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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2012 Volume III: The American Presidency

The First Twenty Years: Whiskey, Aliens... and Shopping!

Curriculum Unit 12.03.06, published September 2012
by Leonardo De Andrade

Rationale

Two pieces of evidence in our elementary school have helped me develop this unit: the results of the last two presidencies' mock elections and the staggering, year-after-year observation that students tend to fail dramatically, and increasingly more, when asked to think and reason. From the mock elections, I find that students vote under the same ideologies as their parents and, although not a surprising fact, when discussing their support to a specific candidate, their reasons are mostly superficial: they seem to be either repeating what publicity or advertising presents, or what was overhead in their parents' conversations. Repeating without reasoned support is something that is also, unfortunately, encouraged by education policies relying on standardized tests' data and an array of evaluation instruments which emphasize rote memory or regurgitation.

As a fifth grade teacher, I think it is crucial to help students enter middle school with an understanding of the need to reason, discriminate and discern when giving an opinion or writing an essay. I also find it crucial to challenge students' thinking through arguments and logic in all subjects and, in the context of this unit, in Social Studies and Language Arts.

Several of my lessons are structured around fiction and non-fiction texts. Students do well when answering questions or performing a task at the knowledge (following Bloom's 1956 Taxonomy) or remembering (Anderson and Krathwohl's 2000 Taxonomy) level. However, students are usually puzzled when handed a task designed around the higher-order thinking skills, from the comprehension level and all the way to evaluation or create. This becomes more evident and dramatic when studying history.

In general, students tend to label the study of history as boring, a "thing from the past" and not important. Government and politics are underlined by similar comments. The success usually relies in presenting the historical and political information in a manner that makes it relevant to our students' (and our families') lives today. At times, though, students still find the connections unrelated to their reality of instant gratification, changing channels or getting lost in entertainment. Even war, a constant presence in our contemporary world, has become either another piece of news they hear and forget or the excuse to keep their parents' or peers' ideologies and stereotypes in place... if not, a series of remote incidents trivialized by video games.

This curriculum unit is thus grounded on the need to develop our students' interest towards America's

historical past, its politics and the developing role of the presidency. This is especially significant since the nation will be involved in electing, or reelecting, a President in the fall of this year, 2012. My overall goal (more specific Common Core Standards are in the Appendix) is still to help students access, comprehend and analyze historical information and relate it to our current circumstances; an additional bonus would be that, when running our mock election this year, students are more curious about the candidates, their views and policies, and how these may impact them and their own families.

The unit consists of two parts:

A) New Nation, New Government: initially, we will start with a short review of the American Revolution and proceed with the Articles of Confederation to understand the transitional role of this first document in shaping early government in the United States; we will then proceed to see how the creation of the Constitution offered Americans a strong, balanced central government in addition to safeguards against the possibility of a tyrannical leader.

B) Lifeskills and the Presidencies of Washington, Adams and Jefferson: during the second part of the unit, we will study the presidencies of George Washington, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. We will examine instances in their presidencies when the possibility of a tyrant government could have risen and how the Constitution, the form of government, and the presidents themselves contributed to keeping democracy in place. The students will also determine how these presidents used Lifeskills in their role as leaders of the nation, especially during the following key events of their administration: the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794, the Alien and Sedition Acts in 1798, and the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.

Throughout the unit we will consider the social and economic conditions of the country and try to understand, as a final conclusion, how these three presidents' leadership styles contributed to their successes, failures or challenges, and whether other factors contributed to those outcomes.

Part A - New Nation, New Government

The ideals of the American Revolution: a review

The American Revolution is not a chronologically easy to delimit event since its causes can go back to the Proclamation of 1763 and its final closing act can extend to the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783. By the time the Declaration of Independence is approved, the 4th of July of 1776, and signed, on August the 2nd, several Acts imposing taxes on Americans and the indignant complaints against them have already occurred. Acts of protest that have left people dead, such as the Boston Massacre, or led George III to economic sanctions after the dumping of the English tea in the Boston harbor, have happened, and two small battles, in Lexington and Concord, have been fought. Almost a month before the currently celebrated date, Richard Henry Lee had presented to the illegally formed Continental Congress a resolution declaring, "these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States." ¹ However, the document that is approved is Jefferson's Declaration which seized this opportunity to not only let the British Crown know of the colonies' intentions for separation and independence, but also to help rally the colonists to stand for ideals bigger than the hostilities and revolts that had progressively divided Americans into Loyalists and Patriots ². This document was a call to awaken a birthright for a new type of authority in which the majority, the people,

would establish the government and as such, have the power to put an end to it when the ideals of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness were not being honored. ³ As it turns out, by 1776, the now considered tyrant king George had been ignoring those supreme ideals and, instead, kept insisting on more punishment to the disobeying colonies: "I do not want to drive them to despair but to Submission." ⁴ Fortunately, such a goal was not achieved and the newly declared independent colonies had to quickly devise a system of governance that could assure such an institution would never arise.

In the Merriam-Webster dictionary on line, the definition of tyranny refers to words from Thomas Jefferson: "tyranny is an oppressive power exerted by government." For government to become tyrannical, a concentration of power needs to be in place. European history, which also shapes American history, had been plagued with this type of authority in which power is either an inheritance or legacy, or acquired through whatever means, even violence, if necessary. James Madison, writing in *Federalist 47*, expands the term: "The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, selfappointed (*sic*), or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny."

Even before Madison had been concerned with the possibility of replacing a British tyrant with an administration with controlled powers, the Continental Congress of 1776 had drafted the Articles of Confederation, which were seen as a means to give legitimacy to the cause of independence as well as secure foreign help for the Revolutionary War. The Confederate States of America, the alliance between the thirteen colonies with the purpose of securing the desired independence, relied on the Articles to guide the nation in its war (and eventual peace) efforts, clarify the terms of diplomatic and commercial agreements with foreign powers and help the states decide border disputes; however, each state was sovereign in its governing functions and no central or federal power had been established.

The Articles of Confederation on Trial

From the very beginning in 1777, it was clear that the Articles of Confederation lacked the instrumental strength to unite the thirteen states into a new country. Among the complaints that were being discussed: the colonies were burdened with an increasing debt due to the Revolutionary War, but there was no chief executive, no court system and no means to force a state to pay taxes let alone declare common policies; it became evident, even as the Articles were still being ratified, that a new document needed to be drafted to replace them. ⁵

Hamilton in *Federalist 15* asks several questions aimed at justifying the need of a federation, a republican government in which the coalition of states would have to share powers with a federal, central authority: "The measures of the Union have not been executed; the delinquencies of the States have, step by step, matured themselves to an extreme, which has, at length, arrested all the wheels of the national government, and brought them to an awful stand. Congress at this time scarcely possess (*sic*) the means of keeping up the forms of administration, till the States can have time to agree upon a more substantial substitute for the present shadow of a federal government." George Washington himself, troubled by Shays' Rebellion –a local uprising that took a year to be controlled- acknowledged the weaknesses of the Articles since the fragile federal government could not even deal with internal insurrections. Later, Hamilton again, Washington's top aide at the time, would eventually get the general's endorsement and ask Congress to call on the state representatives to a convention where the need of a new constitution would be discussed.

The American Constitution

The few states present at the Convention of 1786 passed a motion to meet the following year with all the states present. The intention was to improve the Articles; however, as it turned out, in the Constitutional Convention of 1787 a series of secret meetings were held, everyone present was sworn to secrecy, and from May until September a new Constitution was written.

Writing the new Constitution of the United States was not an easy task. The framers of the new document, very much aware of the causes of the American Revolution and the possibility of recreating a government very much like the British monarchy, spent long hours, during those five months, listening to arguments, talks and debates, getting angry and coming back to the table of discussions and negotiations, to form a national government that could ensure peace and prosperity in the nation. ⁶

When discussing the need for a republican government, the issue of tyranny kept resurfacing. The main concern was how to distribute power and make it equitable. James Madison, in *Federalist 47*, expressed his concern and solution: "...the preservation of liberty requires that the three great departments of power should be separate and distinct."

Thus, in order to avoid or minimize the possibility of tyranny, the framers devised a system of checks and balances that would divide the government into branches and, although giving each one certain powers, it also made them responsible for and to one another. ⁷

Preventing Tyranny: a Division of Powers

The idea and need of Federalism as a system of government gradually took shape when, during the Constitutional Convention of 1787, the thirteen states' representatives struggled with the suggestion of letting the central government make decisions that would affect everyone. The states, under a federal government, share the sovereignty of the country with a central Chief Executive: they can still make their own decisions while, at the same time, coming to consensus regarding those measures that benefit everyone in the nation. Thus, the central government can check the states just as the states can check it. This also implies that the governmental instruments and institutions created will reflect this dynamic both at the country and the state levels.

By separating and sharing the powers of government there is a level of control given to each division while, at the same time, each one is not allowed to take over and rule despotically. The separation of powers establishes executive, legislative and judicial offices in charge of and delimited to specific functions, decisions and responsibilities. In general, the executive office is managed by the president and his cabinet; the legislative office, with its seat in Congress, splits the administration between the House of Representatives and the Senate, and the judicial office, housed in the Supreme Court, is ruled by nine judges (originally six) called *justices*.

Summarizing the Constitution, the president of the United States is in charge of executing the laws of the country. For such means, he can hire or appoint people who will enforce and carry out the national laws; he is in charge of making treaties and conducting foreign policy, and he can appoint the members of the executive cabinet. He shares powers with the Supreme Court as he can appoint judges, also with Congress when he suggests laws and budgets, or when he vetoes a bill Congress has passed. The two houses of Congress have the responsibility and authority of making laws; they can also support or reject the treaties and appointments made by the president, and approve budgets. To balance it all out, the Supreme Court is in charge of deciding

the meaning of the laws, approved by Congress, as well as stating their constitutionality under the power of a judicial review. This separation of powers, the framers argued and reasoned, would protect the people from giving too much control to a single individual or institution while, at the same time, would prevent the different offices from doing what they wanted once they had been elected or appointed.

This structure aims at common goals originally established in the Declaration of Independence with its ideals of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. A democracy gives its main power to the people who elect their Congress and Chief Executive but, as Madison suggested, a people by itself is not enough control for a government: this government could turn against its people if the power is absolutely centralized. ⁸ The division of powers and the system of checks and balances makes this almost, if not completely, impossible since it would require for the three branches to be in complete, despotic agreement to override the people's wishes. History has not shown such a case, at least not yet. For example, if the president is found unlawful and needs to be impeached, both the Senate and the House would have to agree in hiding his criminality; a law viewed as unconstitutional is nullified as it can be vetoed by the president and ruled as undemocratic by the Supreme Court; the members of the Supreme Court are appointed by the president as it becomes necessary, but such selection has to be approved by Congress; at the same time, the justices transcend the presidency when they were chosen since they are assigned to the Supreme Court for life.

Just as important as the division of powers and a system for restraining the people in charge and equalizing the weight of a shared authority, another very much discussed issue became the size of the states, not regarding area but population, for their representation in Congress. Two plans were presented: under the penmanship of Edmund Randolph, the Virginia Plan, from one of most populous states, suggested that the allocation of legislative seats in each house would be based on population. William Patterson, aware that such policy would take over his own less populated state, countered with the New Jersey Plan: states should have equal representation in Congress. John Dickerson, from Delaware, proposed that at least in one of the houses, states should have an equal amount of votes. And after more arguing and a rejection of the New Jersey plan, the Virginia plan prevailed with a few compromises that had been inspired by Dickerson: the House of Representatives would have a number of delegates per state based on population; the Senate would have an equal representation of two votes per state. The bigger states, entitled to more representatives in the House would have more power in that chamber; the smaller states, having the same number of legislators as any other state, would have equal power in the Senate. In the fair and objective political world the framers of the Constitution had envisioned, another possibility to control tyranny had been achieved: in the House, unequal representation would legally give the states with more inhabitants a louder voice; in the Senate, equal representation saved the smaller states from a possible supremacy by the larger states. ⁹

This was an experiment, as no model exactly like this had ever existed. As history has proven, the United States has had all kinds of leaders and the Constitution has had amendments but not dramatic changes at its core. However, from the very beginning, even with the unanimously elected first president, the very much admired and loved General of the revolution, George Washington, voices were raised about the president exceeding the powers to him granted by the Constitution. It has taken a strong document and faithful leaders, sometimes in all branches of government, to sustain this type of administration. As we study the first three presidencies, it becomes evident that the American democracy has been shaped by the institutions created as well as the character and traits of the elected leaders.

Part B - Lifeskills and the Presidencies of Washington, Adams and Jefferson

Integrated Thematic Instruction (ITI) was a multidisciplinary approach to teaching content that Tulsa Public Schools started implementing in 2001. With its focus on building efficient and responsible citizens for the world, and applying the results of brain research to instruction, it listed, as a basis for classroom management policies, five community guidelines and eighteen qualities, the Lifeskills, that defined teachers' and students' personal best: caring, common sense, cooperation, courage, curiosity, effort, flexibility, friendship, initiative, integrity, organization, patience, perseverance, pride, problem solving, resourcefulness, responsibility and sense of humor. ¹⁰ For the second part of this unit, I want students to relate the Lifeskills of *cooperation, flexibility, initiative, organization, problem solving* and *responsibility* to the presidencies of George Washington, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson as they study their biographies and a key event in each presidency.

The first 3 presidencies: leadership & Lifeskills

The American president is the executive leader of the nation, although the presidency itself, the executive power, is not designed to be the center of responsibility in the government: that is the legislative power's job. In view of the separation of powers, one of the main issues a president as a leader has faced is thus how to handle conflict. Burns contends that there have been certain expectations attached to this job and maybe more clearly delimited in the origins of the presidency: the president was expected to be judicious, high-minded, removed from turbulence of party discord: to be above the political conflict that is embedded in the constitutional structure of the presidency. ¹¹

Although these expectations are still somewhat present today, a current president's political power is mostly correlated with the support of the people: he needs not only a sense of how to awaken and draw on the needs of his followers, but also have the capacity to mobilize the resources to meet those needs, thus retaining the people's support and continuing in power (Lifeskills of organization, problem solving, cooperation and initiative.) In general, like a successful leader, presidents need self-confidence and practicality, political skill, ability to command sub-leaders, personal relationship with people and personal authority, and responsibility in the enhancement of the executive functions (Lifeskills of flexibility and responsibility.)

Even in the Constitution in its Article 2, section 2, it can be argued that Lifeskills are present. The Article elaborates on the powers of the president but each responsibility is tied in to cooperation with Congress and the Supreme Court. At the same time, the president's organization can help him be successful in communication and problem solving; the president will also need initiative to bring his agenda forth and the flexibility to adapt, change, compromise or even start over when dealing with Congress; all of this is underlined by the responsibility he owes to his post and the people who have elected him, altogether with his promise to uphold the articles of the Constitution.

Responsibility also plays a broader role: the president has civilian power over the military and his Cabinet, as well as the power to pardon and to appoint the right leaders for his government. Without a strong sense of duty and responsibility, a president with such powers can easily turn into a dictator or a tyrant. In the same Article 2, section 3 he is entrusted with taking care that the laws of the country are faithfully executed. And, just like in life when we do not live up to what is expected, the president can be disqualified from his post, as stated in section 4.

I find Lifeskills are inherent to a leader's personality and his duties: cooperation, flexibility, initiative, organization, problem solving and responsibility. Greenstein, who studied leadership style from Franklin Delano Roosevelt to Barack Obama, lists six traits that he finds in the American president: effectiveness as public communicator (knows how to articulate what he needs to say), organizational capacity (not only for himself and his duties but for his cabinet and the people and institutions around him), political skill (the ability to use his powers energetically while able to preserve people's support), vision (consistent in his ideas with a skill to inspire others), and strategic (clear intentions with his tactics) and emotional intelligence (able to keep centered, far from emotional chaos).¹²

Barber's study revisits some of these elements. He examines five concepts that influence a president's performance: character, world view, style, power situation, and climate of expectations. Character is related to self-esteem, world view with the president's beliefs and conceptions; style with how the president goes about doing what his office requires him to do; power situation gives relevance to a president adapting to the system in which he will be interacting just like the system is trying to adapt to him; and the climate of expectations is related to the needs of the voters and the sense of reassurance and progress the president is able to convey.¹³

These elements allow Barber to create main configurations, using psychological research, through which he can study and typify the presidential experience; he warns that these are tendencies and that no individual can truly fit a category: active-positive type presidents are characterized by high self-esteem, flexibility, defined personal goals, and achievement of results; the active-negative type is ambitious, perfectionist, his self-image is vague; gets and keep power, even if there is struggle; in the passive-positive category we find the leader who is compliant, cooperative, agreeable, has low self-esteem and is after affections; finally, the passive-negative type is of low self-esteem but capable of dutiful service and civic virtue.

Through that categorization he concludes that Washington is closer to the passive-negative type: he established the legitimacy of the American government; was always dignified and judicious; his temperament carried an air of reserve and dedication, and tried persistently to keep stability. Adams, an active-negative type, acted dutiful although he was impatient, irascible, and seemed to have craved a need to dominate; finally, Jefferson, of an active-positive nature was agreeable, humorous, and clear and; he also used reason and an open vision to lead his government and the nation.

However, Edwards contends that all of these qualities can be present but external circumstances play a key role in determining the success or failure of a president. After analyzing the time in office of several contemporary presidents, he comes to the conclusion that a skilled leader has to also be a facilitator, whom he defines as "leaders who depend on their environments for providing opportunities that they can exploit to accomplish their objectives... a successful president requires the commitment, resolution, perseverance, resiliency and strength to take full advantage of opportunities that arise."¹⁴

During the first twenty years of the American presidency Washington, Adams and Jefferson had to work hard at legitimizing democracy, the new experiment on governance. Their personalities and role as leaders certainly contributed to the challenges and changes the presidency went through but also their intrinsic (or lack of) Lifeskills (cooperation, flexibility, initiative, organization, problem solving and responsibility) played a role in their failures or successes. Moreover, the always looming possibility of destabilizing the democratic form of government through autocratic leadership seems to have been kept at bay by these presidents' personalities and their strong commitment to the ideals of the Union. At the same time, following Edwards, perhaps the successes were more influenced by the social-economical and world landscape of the times than

their glorified or condemned images.

George Washington, 1794: The Whiskey Rebellion

It is commonly argued that the first president of the United States, George Washington developed his leadership skills before and during the Revolutionary Era. Previously to earning his title as "The Father of His Country", Washington was determined to secure a commission with the British army. With a clear vision to achieving this goal, he enlisted in the Virginia militia and, as a Major, went to the frontier (in those days, the Ohio River area) to assess possible conflicts between the British and the French settlers. Earning some fame with the publication of *The Journal of Major George Washington*, he later returned to the area to, this time, fight in the French and Indian War as a Lieutenant Colonel. Even though his participation included some failures, he acquired military experience that proved invaluable for his career.

To his disappointment, and in spite of having developed war skills and earning the respect of his men, he was not given the desired commission with the British Military (he was a *colonial*, after all) ¹⁵ and thus resigned the militia to start his life as a Virginia plantation owner. But his military status had already been established and by the time the colonies began armed hostilities towards the British, Washington was chosen as chief of the fragmented and untrained Continental Army. It is during the Revolutionary War that Washington gains the ultimate admiration that will accompany him for life but, in general, the victories were few, the mutinies many, and a big part of his job consisted in keeping the men together as he thought their commitment to fight would eventually weaken the British campaign. Washington's determination, persistence and organization served him well, although the revolutionary effort could not have succeeded without French help. ¹⁶

Washington's service to the nation barely seemed to have ended after the war. Elected president of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, he is a witness to the development of the Constitution and later regarded as "indispensable to the American people's political existence." ¹⁷ Given such a status, it follows that the office of the Executive is created around him and he then becomes the first president of the new democratic nation in 1789.

During his presidency, Washington added the Inaugural Address to the Executive's duties; introduced a ceremonial aspect to the office that had not been anticipated; and set several precedents: he created a Cabinet of advisors, initiated the negotiation of treaties before asking Congress for approval, remained neutral in regards to foreign wars, and declined to be president after two terms in office. He was regarded at the time as "systematic, orderly, energetic, solicitous of the opinion of others but decisive, intent upon general goals and the consistency of particular actions with them." ¹⁸

Another precedent, which is sometimes argued as falling into the excessive use of presidential powers debate, was Washington's refusal to submit documents to the House in regards to the Jay Treaty. ¹⁹ These negotiations were endorsed by Washington's policy of ensuring the United States' neutrality in international conflicts. Washington claimed that secrecy was necessary in diplomatic negotiations and therefore he had an "executive privilege" to protect the documents. However, he acknowledged that the Senate did have a role in the ratification of treaties (as stated in the Constitution), and submitted the documents to the Senate. The House proceeded to approve the treaty. Nevertheless, the "executive privilege" Washington claimed was something his cabinet created and has been used by several presidents after him.

One of the events in which Washington proved his leadership was the Whiskey Rebellion. Although Congress had authorized a tax on spirits, some strong opposition started emerging in Western Pennsylvania. The nation

was in desperate need of collecting these funds as the Treasury was trying to pay the debt that had accumulated during the Revolutionary period. Discontent and some violent episodes prompted the President, as Commander in chief, to lead an expedition to the territory. The strength in Washington's character in carrying, literally, his duties as expressed in the Constitution, combined with negotiations, put an end to the revolt.

Washington set the example of not accepting a third term in office –he was tired, longing for his Mount Vernon home and being far from the intrigues that had developed during his presidency, especially between the people he supported, the Federalists, and an anti-group who eventually would become the Republican party. However, he couldn't escape for too long. In 1799, his former vice-president, now President John Adams, anticipating possible military conflicts, appointed him lieutenant general and commander of the American army; he accepted on the condition he wouldn't assume active command unless it became indispensable; to everybody's relief his duties were minimal ²⁰

By the end of his presidency in 1797, Washington was regarded as having led the office with strong convictions regarding organization, discipline and the value of enduring institutions. His character, traits and principles contributed to a strong foundation of the American government. Tyranny was something he opposed often and a need for dictatorial authority was far from what he envisioned doing before or after his presidency.

John Adams, 1798: The Alien and Sedition Acts

John Adams, vice-president to George Washington during both terms in office, was a graduate from Harvard University with law degrees and studies in political philosophy. He was one of the founders who originally wrote essays and resolutions criticizing the British policies regarding taxes and the regulation of trade. However, he was always a fair observer and lawyer: during the Boston Massacre he defended the British soldiers accused of starting the revolt and secured their freedom. Much later, integral to his ideas, he would be one of the first leaders to insist on a system of checks and balances while exercising the will of the people in regards to national government.

Adams is credited with helping get financial help for the colonies' independence when he traveled to the Netherlands during the Revolutionary War. He also returned to Europe later to negotiate the peace treaty that set the colonies free from British rule. After this, his next service to the new country was as the first American ambassador to Great Britain.

Although not as popular and revered as Washington (he had won the presidency by three votes), Adams from the very beginning reached out to Thomas Jefferson, his vice-president, and James Madison, a member of his cabinet, to help him repair the almost broken relationship with France, their former ally. Jefferson and Madison had encouraged the United States government to side with France in their war against Europe, particularly Great Britain. However, President Washington had declared neutrality which meant the Americans would not support either country. By the time Adams became president, the men in government were getting more divided in their preferences and both, Jefferson and Madison, rejected President Adams' request and threatened to resign his cabinet. Adams, trying to keep the peace and these powerful men close to him, backed away. ²¹

Trying to organize the government and country, in case of attack by either France or Great Britain, President Adams petitioned Congress to increase the navy and the army's budget. He, strategically, asked retired

George Washington to become commander of the army but fortunately, no hostilities ever reached the United States –although they did occur on the high seas.

As Adams started growing very suspicious of the loyalty, or lack of it, from the men in Congress and in his cabinet, a split among the Federalists widened. The president was

"regarded as vain, opinionated, unpredictable, and stubborn to follow Federalists' directions." ²² The climate in the country turned into one of mistrust and suspicion. Congress decided to pass the Alien and Sedition Acts as "instruments of self-preservation for a republic threatened by a foreign power and its domestic adherents" ²³ ; another goal was preventing the Republicans of gaining more supporters and, in general, controlling dissidents and critics of the government. However, these acts just contributed to bigger divisions in governments and eventually, the creation of political parties.

The four laws that made up the Alien and Sedition Acts changed from five to fourteen years the term for a foreigner to become citizen (Naturalization Act); gave the president the power to deport any resident alien who was believed to be dangerous (Alien Friends Act) or, in case of war with a country whose citizens lived in the United States, detain, deport or confine them (the Alien Enemy Act, still in effect); and last, the Sedition Act allowed the government to fine and imprison critics of the government's policies or officers. These laws, signed, although not proposed by Adams, were highly criticized as unconstitutional and an overreach of the President's powers stated in the Constitution. Adams could have vetoed the Acts but instead he approved them and brought his attention back to his peace efforts in foreign policy.

This time, without any consultation with his cabinet or Congress, Adams sent a peace envoy to France and an agreement was reached: France had consented to peace but not to compensation for the ships it had damaged or confiscated. It had not been a perfect agreement but peace had been reached.

Many scholars today agree that President Adams's achievements and legacy are to be found in his deep commitment to preserve the young republic, its peace, its values. ²⁴ The abuses that the Alien and Sedition Acts brought about were minimal and, once again, the President's principles and endorsement of the ideals that had created the Union were more important than the Federalists and Anti-Federalists' disputes and disagreements. Acting as an "independent executive" President Adams was able to endure the deep disagreements in his government which, for a while, were thought to break apart the young nation. ²⁵ In his beloved wife, Abigail Adams, he found an equal in intellect and companionship who, in spite of all the criticism, always defended her dearly loved partner.

Thomas Jefferson, 1803: The Louisiana Purchase

When Thomas Jefferson becomes the third president of the United States, he has already been in office for twelve years: first as secretary of state with Washington; later as vice-president to Adams. During those years he has gradually separated from the Federalists and their idea of a more central government which, according to his beliefs, minimized the power of the states.

Jefferson was a figure of the Enlightenment –a firm believer in the people's innate rights to liberty and equality. At this time, the Federalists viewed men as weak, unreliable and in need of much guidance –therefore, a strong government was indispensable. Jefferson's ideas seemed to be at the other extreme; he would argue that man was reasonable, self-improving and autonomous which made him able to take care of himself and his family "if only intrusive institutions were removed." ²⁶

Still, like Adams, Thomas Jefferson, was a knowledgeable intellectual; he was also a practicing lawyer and could express himself succinctly and effortlessly, especially in paper (thanks to him we have the extensively quoted Declaration of Independence.) Differently from Adams, though, Jefferson developed social skills that helped him tremendously in diplomacy and later in politics; and, just like Adams, he was one of the first American ambassadors to Europe, in his case, France. These two men would actually be united in the political history of the United States until the fourth of July of 1826 when both, just minutes after the other, died.

The election of 1800 marked the first time in America history that a different political party, the Republicans, came to power and the transition was peaceful. Jefferson's *Revolution of the 1800* set him as an agent of change, turning around Adams' policies which, he believed, were characterized by too much interference by the federal government: he reduced military expenditure and taxes; balanced the budget and allowed, almost all, the Alien and Sedition Acts to expire. Additionally, since Congress was also Republican, most of the legislation that passed during his presidency originated in Jefferson or his cabinet; this added the job of Chief Legislator to the duties of the executive in addition to an already new title, Party Leader, which Jefferson had inadvertently created. ²⁷

Early on, Adams had described Jefferson as "prompt, frank, explicit and decisive in committees and conversations." ²⁸ His decisiveness and cautious diplomacy – interwoven by his beliefs and ideology- is what helped him seize an opportunity to double the size of the United States. Purchasing the territory of Louisiana from the French was a timely and risky enterprise as Jefferson felt it was not a power granted to him by the Constitution. But, his dream of "an expanding army of peaceful settlers carrying American institutions to the Pacific" ²⁹ proved more important. And strategically, reducing the number of borders with Spain, France and Great Britain, would make everyone safer in the western areas of the nation.

Originally, Jefferson had wanted to buy the port of New Orleans to strengthen the nation's navigational and commercial capacities. The French self-declared Emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte, had ceased on his idea of rebuilding the French empire in America and, in desperate need for money to continue his war against Great Britain, saw an opportunity in Jefferson's offer. At the same time, Jefferson, concerned about the unconstitutionality of his decision, drafted an amendment. However, this amendment would require debate in Congress and eventual ratification by the states, and there was fear Napoleon could change his mind; therefore, without delay, the purchase was approved. When US Army Captain Meriwether Lewis and his partner, William Clark, commissioned by Jefferson, surveyed and wrote about the newly purchased land, "their report captured the public imagination and sparked not only interest in new settlements but dreams of a continental United States." ³⁰ In spite of all the good it could bring to the nation, some people wanted to minimize this as one of Jefferson's achievement; for his part, Jefferson never boasted about it. However, the issue about the over extension of his authority was a valid argument and, in addition to his new roles as legislator and party leader, expanded the President's responsibilities and power.

From the two terms in presidency, Jefferson's first was more successful; during the second there were more tribulations and difficulties. However, his place in history had already been achieved and his influence continued until the Declaration of Independence was fifty years old. Even after his death "generations of Americans turned to him for inspiration and guidance in the successive crises of the nation's affairs." ³¹

The Constitution, Lifeskills and Presidents

The United States has had a good political life. In spite of the permanent, very much valid, concerns in regards to the continual extension of the Presidents' powers, the Constitution of 1787 has been, and still is, the

background for the government's policies and decisions. From the very beginning, the country's leaders were persistent in distancing America's new political organization from the old models of the monarchy. The creation of the three branches of government was believed to be an efficient structure to allow the people's chosen leaders to rule without a sharp imbalance between what the country and its people needed and expected. With this model, the perspective of tyrannical rule was almost eradicated as the Chief Executive, the Congress and the Supreme Court had individual responsibilities within their branches and with one another, that is, keeping in check each other's powers. It actually can be concluded that, after 224 years, with this document still in place and no authoritarian ruler, this democratic experiment has been quite a success.

Has the Constitution and the configuration of government been the only warrant of this accomplishment? Viewing the presidencies of Washington, Adams and Jefferson we can see that the inherent notion of conflict, embedded in the creation of the three branches of government, has allowed for refinements and clarifications of the framers' original ideas – and many of them have benefitted country and people. Time could not be factored into those original ideas or the character of the presidents following George Washington, once he was not available. His presidency was thought of as a model for the future but the emergence of political parties was not anticipated. Once the divisions and conflicts among those governing escalated, separation was inevitable but, once again, the Constitution and the elected officials helped the nation keep on growing. It seems that we have been lucky to have had presidents who, beyond their differences and animosities, loved the idea of the Union, and the benefits intrinsic in its formation, even more than their ideologies.

The presidents' character, values and principles have defined their terms and contributed to what we have achieved as a nation. What, in the context of this unit, has been referred to as Lifeskills are essential qualities that I strongly believe an efficient leader needs to have. Washington, with his sense of duty and responsibility, his faithfulness to the Constitution, the emergent nation and the office he occupied, made the Executive a symbol of enduring strength and in service of the greater idea of the United States; Adams, insecure and in the shadow of Washington, persisted in his vision of a safe, neutral people and those years strengthened the country; Jefferson, the figure of the Enlightenment woke up the nation to its geographical expansion, and the natural conflicts such transformation would bring about. His beliefs in a nation where everyone has the power and ability to succeed and prosper, with less interference of the central government, defined political parties and has sustained a nonconformist dialogue for centuries –from both Republicans and Democrats. Even if we can find instances where these three founders made decisions that could be labeled as arbitrary, maybe unconstitutional, the basic idea of a free society, with elected leaders for a predetermined period of time, prevailed.

The development of the American government and its protagonists has not been a perfect, harmonious process but it has certainly strengthened the United States as a nation, domestically and in the world community. Its greatest success may be, though, that both, the political figures and the people who have elected them, are still active participants in the continuous improvement of this model of democracy.

Activities and Strategies

Part A - New Nation, New Government

The unit will start with a quick revision of the American Revolution using the video *The American Presidents*

1754-1861 from Disney Education. *The Making of the Presidency* is a 20-minute segment in this DVD that depicts the causes of the American Revolution, the important events of the conflict, the use of the Articles of Confederation to create a common government for the 13 colonies and the eventual development of the Constitution. I always find it more engaging when students are provided a few questions to answer as they are watching the video. This is also a good opportunity to have students review and reason about the causes and consequences of the Revolution as well as the ideals that supported it, later embedded in the writing of the Constitution.

A discussion in three or four small groups will continue using scenarios that will help the students get introduced to the ideas of federalism, separation of powers, checks and balances, and balancing powers between small and large states -most of these scenarios are provided in *The Document Based Question (DBQ) Project: Mini-Qs in American History, Volume I: Constitution*. The students are first presented with four questions that guide the discussion and their thinking in regards to the new government of the United States and the possibility of tyranny: individual states over the central government; the Chief Executive as legislator and justice (in the absence of a legislative and a judicial branch); and, states with more population having more power than less populated states. After the discussions, every group will present their conclusions and summaries to the whole class.

Later, the students will study the picture *Scene of the Signing of the Constitution of the United States* by Howard Chandler Christy, and a discussion will follow about the Philadelphia convention in the summer of 1787. The picture is easy to find in the Internet and I suggest a high resolution image that can be copied into a Power Point document. Present the picture like a puzzle, one piece at a time, and start a discussion/guessing game about the time, people and occasion of this depiction. Invite students to dig deep into the painting, accept all comments but guide students towards the significance of this event that motivated an artist to paint it. Work with the students on identifying the most important people depicted (Washington, Franklin, Hamilton, etc.); you may want to use the website: <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/convention/christy/>; when you move the mouse over the picture the representatives' names and states are displayed. If there is time, have groups of students act the painting; challenge them to mimic the expressions and postures of the most visible men. To finish this section, have students write a descriptive/explanatory paragraph about what was happening and the possible thoughts of some of these men at that time (for instance, prompt students to speculate on what Hamilton may be whispering to Franklin; or elaborate on what the manner in which Franklin is seated reflects about his thoughts or disposition.)

Four documents from the DBQ Project will be given to the students next, in the following order: A) Federalism, B) Separation of Powers, C) Checks and Balances and D) Big States and Small States. These documents contain fragments of the Federalists Papers and the Constitution and graphic organizers that will help the students answer and discuss a series of questions that will clarify how the new Constitution guarded against tyranny. Invite peer and group discussions, with a reporter at the end of each section presenting their group's conclusions to the whole class.

The final activity of Part A is to guide the students to develop an outline for an essay, its drafting and final publication in the form of an article in a newspaper of the time. The students will be given rubrics to guide them on how they will be assessed; they will also have a peer review, individual conference with the teacher and a final co-evaluation of the essay between the teacher and the student. Provide models of newspapers from the time, for example The Pennsylvania Gazette (several good images on the Internet), and have students work on the design of their front page over a week in class or as homework.

By the end of this part, students should be familiar with the Constitution and its layout. It is useful to have posted around the classroom, summaries of each article so students can refer to when discussing the first three presidencies and the role of the Constitution in preventing government tyranny. Additionally, the company Teacher Created Materials has a kit labeled Constitution and New Government that includes very realistic copies of the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution, a good visual for the students.

Part B - The First Three, Leadership and Lifeskills

The second part of the unit will start with a review of what "personal best" means and the Lifeskills that underlie this community guideline. We will follow with a small group discussion about which Lifeskills the students feel they have progressed on and which ones are still emerging. We will also address how external circumstances can, at times, help these qualities become more a part of our personality or how the opposite can also emerge (for example, courage can appear in a moment of fear; cowardice can be present when there is pressure to conform to established standards.) Encourage students to give examples of their own lives or people they know well -try to avoid generalizations or assumptions.

For the next activity, students will be given cards with the names of important people from the Revolutionary Era of the United States; their task is to choose two or three Lifeskills they will reason these people had to use at a certain moment in their lives; the students will be speculating but they will have to have knowledge of these people or the teacher will have to write a short biography on the card given to the student. Key events in this person's biography will have to be included so that the students can identify the Lifeskill needed when making a decision or acting in a determined way.

Next, the students will be divided into three groups and instructed to start a research about the first three presidents: they are asked to consult at least three different pieces of research material (book, Internet site, and a video) and present their results in the form of a poster. Each group will do a different president and, once their poster is ready, will make a short presentation for the whole class. Research guidelines may include: short background of their leader before becoming president, family and children, term or terms in office, their vice-presidents, political party they were associated with, achievements and their significance in the United States' political life. Although not as significant but certainly fun for children they can find about the presidents' pets, and places or things named after them or where their images or names are depicted.

In future sessions, the students will receive three documents -I suggest doing one per class or period: George Washington and the Whiskey Rebellion; John Adams and the Alien and Sedition Acts, Thomas Jefferson and the Louisiana Purchase. Ready to use documents about Washington and Jefferson can be found in *Presidents & the Constitution*, a book by the Bill of Rights Institute. The document about John Adams can be easily created using the essay *John Adams's Views on Citizenship: Lessons for Contemporary America* by Todd Wallingford from the Massachusetts Historical Society (http://www.masshist.org/education/resources/wallingford/Wallingford_Complete.pdf)

Using these events and documents, the previous research and a set of discussion questions/scenarios, the students will identify which Lifeskills were most present in the first three presidents. A final conclusion should also be reached regarding how the Constitution was upheld or not during these presidencies and if some of their actions could be labeled "tyrannical". If so, lead a discussion on how the Constitution helped ensure that

the presidents would still endorse a democratic instead of an autocratic government. Also, bring to the students' attention the socio-economical of the country and other important world events at the time of each president's term.

The last session will help students gain insight into the Lifeskills embedded in leadership, and discern if strong leadership qualities is enough to guarantee that a president will succeed in selling his ideas to the people who have elected him. The lesson starts with the dictionary definition of leadership and the students' views on what traits a person needs in order to become a leader. These are written on the board and later associated with the Lifeskills. We then look back at the presidencies of Washington, Adams and Jefferson to find evidence to support or refute the assertion that a strong leader can influence people to follow their agenda and ideas. The teacher follows with a short lecture emphasizing the social and economic circumstances in the background of these presidencies during the first twenty years of the new republic. When appropriate, the teacher invites students to participate using their background knowledge from the unit and their research

During a final session, students work in small groups to create a Triple Venn Diagram to compare/contrast the three presidencies. Use big pieces of paper so they can comfortably work together on the floor. Display their work and invite comments that reflect on what the students learned about the Constitution, the concept of tyranny and how it was dealt with; the first three presidents, how they governed and the importance of the Lifeskills included in their leadership. I suggest having the students, as a final tool of assessment, present a reflective conclusion in any form they feel most successful with (writing, drawing, a skit or play, etc.)

Endnotes

1. Dyer, 2012, p. 3
2. Becker, 1922; Ferling, 2011; Zinn, 2003
3. Declaration of Independence, 1776
4. Ferling, 2011, p. 94
5. Beck, 1924
6. Federalist 47; Federalist 51; Helvidius 1; Woods, 2010
7. U.S. Constitution
8. The Federalist 51
9. Beck, 1924
10. Kovalik and Olsen, 2001
11. Burns, 1978
12. Greenstein, 2009
13. Barber, 1985
14. Edwards, pp. 189-190, 2009
15. Felzenberg, 2008, p. 367
16. Brinkley, 2004
17. Brinkley, 2004, p. 14
18. Graff, 1997, p. 5
19. Pigliucci, 2012
20. Ibid, p. 20
21. Brinkley, 2004

22. Ibid, p. 23
23. Cronin, 1989, p. 315
24. Graff, 1997
25. Cronin, 1989
26. Brinkley, 2004, p 37
27. Graff, 1997
28. Felzenberg, 2008, p. 45
29. Brinkley, 2004, p. 43
30. Felzenberg, 2008, p. 86
31. Graff, 1997, p. 56

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Appendix

Common Core Standards

Tulsa Public Schools starts using the Common Core Standards for Social Studies/History this year. From the district's pacing calendar for the academic year 2012-2013, two curricular sections are embedded in this unit of study: The American System of Government and The Early Federal Period. This unit is structured around a period of 7-8 weeks. These are the two main Content Standards:

- 1) The student will examine the formation of the American system of government following the American Revolution.
- 2) The student will compare and contrast the continued formation of the new nation under the leadership of Presidents Washington, Adams, and Jefferson.

Specific Content Standards for 1 include:

CS.4.1. Draw specific evidence from informational texts and examine the issues and events encountered by the young nation that led to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787 including a weak national government, the Northwest Ordinance, and civil unrest as typified in Shays' Rebellion.

CS.4.2. Examine the contributions and leadership of George Washington, James Madison, George Mason, and Gouverneur Morris as evidenced in the great issues, debates, and compromises of the Constitutional Convention including the Virginia Plan and the New Jersey Plan, slavery, the Three-fifths Compromise, and the Great Compromise.

CS.4.3. Determine the main purposes of the United States government as expressed in the *Preamble* and as evidenced in the *United States Constitution* including the principles reflected in the separation of powers, checks and balances, and shared powers between the federal and state governments, and the basic responsibilities of the three branches of government.

CS.4.4. Explain the process of ratification of the *United States Constitution* as well as compare and contrast the viewpoints of the Federalists and Anti-Federalists over the addition of a bill of rights.

Specific Content Standards for 2 include:

CS.5.1. Analyze the formation of the new government and the presidential leadership qualities of George Washington including the precedent set by his decision not to seek a third term and the impact of his *Farewell Address*.

CS.5.2. Explain the impact of the presidential election of 1800 regarding the peaceful transfer of political power from one party to another.

CS.5.3. Examine the transformative impact of the *Louisiana Purchase* in 1803 upon the American system in regards to the explorations by Lewis and Clark and the concept of Manifest Destiny as America expanded westward.

These Content Standards will be developed using the following Common Core Process and Literacy Standards:

PLS.1.1. Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

PLS.1.2. Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.

PLS.1.3. Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in United States history primary and/or secondary sources based on specific information in the texts.

PLS.1.5. Compare and contrast the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, historic problem/ solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts.

PLS.1.7. Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, e.g., timelines, maps, graphs, charts, political cartoons, images, artwork, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question or to solve an historic problem.

PLS.2.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic in United States history and government.

PLS.2.6. With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

PLS.2.9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research

PLS.2.10. Write routinely over extended time frames and shorter time frames for a range of United States history and government tasks, purposes, and audiences.

PLS.3.1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on Grade 5 United States History topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

PLS.3.3. Summarize the points a speaker makes and explain how each claim is supported by reasons and evidence.

PLS.3.4. Report on a United States History topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; and speak clearly at an understandable pace.

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