produce universal alarm" **(2 points)**
 - B. "exercises a power no where delegated to the federal government, and... subverts the general principles of free government" **(1 point)**
 - C. "this assembly most solemnly declares a warm attachment to the Union of the States" **(0 points)**
 - D. "it is their duty to watch over and oppose every infraction of those principles" **(3 points)**

2. Justify your choice in the space below.

Choice D, worth 3 points, is the best piece of evidence to support the claim that states should oppose federal abuses of power. The use of the word "duty" denotes a strong opinion on the role of states in maintaining Constitutional principles. Choice A also supports the claim, since it references how a particular legislation should cause alarm. However, the term "alarm" is not as strong as "oppose" in Choice D. Choice B is only worth 1 point, because describes why the legislation is unconstitutional without a connection to how the states should respond. Lastly, Choice C is worth 0 points because it provides a strong affiliation between the state of Virginia and the federal government instead of explaining the importance of state resistance.



1. Weighted Multiple Choice

3 points (Choice D)	2 points (Choice A)	1 point (Choice B)	0 points (Choice B)
			Subtotal: _____ / 3

2. Short Answer: Justify Your Answer

3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points
Student thoroughly justifies their choice of the <i>best</i> piece of evidence—which is worth three points as shown on the teacher key—that supports the claim.	Student thoroughly justifies their choice of either the 1 or 2 point option from the WMC question. OR Student's justification of the 3 point option needs deeper analysis.	Student's justification of their choice (either the 1 or 2 point option) lacks deep analysis.	Student either makes no attempt to justify their choice OR try to justify the 0 point option.
			Subtotal: _____ / 3

Total: _____ / 6

