

LESSON PLAN

U.S. Constitution

Level: Low Intermediate, Intermediate

Suggested Length: 2 or 3 class periods

Civics Test Questions

- #1—What is the supreme law of the land?
- #2—What does the Constitution do?
- #3—The idea of self-government is in the first three words of the Constitution. What are these words?
- #4—What is an amendment?
- #5—What do we call the first ten amendments to the Constitution?
- #6—What is one right or freedom from the First Amendment?
- #7—How many amendments does the Constitution have?
- #10—What is freedom of religion?
- #12—What is the “rule of law”?
- #14—What stops one branch of government from becoming too powerful?
- #41—Under our Constitution, some powers belong to the federal government. What is one power of the federal government?
- #42—Under our Constitution, some powers belong to the states. What is one power of the states?
- #65—What happened at the Constitutional Convention?
- #66—When was the Constitution written?
- #67—The Federalist Papers supported the passage of the U.S. Constitution. Name one of the writers.
- #68—What is one thing Benjamin Franklin is famous for?

Key Vocabulary

Founding Fathers, Articles of Confederation, central/federal government, operate, Constitutional Convention, equal representation, balanced, Federalist Papers, passage, essays, contributions, diplomat, Postmaster General

supreme law, structure, living document, flexible, amend, amendment, rule of law

Bills of Rights, guarantee, First Amendment, freedom of speech, issues, debates, freedom of religion, assemble, assembly, freedom of the press, petition

checks and balances, separation of powers, veto, federal powers, state powers, make treaties, zoning

Objectives:

Students will:

- identify the Constitution as the supreme law of the land
- explain the function of the Constitution and when it was written
- explain the meaning of the “rule of law”
- explain the meaning of the phrase “We the People” and the concept of self-government
- describe an amendment and identify how many amendments are in the Constitution
- explain the Bill of Rights and the rights in the First Amendment
- explain freedom of religion
- describe the system of checks and balances and separation of powers
- identify federal and state powers
- describe what happened at the Constitutional Convention
- explain the purpose of the Federalist Papers and identify its authors
- describe Benjamin Franklin’s role in U.S. history



Materials:

Handouts: **Creating a New Government**, **Supreme Law of the Land**, **The Bill of Rights**, **Balancing Power**, **Review—U.S. Constitution**, and **Civics Test Questions—U.S. Constitution**

8.5" x 11" visuals

Intermediate Level U.S. Constitution Lesson Answer Key

Lesson Overview and Notes to Teacher:

This lesson covers the creation of the U.S. Constitution and its powers and protections. It also explores the meaning of the Constitution as a living document and the creation of the Bill of Rights. The lesson includes 8.5" x 11" images of the historical documents and the Founding Fathers to display in class. Instructions for each handout are described below.

The **Key Vocabulary** on the first page of the lesson plan is generally more advanced than the words in the vocabulary lists for the reading and writing portion of the test. However, learning these words will help the students develop a deeper understanding of the concepts in the lesson. Consider teaching these keywords as part of your introduction to this lesson.

Creating a New Government: Write the word **Constitution** on the board and ask the students what it means (**structure or plan of the government, rights of the people**). Ask the students about the systems of government in their native countries. Discuss whether their native countries have a constitution. Explain that this lesson describes how the Founding Fathers decided to organize the government and protect people's rights. Discuss the painting "Scene at the Signing of the Constitution of the United States," and share the 8.5" x 11" images to highlight the Constitution and the Founding Fathers who played key roles in the process. Draw a timeline on the board. Review the sequence of events for the colonial period including the Revolutionary War and Declaration of Independence, and mark them on the timeline. As you cover the reading in this handout, add the Articles of Confederation, the

Supreme Law of the Land: Write **supreme law of the land** on the board. Ask the students what this means (**the highest law in the country**). Review the reading as previously described in the instructions for the handout *Creating a New Government*.

The lesson includes readings about the Constitution. Use the same process for reading each handout with your students. This process is described below in the instructions for the handout *Creating a New Government*. At the end of each reading, students can practice the specific test items covered in that handout. The suggested discussion questions can be used for whole-class and small-group discussion or for writing assignments. For review, students can practice new vocabulary from the lesson by completing the word scramble. The final handout is a summary of all the Civics Test items covered in the lesson.

Constitutional Convention, and the Constitution to the sequence.

To begin the reading, have the students silently read the paragraphs on the handout. Tell them to underline any new words while they read. When they finish, read the paragraphs aloud while they listen silently. As you read each phrase or sentence, pause to ask if there are any words they do not know. Read the paragraphs aloud again, this time without stopping. As a final step, go back to the beginning of the reading and model each sentence one at a time with the students repeating after you. If you wish, call on volunteers to take turns reading each sentence aloud. Then have the students fill in the answers to the Civics Test items at the bottom of the handout. Review them together, modeling the pronunciation of each question and answer.

Refer to the discussion questions at the bottom of the handout and have the students work in pairs or small groups to discuss the importance of the Constitution as a living document. If you wish, you can assign these questions for written homework.

The Bill of Rights: Write **Bill of Rights** on the board and discuss the meaning with the class. Review the reading as previously described in the instructions for the handout *Creating a New Government*. As you review the rights

in the First Amendment, ask the students to think of examples in current events where people have exercised these rights. Have them work in small groups or pairs to discuss the questions at the bottom of the handout.

Balancing Power: Draw a diagram of the three branches of government (executive, legislative, and judicial) on the board. Have the students identify some powers of each branch and add those powers to the diagram. Explain the separation of powers and how the system of checks and balances works. Ask the students why checks and balances would be important. Explain

that certain powers of the federal and state governments are also separate. Review the reading as previously described in the instructions for the handout *Creating a New Government*. Have them work in pairs to identify which powers belong to the federal government or the state governments.

Review—U.S. Constitution: For the word scramble, have the students rearrange the letters to create the words and phrases they have studied in this lesson.

Point out that the letters in the numbered boxes should be transferred to the corresponding numbered boxes at the bottom of the page to form a new phrase.

Civics Test Questions—U.S. Constitution: This handout lists the 16 Civics Test items in this lesson. You can use this exercise for pair work where the students

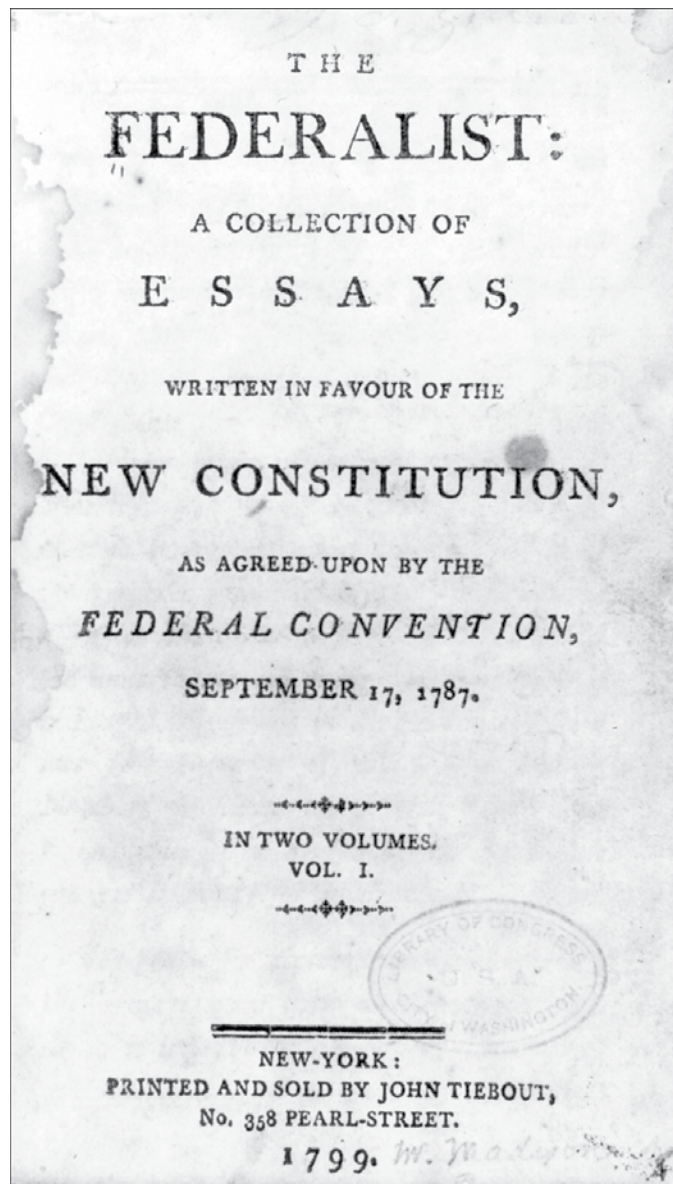
take turns interviewing each other, or you can assign it for homework.

The U.S. Constitution



Courtesy of the National Archives.

The Federalist Papers



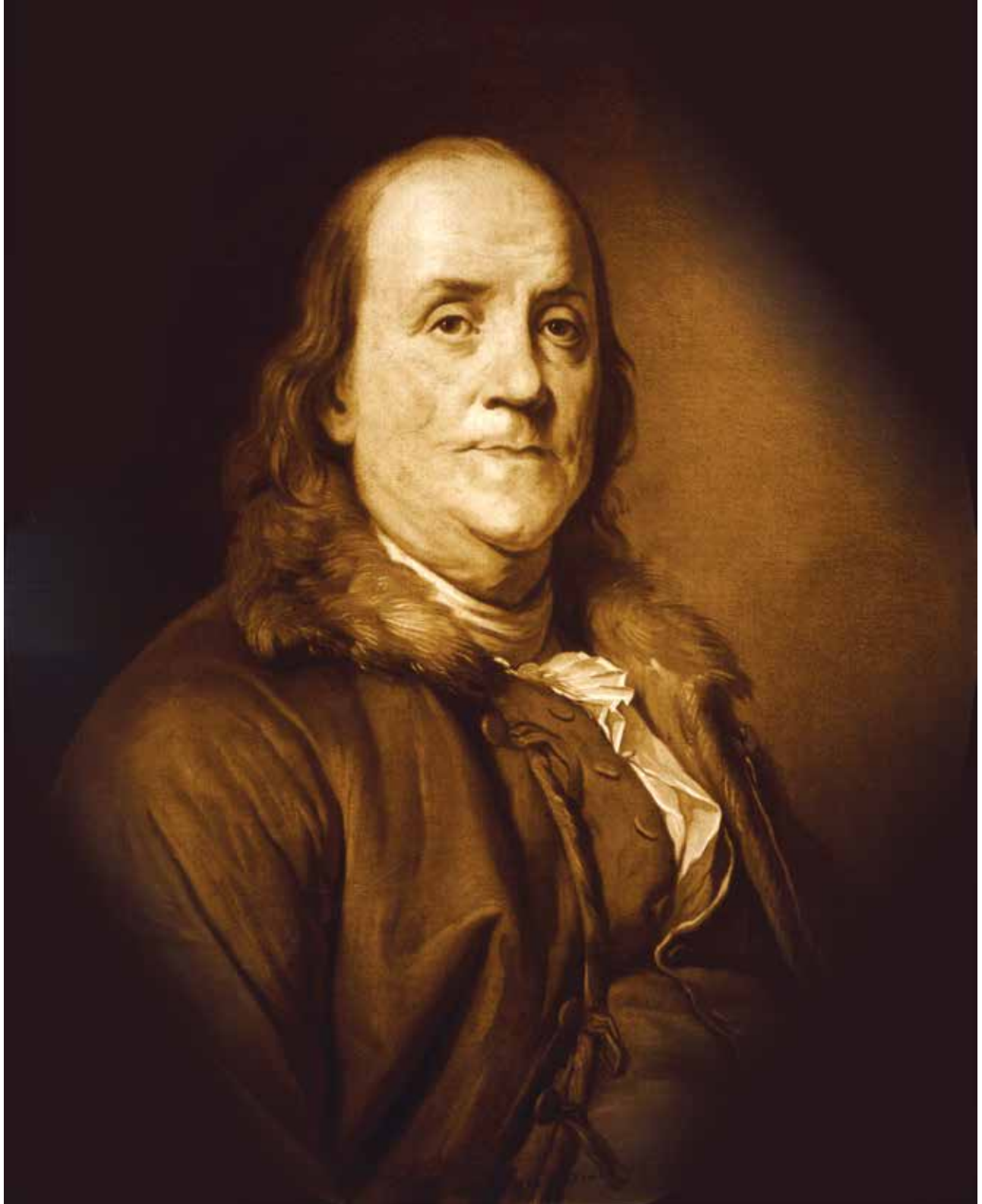
Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-70508.

Scene at the Signing of the Constitution of the United States by Howard Chandler Christy



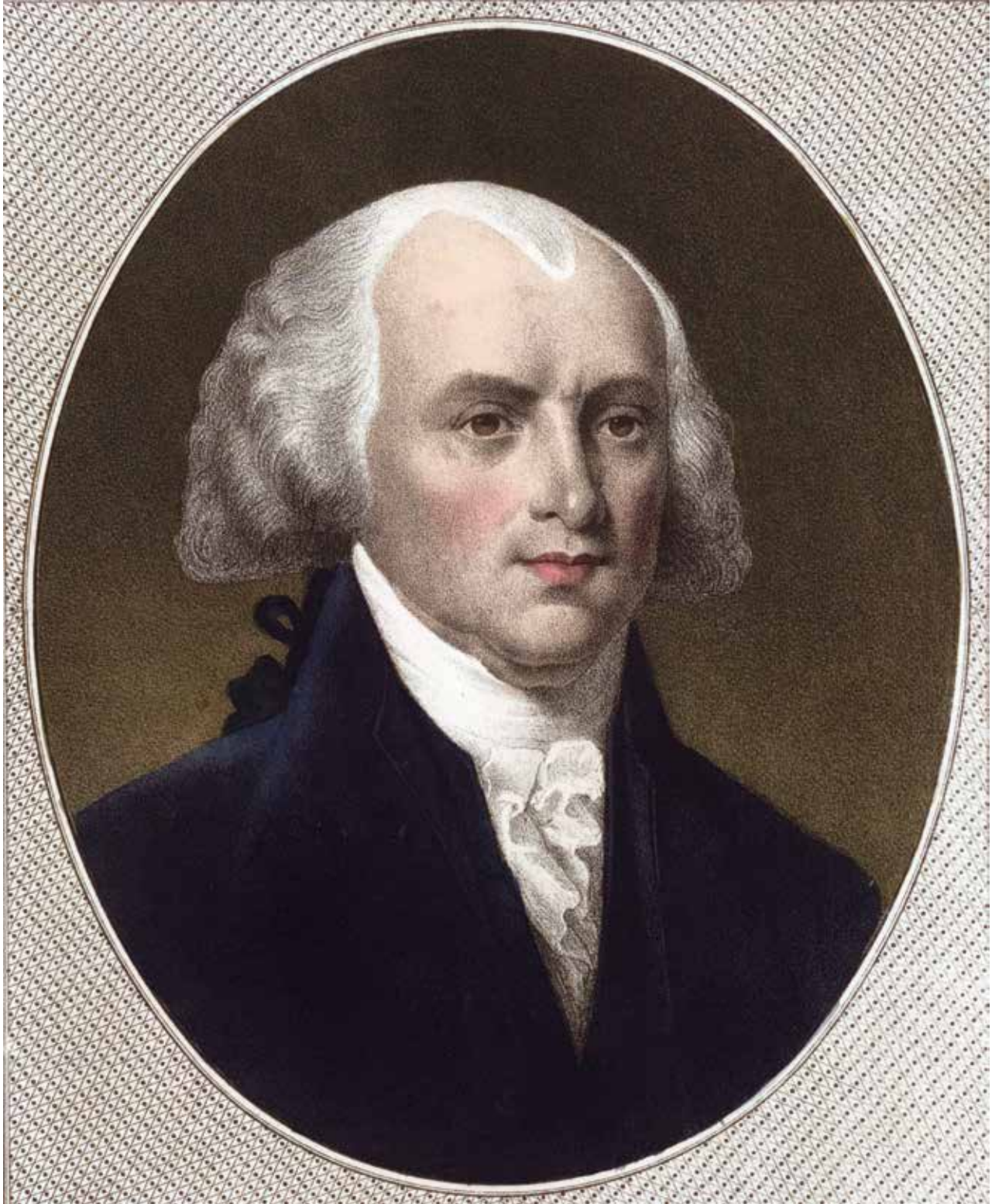
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Benjamin Franklin



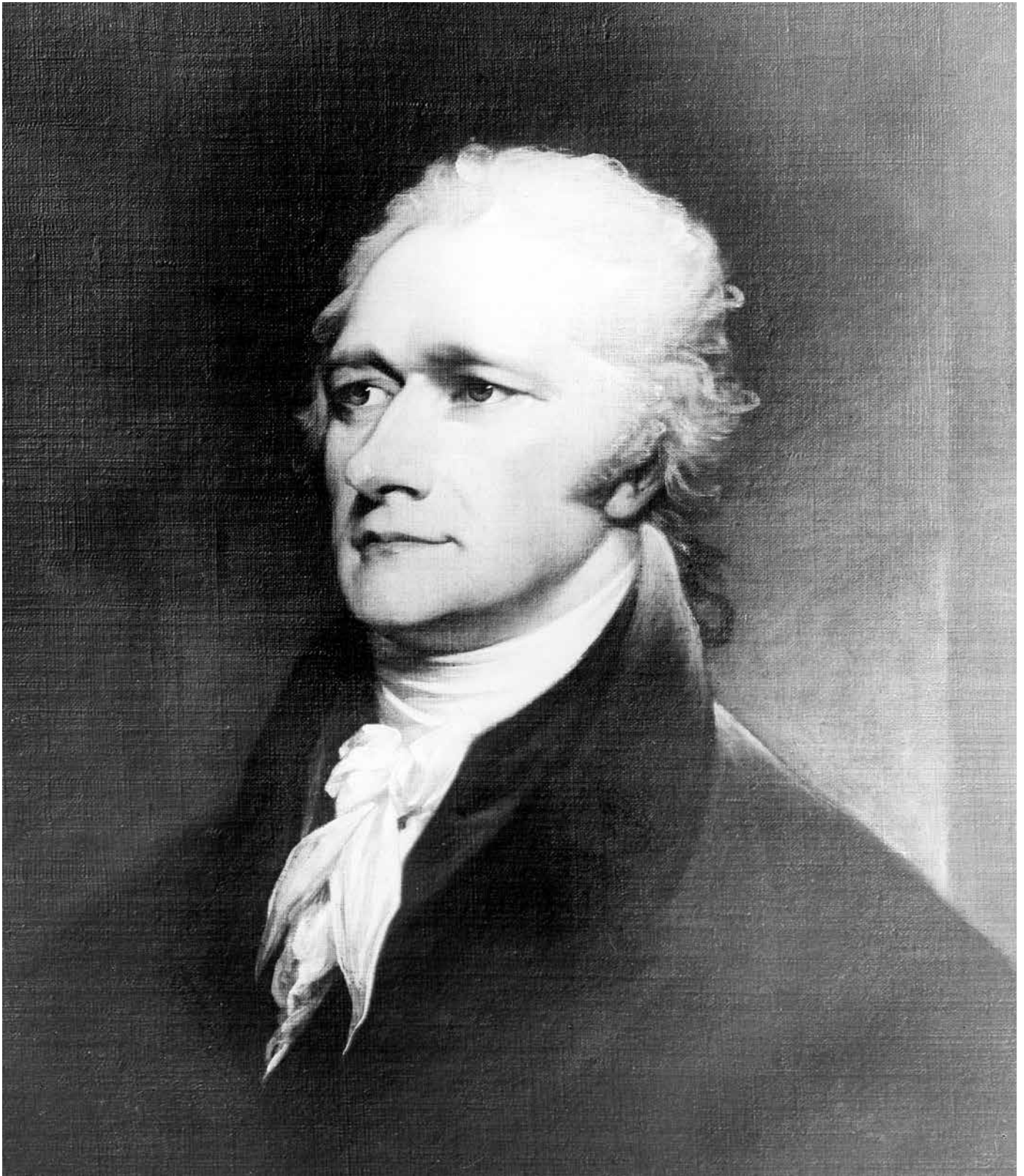
Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USZC4-7214.

James Madison



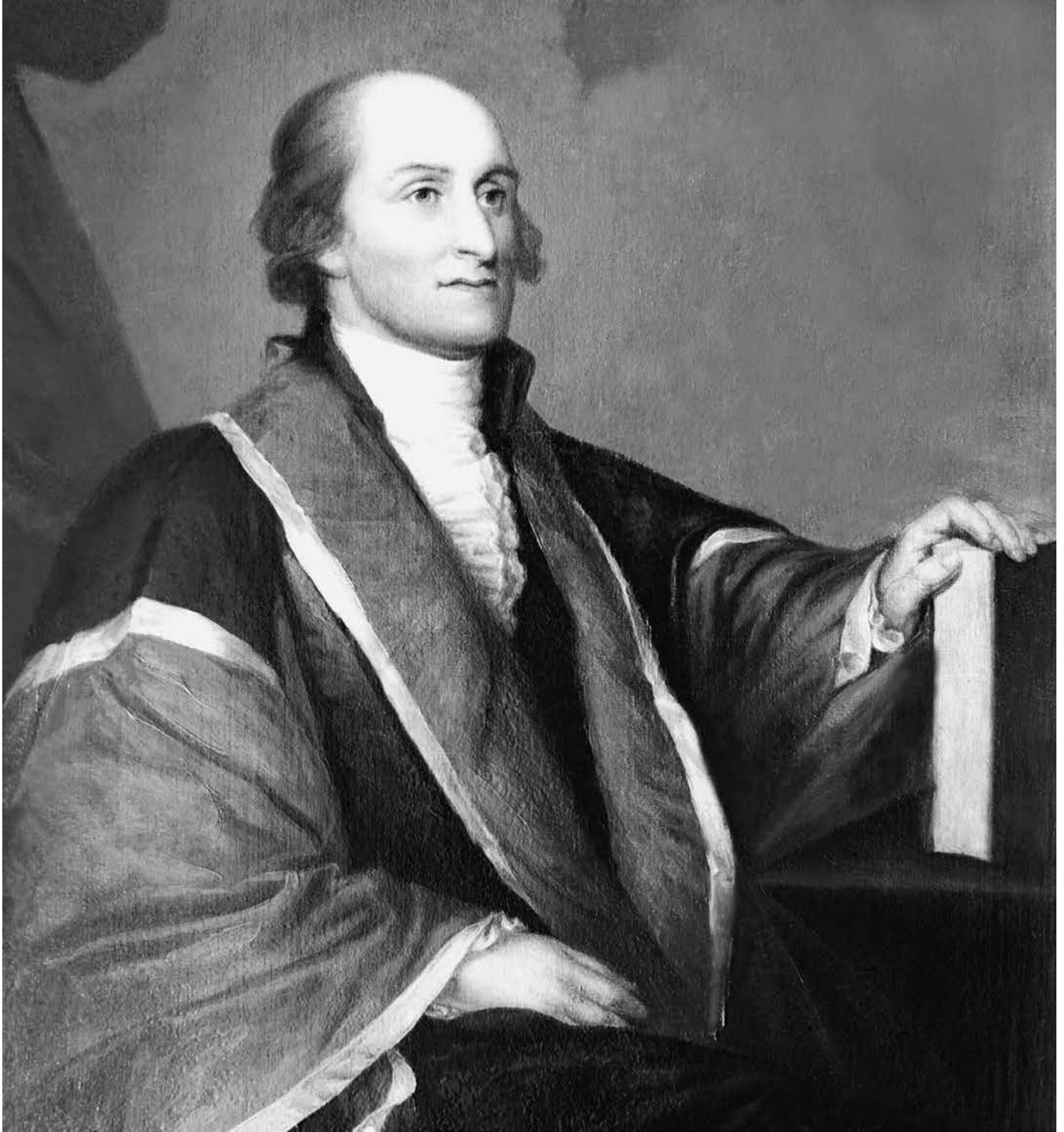
Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsca-30581.

Alexander Hamilton



Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-DIG-det-4a26166.

John Jay



Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-H812-T-P01-068-A.