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## The Northwest Ordinance Teacher Page

### Overview:

This lesson asks students to read selected parts of the Northwest Ordinance to learn about some of the important precedents this document established. They'll also explore a 1778 map that contains text describing the Northwest Territory. Their goal is to find out more about what the Ordinance stated and the reasons why the United States was so interested in extending its government onto this land.

### Objectives:

Students will:

- read and interpret parts of the Northwest Ordinance
- analyze a map of the Northwest Territory

### Web Sites Used in this Lesson:

Northwest Ordinance: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/nworder.htm>

“A new map of the western parts of Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland and North Carolina,” which can be accessed by following these directions:

- Go to <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/armapquery.html>.
- Type in the keywords “new map western Virginia,” and click “Search.”
- Select search result 2 (“United States—Ohio River Valley”).

In addition, these Web sites provide some background on the Northwest Ordinance:

- <http://www.statelib.lib.in.us/www/ihb/nword.html>
- <http://www.pbs.org/ktca/liberty/chronicle/northwest.html>

The excerpts from the Northwest Ordinance used in this lesson are also available as a reproducible handout in the Appendix.

### Strategies:

Review with the class the basics of the Northwest Ordinance: Passed by Congress on July 13, 1787, it established the ground rules for the government of the Northwest Territory (the area north of the Ohio River and west of Pennsylvania to the Mississippi River).

Draw a timeline on the board, and place the following events onto it: The Declaration of Independence, the end of the American Revolution, and the signing of the Constitution. Ask students to place the Northwest Ordinance onto the timeline. Then discuss the historical context in which the Northwest Ordinance was written: The Constitutional

Convention was meeting in Philadelphia at the same time the Northwest Ordinance was passed. The nation was therefore still bound by the Articles of Confederation, as they'll notice when they read one of the passages of the Ordinance. The new nation was eager for more land and wanted to set precedents for the governing of new territories and states.

Have students complete the worksheet.

Wrap-Up:

Discuss students' responses to the worksheet questions as a class. Also discuss these questions:

1. How important do you think the Northwest Ordinance was to the expansion of the United States? In what ways might the Ordinance have helped the country's future westward expansion?
2. Were the ground rules established by the Northwest Ordinance strictly followed? In particular, did settlers and the government in the West obey the instructions not to mistreat the Indians?

Extension Activity:

Have students research the beginnings of early towns in the Northwest Territory, such as Marietta, Ohio. Have them illustrate maps to show these towns and some examples of what life was like there in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

## The Northwest Ordinance Student Worksheet

### Introduction:

The Northwest Ordinance was a law passed by Congress in 1787 to provide for government of the Northwest Territory, located north of the Ohio River and west of Pennsylvania to the Mississippi River. Soon after its passage, settlers flocked westward and created new towns and farms throughout the territory.

In this activity, you'll read some parts of the Northwest Ordinance. You'll also look closely at the Northwest Territory on a map and read information on the map to find out what the land was like.

### Directions:

#### **“The Northwest Ordinance”**

Go to <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/nworder.htm> and read the following parts:

- Section 1
- Section 13
- Section 14, Article 3
- Section 14, Article 4
- Section 14, Article 6

Answer these questions about the Northwest Ordinance:

1. How does Section 1 say the Northwest Territory will be divided?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. According to Section 13, did the Northwest Ordinance intend for the Northwest Territory to remain an official territory, or might it eventually be turned into new states?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. According to Section 13, what principles would form the basis of the territory's laws?

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4. According to the first sentence of Section 14, Article 4, what would be the relationship between the Northwest Territory and the United States government?
  
5. How were the Indians in the Northwest Territory to be treated?
  
6. Was slavery allowed in the Northwest Territory?

**“A new map of the western parts of Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland and North Carolina”**

Go to <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/armapquery.html> and follow these directions:

- Type in the keywords “new map western Virginia,” and click “Search.”
- Select search result 2 (“United States—Ohio River Valley”).

Look carefully at this map, and locate the Northwest Territory (hint: first find the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers). Zoom in on two or three of the small text areas in the Northwest Territory and read the text. Then answer these questions:

7. How does the text on the map describe the land of the Northwest Territory? Provide three examples.
  
8. Imagine that you live in Massachusetts in 1787 and have just heard about the Northwest Ordinance. You also happen to have access to a copy of this map. What might you think about the idea of moving west after examining the map?
  
9. Why do you think this map was created? What purposes might it have served?