

Northwest History Consortium

Writing the Constitution: The Philadelphia Convention

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7th & 8th Grade

National Standard

Era 3: Revolution and the New Nation (1754-1820s) / Standard 3

Standard 3: The institutions and practices of government created during the Revolution and how they were revised between 1787 and 1815 to create the foundation of the American political system based on the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Washington State Standards (EALRs)

EALR 1: Civics - *The student understands and applies knowledge of government, law, politics, and the nation's fundamental documents to make decisions about local, national, and international issues and to demonstrate thoughtful, participatory citizenship.*

1.1: *The student understands key ideals and principles of the United States, including those in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and other fundamental documents*

1.2: *The student understands the purposes, organization, and function of governments, laws, and political systems.*

1.2.3: *The student understands that the U.S. government includes concepts of both a democracy and a republic.*

1.4: *The student understands civic involvement.*

1.4.1: *The student analyzes how a position on an issue attempts to balance individual rights and common good.*

EALR 2: Economics - *The student applies understanding of economic concepts and systems to analyze decision-making and the interactions between individuals, households, businesses, governments, and societies.*

2.1: *The student understands that people have to make choices between wants and needs and evaluate the outcomes of those choices.*

2.3: *The student understands the government's role in the economy.*

2.3.1: *The student understands and analyzes the influence of the U.S. government's taxation, creation of currency, and tariffs in the past or present.*

EALR 3: Geography - *The student uses a spatial perspective to make reasoned decisions by applying the concepts of location, region, and movement and demonstrating knowledge of how geographic features and human cultures impact environments.*

3.1: *The student understands the physical characteristics, cultural characteristics, and location of places, regions, and spatial patterns on the Earth's surface.*

3.1.2: *The student understands and analyzes physical and cultural characteristics of places and regions in the United States from the past or in the present.*

EALR 4: History - *The student understands and applies knowledge of historical thinking, chronology, eras, turning points, major ideas, individuals, and themes of local, Washington State, tribal, United States, and world history in order to evaluate how history shapes the present and future.*

4.1: *The student understands historical chronology.*

4.1.2: *The student understands how the following themes and developments help to define eras in U.S. history from 1776 to 1900.*

4.2: *The student understands and analyzes causal factors that have shaped major events in history.*

4.2.1: *The student understands and analyzes how individuals and movements have shaped U.S. history (1776—1900).*

EALR 5: Social Studies Skills - *The student understands and applies reasoning skills to conduct research, deliberate, form, and evaluate positions through the processes of reading, writing, and communicating.*

5.1: *The student uses critical reasoning skills to analyze and evaluate positions.*

5.1.1: *The student understands positions on an issue or event.*

5.1.2: *The student evaluates the significance of information used to support positions on an issue or event.*

5.2: *The student uses inquiry-based research.*

5.2.1: *The student creates and uses research questions to guide inquiry on an historical event.*

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5.2.2: The student analyzes the validity, reliability, and credibility of information from a variety of primary and secondary sources while researching an issue or event.

5.3: The student deliberates public issues.

5.3.1: The student engages in discussions that clarify and address multiple viewpoints on public issues.

BACKGROUND

The colonists declared independence on July 2, 1776. They were already at war with Britain and had been dealing with their “abuses and usurpations” for a long time. As colonists, they had few rights as citizens of Britain and were being taken advantage of for financial gain. For example, they were being taxed heavily, but they had no say in the matter and few benefits as a result (taxation without representation).

The Declaration of Independence first tells why the colonists think they have the right to leave their mother country. This is probably best summarized in this sentence from the Declaration:

"But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security."

The Declaration then proceeds to list the ways they were being treated poorly or unfairly.

Although independence was declared in 1776, the colonists didn't win this independence until the Revolutionary War was over in 1783. Once independence was declared, the colonists had to decide how the government of this new nation was going to be organized during and after the war. Many states had spent much time setting up their own governments and some even had written state constitutions, but there was no structure to create unity between the states. They recognized they would need a central or federal government, but they also knew that they didn't want a strong tyrannical ruler, such as the current King George III. So, they set up a loose union of states through the Articles of Confederation. This purposefully gave very little power to the central government, giving most of the power to the individual states. Eventually, the Congress was given the task of heading the federal government. The Articles were written in 1777 and ratified in 1781. These helped the United States get started as a new government and carried the states through the war.

Within a few years after the end of the war, however, the Congress realized the Articles had made the central government too weak. Once the war was done, the new country was heavily in debt and couldn't pay its bills because it did not have the power to levy taxes.

The states and the Congress decided to meet in March of 1787 to revise the Articles. However, most representatives realized they would need a new document altogether. Those delegated by the states to revise the Articles, also known as the Founding Fathers, met and debated for a long hot summer to meet the needs and wants of all the states and to create a document that would

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stand the test of time. The final result is our Constitution. This amazing document balances power in many ways: between the three branches of government; between the federal government and the state governments; between small and large states. The Constitution still rules our country today. According to Wikipedia, it is “the oldest written constitution still in use by any nation in the world.”

PROBLEM

Designing a document to create a new type of government/country was no easy task. The Philadelphia Convention met and debated from March 25 to September 17, 1787. Yes, they did have some examples to glean ideas from such as the Magna Carta, the Constitution of the Roman Republic, and especially those of the individual state governments. However, the final result is one that is unique, has withstood the test of time, and is successful enough to be emulated by other countries around the world today.

SCENARIO

Although the Constitution is an amazing document (but not perfect!) it was difficult to write. There were some rights that everyone agreed on. Thanks to the Pilgrims and the Puritans, the Founding Fathers knew they wanted religious freedom—the right to worship, or not worship, as they wished without government intervention. They also agreed, after their recent experiences with King George III, that if one person was put in charge of the government, he could not have too much power. But for each issue the representatives agreed on, there were more issues that they disagreed on. These were very specific to each state and each individual. No two people needed or wanted exactly the same thing, so they would have to compromise.

Many representatives came to the Philadelphia Convention with ideas:

- Virginia Plan using ideas from James Madison and presented by Edmund Randolph
- Plan of Charles Pinckney from South Carolina
- New Jersey Plan introduced by William Paterson
- Alexander Hamilton’s Plan
- Connecticut Compromise created by Roger Sherman

Many representatives came to the Philadelphia Convention with a plan for the new Constitution.

TASK

You are a representative from (fill in state name here) and need to develop the best plan to present your state’s wants and needs in the new federal Constitution. You may take all of an historical plan, bits and pieces from the different historical plans that best suit your state, or write your own unique plan. You need to understand and be able to explain why each option is best for your state, and you need to be able to convince representatives from other states that your

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plan will be good for them too. Know which specific issues are most important to your state and which you may need to give up in order to get what you want on those important issues. Be ready to compromise, but you must also be ready to fight passionately for what's important to you and your state. Finally, remember that if you don't represent the needs of your state well, you probably won't be voted back into office!

RESOURCES

"Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union." Archiving Early America. ©1996 - 2010. Bainbridge Island, WA. 18 November 2010 <<http://www.earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/milestones/articles/text.html>>.

"The Constitution of the United States." Archiving Early America. ©1996 - 2010. Bainbridge Island, WA. 18 November 2010 <<http://www.earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/freedom/constitution/text.html>>.

Forsythe, Gary E. and Guiseppi, Robert A. "Ancient Rome: Constitution of the Roman Republic." January 2007. International World History Project. ©1995 - 2010. [location unknown]. 18 November 2010 <<http://history-world.org/Roman%20Constitution.htm>>.

Hancock, John, et al. "The Declaration of Independence." 4 July 1776. US History Organization. ©1995 - 2010. Philadelphia, PA. 18 November 2010 <<http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/document/>>.

"The Magna Carta." 1297. The National Archives. 2010. Washington, DC. 18 November 2010 <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/magna_carta/>.

"The Original Bill of Rights." Archiving Early America. ©1996 - 2010. Bainbridge Island, WA. 18 November 2010 <<http://www.earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/freedom/bill/text.html>>.

ASSESSMENT

Students will be evaluated by rubric both on the actual work (historical accuracy, point-of-view, knowledge gained, and required elements) as well as on their group work (contributions, time management, problem-solving, and working with others).

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PBL Group Process Rubric

Category	4	3	2	1
On Task	The group is working on the assignment and uses their time efficiently.	The group was on task the majority of the time. They only needed 1 reminder.	The group needed a 2-4 reminders to get back on task.	The group needed constant reminders to be on task.
Problem-Solving	Each member contributes to solving the issues and problems that arise in the group.	Most of the time the group was able to solve their own problems. Needed guidance only once.	The group needed guidance to solve problems 2-3 times.	The group was not able to solve problems that arose.
Working with Others	Members of the group listen to, share and support each other.	Group members most often listened to and supported each other. Problems only arose once.	Group members frequently (2-3 times) had difficulty listening and sharing ideas.	Group members did not work cooperatively and were not listening to each other.
Prepared for Class	Each member came to class prepared to work on the assignment each and everyday.	Group was most often prepared for class. Had to retrieve supplies 1-2 times.	Group was more unprepared than not, and had to get supplies 3-4 times.	Group members were continually unprepared for class work and had to get supplies on a regular basis.

VanStaalduinen, Darlene.. "PBL Group Process Rubric" adapted from Rachel Edwards' lesson on Taylor, Kaycee. *Indian Policy in the 19th Century*. NWESD Organization. 2008. Anacortes, WA. 5 July 2009 <http://www.nwesd.org/1510101216191755740/lib/1510101216191755740/6.4_IndianPolicy.Taylor.11.pdf>.

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PBL Self-Evaluation Rubric

Category	4	3	2	1
Quality of Research	Research questions and notes taken were in-depth and appropriate.	Research questions and notes were appropriate, but they are not as in-depth as they should be.	Research is incomplete and notes are not as in-depth as they should be.	Research notes are not appropriate for the topic and there is no clear focus.
Sources and Annotations	All sources were cited and you explained why your sources are credible- minimum 3 primary sources	Comment, but 1-2 sources are not cited and/or annotated.	3-4 sources are not cited and/or annotated.	No sources are cited and/or annotated.
Requirements	All steps of process are completed and guided worksheet is turned in. Your personal responsibility was completed.	1-2 steps of the process are not completed or documented	3-4 steps of the process are not completed or documented.	Worksheet requirements were not completed and personal responsibility was not completed.
Presentation	Presentation was loud, clear, neat and organized.	Presentation was almost loud or clear enough for the audience to hear easily. Was organized.	Presentation was way too soft, not very neat or organized.	Presentation was very hard to hear and not organized.

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REFERENCES/CITATIONS

- Hancock, John, et al. "The Declaration of Independence." 4 July 1776. US History Organization. ©1995 - 2010. Philadelphia, PA. 18 November 2010 <<http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/document/>>.
- "History Standards for Grades 5-12 United States." UCLA National Center for History in the Schools. 2005. Los Angeles, CA. 21 May 2009 <<http://nchs.ucla.edu/standards/us-standards5>>.
- OSPI. "Social Studies Essential Learning Requirements: Recommended Grade-by-Grade Sequence for Grade Level Expectations – K-12." Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. 2009. Olympia, WA. 5 June 2009 <<http://standards.ospi.k12.wa.us/ComponentListByGrade.aspx?subject=6,GLE&gl=9>>.
- "United States Constitution." 12 November 2010. Wikipedia. 2001 - 2010. San Francisco, CA. 18 November 2010 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Constitution>.
- VanStaalduinen, Darlene. "PBL Group Process Rubric" adapted from Rachel Edwards' lesson on Taylor, Kaycee. *Indian Policy in the 19th Century*. NWESD Organization. 2008. Anacortes, WA. 5 July 2009 <http://www.nwesd.org/1510101216191755740/lib/1510101216191755740/6.4__IndianPolicy.Taylor.11.pdf>.
- VanStaalduinen, Darlene. "PBL Self-Evaluation Rubric" [adapted]. NWESD Organization. 2008. Anacortes, WA. 18 November 2010 <http://www.nwesd.org/1510101216191755740/lib/1510101216191755740/3.3__WritingConstitution.VanStaalduinen.7-8.pdf>.
- VanStaalduinen, Darlene. "Writing the Constitution: The Philadelphia Convention." NWESD Organization. 2008. Anacortes, WA. 18 November 2010 <http://www.nwesd.org/1510101216191755740/lib/1510101216191755740/3.3_WritingConstitution.7-8.pdf>.