

The Rule of Law in American Govt: Impeachment

Middle/ Junior High School

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- analyze primary and secondary sources;
- synthesize evidence from primary and secondary sources;
- use and create charts, diagrams, and pictures to determine characteristics of people, places, and events;
- summarize points and evidence to answer a question;
- use evidence to draw conclusions and make generalizations;
- construct arguments using evidence from multiple sources;
- compare and contrast people, places, and events;
- Compare and contrast historical, cultural, and political perspective;
- make connections between past and present;
- access a variety of media, including online resources.

2015 Standards

Virginia SOL: CE.6b Explaining the principle of separation of powers and the operation of checks and balances;
The Congress checks the president when legislators impeach and convict a president.
The Congress checks the courts when legislators impeach and convict judges/justices.

National: NSS-C.5-8.3, C.9-12.1 Principles of Democracy

Approx. Time: One and a half 90 minute blocks or three 45 minute blocks.

Hook: Start the lesson with a brief discussion and brainstorming activity with the students. Write “The Rule of Law” on the board. Ask the students if they know/remember what it means. Discuss briefly how the concept of the rule of law means that no one is above the law, not even the president of the United States.

Next, ask them what can be done if a president breaks the law or violates the Constitution. If they say that the president can be impeached, write the word “Impeachment” on the board under “Rule of Law.”

Ask them if they know how the impeachment process works, or if they know what a president or judge has to do, or not do, to be impeached.

Have the students outline the process and identify reasons why a president should be impeached. Write the reasons on the board. Once you have a fair number of reasons, have the students rank them from the most serious reason to the least serious reason.

Once they have done this, explain that today they will learn about the impeachment process and the reasons to impeach a president as well as examples of presidents who have been, or almost been, impeached.

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Divide students into groups and assign each group with one of the following topics: (i) a step in the impeachment process, (ii) the articles of impeachment, or (iii) historical examples of impeachment, including Andrew Johnson, Richard Nixon, and Bill Clinton.

Each group will (i) research a topic, (ii) create either a poster or a digital presentation (Google Slides, Prezi, infographic, etc.), and (iii) present their work to the class. Students will discuss each topic and take notes from each presentation.

Follow the order below for presentations so students start with an understanding of the process and then move to historical examples.

Presentations should include a basic, but thorough, explanation of each topic and include AT LEAST one picture.

Suggested sites for creating an infographic:

<https://www.creativebloq.com/infographic/tools-2131971>

GROUPS:

1. Role of the House of Representatives in the Impeachment Process
2. Role of the Senate in the Impeachment Process
3. Constitutional Reasons (Articles) for Impeachment
4. Impeachment of Andrew Johnson
5. Impeachment of Richard Nixon
6. Impeachment of Bill Clinton

Struggling Learners: Have students working in their groups highlight information on the excerpts they think is most relevant to their topic to summarize it. This will make it easier for them to focus on what needs to be on their infographic.

Advanced Learners: Have students use the web links instead of the excerpts to find their evidence in a broader context.

Assessment: “Students will play “To Impeach, or Not to Impeach?” by holding up signs supporting impeachment or not supporting impeachment (provided at end of this lesson) when presented with different scenarios and examples of possible impeachable offenses. (Signs can be distributed or allow students to draw the signs.)

Some of the scenarios are obvious whether they are impeachable offenses or not, but many are not clear. Make sure students can identify the constitutional reason if they support impeachment or why the scenario does not meet the requirement. This should lead to good discussion and debate about whether or not to impeach, demonstrating the same difficulty lawmakers have in deciding!