

#12134

THE MAKING OF AMERICA'S PRESIDENCY

NEW DIMENSION MEDIA/QUESTAR, 2003

Grade Level: 5-12

12 Minutes



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The Making of America's Presidency **Our Presidents in America's History Series**

Subject Area: Social Studies, U.S. History

Synopsis: Chronicles the beginnings of American democracy, including the early governments of the colonies, the Continental Congress, and the creation of the United States Constitution. Discusses the system of checks and balances laid out in the Constitution, which limits the power of the President of the United States.

Learning Objectives:

- Objective 1)** Students will be able to explain the early democratic ideas and practices that emerged during the colonial period and explain the functions of the House of Burgesses and the Continental Congress.
- Objective 2)** Students will be able to describe the mounting tensions between the American Colonies and Britain that led to the Revolutionary War, with emphasis on the issue of taxation without representation.
- Objective 2)** Students will be able to discuss the Constitutional Convention, and explain why it was necessary to have a workable central government led by a single executive with limited powers.
- Objective 3)** Students will be able to explain the roles of each of the three branches of government and discuss the system of checks and balances as outlined in the United States Constitution.

Pre-Viewing Discussion and Activities:

- 1) Point out the original 13 colonies and Great Britain on a map. Who ruled the American colonies? What types of local governments existed? Why were local governments necessary?
- 2) Vocabulary: evolved, lynchpin, Declaration of Independence, pledge, House of Burgesses, influential, regional, abyss, levied, taxation, tyranny, rebellion, legislature, annually, Minute Men, Continental Congress, Articles of Confederation, inadequate, Constitutional Convention, executive, checks and balances, veto, impeach, liberty, ratified, Bill of Rights

Post-Viewing Discussion and Activities:

- 1) When did the concept of American democracy begin? Describe the systems of government in the Colonial period. Did the colonies share a common government?
- 2) What were the causes of the Revolutionary War? Why did England levy taxes on the colonists? Why did this upset the colonists?
- 3) How did the colonies respond to the escalating tensions with Britain? Why was it important that the colonies declared common cause with Massachusetts after the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party? What do you think would have happened had the colonies not united against Britain?
- 4) Why do you think the Battles of Lexington and Concord are referred to as "the shot heard round the world?" Why were these battles significant?
- 5) What was the purpose of the Constitutional Convention? Why did the United States need to create a central government? Why did the nation need a single executive? How is the President's power limited?
- 6) What are the three branches of government? Why is the system of checks and balances necessary? Give an example of the system of checks and balances in action.

Additional Activity:

- 1) In a class activity, work through three mock scenarios that demonstrate the system of checks and balances:
 - Have the “Congress” vote and pass a new bill that the “President” may veto or the “Supreme Court justices” declare unconstitutional.
 - Have the President ask the Congress to declare war.
 - Tell the class that the President has been accused of abusing his or her power as President and go through the process of impeachment.

FOR INFORMATION, OR TO ORDER CONTACT:

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