

First Congress Unit - Lesson 8: Unit Review

Unit Review: Reflecting on the Role of the First Federal Congress

This lesson is designed to encourage students to reflect on the roles of Congress as illustrated through the debates that occurred at the First Federal Congress.

Targeted Audience: Students of early American history and government.

Goal: This lesson is designed to help students understand the roles that Congress plays in helping to create a “more perfect union.”

Focus Question

- Based on the debates that took place during the three sessions of the First Federal Congress, what roles does (or did) Congress play in the Federal Government?

Time to Complete: 1-2 class periods.

Materials Needed

1. A transparency.
2. Class copies of Handout 8-2 (see **Unit Resources**).

Terms to Know: instruct, impost, tariff, funding, removal, assumption, residence.

Procedures

1. Lesson Description: Tell students that this activity is designed to help them summarize the information presented in this unit and connect that information to the major debates that took place at the First Federal Congress.

2. Form Groups: Assign the class to groups of 3-4 students.

3. Distribute copies of Handout 8-2 (see Unit Resources). Tell the students that their task is to work together to complete the chart.

4. Guided Practice: Display Handout 8-2 (see **Unit Resources**) on the overhead transparency. Complete the row on the chart that relates to the debate over the removal of executive appointees in a whole group setting. Ask students to volunteer answers and record them on the overhead. Be sure that the students understand the assignment then ask them to complete the rest of the chart in their groups.

5. Presentations: After students have completed their group assignments, ask for one or two volunteers from different groups to come up to the front of the room and share their responses with the rest of the class via the overhead projector. Have the volunteers record their responses on the transparency and invite other students to confirm or challenge the responses presented.

6. Debrief: Reflect. Ask students:

- what were the major problems that the FFC had to contend with?
- what were the most significant roles played by the FFC?
- what were the major themes in American history that surfaced during the debates that occurred at the FFC (e.g., federalism, sectionalism, sovereignty)?

Extension Activities

A leading historian of the First Federal Congress has stated that “...the First Congress also had a great deal to do with the evolution of the political parties which emerged in the 1790s to struggle for control of the machinery of government worked out by the First Congress.” (Bowling, 276) Have your students compare and contrast the positions advocated by the future leaders of our first two political parties Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton with those advocated Representative James Madison and Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson in an introduction to a unit on the early history of political parties in the United States.

Recommended Readings/Sources Cited

- Bickford, Charlene Bangs and Bowling, Kenneth R. *Birth of the Nation: The First Federal Congress 1789-1791*. Madison House Publishers. Madison, WI. 1989.
- Bowling, Kenneth R. *Politics in the First Federal Congress, 1789-1791*. Distinguished Studies in American Legal and Constitutional Garland Publishing, Inc. New York. 1990.