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Final Project

*Heroes of the Constitution – the Anti-Federalists*

**Proposal Abstract:** While the Constitution is an incredible document that outlined a plan for our government, a government that has endured despite the changes that have occurred in our society over the last 200 years, one could argue that without the addition of the Bill of Rights, the plan might not have been as successful and long-lasting as it has been. It was the Anti-federalists that fought for the addition of the Bill of Rights and therefore the Anti-federalists could be viewed as the heroes of the Constitution. I designed a one week unit that focused on the Anti-federalists and their fight for a Bill of Rights.

**Grade Level:** 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Seminar impact:** I believe my proposal was directly and indirectly impacted by the seminar. I will use many of the strategies shared by Kraig Hannum in my own teaching about the Declaration of Independence. The unit I designed was not about the Declaration but I did have to teach that topic prior to tackling the unit I designed for the course this year.

While Michael Dwyer and Dr. Willard Sterne Randall are brilliant men, I will not be using their material in my classroom. However, I do not mean that in a way that implies that their presentations had no impact on this unit. The information and knowledge that they shared will deepen my background knowledge which will make me a better teacher of this time period.

The more beneficial of the two field trips was the local trip to the Hubbardton Battlefield. The trip to Newburgh and Saratoga would be impractical for my classes for a couple of reasons: the amount of on the road time makes the trip a lengthy one that would last longer than the school day and the material is not necessarily a focus of my classes. However, Carl Fuller was an excellent and incredibly informative guide at Hubbardton. I believe my students would enjoy that as a half-day trip

Finally, one of the ideas I used – that of a simulation where I set up my classroom to be excessively rigid and then ask students to list the rights they believe they should have (hoping that the rights they try to protect are connected to the ones I tried to take away with the rigid rules) – came from a colleague during one of our discussions as a smaller group. Often, the work that is done in that smaller group has the largest impact because it is the time when we most have a chance to talk about our proposals and bounce ideas off one another.

**Central Questions:**

- § What was the debate when the states were ratifying the Constitution?
- § Who were the Anti-federalists and what was their argument?
- § What is the Bill of Rights?

**Lesson Length:** 80 minutes per day for 5 days

**Key ideas:**

- § The addition of the Bill of Rights ensured the enduring success of the Constitution.
- § The Bill of Rights – although widely unused early on, has in recent years been the piece of the document that has allowed the Constitution and our government to endure in rapidly changing times.
- § The Anti-federalists fought for what they believed in, despite the fact that resisting the ratification of the Constitution was unpopular with many.

**Intended Learning Outcomes:**

- § Students will be able to evaluate the arguments over the necessity of a Bill of Rights and explain the Anti-federalists roles in securing its addition to the Constitution.
- § Students will analyze the importance of the Bill of Rights and its specific guarantees.

**National History Standard:**

Standard 3B ~ The student understands the guarantees of the Bill of Rights and its continuing significance.

**Preparation for teaching:**

Pre-teaching for this unit . . .

*Creating a Nation*  
1776-1791

\*Strengths and weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation (November 15, 1777)

- Problems with \$\$\$ and land

\*Settling land west of the Appalachian Mts.

- Land Ordinance of 1785
- Northwest Ordinance

\*Constitutional Convention (May 1787)

- Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Thomas Paine, Patrick Henry, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, James Madison, Edmund Randolph, William Patterson
- Virginia Plan + New Jersey Plan = Great Compromise
- North + South = 3/5 Compromise

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\*Ideas behind the Constitution

Iroquois League, Magna Carta

Powers of Federal/State governments

Separation of Powers – executive, legislative, judicial

Electing President

Checks & Balances

Ratifying Constitution

Federalists – James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, John Jay  
(defended constitution)

Anti-federalists – John Hancock, Samuel Adams, Patrick Henry  
(attacked Constitution and argued for Bill of Rights)

Rhode Island voted to approve in 1790

Add Bill of Rights – 1791

**Primary Sources listed and briefly evaluated:**

- Ø Bill of Rights

This is one primary source that I have found incredibly readable for middle school students. The reading is short, easily broken up, and – most importantly- middle school students can relate to the idea of rights!

Ø Federalist Papers

Important for the teacher of this time period to have read, but again, not a document I would have the students read. However, I do tell the students about them.

Ø Various letters written by Anti-federalists . . . 07 Jan. 2008. <http://www.celdf.org>

I found these writings very useful in understanding the mindset of the Anti-federalists. I found it challenging to find primary source documents that would help me with this unit. These were not readings I would give to my students. I think the readings would be too heavy for middle school students. Due to the time boundaries I have set for this unit, I would not choose to use even excerpts. However, as a teacher, I found it useful to read many of these writings. I also found the fact that many of the Anti-federalists wrote under pseudonyms very telling in itself.

**Secondary Sources listed and briefly evaluated:**

Ø *The BASIC/Not Boring Middle Grades Social Studies Book* Nashville, TN, Incentive Publications, 2002

This is another book of reproducibles for the teaching of history in the middle grades. I used one page, titled “Know Your Rights!” from this book simply as an exercise to apply their understanding of the Bill of Rights. I have found this to be a very useful resource in my classroom. I use it frequently. The worksheets generate thinking, often require research skills, assess comprehension and understanding, and – as the title suggests – the activities do engage the students.

Ø Berkin, Carol *Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the Struggle for America's Independence* New York, Knopf, 2005

Excellent book – wish there was one for every topic in history. Listening to Carol Berkin present is probably influencing my opinion as she was an incredible speaker – intelligent, articulate, and funny. Her book shared with the reader the experience of women during the Revolutionary War in a way that was complete and complex but presented in a manner that was clear. I would recommend this book for all teachers of history.

Ø *Biographies* January 2007  
<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/ratification/biographies/html>

Excellent resource! Very informative site and appeared to be highly accurate. This is a great site for students to use if you allow time for them to navigate the site and get familiar with, and sort through the information available. If time does not allow for this, it is a tremendous site for teachers to use to gather (print) to use with students, very user friendly.

Ø *Bring History Alive! A Sourcebook for Teaching United States History* Los Angeles: National Center for History in the Schools, 1996

This resource includes articles that pertain to the study of history, including both a rationale for studying history and methods for studying history. Additionally, and probably more useful to the teacher of history are essays and examples of classroom activities for each National History Standard. Part III of this book is a list of recommended teaching resources (media, CD-ROM, text based, primary, and art) to be used in general and specifically for each Era. This is a helpful resource for the teacher. Once one knows the topic, this resource can be very helpful in the planning stages.

Ø *Great Issues in American History: 1765-1865* by Richard Hofstadter and Beatrice Hofstadter New York: Vintage Books, 1982

The book provides a selection of documents with very brief introductions to each. I find it very time consuming to have students read primary sources because it is challenging for them to understand and honestly – I am not sure it always has the impact intended. If I choose to have students read primary sources, I make sure it is educationally worthy of the time that will be dedicated to the task. This is a useful resource for a teacher as background information or to help one choose which sources to use in the classroom.

Ø *Lessons from History: Essential Understandings and Historical Perspectives Students Should Acquire* Los Angeles: The National Center for History in the Schools, 1992

Another very useful resource with chapters on “The Case for History in Our Schools”, “Determining What History to Teach” and “Essential Understandings in United States History”. The Chapter on essential understandings is very useful for teachers in that it is broken up into time periods and for each it outlines major themes, essential understandings, and habits of the mind. As history teachers, we need to be prepared to explain the importance of our content area and the choices we make about what we teach. I would recommend this resource to all history teachers.

Ø *U.S. Constitution* Huntington Beach, CA, Teacher Created Materials, 1993

This is a book of reproducibles. I used two pages from this book. One was a page titled “In the Know.” It gives a very brief background on the Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, Virginia Plan, Great Compromise, Constitution, and the Bill of Rights on one page. It is a useful resource to give students to refer back to throughout the study of this time period. Additionally, there is a page titled “Bill of Rights Study Guide” which is exactly what it sounds that is again a useful page to give to students. I gave this to students after they had already read the actual Bill of Rights and put it into their own words.

Ø *We the People* Calabasas: Center for Civic Education, 1993

This is a resource that is a series of 3 books at levels designed for elementary, middle, and high school. I used readings from all three books even though I was teaching only 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. The information in this resource is accurate and through the use of all three, I was able to differentiate my instruction and meet the needs of all my students whose are reading at different levels.

**Activities:**

**HW the day before Day 1 . . .** Read the Bill of Rights and re-write the amendments in your own words

**Day 1** Simulation – Start class with a list of very strict, over-the-top, rules. Design the rules to take away rights/privileges that the students are used to having. Enforce those rules rigidly for the majority of class. Use the last 30 minutes of class to put students in small groups and have them list the rights they want protected in my classroom. Hopefully, this “list of rights” will be a list created to protect the rights that I took away with my rigid rules. We can refer back to this experience throughout our unit on the Bill of Rights to make connections in order to help students understand the concepts behind the writing of the document.

**Day 1** In pairs, share homework from last night.  
Read *Bill of Rights Study Guide* as a class.  
Complete *Know Your Rights! Worksheet* in pairs.

**Day 2** Read, as a class, *Who Were the Supporters and Critics of the Constitution?*  
Individually answer the 6 comprehension questions.

**Day 3** Debate . . . Divide class into two groups, Federalists and Anti-federalists  
Each side will prepare an argument using the reading from yesterday.  
Groups will choose a speaker – each side will share their argument, listen and then rebut. Students would then split up in smaller groups – some Federalists and some Anti-federalists and debate whether or not the Constitution should be ratified. Students will end class by casting a secret ballot – voting yeah or nay for the Constitution. Also on the ballot, students will be asked to state one reason that supports their vote

**Day 4** Choose Anti-federalist from packet.  
“Character Traits” notes - using computers, research (which means READ & THINK). Read about the person you chose, write down their actions and assign each action a character/personality trait.  
HW: Using Character Traits notes, write one paragraph (7 sentences) about the Anti-federalist you chose to research.

**Day 5** Bio-Cube – Use computer to research and complete the Bio-Cube Planning Sheet.

Proceed to the web-site [http://readwritethink.org/materials/bio\\_cube/](http://readwritethink.org/materials/bio_cube/)  
Complete data entry, print, cut-fold.

**Day 6** Essay Test

1. What did the Anti-federalists accomplish with regard to the Constitution?
2. Why was the Bill of Rights important?
3. Name and describe one of the anti-federalists who fought for the Bill of Rights

**Assessment**

Bill of Rights re-written in students words

Know Your Rights! worksheet

Comprehension questions for *Who Were the Supporters and Critics of the Constitution?*

Participation in debate  
"Character Traits" notes  
Paragraph  
Bio-cube  
Essay Test

**Accommodations:** Accommodations will be made as required by student's IEPs.