

Who is the most “Founding” of our Founding Fathers?

Instructional Plan by Doug Kraft
Sacajawea Middle School
Bozeman, MT

Essential Questions

Who are our Founding Fathers?

How did their ideas, writings, actions shape our country during their lives?

What effects do they have on our country today?

Historical Background

America’s history has many fascinating characters. Some of the most fascinating come from our founding generation. These individuals fought a war for independence and founded a new government for a new nation and shaped it in its early years. To understand the Revolutionary period, one can look at the cast of characters that played the biggest roles. The intent of this Instructional Plan is for 8th grade students study the lives and contributions of our founders using biography and primary resources. The 8th graders will then do what they do best, argue. They will debate these individuals answering the questions of “Who is the most significant?” Based on these debates, evaluated by the students in class, we will obtain a top fifteen poll of “Who is the Most Founding of our Founding Fathers.”

Historical Thinking Standard 3

The student engages in historical analysis and interpretation:

Therefore, the student is able to:

- **Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas**, values, personalities, behaviors, and institutions by identifying likenesses and differences.
- **Consider multiple perspectives** of various peoples in the past by demonstrating their differing motives, beliefs, interests, hopes, and fears.

Historical Thinking Standard 4

The student conducts historical research:

Therefore, the student is able to

- **Obtain historical data** from a variety of sources, including: library and museum collections, historic sites, historical photos, journals, diaries, eyewitness accounts, newspapers, and the like; documentary films, oral testimony from living witnesses, censuses, tax records, city directories, statistical compilations, and economic indicators.

Revolution and the New Nation (1754-1820s)

Standard 1: The causes of the American Revolution, the ideas and interests involved in forging the revolutionary movement, and the reasons for the American victory

Standard 2: The impact of the American Revolution on politics, economy, and society

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

Quoted from: <http://nchs.ucla.edu/Standards/>

Guided Discovery Activity/Student Learning Activity

This activity is for the 8th grade level.

The Project:

1. Have students choose a founder from the following list or one that is not on the list if he/she can make a case that the individual should be included on the list.
2. Two students will research each founder. One student(referred to as Pro) will be researching with the goal of making a case that the individual is the “greatest” of our founders and the other student (referred to as Con) will research to make the opposite argument; that the founder was insignificant or indeed damaging to the infant country.
3. Once research is completed, the students will present their arguments to the remainder of the class in the form of a debate. Each student will have no more than five minutes to present their argument followed by two minute rebuttals to refute the other’s arguments. Each student will be required to make their presentations using Power Point or some other electronic presentation.
4. Each presentation will include a quote from a primary source and a bibliography.
5. The rest of the class will serve as judges using the following form. Each student will be required to take notes on the arguments of the presenters and rate each founder on a scale of one to ten, one being the least significant and ten being very significant. Each student will be required to defend their rating with a paragraph referring to the arguments presented.
6. The teacher will average the ratings from each of the debates and obtain the most “founding” of our founders and rank them.

The List of Founders offered for research and debate:

1. George Washington
2. Thomas Jefferson
3. John Adams
4. Thomas Paine
5. James Madison
6. Alexander Hamilton
7. Abigail Adams
8. Benjamin Franklin
9. Samuel Adams
10. Agrippa Hull (free black)
11. John Hancock
12. Patrick Henry
13. Paul Revere
14. Phyllis Wheatley
15. Daniel Shayes
16. John Jay

Student Assessment Plan

The students will be scored according to the following rubric.

- 1 Novice 2 Nearing Proficient 3 Proficient 4 Advanced
1. Presents thoughtful and accurate research (Pro or Con).
 2. Uses a quote from a primary source when making argument.
 3. Includes Bibliography
 4. Takes notes during each debate and thoughtfully ranks each founder presented.

Sources and Resources

Textbook: American Journey

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, 19 W. 44th Street, NYC, NY 10036

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[/www.gilderlehrman.org/](http://www.gilderlehrman.org/)

Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Founding_Fathers_of_the_United_States

I will use various resources in my classroom as well.

Reflection

I have not done this unit with my students yet. I will do this in the Fall of 2011.