

Q83 – The Federalist Papers supported the passage of the U.S. Constitution. Name one of the writers.

DOUGLAS GINSBURG, Federal Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, D.C. Circuit:

Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay wrote the Federalist Papers: 85 essays urging the states to ratify the Constitution.

Five essays were written by John Jay – soon to be the first chief justice. James Madison – the main architect of the Constitution – wrote at least 29 essays, and maybe more. But most of the essays were written by Alexander Hamilton – one of the youngest Founders of the republic.

When they first appeared, no one knew who wrote them. They were all signed “Publius” – a tip of the hat to the statesman who helped found the Roman Republic.

When the Framers wrapped up their work in Philadelphia, the states’ ratification of the new Constitution seemed doubtful. Even some of the Framers, such as George Mason of Virginia, thought the Constitution gave too much power to the federal government.

Hamilton decided the best way to focus attention on the ideas in the Federalist Papers was to not identify the authors. Indeed, they remained anonymous until after Hamilton's death in 1804. Having teamed up on history's greatest sales pitch, Hamilton and Madison later had a falling out over how to interpret the Constitution they had both championed.