

Lesson Plan

“A Conversation with the Presidents”

An in-depth analysis of the varying opinions of Executive Power

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Lesson Plan: A Conversation with the Presidents

Lesson

Students will research the intended role of the Executive Branch as designated by the founding fathers and compare it with the changing role of a modern president showing the contrast through a discussion they will write between Washington, Jefferson and a modern president of their choice.

Standards

USI.7 Explain the roles of various founders at the Constitutional Convention. Describe the major debates that occurred at the Convention and the “Great Compromise” that was reached. (H, C)

Major Debates

A. the distribution of political power

USI.11 Describe the purpose and functions of government. (H, C)

USI.20 Explain the evolution and function of political parties, including their role in federal, state, and local elections. (H, C)

Goal

The general goal of this lesson is to get students to examine the changing role of the president and the way domestic/foreign circumstances have required our Executive to lead in a way unlike the intension of the founding fathers. By formulating a discussion between Washington, Jefferson and a modern president, students should be highlighting the opinions of our framers while the characters discuss the modern president’s obstacle.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Discuss the powers and responsibilities of the President as defined by the Constitution.
- List some of the precedents set during George Washington's term in office.
- Understand the difference in the role of a modern president from the intended role by the founding fathers.
- Understand the importance of perspective.

Materials

- Students will need access to computers with internet to complete this project.
- Copies of excerpts from the letters:
 - James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Oct. 24, 1787*
 - Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, Nov. 13, 1787*
 - Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, Dec. 20, 1787*
 - George Washington to Marquis de Lafayette, April 28, 1788*
- Selections from *the Federalist Papers*
- Washington’s *Farwell Address*

Suggested Websites

American President

An Online Reference Resource

In-depth Information on each President and Administration

<http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/>

Primary Documents in American History

United States Constitution

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/Constitution.html>

Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, Query 13, 120--21

<http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch10s9.html>

Federalist No. 69, Hamilton, *The Real Character of the Executive*

From the New York Packet. Friday, March 14, 1788.

http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed69.asp

Thomas Jefferson and Executive Power, Jeremy D. Bailey

<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=2187>

Washington's *Farwell Address*

http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp

Procedure

- Students will use the worksheet from Edsitement.neh.gov to examine the role of the Executive from the Federalist Papers and answer questions on worksheet
- Students will then use the primary sources listed to examine the opinions of Washington and Jefferson on the role of the president as they saw it and how they lived it
- Students will pick a modern president (Andrew Jackson to Obama) and research one major obstacle that occurred during their presidency and how they handled it as the executive power

Assessment

Based on the research done on the three presidents (Washington, Jefferson and the modern president of their choice) and their views on the role of the president, students will write a dialogue of the three presidents discussing an obstacle of their modern president. The discussion should focus on the modern president asking advice of Washington and of Jefferson on how to tackle the obstacle and should highlight their opinions on the role of the president.

The expected length will be at least 1500 words and will count for a project grade. Students will present their dialogues with the aid of classmates for an opportunity of 5 extra credit points.

Reflection:

[Go to SSEC TAH Site](#)