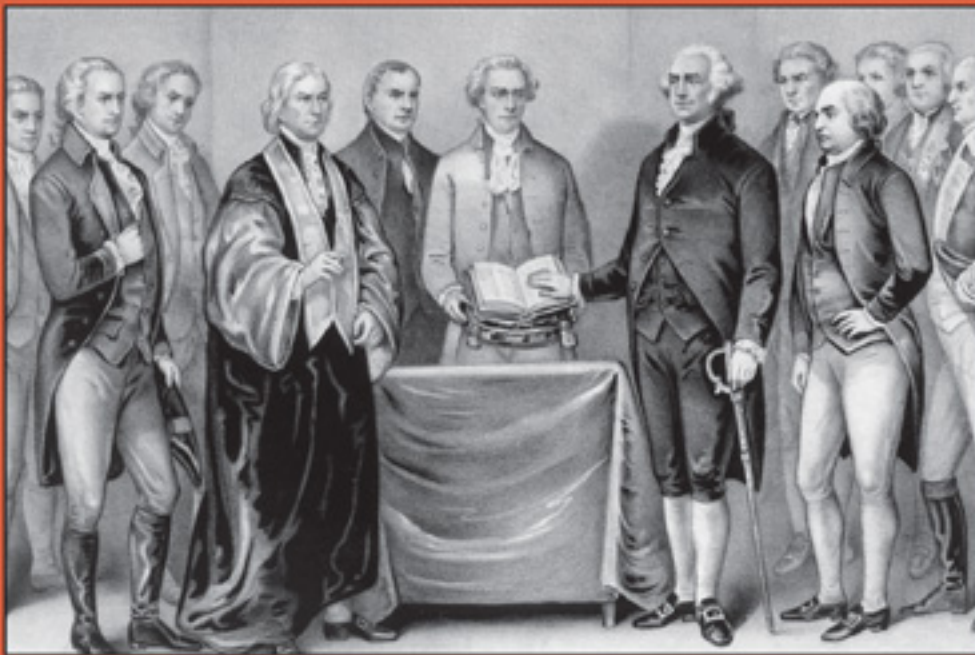


History UNFOLDING

“A REPUBLIC, IF YOU CAN KEEP IT”

THE FOUNDING OF AMERICA’S FEDERAL UNION



Samples are provided for evaluation purposes. Copying of the product or its parts for resale is prohibited. Additional restrictions may be set by the publisher.

MindSparks
CHALLENGING STUDENTS TO THINK HISTORICALLY

Contents

Introduction	2
Lesson 1	From Yorktown to Philadelphia	4
Lesson 2	The New Constitutional Order	8
Lesson 3	The Federalists in Power	12
Lesson 4	Passing the Torch: The Election of 1800	16
Appendix	Image Close-ups	21

“A Republic, If You Can Keep It”—The Founding of America’s Federal Union

Introduction

The Founding of a Republic

The U.S. Constitution is often portrayed as the heroic final act of the entire revolutionary drama. This seems appropriate given that the document still functions today as the world’s oldest written constitution and has inspired countless others in democratic nations around the world. The U.S. Constitution has been a beacon to people all over the world for two centuries.

But this booklet departs from this viewpoint somewhat. We depict the Constitution as the key moment in what was in fact a longer process by which the nation finally established a fully functioning republic. The Framers all said they opposed party, or “faction,” as Madison called it in “Federalist No. 10.” Yet until power could pass from one party to another peacefully, it was not clear that a stable republican form of government had been established. This transfer of power took place in the election of 1800, when the Federalists gave way to Jefferson’s Republicans.

Of course, in a sense, we are always retaking this test of our republican institutions—as Benjamin Franklin knew we would have to. When he was leaving the Convention, a lady asked him what the delegates had created. He replied, “A republic, madam, if you can keep it.”

In this spirit, this set covers the entire formative period from the Articles of Confederation to the election 1800. The illustrations are presented in four lessons. Each lesson uses three visual displays to explore one broad topic in the overall story. Briefly, the four lessons are as follows:

From Yorktown to Philadelphia

The Revolution was a triumphant moment for Americans. But the newly independent states could not find much unity under the Articles of Confederation. The illustrations here focus on the hopes and the frustrations of these years just after the Revolution.

The New Constitutional Order

The visuals for this lesson touch on aspects of the Philadelphia Convention, the U.S. Constitution it produced and the debates it generated during the battle over ratification.

The Federalists in Power

The precedents set by Washington may have helped to give the Constitution the authority and prestige it needed. His willingness to seek out only the best advisers and department heads, even when they disagreed strongly with one another, set a tone of high statesmanship.

Passing the Torch: The Election of 1800

The illustrations here focus on the troubled presidency of John Adams and the bitter election of 1800. This election helped establish the notion that, in America, a loyal opposition is to be seen as a normal part of the nation’s political life. In this way, that election made clear that the U.S. Constitution worked as well as or even better than expected.

Using Photos, Cartoons, and Other Visuals to Teach History

Many textbooks are full of colorful visuals. However, all too often these visuals function primarily as window dressing. They make the text more entertaining, or at least more palatable. Only occasionally do the visuals in textbooks do more than offer simple pictorial reinforcement of ideas already presented in the text. In many cases, they pander to the visual orientation of the young while doing little to help young people master the challenges of the visual media that dominate their lives.

By way of contrast, our approach to using visual materials emphasizes their unique strengths as historical documents. The lessons in this booklet focus students on the visual symbols and metaphors in editorial cartoons, the dramatic qualities of certain photographs, the potential of many images to make abstract ideas more specific and concrete, the implicit biases and stereotypes in certain images, their emotional power, and their ability to invoke the spirit of a time and place. In the process, we make every effort to strengthen students' visual literacy skills in general, as well as their ability to think critically and engage in spirited but disciplined discussions.

How to Use This Booklet

The booklet is divided into four lessons, with three illustrations per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

A BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

DIGITAL IMAGES The booklet's PDF allows you to project the images for use in your class discussions.

DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY SHEETS

Each sheet displays one illustration. It includes a sequence of questions to help you plan an all-class discussion while using the projected images. The questions take students step by step through an analysis of the illustration. If you wish, you may reproduce these pages and hand them out. In addition to the discussion questions on the illustration itself, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. Some of these can be made into individual assignments. Others will work best as small-group or all-class activities.

*“A Republic, If You Can Keep It”—The Founding of America’s Federal Union***OBJECTIVE**

1. Students will better understand the difficulties that led leaders of the new nation to discard the Articles of Confederation and attempt to create a whole new framework for the young American republic.

From Yorktown to Philadelphia

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

Americans saw their Revolution as heralding a new golden age. In this 1787 illustration, for example, Columbia as a young Roman woman appears with two children before the goddess Minerva. A scene of commercial and agricultural plenty fills the background. The scroll next to Minerva reads “Independence the reward of Wisdom Fortitude and Perseverance.” The classical imagery here is typical of the way they viewed their place in history—as the heirs of a tradition of liberty going back to ancient Greece, yet also as the founders of something new and glorious in world history.

Illustration 2

With the Articles of Confederation, the new nation was only a loose alliance of independent states. Little was accomplished under them—a major exception being success in organizing the territories northwest of the Ohio River. But the Articles provided no real executive power. Congress could not even impose taxes. At the same time, each state could tax goods from other states. Border conflicts between states festered. Tensions between debtors and lenders worsened, feeding the anger of poor backcountry farmers toward seacoast planter and merchant elites. The scene on the right is of Shays’s Rebellion, a violent protest by debt-ridden farmers in Western Massachusetts. This upheaval above all convinced many that a stronger central government was needed.

Illustration 3

In the May 1787, 55 delegates were chosen to meet here, at the Philadelphia State House. Among them were Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and other famous leaders of the American Revolution. Also present were several younger men, brilliant and determined—men such as James Madison and Alexander Hamilton. Over the course of that hot summer, the delegates worked in secret, meeting, debating and writing. By September, their work was done. Officially, they were supposed to revise the Articles of Confederation. Instead, they decided to scrap the Articles and start over. They didn’t want an improved confederation—a loose organization of independent states. Their goal was a true federal union—one in which a national government would have real powers while also preserving many of the powers of the states.

Lesson 1—From Yorktown to Philadelphia

Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustration

1. Many Americans felt the American Revolution would open a new and glorious chapter in all of human history. When did the American Revolution end? Why do you think it gave some many Americans such strong hopes for the future?
2. This painting captures the spirit of hope many felt about the Revolution. In it, Columbia is shown as a Roman woman bringing two children before the Roman god Minerva. This figure of "Columbia" is a symbol for something. Can you explain what?
3. Next to Minerva is a scroll that says, "Independence the reward of Wisdom Fortitude and Perseverance." Minerva is the Roman goddess of wisdom, crafts and commerce. Why do you think the artist chose this figure for a painting about America's independence?
4. How do the features in the background of the painting add to its positive view of the newly independent United States?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Each member of the group should take one of the following parts: wife of a soldier killed in the Revolution; a tobacco planter in Virginia; a farmer in Pennsylvania; a loyalist in the North Carolina backcountry; a merchant in New York City; a black slave freed as a reward for fighting for Virginia in the Revolution; a black slave recaptured by his owner after fleeing to join the British; a widow running a tavern in Baltimore; a New England minister. As the person chosen, write a letter or diary entry about the above painting and your thoughts about it.
2. It is 1783. Word has just arrived of the peace talks in Europe that finally settled the American Revolution. Read more about those talks and the final settlement. Now pretend you are a newspaper editor at the time. Write an account of the talks, and use the above illustration as a part of your published news story. Make up quotes from various Americans reacting to the news about the final peace settlement.

Passing the Torch: The Election of 1800

Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

But every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We have called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists. If there be any among us who would wish to dissolve this union or to change its republican form, let them stand undisturbed as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it.

— Thomas Jefferson
First Inaugural Address, 1801