

Delaware Recommended Curriculum

Lesson Title: Delaware Public Archives- Why is Delaware called the first state? (Lesson I)

Updated/Designed by: Jill Szymanski and Taylor Schlotterback

District: Red Clay Consolidated School District

Content Area: Social Studies (History)

Grade Level: Grades 4-5

Summary of Lesson

In this lesson, students will learn about Delaware and problems Delaware faced under the Articles of Confederation. Students will learn why Delaware is called the first state and Delaware's ratification process. Students will create a chronology of events leading to Delaware's ratification of the United States Constitution and will identify cause and effect relationships between the events.

Resources Needed:

Copies of Transcription Source 1: Petition Document.

Copies of Transcription Source 2: Ratification Document.

Copies of Handout 1: Delaware and the U.S. Constitution

Copies of Handout 2: First State Timeline

Stage 1 – Desired Results

What students will know, do, and understand

Delaware Content Standards

History Anchor Standard One: Students will employ chronological concepts in analyzing historical phenomena [Chronology].

4-5a: Students will study historical events and persons within a given time-frame in order to create a chronology and identify related cause-and-effect factors. Grade 4

Big Ideas

chronology, cause and effect

Lesson Essential Question

- What events lead to Delaware's ratification of the United State's Constitution?

Knowledge and Skills

Students will know...

- problems Delaware faced under the Articles of Confederation
- why Delaware is called the First State
- the process of Delaware's ratification of the United States Constitution

Students will be able to...

- put historical events in chronological order
- identify cause and effect relationships between historical events

Stage 2 – Assessment Evidence

Evidence that will be collected to determine whether or not Desired Results are achieved

Assessment

Independently, students will demonstrate their understanding by writing their own cause and effect relationship on Handout 3 using the events from the timeline. Students will support their cause and effect relationship with an explanation.

Rubric

2= students write a reasonable cause and effect relationship and support their cause and effect with an explanation.

1= students write a somewhat reasonable cause and effect relationship, and somewhat supports the cause and effect relationship.

or

students write a reasonable cause and effect relationship, but fail to support it with an explanation.

Stage 3 – Learning Plan

(Design learning activities to align with Stage 1 and Stage 2 expectations)

Instructional Strategies

Procedures

- I. **Warm-Up (developing context):** Tell students today that they are going to explore the answer to why Delaware is called the First State. Divide the class into pairs. Think-pair-share: Why is Delaware called “The First State”?

Explain to students that the American colonies declared their independence from England in 1776 with the Declaration of Independence. Ask: What kind of government did the colonies create? (They created a federal system of government with the states holding the majority of the power.)

Explain that in 1777 the colonies set up the Articles of Confederation. The colonies were in the middle of a war to free themselves from a nation that had a strong central government (all the power was held by the English Parliament and the King). Ask: What kind of government did the colonies want now? (A weak central government with the power held by each individual state. The states would be "on their own.")

- II. **Analyzing a Source:** Pass out Source 1, Petition to the General Assembly. Inform the students that the petition to the General Assembly of Delaware (the State Legislature) was written in 1786 - three years after the end of the American Revolution. During this time the Articles of Confederation served as the plan for our government, and the Petition to the General Assembly was written during this time. Be sure students have an understanding of what it means to petition, and that people typically petition when there is a problem and they disagree.

Read the letter aloud to students. During the read aloud, tell students to listen for why Delawareans’ are petitioning and are unhappy. After reading, direct student attention to the underlined portions of the text. Ask: Are the Articles of Confederation working in Delaware? (No.) What are some of the problems presented in the petition? (Scarcity of cash, debts from the war, increased taxes, colonists sold their property for very little then became homeless and destitute) Do you think other colonies are having similar problems? (Yes)

- III. **Building Understanding:**

Explain the information below to deepen student understanding on how the issues under the Articles of Confederation related to Delaware.

Delaware was suffering because of this new form of government. Some of the problems included:

- a. Economic. Much of the land in Delaware had been farmed for many years and was losing its fertility - thus producing lower crop yields. In addition, deflation (falling prices) was driving many

farmers and merchants toward economic disaster. Many people were deeply in debt. Ask: What is a debtor? (Someone who owes money.) What is a creditor? (Someone who loans money to another person with the understanding that it will be paid back.) Delawareans started writing to the General Assembly begging for some type of help.

b. Economic. Delaware did not have a large seaport where it could carry out trade with other countries or colonies. Many of the goods bought by Delawareans came from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania - the closest large seaport. These goods were taxed by the State of Pennsylvania. Ask: How did the people selling the goods make up the money they lost because of the Pennsylvania tax? (They charged the people of Delaware higher prices for their goods.)

c. Military. Delaware had too much coastline and not enough men to militarily defend against an attack from a foreign power.

- IV. Think-pair-share:** Do you think the size of Delaware affected their situation? How could the situation be fixed? (Look for various answers for both questions.)

After students share their thinking, explain that a solution Delawareans wanted was a strong national government. Many Delawareans felt a strong national government would help to eliminate these problems. They believed it would change the economic conditions under which they were suffering. They hoped a strong national government would regulate the prices Delawareans had to pay for goods from other states. In addition, a strong national government could provide men and military supplies to help defend the Delaware coastline

- V. Deepening Student Understanding:** Explain to students that an agreement was made between all the states to send representatives to a "convention" to revise the Articles of Confederation. This convention was held in Philadelphia during the summer of 1787. Delaware was represented by George Read, Richard Bassett, John Dickinson, Jacob Broom, and Gunning Bedford, Jr. Most Delawareans wanted small states such as Delaware to have equal representation in the revised government. Without this guarantee, larger states would dominate the government and the country.

Continue explaining that once the Convention started, the delegates chose to discard the Articles of Confederation in favor of creating a stronger national government. Completed in September of 1787, the Constitution was sent out to every state for approval. Ask: Would the various state legislative bodies be in favor of this new form of government? (No, because it may limit or restrict their own power.) To counter this problem, the Convention delegates decided to hold special elections to choose citizens for a convention where they could vote for or against adopting the new Constitution. In this way, the Constitution would be decided upon by ordinary citizens. New Castle, Kent,

and Sussex County each selected ten citizens. The group met in Dover at Battell's Tavern from December 3 through December 7, 1787.

- VI. Making the Connection:** Before citizens in each state decided whether or not they wanted to approve the Constitution, they met to see if their concerns were addressed.

Pass out Handout 1: United States Constitution Article I, Section 8. Explain to the students that this is one part of the United States Constitution that shows how the US Constitution helped Delaware. Students will be identifying the examples as either Military Help or Economic Help. Instruct the students to complete the worksheet.

Review the worksheet with the students. There may be some parts of the Constitution that are difficult for students at this level to comprehend.

This could be a possible pausing point in the lesson if needed. If so, Collect the worksheet (Handout 1) and the petition/ratification document (Resource 1) at the end of the period.

VII. Source Analysis:

Pass out the Ratification Document (Source 2) to students. Instruct the students to read and review the ratification document, in pairs or a small groups. Ask students to record what they notice in the document. Have each group share their observations and generate a class list.

If students struggle to read the text independently, read the document aloud. Use the following questions if students are struggling to make observations or as talking points for things students omitted in their observations.

1. What does this document tell us about the Constitution? (It was approved [ratified] by the delegates.)
2. Are all of Delaware's counties represented? (Yes; New Castle, Kent, Sussex)
2. Count the number of names for each county. How many delegates from each county signed? (10 from each county, 30 total)
3. Did all the delegates sign their names to ratify the Constitution? (Yes, the vote was unanimous.)
4. What is the date the ratification document was signed? (December 7, 1787)
5. Why did all the delegates vote to ratify the Constitution? (It addressed the economic and military problems that Delaware faced at the time.)

Explain the ratification process to students. Nine states needed to ratify the Constitution before it could be put into effect. Many people opposed the Constitution - including a number of prominent Americans who were heroes of the American Revolution. Among those against the new form of government were John Hancock, Patrick Henry, and Samuel Adams.

Ask: Why were they against it?

Some of the reasons included:

1. Individual states were not allowed to print money
2. Powerful, centralized government

3. Constitution did not have a Bill of Rights
4. Constitution did not mention God

Additional Information about Delaware's Ratification.

- Delaware became the first state because it was the first former colony to approve of the new Constitution. What do we call that day? (Delaware Day)
- What symbol in Delaware carries that date? (The Delaware Flag. If a flag is not available use the overhead from the Delaware Flag lesson.)

VIII. Chronology & Cause/Effect

Pass out the First State Timeline (Handout 2) to each student. Instruct students to cut out the event cards from First State Event Cards on page 2 of Handout 2 and cut apart each event. Explain to students that each of these events are events discussed throughout the lesson. Ask students to work with a partner or in small groups to sort and organize the events in chronological order, from earliest to latest. Explain to students that historical events are often organized in chronological order, or time order. Events are typically organized this way because earlier events can lead to or cause later events to happen. Tell students that as they are ordering the events to think about why they are ordering the events in this way and how the events relate to each other.

Have students share out the ordering of their events and their reasoning. Discuss any differences the groups may have and come to a final conclusion of the correct sequence. Be sure to discuss how one event has led to another; for example: The problems with the Articles of Confederation resulted in delegates meeting at the Philadelphia Convention in the Summer of 1787 because the delegates wanted to revise the Articles.

Direct student attention back to the timeline on Handout 2, page 1. Instruct them to fill in the following dates in the numbered boxes.

1. 1776
2. 1777
3. 1786
4. Summer of 1787
5. September 1787
6. December 3rd, 1787
7. December 7th, 1787

Have students paste or write the events from the sort onto the corresponding box on the timeline.

IX. Assessment:

Independently, students will demonstrate their understanding by writing their own cause and effect relationship on Handout 3 using the events from the

timeline. Students will support their cause and effect relationship with an explanation.

Source 1 Transcription:

Petition to the General Assembly

To the Honorable the Representatives of the Freeman of The Delaware State in General Assembly met. The Petition of divers Inhabitants of Sussex County Humbly Sheweth That the sufferings of your Constituents in general thro the State and in this County in particular, for several years past, from the Scarcity of Cash, the number of Debts both Public & Private necessarily contracted during the late War and the consequent increase of Taxes, have reduced many of the Good People of this County to the lowest State of Misery and want. That so far from any prospect of Relief We find the Evil rapidly increasing, becoming more dreadful in its appearance and more destructive in its effects. Our property is sold, and many of the virtuous but poor inhabitants of the County with large and helpless families, are turned out of Doors by their merciless and unfeeling creditors who frequently purchase their property at a third, fourth or fifth part of its real value. Knowing that your Honors were intimately acquainted with our declining and ruinous circumstances, We have for several months looked up to our Representatives in Assembly with confidence of support and Relief. Unwilling to dictate to your Honors; We have for a long time remained in silent expectation; but necessity has at length conditioned us to petition and beseech your Honors, in the most pressing and urgent manner, to grant your distressed Constituents the only relief which now remains and which alone can save the State from Ruin, Anarchy & Destruction. That we allude to the Emission of a paper currency must evidently appear to your Honors. We trust to an Assembly of your Wisdom and Integrity it will be unnecessary to point out the particular mode of emitting it. We suppose with deference to the Judgment of our worthy Representatives that the usual method by Loan will appear both convenient and practicable. Resting therefore in a firm Reliance that your Honors will grant the above mentioned or some other relief. We trust and Hope