

Movement, one of Geographies five major themes, is defined as the travel of people, goods, and ideas from one place to another. In a world where oceans can be physically crossed in hours via jet airliners and ideas can be exchanged in seconds through electronic devices it becomes nearly impossible to imagine how information was “moved” without such luxuries. Not only does the lack of these pieces of technology beg the question of how information is moved it also becomes nearly impossible to image how state, and even country wide decisions were made. Nevertheless, they were.

One of America’s earliest examples of a countrywide decision came in form of the Constitutional Convention of 1787. A middle school student in 2008 was born somewhere between 1996 and 1999. Thus, they do not know a world without the Internet, cell phones, blackberries, and low cost jet travel. Therefore, how can a student in this age understand the Constitutional Convention if they do not grasp the issues many of the delegates had with the physical movement of themselves to the convention, or the movement of their ideas upon closure of the convention.

Traveling during the 18th century was far from routine. In fact, for some delegates simply getting to the convention would be the most challenging aspect of the gathering. Although some from the most southern states would travel to Philadelphia via coastal vessels most would arrive by overland routes. Both forms of travel were heavily dependent on the weather, especially during the damp spring season. Although there were some main roads during the period, such as the Main Post Road and Boston Post Road, they were received little maintenance and were not much wider than a large path (Colonial Williamsburg). Those on the roads would be faced with constant washouts and were often required to suspend their trip for days due to damp road conditions.

Most of the delegates arrived in Philadelphia through the use of the periods most elaborate form of transportation, horse and buggy. Many had more elaborate coaches and carriages than the common men and most had drivers. Still, a fancy carriage was not immune to challenges presented by poor roads and weather conditions (Colonial Williamsburg). Perhaps the biggest piece of evidence illustrating the delegates travel challenges is the fact the convention was postponed eleven days in order to allow for the arrival of a quorum (Bowen, 43). Still, despite the challenges faced during their travel fifty-five of our forefathers arrived in Philadelphia on May 25, 1787.

Once the delegates arrived one of their first resolutions was to seal off the convention from the rest of the world. The delegates felt if the outside world knew what was going on they would become heavily influenced by what the press was saying. The resolution of a sealed door session passed with little opposition. Still, the passing of the resolution did not stop the newspapers from speculating what *was* going on behind closed doors (Alexander, 34). At the time there were 10 newspapers in Philadelphia. One of these newspapers, the Philadelphia Gazette, served as the New York Times of the period. The Gazette did its best to get “spy” information from what was going on behind the closed doors, but had little “true” success. In fact, one rumor published by the Gazette of the convention placing a monarch in power prompted the delegates to issue a statement asking the Gazette to quit publishing such information in fear of public uproar (Hardsog).

Despite the attempts of the Gazette during the summer of 1787 to leak information about the happenings of the convention, it would not be until after the delegates went home to “sell” the constitution to their states that the real information

about what happened at the convention would come out. The only sales pitch many Americans would hear of the constitution would come in the form of the 85 Federalist Papers. The articles, written by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay and James Madison would serve as the periods main documents advocating the ratification of the Constitution. They would also serve as the everyday Americans only exposure to a document they were soon be governed by (Bowen, 189).

The lack of “movement” available to people and ideas during the late 1700s most definitely had a factor on the final draft of the constitution. Although the effects could be debated, there is no doubt that delegates had great challenges in simply getting to the convention and American’s had to rely on the print words of a few men in order to make their decision.

Massachusetts Standards:

This lesson is designed for use in 7th Grade Geography or 8th Grade United States History. The following lists state standards, which will be met when the lesson is taught in the respective grade.

Geography Standards:

History and Government:

3. Illustrate how the third of the five themes of Geography, movement, has evolved over history.

Civics and Government

8. Define what a nation is and give examples of the different ways nations are formed.

US History Standards:

USI.7 Explain the roles of various founders at the Constitutional Convention. Describe the major debates that occurred at the Convention and the “Great Compromise” that was reached. (H, C)

USI.8 Describe the debate over the ratification of the Constitution between Federalists and Anti-Federalists and explain the key ideas contained in the Federalist Papers on federalism, factions, checks and balances, and the importance of an independent judiciary. (H, C)

Seminal Primary Documents to Consider: Federalist Papers numbers 1, 9, 39, 51, and 78

Time Frame:

This lesson is designed to be accomplished over five forty-five minute class periods. Depending on the level of student participation it may carry over into another period.

Objectives:

1. Relate the geographical theme of movement to an important event in United States History.
2. Allow students to understand the challenges in the movement of people and ideas during the 18th century.
3. Enhance student research skills.
4. Enable student to interpret and analyze primary sources.

Prior Student Knowledge:

Students will have spent the previous three days studying the basics of the Constitutional Convention. This would include a brief examination of who the delegates were and an in depth analysis of the major issues discussed at the convention. Part of this would also include the viewing of Part 6 of the PBS documentary, Liberty. Part 6 is titled, “Are We to Be a Nation?”, and covers the time between 1783 and 1788.

With this knowledge students will be asked to step back and look at how the issue of movement effected the delegates to the convention and America’s decision of whether to ratify the document, or not.

Activity #1: How People Moved During the 17th Century:

Step 1: Comparison of two road maps, one from 1760 and the other from 2008.

Both maps will be displayed on the classroom LCD projector and students will asked to make list of three differences they see between the two maps in their notebooks. A discussion of the differences will ensue.



The Philadelphia Print Shop



Rand McNally

Step 2: Students will be broken into groups of three and asked to research the following topics relating to 20th century transportation.

- Coastal Vessels
- Canoes
- Coaches/Carriages
- Old Post Road
- National Road
- Boston Post Road

Students will be allowed to use print encyclopedias and the E-Library database available in the schools library to research the following on the forms of transportation listed above.

1. Students must give a brief (2-3 sentence) description of their topic
2. Students must state who the main users of their form of transportation were
3. Students must state a brief description of how their form of transportation was used.
4. Students must state the 3 pros and 3 cons of their topic
5. Students must compile their information on a PowerPoint slide for presentation to the class.
6. Students must find at least one color picture of their topic, and place it on a PowerPoint slide.

Total time for step 2, 45 minutes.

Step 3: Upon completion of research students will present their findings to the class via PowerPoint. The teacher will then give a short lecture on other possible challenges that faced the delegates on their journey such as weather lack of instant communication and sickness.

For homework students will be assigned a delegate and asked to write a three paragraph historical fiction essay on how they think their assigned candidate may have traveled to the convention and the troubles he could have faced.

Step 4: Upon student's understanding of how the delegates literally moved to the convention they will now be asked to understand how the of the convention moved after the convention was over and states were deciding whether or not to ratify the constitution. In order to do this students will be asked to break into groups of three and analyze quotes from various Federalist Papers. Each quote has two questions the group of students must answers. The quotes and questions are as follows:

Group #1: Federalist Paper 23--Alexander Hamilton

The principle purposes to be answered by Union are these -- The common defense of the members -- the preservation of the public peace as well as against internal convulsions as external attacks -- the regulation of commerce with other nations and between the States -- the superintendence of our intercourse, political and commercial, with foreign countries.

For Discussion

1. According to Hamilton, what are the main purposes of forming a Union under the Constitution? Make a list in your own words.
2. Do the majority of Hamilton's purposes relate to domestic or to foreign affairs?

Group #2: Federalist Paper 47--James Madison

The accumulation of all powers legislative, executive and judiciary in the same hands, whether of one, a few or many, and whether hereditary, self appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny.

For Discussion

1. According to this excerpt, do you think Madison supported or opposed the principle of "separation of powers"? (Refer to your textbook if you are not familiar with this term.)
2. Why do you think Madison held this view of the "separation of powers"?

Group #3: Federalist Paper 51--James Madison

If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: You must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place, oblige it to control itself.

For Discussion

1. Which of the following statements would Madison agree with based on his views in the above excerpt?
 - a. Government is necessary.
 - b. The people should elect government leaders who act like angels.
 - c. Elected government officials should be controlled by a system of "checks and balances." (Refer to your textbook if you are not familiar with this term.)
2. What would you say was Madison's general opinion of people in government: angels? devils? something else?

Group #4: Federalist Paper 72--Alexander Hamilton

The original intent of the Constitution was to place no limit on the number of times an individual could be elected president. However, after Franklin D. Roosevelt won four presidential elections in a row, a constitutional amendment (the 22nd) was passed limiting a person to two terms as president. In the following selection, Hamilton argues against limiting the number of presidential terms.

[An] ill effect of the exclusion would be depriving the community of the advantage of the experience gained by the chief magistrate in the exercise of his office. That experience is the parent of wisdom is an adage, the truth of which is recognized by the wisest as well as the simplest of mankind. What more desirable or more essential than this quality in the government of nations?

For Discussion

1. What argument does Hamilton give against limiting the number of times a person may be elected president?
2. What could have been one of the arguments used by those who proposed the 22nd Amendment?

Group #5 Federalist Paper 78--Alexander Hamilton

"If then the courts of justice are to be considered as the bulwarks of a limited constitution against legislative encroachments, this consideration will afford a strong argument for the permanent tenure of judicial offices, since nothing will contribute so much as this to that independent spirit in the judges, which must be essential to the faithful performance of so arduous a duty. This independence of the judges is equally requisite to guard the constitution and the rights of individuals from the effects of . . . designing men."

For Discussion

1. What does Hamilton mean by "the permanent tenure of judicial offices"? Does Hamilton support or oppose this idea?
2. What does Hamilton mean when he says that an "independent spirit in the judges" is essential for them to do their duty?

***Information for this activity was obtained from:

Kammen, Michael G. *The Origins of the American Constitution : A Documentary History*. New York: Penguin (Non-Classics), 1986.

Step 5: After groups are given 30 minutes to discuss their quote and answer their questions they will be asked to present their findings to the class. In order to do so one member of the group will be asked to read their quote in a fashion they believed their writer would have (i.e., act it out!), the second will read the questions and answers and the third will write the answers to the questions on the classroom marker board. The students in the audience will be required to take notes while others are presenting.

Step 6: Upon students completing their presentations the teacher will give brief lecture on the Anti-Federalist papers. Several copies of *The Anti-Federalist: An Abridgment of The Complete Anti-Federalist*, by Herbert J. Storing will be passed around. Students will be given time in their groups to look over the papers in attempts to find how these papers refute the ideas of the Federalist Papers.

Step 7: Students will be asked to write a three paragraph essay on how they feel the constitution ratification process would have been different if today's forms of information movement would have been available in 1787.

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The Geographical Theme of Movement and the Constitutional Convention

Curriculum Plan

TAH: *A More Perfect Union*

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