

Mock Constitutional Convention:
Creating Compromise

Jennifer Larose

TAH
A More Perfect Union:
The Origins and Development of the U.S. Constitution

Lesson Plan Using Technology

- CD Rom included
- Classroom hand outs/ materials attached

In the 8th grade U.S. History course that I teach, we do a four week long unit on the U.S. Constitution, and government. Aside from studying Articles I-III and the Bill of Rights, we are also required to teach the compromises made at the Federal Convention that made the ratification of the Constitution possible. The conversations, debates and speeches made at the Federal Convention need to be covered in order to understand how the constitution was created. Additionally, I believe in the classroom that the best way to learn is to actually re-enact a particular event. Lastly, I think it is an excellent challenge for the students to read the real primary source records from the convention, primarily using James Madison's notes on the Federal Convention. Therefore in this three day class activity the students will truly get an understanding of the meaning and necessity for compromise at the Federal Convention by playing the role of a founding father.

Objectives

The Student will:

- gain a complete understanding of the compromises made at the Federal Convention
- identify with the founding fathers through research and role play
- appreciate the final product of the U.S. Constitution upon obtaining a clearer understanding of the difficulty that the founding fathers went through to create the document
- be aware of the diverse interests and needs of each state and region of the country

Day 1 of this activity includes the power point presentation (slides 1-8) outlining the convention itself and the main topics discussed. Also, the directions of the project will be covered very thoroughly. Day 1 of the project will take place approximately a week before the Mock Convention takes place, so as to provide adequate time for the students to conduct their research and create their “Delegate Portfolio”. Also, on this Day 1 they will pick/be assigned their delegate (there will be some repeats, as some of the delegates are more difficult to find information on for an 8th grade student).

Days 2 and 3 will be the actual convention. There will be an additional power point with scene setter pictures of the inside and outside of Independence Hall. The classroom will be set up in two rows of a horse shoe shape. The students will wear name tags and be encouraged to wear wigs/dress up. The debates and participation will take place during this day and the in class worksheet will be completed.

After the convention has come to a close, they will hand in their portfolios the next day. At that point, I will use slides 9-15 to reaffirm that they understand the real compromises that were made (in case the class came up with alternate compromises).

Overall I think this will be a fun, creative, excellent learning experience. Additionally it is a great research based activity as well that focuses on the use of primary sources (a major goal of mine in the 8th grade History course).