



Name _____

The Fateful Hour

Reading Guide/Post Play Review

Guiding Questions for Teachers Post Play

Act One:

1. What were some problems facing New York citizens under the current government (The Articles of Confederation) in 1788?
2. What was the “federal government” and what was this new Constitution?
3. What was the process for ratifying the newly written Constitution? How does it work? Where will the ratifying convention be held in New York?
4. What caused the characters in the play to be so afraid of the new Constitution- “I smell a rat”?
5. How did people living in New York City feel about the new Constitution as compared to the people of more rural Dutchess County? Does class play a role in the differences?
6. Who was Melancton Smith and how did he feel about the new Constitution?
7. Who was Alexander Hamilton and how did he feel about the new Constitution?
8. What was a Bill of Rights and what were some important rights NOT included in the original Constitution?

Act Two:

1. How many states have already ratified the Constitution at the start of the New York Ratifying Convention? Who has not ratified the Constitution? What state will make the new Constitution official?
2. What will happen to New York, and the other remaining states that have not ratified the Constitution, if they do not ratify the document?
3. What major arguments did Robert Livingston make in support of ratifying the Constitution?
4. How did delegates at the New York Convention attempt to counter Livingston’s arguments?
5. What arguments did Alexander Hamilton offer in support of ratifying the Constitution?
6. Why did John Lansing oppose ratifying the new Constitution?
7. What major event happened at the end of Act Two?



Act Three:

1. What major arguments did delegate Melancton Smith present against ratifying the Constitution?
2. What potential solution did Delegate Baxter propose in order to avoid New York State's outright rejection of the Constitution?
3. How did James Madison, a delegate from Virginia explain how Delegate Baxter's proposal was not possible?
4. Ultimately, why did delegates like Melancton Smith and Delegate Wiggins decide to vote in favor of ratifying the new Constitution?
5. Explain the contents of Delegate John Jay's letter/proposal to the other twelve states. Why was this letter so significant?
6. Once the New York Ratifying Convention was over, two surprise guests from the 19th Century entered the stage? Who are they and what concerns did they raise?