

Sample Social Studies Learning Plan

Big Idea/ Topic

Impeachment

Connecting Themes/Enduring Understandings:

Beliefs and Ideals: The student will understand that the beliefs and ideals of a society influence the social, political, and economic decisions of that society.

Conflict Resolution: The student will understand that societies resolve conflicts through legal procedures, force, and/or compromise.

Distribution of Power: The student will understand that distribution of power in government is a product of existing laws and documents combined with contemporary values and beliefs.

Individuals, Groups, and Institutions: The student will understand that the actions of individuals, groups, and/or institutions affect society through intended and unintended consequences.

Rule of Law: The student will understand that in a democracy, rule of law influences the behavior of citizens, establishes procedures for making policies, and limits the power of government.

Essential Question:

How should federal officials be charged with crimes and removed from office through the power of the U.S. Constitution?

Standard Alignment

SSCG9 Explain the impeachment and removal process and its use for federal officials as defined in the U.S. Constitution.

Connection to Literacy Standards for Social Studies and Social Studies Matrices

L9-10RHSS1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

L9-10RHSS7: Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.

Map and Globe skills –

8. draw conclusions and make generalizations based on information from maps

Information Processing Skills –

2. Organize items chronologically

4. Distinguish between fact and opinion

5. Identify main idea, detail, sequence of events, and cause and effect in a social studies context

6. identify and use primary and secondary sources

8. identify social studies reference resources to use for a specific purpose

15. determine adequacy and/or relevancy of information

Instructional Design

***This lesson has a flexible timeline and will cross over several days.**

This lesson is intended to reach students in a virtual setting, whether plugged or unplugged. See bottom of lesson for list of unplugged supplies.

Note to teachers: Talking about impeachment can be a complicated topic in a classroom setting. It may be appropriate to gauge students' comfort in discussing this sometimes politically charged topic and ensure that the topic is addressed as it relates to the standard, removing as much as the politicization as possible. A great way to begin a lesson that may be seen by some as controversial is to start by having students journal, as you will see in the preview to this lesson.

Part 1: Preview the Lesson

1. Before beginning the lesson, ask students to brainstorm responses to the following questions. For all discussion questions that follow use one of the following platforms: digital journal or regular journal/interactive notebook.
 - a. What do you know about impeachment?
 - b. Where have you heard it mentioned before? (TV, social media, family or friends, another class, etc.)
2. Explain that impeachment is the Constitutional power of the U.S. House of Representatives to officially accuse an office holder of the Executive or Judicial branches, which *may* lead to the removal from office. This power is a critical part of the separation of powers and checks & balances of the U.S. Federal Government. Continue to probe students using some of the following discussion questions:
 - a. What do you think a federal official should be impeached for?
 - i. What would your teacher, parent, friend's answer be?
 - ii. Why might their answers be different?
 - b. What does the U.S. Constitution say on the matter of impeachment?
3. Show students the three U.S. Presidents who have been impeached (slide 5). Ask students if they think any of these presidents were removed from office. Explain again to students that impeachment is only official charges being brought against a federal office holder. Removal from office hinges on a trial conducted by the U.S. Senate and is a separate procedure. While three presidents have been impeached (President Trump twice), no president has ever been removed from office through conviction of articles of impeachment. Andrew Johnson was the closest, only one vote shy of being convicted and removed from office. Only one cabinet member has ever been impeached, Secretary of War William Belknap in 1876. He resigned and was not convicted.
4. Show students the 15 federal judges who have been impeached (slide 7). Ask students why they think more judges have been impeached than presidents. Explain to students that there have only been 46 presidencies in U.S. History and there were 870 federal judge positions in 2020 alone. Show students the map of federal judges (slide10). While no president has been convicted of articles of impeachment, eight of these federal judges (in bold) have been convicted and removed from office.
5. To summarize what they know and understand about part one, have students write their answer to this question:
 - a. Are impeachments a waste of time?
 - b. Why might your answers be different from someone else?

***Unplugged variation** – Print out referenced slides from the accompanying [PowerPoint for students](#). Have students brainstorm and answer the questions provided in each step.



Part 2: Build Content Knowledge

1. Teach students content vocabulary for this lesson (slide 13). Consider asking students to write definitions in their own words, draw a picture/symbol for each term, and/or have students use the word in a sentence including a contextual term like “United States” or “government.”
2. Help students develop their newly acquired content vocabulary by further pursuing an understanding of impeachment as it exists in the U.S. Constitution. Ask students to watch the TED ED video [“How does impeachment work? - Alex Gendler.”](#) *Note: transcripts and subtitles are available for this video in 19 different languages.* Once students have viewed the video ask them to journal responses to the following questions:
 - a. What is impeachment?
 - b. What is one thing you learned about impeachment from the video?
 - c. What is one question you still have after watching the video?
3. Help students to identify and make meaning out of portions of the U.S. Constitution that deal directly with impeachment. Ask students to use a copy of the U.S. Constitution to look up, record, and make meaning out of several segments (see worksheet attached).

***Unplugged variation** – Have students write the definitions from slide 13 in their own words, draw a picture/symbol for each term, and/or have students use the word in a sentence including a contextual term like “United States” or “government.” Print out the following short [article from Scholastic about impeachment](#) to replace the TED ED video, a copy of the constitution, and the making meaning of the constitution document. Have students journal their responses to the article and complete the constitution document.

Part 3: Assessment: Present Their Case

1. Students will present a case for acquittal or conviction of one person from the executive **and** judicial branch (lists provided on slides 5 & 7) and create a multimedia presentation using PowerPoint, Prezi, Canva, etc. to demonstrate their understanding of the impeachment process. Presentations must include research using reliable resources and present information on:
 - The individual’s full name, federal office, and years in office
 - A paragraph summary of the crime or alleged crime
 - A paragraph summary of the articles of impeachment filed by the U.S. House of Representatives
 - A paragraph summary of the trial by the U.S. Senate, including the tally of the vote to convict or acquit
 - A paragraph summary of the political implications/aftermath from the impeachment proceedings
 - A paragraph summary with your opinion to agree with or overturn the original verdict. Your paragraph should provide evidence to support your opinion.
2. If circumstances allow, have students share their presentations with one another and defend their decision to acquit or convict.

*Consider providing students with a checklist—a sample is provided.

***Unplugged variation** – Students may show their understanding their presentation on paper. You will need to provide students with resources to support their opinion. The websites or informational text you have your students explore for this assignment will vary depending on district resources and may include informational texts in a book form, online encyclopedias, or other reliable websites.



Opportunities for Extension:

1. Students may choose to offer their opinion of the impeachment based on their research of the alleged crime and offer commentary on the articles of impeachment trial. Students may choose to agree or disagree with the findings of the trial.

***Unplugged variation** – Students may write their opinions on paper.

*The websites or informational text you have your students explore for this assignment will vary depending on district resources and may include informational texts in a book form, online encyclopedias, or other reliable websites.



Student Learning Supports

Ideas for Differentiation:

Our goal is for all students to be actively engaged using speaking, writing, illustrating, reading, and listening. Below are changes to the lesson to help achieve that goal for students who need additional support. Note: Be careful using these lessons for all students. If students can complete the activities on their own, it would be best to let them do this independently.

- For videos, consider using available transcripts, subtitles or Closed Captioning (TED offers a variety of language options).
- Consider allowing students to record their thoughts in a variety of ways: using the talk to text/dictate feature, making an audio recording of their responses, creating illustrations, annotating maps, etc.
- Consider reading research materials to students or copying materials into a Word document to allow that students may use the “read aloud” feature.
- Consider giving students a partially completed constitution document. Prerecord the wording and have students complete the meaning. It may be beneficial to provide an example or to get started together if circumstances allow.
- Consider providing students with an example presentation.
- Consider asking some students to only complete a presentation for one person from either the executive or judicial branch, instead of both.
- Consider adapting the requirements of the summative assessment to suit the needs of the learner.

Evidence of Student Success

Information for diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments are described within the Instructional Design.

Engaging Families

Materials included to support unplugged learners: Accompanying [PowerPoint presentation](#) which can be printed and replacement article from Scholastic which can be printed.

Optional materials to support learning not included: blank paper, notebook, scissors, glue sticks, colored pencils, markers, etc. as available



Impeachment Lesson Checklist

SSCG9 Explain the impeachment and removal process and its use for federal officials as defined in the U.S. Constitution.

Part 1:

- Use your journal or interactive notebook to brainstorm responses to the following questions:
 - What do you know about impeachment?
 - Where have you heard it mentioned before? (TV, social media, family or friends, another class, etc.)
- Use the slide 3 of your handout to read about impeachment and answer the questions in your interactive notebook or journal:
 - What do you think a federal official should be impeached for?
 - What would your teacher, parent, friend's answer be?
 - Why might their answers be different?
 - What does the U.S. Constitution say on the matter of impeachment?
- Look at slides 7 and 8 of your handout to think about the following question:
 - Why do you think more judges have been impeached than presidents?
- Summarize what you have learned from part one by answering the following questions in your journal or interactive notebook:
 - Are impeachments a waste of time?
 - Why might your answers be different from someone else?

Part 2:

- Read the vocabulary terms and definitions on slide 13. Write definitions in your own words, draw a picture/symbol for each term, and/or use the word in a sentence including a contextual term like "United States" or "government."
- If you access to the internet, watch the TED ED video ["How does impeachment work? - Alex Gendler."](#) If you do not have access to the internet, read the transcript or the attached article *Impeachment* by Valerie Earle. Answer the following questions in your interactive notebook or journal.
 - What is impeachment?
 - What is one thing you learned about impeachment from the video/article?
 - What is one question you still have about impeachment?
- Use a copy of the Constitution to complete the attached document. Write the wording from the Constitution and explain it in your own words.

Part 3:

- Use the attached checklist and the resources provided to present a case for acquittal or conviction of one person from the executive and judicial branch (lists provided on slides 5 and 7).



Assignment: Present 2 cases for acquittal or conviction by creating a multimedia presentation using PowerPoint, Prezi, Canva, etc. Choose one person from the executive and judicial branch (see lists provided on slides 5 and 7). Your presentation must include research using reliable resources and should include:

- The individual's full name, federal office, and years in office
- A paragraph summary of the alleged crime
- A paragraph summary of the articles of impeachment filed by the U.S. House of Representatives
- A paragraph summary of the trial by the U.S. Senate, including the tally of the vote to convict or acquit
- A paragraph summary of the political implications/aftermath from the impeachment proceedings
- A paragraph summary with your opinion to agree with or overturn the original verdict.
 - Your paragraph should provide evidence to support your opinion.



Making Sense of impeachment in the U.S. Constitution

Look up the following passages from the Constitution. First, record it as it appears in the Constitution. Then describe what you think it means.

1. Article I, Section 2, Clause 5 – starting with “The House of Representatives...”

Wording:

Meaning:

2. Article I, Section 3, Clauses 6 – starting with “The Senate shall...”

Wording:

Meaning:

3. Article I, Section 3, Clauses 7 – starting with “The Senate shall...”

Wording:

Meaning:

4. Article II, Section 4 – starting with “The President...”

Wording:

Meaning:

5. Article III, Section 1 – starting with “The Judicial Power of...”

Wording:

Meaning:

