

Constitutional Convention Introduction: Leadership Qualities of the Founding Fathers

Lesson Objectives

Essential Questions:

1. What role did the founders play in establishing America?
2. How did the leadership characteristics of the Founding Fathers impact our Constitution?
3. What defining characteristics did they all have in common?

Utah Core Standards: U.S. History I

- Standard 5.3.a Identify the contributions of colonial leaders; e.g.; George Washington, Thomas Paine, Alexander Hamilton.
- Standard 6.1.a Analyze the factors involved in convening the Constitutional Convention.

Utah Common Core Standards

- Writing Standard 6: Use technology, including the internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.
- Writing Standard 9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- Speaking and Listening Standard 1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- Speaking and Listening Standard 5: Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

Students will know:

- ➔ Who the Founding Fathers were who participated in the Constitutional Convention.
- ➔ What background each Founding Father brought to the convention and how it influenced the shaping of our nation.
- ➔ What characteristics and leadership skills they had and how they helped to make the convention successful.

Students will be able to:

- ➔ Decide what kinds of characteristics the framers of the constitution possessed and what they may have lacked through completing a partner activity.
- ➔ Uncover the characteristics which enabled the Founding Fathers to create our Constitution.
- ➔ Research an assigned Founding Father using the rubric provided as a guide.
- ➔ Create an informative pamphlet about their Founding Father's characteristics which made them important to the Constitutional Convention.
- ➔ Present their pamphlets to their peers in appointment book (GIFT).

Procedural Summary

Time-frame: 2-3, 45-minute periods

Materials Needed:

Computer access to the following websites:

<http://constitutioncenter.org/learn/educational-resources/founding-fathers/>

<http://billofrightsinstitute.org/resources/educator-resources/founders/>

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/convention/delegates/>

Pamphlet guide/rubric

Founding Father Comparison Chart/Conclusions

Anticipatory set/bell-ringer

Think Pair Write (GIFT)

Read the following quote, discuss it with your partner then answer the question that follows:

“No other major nation honors its past historical characters, especially characters who existed two centuries ago, in the quite the manner we Americans do. We want to know what Thomas Jefferson would think of affirmative action, or George Washington of the invasion of Iraq. The British don’t have to check in periodically with, say, either of the two William Pits the way we seem to have to check in with Jefferson or Washington. We Americans seem to have a special need for these authentic historical figures in the here and now. Why should this be so?”

(Revolutionary Characters, Gordon S. Wood: page 1)

Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why? (1-2 full sentences)

Why do you think Americans emphasize the importance of these men we call the “founding fathers?” (2-3 full sentences)

Various scholars’ reasons we look to the Founding Fathers are:

1. Constitutional interpretation is based on what these men were thinking when they wrote it.
2. To recover what was wise and valuable in America’s past.
3. As standards by which to measure our political leaders of today (Why don’t we have such leaders today?)
4. They give us a sense of identity as a nation.

Gordon Wood suggests:

“The United States was founded on a set of beliefs and not, as were other nations, on a common ethnicity, language, or religion. Since we are not a nation in any traditional sense of the term, in order to establish our nationhood, we have to reaffirm and reinforce periodically the values of the men who declared independence from Great Britain and framed the constitution. As long as the Republic endures, in other words, American are destined to look back to its founding.”

(Revolutionary Characters, Gordon S. Wood: page 2)

Reviewing Previous Lesson:

Students will work in partners to brainstorm the faults of the Articles of Confederation. (The teacher may use questions to help them to remember previously learned material.)

The motives for reform were:

- Economic depression (Who wouldn't trade with the U.S.?)
 - Lack of trade with Great Britain due to trade barriers
- Expansion (Who would decide how and where people could settle in the lands West of Appalachian Mountains?)
 - Territorial growth brought problems of security
- Security (Security from who?)
 - Post-war destruction
 - British forts in our territory refused to leave, stirred up Native Americans
 - Interstate Commerce
 - Shays' Rebellion
- Confederation Congress
 - Inept/a laughing stock
 - Lack of quorums (nothing can get passed)

Procedures:

Day 1

1. Give a short lecture presenting background information necessary for students to understand the need for a new system of government.

Teacher Background Notes:

Many Americans became convinced that they needed a stronger central government. Few agreed on how that government should be set up or what powers it would have.

- Some felt that the 13 states should be combined into one large state with one central government
- Some felt that the states should keep as much power as possible for themselves
 - They favored a FEDERAL SYSTEM in which the power to govern would be divided between the national government and the states.

Constitutional Convention- May 1787

- 55 delegates from 12 states participated (Rhode Island opposed a strong central government and did not want to participate)
- Assembled to revise the Articles of Confederation
- Within a few days they decided that the Articles were not worth saving
- The delegates decided to write a new document- a constitution- that would set up an entirely new central government
- At the beginning of the convention they made several important decisions
 - Each state would have one vote- no matter how many delegates from that state were present
 - A simple majority vote would decide any issue- 7 votes
 - The work of the convention was to be a secret (**Why was it supposed to be kept a secret?**)
 - The task was controversial- they were only supposed to revise the Articles- not replace them!

2. The Teacher will ask students to think of someone who is in a leadership position that they know well. Examples include people who are on student council, sports, Governing Youth Council, etc. Ask the students to come up with at least 5 examples of qualities or characteristics that make them good leaders. Students will then pair up and discuss what they came up with. After this discussion time the teacher will choose a few volunteers to share their list with the whole class.

3. As a whole class discussion, ask the students to come up with possible characteristics they think describe the Founding Fathers and why they would have been selected to be delegates to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia.

Possible characteristics may include:

- Education
- Religion
- Finances
- Family/Social Standing
- Politics
- Slave holdings
- Profession
- Age
- Geography
- Political philosophy

4. After the class has made a list of all the characteristics they think will be important ask them to select the 3 they think would have been most important to participate in the Constitutional Convention. Ask students to hypothesize why the two lists differ? Why are certain characteristics valued differently today than in the past? Make sure the students understand that the most important characteristics in the selection of delegates were class, education, and wealth. They had to be true gentlemen, in the 18th century sense.

Day 2

1. Students will review the list of characteristics developed in the lesson the previous day. Students will attempt to identify as many characteristics as possible.
2. The teacher will introduce the students to the assignment that will give them the opportunity to study the Founders who participated in the Constitutional Convention closer and see how each had a different set of characteristics that qualified him to be chosen to be a delegate to the convention. The teacher will explain the assignment and hand out the research guide/pamphlet rubric. Students will also sign up for one of the delegates to the convention on the sign-up sheet.
3. Students will then start to research the delegate they signed up for on a computer with internet access. They will use the websites that have been approved and discussed beforehand. Students will use the research guide/pamphlet rubric as a guide to find the information they will need to create their individual pamphlet/brochure. Students will take the information found on the internet and incorporate it into the pamphlet per instructions. Students will have the entire class period to work on the brochure.

Day 3

1. Students may need some additional time to complete the pamphlet as needed.
2. When they have finished and printed their final product they will need to go around the room and make appointments with 5 other students. When all students have finished making appointments, they will be given 8 minute intervals to meet with each person they made an appointment with. They will take notes while they listen to each presentation. Each person will have 4 minutes to explain what they learned from their research.

Conclusions

3. After all the appointments have been completed, the teacher will ask students to share how their individual research and appointment book discussions gave them a better understanding of the delegates.

Suggested questions to help teacher facilitate a whole class discussion.

What were characteristics that were common to all or almost all?

Examples could include: All White Men, Mostly well educated, Wealthy, Landowners, Professionals and or businessmen.

What were characteristics that were unique to one or a few of them?

Examples: many different professions, backgrounds, ages, religions, regional differences.

How did the leadership characteristics of the Founding Fathers impact our Constitution?

Revisit opening discussion

Have students think back to the discussion from the beginning of this project. Revisit these ideas below and see if they have a different perspective from before. They could pull out their responses from before and see if their opinions have changed or if they have new insights into why we look to the Founding Fathers.

Various scholars' reasons we look to the Founding Fathers are:

1. Constitutional interpretation is based on what these men were thinking when they wrote it.
2. To recover what was wise and valuable in America's past.
3. As standards by which to measure our political leaders of today (Why don't we have such leaders today?)
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Gordon Wood suggests:

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Constitutional Convention Delegate Informational Pamphlet Instructions

Your task is to create an informative pamphlet about one of the Founding Fathers who participated in the Constitutional Convention. You will also look for the characteristics that your Founding Father had to qualify him to be included in this important meeting. Take your time and be creative.

Use the research guide below to help you find the information required to complete your pamphlet/brochure.

Approved Websites

<http://constitutioncenter.org/learn/educational-resources/founding-fathers/>

<http://billofrightsinstitute.org/resources/educator-resources/founders/>

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/convention/delegates/>

Information that must be included in your pamphlet:

1. Picture of your Founding Father (at least 1)
2. Name of Founding Father
3. Year he was born and the year that he died
4. Education
5. Geography
 - Where was he born?
 - Which state did he represent?
6. Age of your Founding Father at the time of the convention.
7. Religion
8. Occupation
9. Slave Issue (do they own slaves? Or do they oppose slavery?)
10. Political Career
11. Political Philosophy
12. Information on what your Founding Father did at the Constitutional Convention.
13. Leadership characteristics shown by your Founding Father.
14. Family life
15. Finances (independently wealthy or must work to keep income coming in)
16. Famous or informative quotes that your Found Father said.

Writing/Research requirements

- Use any layout style you wish
- Be creative
- Bibliography of sites used
- Your Name and class period

Pamphlet Grading Rubric

Name: _____ Period: _____

1. _____/5 Picture of your Founding Father (at least 1)
2. _____/5 Name of Founding Father
3. _____/5 Year he was born and the year that he died
4. _____/5 Education
5. _____/10 Geography
 - Where was he born?
 - Which state did he represent?
6. _____/5 Age of your Founding Father at the time of the convention.
7. _____/10 Religion
8. _____/10 Occupation
9. _____/5 Slave Issue (do they own slaves? Or do they oppose slavery?)
10. _____/10 Political Career
11. _____/10 Political Philosophy
12. _____/20 Information on what your Founding Father did at the Constitutional Convention.
13. _____/20 Leadership characteristics shown by your Founding Father.
14. _____/10 Family life
15. _____/10 Finances (independently wealthy or must work to keep income coming in)
16. _____/10 Famous or informative quotes that your Founding Father said.

_____/150 Sub-total

Writing/Research requirements

_____/20 Layout style

Neat

Easy to read

_____/10 Creativity

Shows best work

Attempts to make pamphlet inviting and interesting to look at.

_____/15 Bibliography of sites used

Used at least 2 of 3 websites listed.

_____/5 Your Name and class period

_____/50 Sub-total

_____/200 Total points possible

Name: _____ Period: _____

Founding Father Comparison Chart

	Your Founding Father	Similarities & Differences	Partners' Founding Father
1		S- D-	
2		S- D-	
3		S- D-	
4		S- D-	
5		S- D-	

Drawing Conclusions

Read the following quote, discuss it with your partner then answer the question that follows:

“No other major nation honors its past historical characters, especially characters who existed two centuries ago, in the quite the manner we Americans do. We want to know what Thomas Jefferson would think of affirmative action, or George Washington of the invasion of Iraq. The British don’t have to check in periodically with, say, either of the two William Pits the way we seem to have to check in with Jefferson or Washington. We Americans seem to have a special need for these authentic historical figures in the here and now. Why should this be so?”

(Revolutionary Characters, Gordon S. Wood: page 1)

Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why? (1-2 full sentences)

Why do you think Americans emphasize the importance of these men we call the “founding fathers?” (2-3 full sentences)

What were characteristics that were common to all or almost all?

What were characteristics that were unique to one or a few of them?:

How did the leadership characteristics of the Founding Fathers impact our Constitution? (3-4 sentences)

STUDENT SIGN-UP SHEET

Name	Founding Father
	John Langdon
	Alexander Hamilton
	Elbridge Gerry
	Roger Sherman
	William Samuel Johnson
	Benjamin Franklin
	Gouverneur Morris
	James Wilson
	Robert Morris
	John Dickinson
	Luther Martin
	James McHenry
	George Washington
	James Madison
	George Mason
	George Wythe
	Edmund Randolph
	Hugh Williamson
	John Rutledge
	Charles Cotesworth Pinckney
	Charles Pinkney
	Caleb Strong
	George Clymer
	William Blought
	Alexander Martin
	John Francis Mercer
	Abraham Baldwin
	John Blair
	James McClurg
	Nicholas Gilman

