

Competition In a New Nation

Application Question: How do past government decisions affect our current lives?

So What?: The beginning stages of the new United States nation were filled with constant debates and changes. Students should understand how these changes and people involved affect the foundation of our country and the centuries of history which have followed it. Students will engage in understanding how decisions came to be made and what were the different choices the young leaders of our country had.

NCSS Thematic Strand:

Strand V: Individuals, groups, and institutions

Strand VI: power, authority, and governance

Ohio Academic Content Standards:

A New Nation (Ohio Learning Standards for Social Studies, p. 27).

7. The outcome of the American Revolution was national independence and new political, social and economic relationships for the American people.

8. Problems arising under the Articles of Confederation led to debate over the adoption of the U.S. Constitution.

9. Actions of early presidential administrations established a strong federal government, provided peaceful transitions of power and repelled a foreign invasion.

Grade Level: 8th Grade United States History

Class Periods Required: 6 Class Periods

Purpose, Background, and Context:

The purpose of this unit is to introduce students to the foundational stages in early American history, particularly at the time of the 13 colonies. Through group competition they will place themselves in the shoes of early American citizens and attempt to answer many of the questions and struggles they faced during that time. While learning about the early actions of those in power during the time they too will work to draw conclusions with their groups and work with other towns.

The background for this lesson comes from information about the Early American republic particularly from 1776-1812. Broad American history is covered with students for the first time in eighth grade. Often this early time in the republic can be lost and students only are taught about early presidents and their decisions. Through the simulation students will not only learn the necessary information about the early stages in American history but understand why certain foundations for the country were agreed upon.

This lesson would fit into an eighth grade United States history class because students learning more in depth knowledge about American history for the first time in eighth grade. As eighth grade students they are also beginning to develop critical thinking skills they will use throughout their high school education and beyond. This group simulation scaffolded within learning the foundation of the American government and colonial America will give students the chance to critically think with their peers.

Goals/Objectives/Student Outcomes/Performance Expectations:

Learners will be able to:

- “Describe interactions between and among individuals, groups, and institutions” (NCSS, p. 78)
- “Identify and describe examples of tensions between and among individuals, groups, and institutions” (NCAA, p. 78).
- “Provide examples of the role of institutions in furthering both continuity and change” (NCSS, p.78).
- “The ways in which the government meets the needs and wants of citizens” (NCSS, p. 80).
- “Analyze conditions and actions related to power, authority and governance that contribute to conflict and cooperation among groups and nations, or detract from cooperation” (NCSS, p. 80).

Materials:

- Folders for each group to keep profiles in
- Online folders set up for online research.
- Access to the internet
- Craft supplies for campaign propaganda
- Cut out pictures of trading goods to help students keep track of trades
- Whiteboard and markers to display leaderboard totals

Description of Class Meetings: 13 Colonies Town Simulation*DAY 1: Who are we and what will we stand for?*

Teams are created within the class of about 5-6 members depending upon class size. There should be 6 teams total for the competition simulation to follow during the next week. Teams will then compete in a draft to represent certain colonial towns. Once towns have been chosen teams will receive a portfolio about the town they selected. The remainder of the first-class period will consist of teams learning about their towns via the portfolios given to them and group research. By the end of this class period students should have a good understanding of what they town is like, who lives there, how big it is, where it is located, what political party its citizens follow, and more.¹

Assessment: Students will organize all the information they learned with their groups during the period in a hard copy or virtual portfolio. This portfolio will serve as a guide to them for the remaining competition. At the end of each class the teacher will collect the portfolios and provide check-ins with each group, tracking their understanding and providing insight when necessary.

DAY 2: How will we govern our new nation?

For today’s lesson in the unit students will engage in a type of structured academic controversy. During the class period the goal is to create a new constitution for the new nation the student’s towns are a part of. Each town will receive points for successfully getting the parts their citizens want in the constitution included in the final draft. This means towns will have to bargain with one another and engage in a structured controversy to create a final draft of the

constitution. The role of the teacher in this is to outline the different sections of the constitution students will be attempting to change and act as a scribe to keep a constitution and the changes visible to all students. Each town does not know what the points other teams are trying to include are and certain elements have different point amounts. In the last five minutes of the class the constitution must come to a vote and be finalized before students are dismissed. Then the teacher will tally the point amounts to create an running leaderboard to show student's the next day.

Assessment: Students will keep track of which parts they successfully get their peers to include within the new constitution. The teacher can utilize the notes kept by each group and the number of points they received to assess their understanding for the day.

DAY 3: Who will we elect as our next president? How will it be a peaceful transition of power?

The Election of 1796 was the first election of a new president for the new nation. There were many fears surrounding how the transition of power would be handled. For today's simulation groups will campaign to elect the candidate which has been assigned to them based on which town they are. The six main candidates in the 1796 election were:

John Adams

Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Pinckney

Aaron Burr

Samuel Adams

Oliver Ellsworth

Groups will spend part of the class creating campaign material and then spend the next half trying to convince their peers to vote for their candidate. No student is allowed to vote for the candidate they are trying to get elected, but every student must cast a vote by the end of class. Votes will be tallied, and the winner announced by the end of class and the actually winner of the 1796 election will also be announced to see if the students picked who the electoral college did. Points will be awarded to teams based on how many votes their candidate received during the election.

Assessment: Today's assessment will be an evaluation of the student's campaign material and how successful they were in getting their candidate elected.

DAY 4: How are trade agreements created? Can relations be created peacefully or is fighting a necessity?

Today's simulation will be rooted in trade between towns through creating alliances or achieving goals by means of force. In their portfolios students will have numbers of the goods they can trade, the goods they need, the number of soldiers they have, and other necessary information. They also will have a section outlining what they need to accomplish during the class period. An example of this would be "Town A has 10,000 pieces of corn and only needs 5,000 pieces but has no wheat and needs 5,000 pieces of wheat". This is one example of something a town would need, and towns will receive 10 possible goals to achieve for different point amounts. The class period will be spent allowing students to work with one another creating agreements and have all students in each group sign off when an agreement is created. Force can be used only in extreme cases with approval of the president (the teacher). The teacher can also have cut out pictures of the different goods to trade to help students keep track.

Assessment: Student's will be assessed based on how many goals they accurately accomplish which will detail how well their group worked together and achieved their trade goals.

DAY 5: Why do we fight in wars?

Today students will work as a nation to decide if they will go to war, particularly the War of 1812. The teacher will play the role of the United Kingdom and pose the problems which led to the War of 1812. As the final day of simulation activities, the towns will work together as a nation to discuss the possibility of war. Each town has within their portfolio their stance on the war and what could happen to them because of it. The class must decide to go declare war or not by the end of the period. Based on what the students choose the teacher will read what happens because of their decision as a way to wrap up the simulations.

Assessment: Students will receive homework to write a reflection about the decision made by the class and what the results of it were. The reflection should be about a page in length.

DAY 6: How do the choices we made align with the early leaders of the country?

Today's class will be spent educating students about what the choices of the early leaders of America were. Teachers can decide how to present this information to students based on how the class learns the best. It may be via video, group readings, short articles, a short interactive slideshow, etc. Then each town will work together to critically reflect on the decisions they made during the simulation the past week, what they like, what they would have changed, what they wish had turned out differently?

Assessment: Teams will turn in the reflection written together to assess their understanding of the simulation and connections to the choices made by early American leaders too.

Assessment of Outcomes:

- Students will understand the decisions made by early American leaders and how they came to make those decisions. This will be assessed by the interactions between groups, choices made by groups, and the final reflection turned in by each group.
- Students will critically think about trade, power, government systems, and the constitution by putting themselves in the position of early leaders to find points of agreement based on different beliefs. This will be assessed by evaluating the groups abilities to work together and find points of agreement.
- Students will reflect on how the choices of the early American government affect us now. This will be assessed through the reflections of groups and individual students after decisions are made and what they think about those decisions personally.

Extensions and Adaptations:

These should be provided to students on a case-by-case basis depending upon a student's particular adaptation through their ESL plan or IEP's. As the unit is grounded in group work, they can be paired with peers who will help them when needed but allow them to feel included. The group work aspect also provides space for them to work on specific aspects of certain parts of the simulation based on how the group divides up the work. The portfolios given to groups can include extra materials for those who may need them such as translations and more clearly explained written directions. These students' assessments can also be graded differently based on effort put in.

Resources:

- National Council for the Social Studies. (2010). *National curriculum standards for social studies: A framework for teaching, learning, and assessment*. Maryland: National Council for Social Studies.
- Ohio Department of Education. (2010). *Ohio's new learning standards: Social studies standards*. Retrieved from <https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Ohio-s-New-Learning-Standards/Social-Studies/SS-Standards.pdf.aspx>.
- Dr. Lindsay Schakenback Regele. Early American Republic, Miami University, AMS HST 363. 2022.

Appendices:

¹Towns for student groups to choose from:

- Town – Political Party – Presidential Candidate (to be used for activities during the simulation)
- New York, New York – Anti-Federalist – Aaron Burr
- Boston, Massachusetts – Federalist – John Adams
- Williamsburg, Virginia – Democrat-Republican – Thomas Jefferson
- Charleston, South Carolina - Federalist – Thomas Pinckney
- Baltimore, Maryland - Federalist – Oliver Ellsworth
- Salem, Massachusetts - Democrat Republican – Samuel Adams

From here portfolios should include the following information:

- Town population
- Political viewpoints on the constitution
- Majority of citizens stance on the election
- Ideas about war
- All goods available to trade
- Good needed from trading
- Number of men in the militia

Students should receive basic information and do more research to learn about the town, especially in regard to majority political party and ideas about government power.