

Lesson Plan

Focus on the Cabinet

Book: *George Washington and the American Presidency*

Series: Foundations of Our Nation

Level: Navigator

Objective

To help students practice drawing from multiple print and visual sources to discuss ideas and support their opinions.

Supplies

- *George Washington and the American Presidency*
- “Cabinet Members” article: <http://www.mountvernon.org/digital-encyclopedia/article/cabinet-members/>
- “Washington’s Presidential Cabinet” video: <https://vimeo.com/78847211>
- Video screen or projector
- Whiteboard

Before the Activity

Read *George Washington and the American Presidency*, or assign it to students to read on their own. Have the students read the “Cabinet Members” article as well.

Activity

Watch the “Washington’s Presidential Cabinet” video as a class. Discuss the following questions as a large group:

- How did George Washington’s experience as a general influence his choices about his cabinet? (Answer: He had practice hearing many people’s conflicting opinions and making a decision based on them.)
- How did Washington’s experience running Mount Vernon influence his choices about his cabinet? (Answer: He had practice making decisions based on the reports of others.)
- Why did Washington choose cabinet members from different regions of the United States? (Answer: He wanted to make sure that the cabinet would represent a variety of people and interests.)
- Why did Washington choose not to have the vice president be very involved in the Senate? (Answer: He wanted to keep the executive and legislative branches separate.)

Then write the following questions on the whiteboard and have students discuss them in groups of two or three:

- Do you think George Washington should have involved the vice president in the cabinet? Why or why not?
- If you were president, would you choose people who disagreed with you to be members of your cabinet? Why or why not?
- If you were one of Washington's cabinet members, would the strong disagreements have caused you to resign? Why or why not?

After giving students five minutes to discuss the questions, come back together as a large group. Ask for a volunteer to share his or her group's answer to the first question. Then ask if any groups had the opposite answer. If they did, have that group share their answer and reasons with the large group. Repeat both these steps for the other two questions.

Evaluation

Could the students give reasonable answers to the questions based on the information in the book, article, and video? Did they treat each other respectfully, even when they disagreed?

Standards

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards' speaking and listening standards, grade 7 (SL 7.1; SL 7.2), and the National Council for Social Studies Standards Content Standard 6.