

Washington's Presidency and Setting Precedents

Name: _____ Date: _____

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

The student will evaluate key decisions made by George Washington as president and explain how they set lasting precedents.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- paper
- pen
- index cards
- ruler (for a timeline)

HANDS-ON ACTIVITY

1. Draw a horizontal timeline on paper spanning 1789 to 1797 (Washington's two terms), marking tick marks for each year.
2. Research or review 4 key events/decisions from Washington's presidency (e.g., forming the first Cabinet, the Whiskey Rebellion response, the Neutrality Proclamation, serving only two terms) and place each on your timeline with a short label.
3. For each event, write on an index card what precedent (a tradition or example for future presidents) it set.
4. Role-play or write a short 'presidential decision' scenario: imagine you are President Washington facing the Whiskey Rebellion — write 3-4 sentences explaining what you would decide to do and why, then compare it to what Washington actually did.
5. Circle the single precedent from your timeline that you think had the biggest long-term impact on the presidency, and explain why in one sentence.

QUESTIONS

1. What precedent did Washington set by choosing to serve only two terms as president?
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2. What was the Whiskey Rebellion, and how did Washington respond to it?
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3. Why did Washington form a Cabinet, and what precedent did this set?
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4. Which precedent do you think had the biggest long-term impact on the U.S. presidency, and why?
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