

THE CONSTITUTION AS A JOB DESCRIPTION

LEVEL:

Middle School

TIMEFRAME:

Approximately 45 minutes

OBJECTIVES:

Students will analyze the U.S. Constitution to determine the role of the President

STANDARDS:

- Principles of Democracy
 - Revolution and the New Nation
 - Foundations of the Political System
 - Reading Informational Texts
 - Reading and Writing Literacy in History/Social Studies
 - Speaking and Listening
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WARM UP ACTIVITY:

1. Provide students copies of Article 1 and Article 2 of the Constitution and ask them to mark the places where the document refers to the responsibilities of the President.

PROCEDURE:

1. Watch the 4-minute video on the *Acts of Congress* produced by C-SPAN's *American History TV* series.
 - a. Stream the video on Mount Vernon's website www.mountvernon.org/ActsofCongress
2. Distribute the handout *George Washington's Notes* (included in the ZIP file download) and ask students to compare the sections they marked in the Warm Up Activity with those that George Washington marked.
3. Ask students to complete the worksheet *The Constitution as a Job Description* (included in the ZIP file download).
4. As a final assessment, ask students to create a job description for the role of the President in 1787 using the U.S. Constitution as evidence.

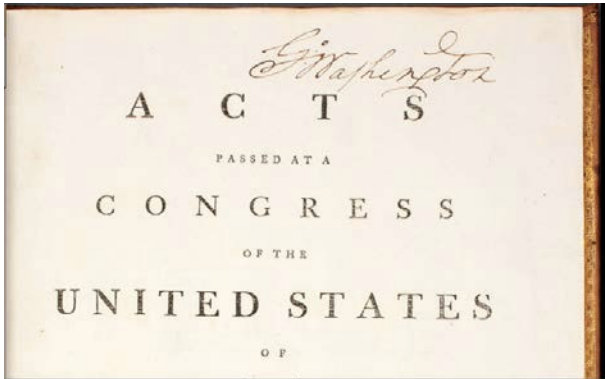
OPTIONAL EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

1. Ask students to create a resume, or LinkedIn profile, for George Washington using the George Washington Timeline on Mount Vernon's website for biographical details. Have students compare resumes and hold a class discussion to evaluate if students believe George Washington was qualified for the position of President.
 - a. George Washington Timeline
<http://www.mountvernon.org/education/for-students/gw-k-5>

THE ACTS OF CONGRESS

George Washington's copy of the *Acts passed at a Congress of the United States of America* (New York, 1789) contains key founding documents establishing the Union: the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and a record of acts passed by the first Congress.

His copy is embossed in gilt letters reading "President of the United States." Washington's bold signature appears on the upper right corner of the title page. He also pasted his engraved bookplate to the inside, front cover. The bookplate features the Washington family coat of arms and the motto *exitus acta probat*, which translates to "the result is the test of the actions."



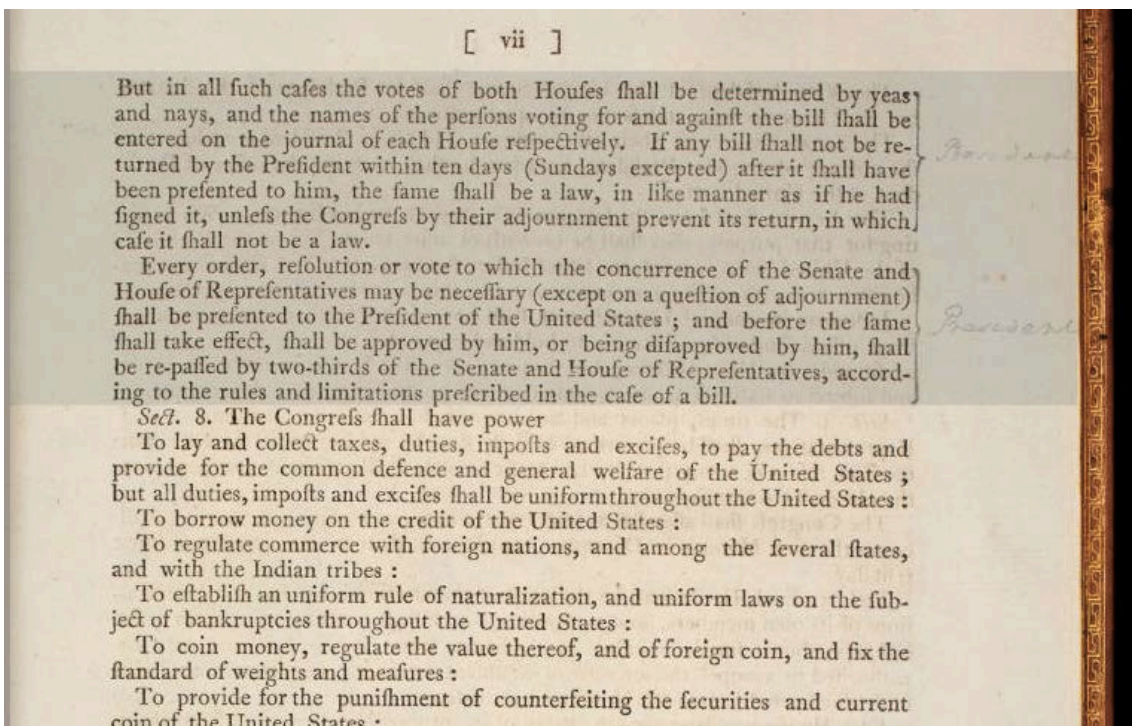
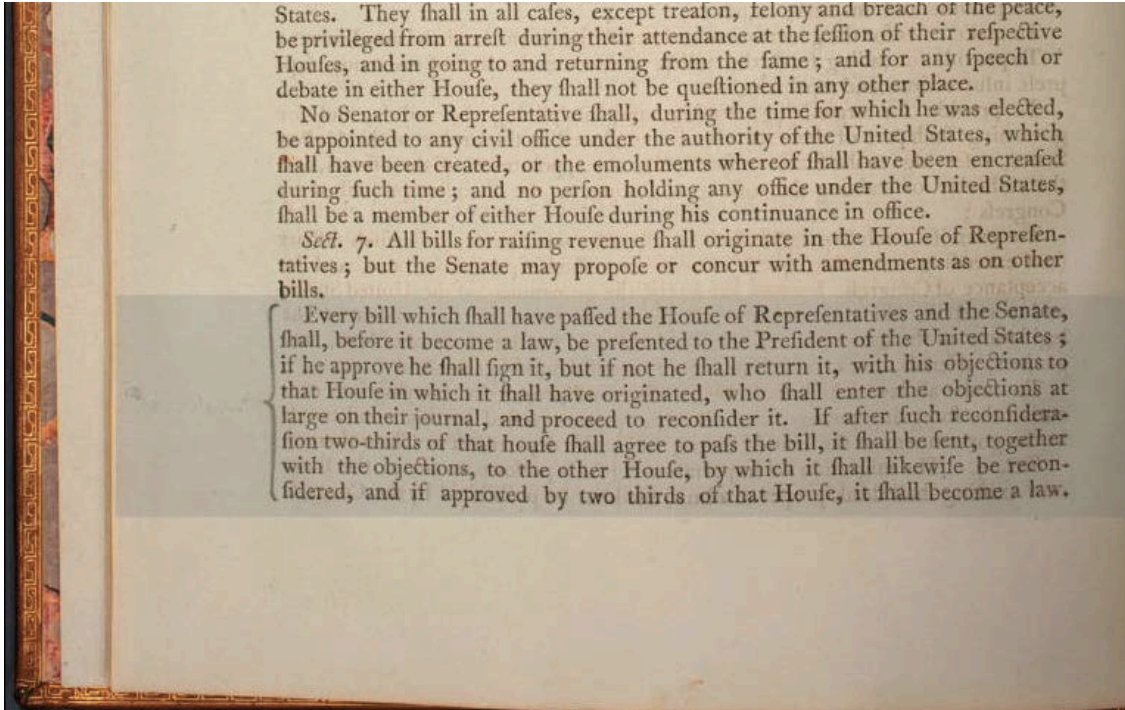
George Washington was the first person in history to serve as President of the United States. No one had the job before he did and the U.S. Constitution served as his job description.

In the margins of four separate pages, Washington wrote the words "President," "Powers," and "Required," underscoring the responsibilities of the first Chief Executive while he held that office.

More about this object and its significance at the Washington Library can be found at:

www.mountvernon.org/ActsOfCongress

ARTICLE 1, SECTION 7 (VII) MARKED "PRESIDENT"



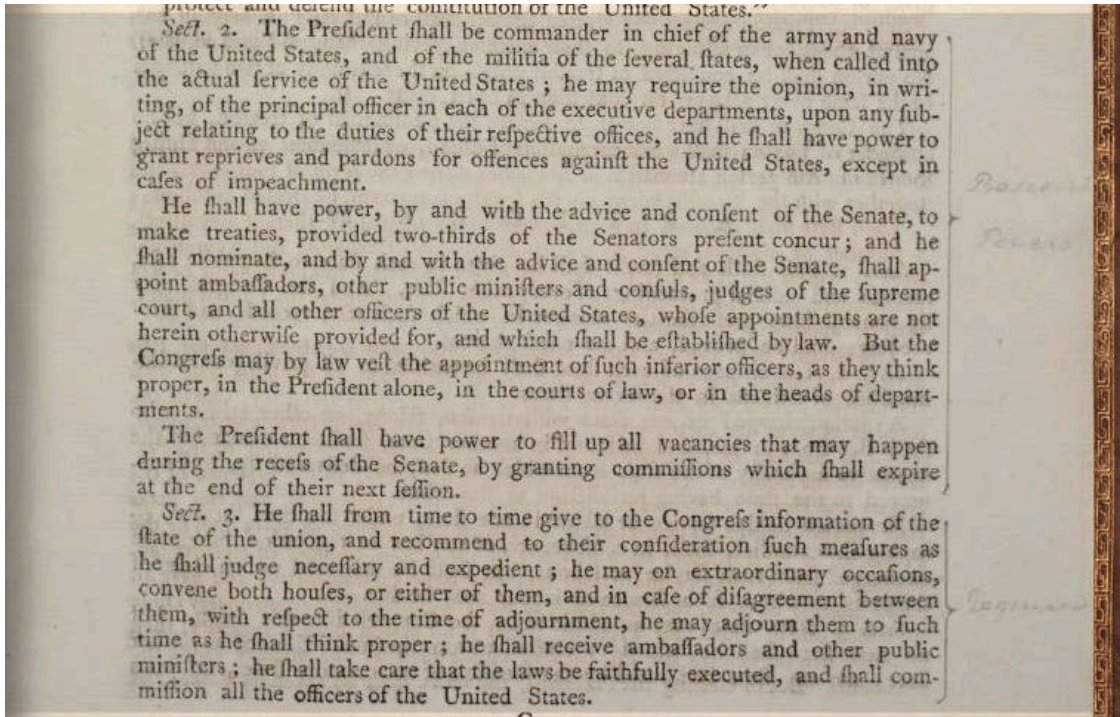
TRANSCRIPT: ARTICLE 1, SECTION 7 (VI & VII) MARKED “PRESIDENT”

Every Bill which shall have passed the House of Representatives and the Senate, shall, before it become a Law, be presented to the President of the United States; If he approve he shall sign it, but if not he shall return it, with his Objections to that House in which it shall have originated, who shall enter the Objections at large on their Journal, and proceed to reconsider it. If after such Reconsideration two thirds of that House shall agree to pass the Bill, it shall be sent, together with the Objections, to the other House, by which it shall likewise be reconsidered, and if approved by two thirds of that House, it shall become a Law.

But in all such Cases the Votes of both Houses shall be determined by yeas and Nays, and the Names of the Persons voting for and against the Bill shall be entered on the Journal of each House respectively. If any Bill shall not be returned by the President within ten Days (Sundays excepted) after it shall have been presented to him, the Same shall be a Law, in like Manner as if he had signed it, unless the Congress by their Adjournment prevent its Return, in which Case it shall not be a Law.

Every Order, Resolution, or Vote to which the Concurrence of the Senate and House of Representatives may be necessary (except on a question of Adjournment) shall be presented to the President of the United States; and before the Same shall take Effect, shall be approved by him, or being disapproved by him, shall be repassed by two thirds of the Senate and House of Representatives, according to the Rules and Limitations prescribed in the Case of a Bill.

ARTICLE 2, SECTIONS 2 & 3 (IX) MARKED "PRESIDENTIAL POWERS" AND "REQUIRED"



TRANSCRIPT: ARTICLE 2, SECTIONS 2 (IX) MARKED “PRESIDENTIAL POWERS”

The President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the Militia of the several States, when called into the actual Service of the United States; he may require the Opinion, in writing, of the principal Officer in each of the executive Departments, upon any Subject relating to the Duties of their respective Offices, and he shall have Power to grant Reprieves and Pardons for Offenses against the United States, except in Cases of Impeachment.

He shall have Power, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, to make Treaties, provided two thirds of the Senators present concur; and he shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, Judges of the supreme Court, and all other Officers of the United States, whose Appointments are not herein otherwise provided for, and which shall be established by Law: but the Congress may by Law vest the Appointment of such inferior Officers, as they think proper, in the President alone, in the Courts of Law, or in the Heads of Departments.

The President shall have Power to fill up all Vacancies that may happen during the Recess of the Senate, by granting Commissions which shall expire at the End of their next Session.

TRANSCRIPT: ARTICLE II, SECTION 3 (IX) MARKED “REQUIRED”

He shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient; he may, on extraordinary Occasions, convene both Houses, or either of them, and in Case of Disagreement between them, with Respect to the Time of Adjournment, he may adjourn them to such Time as he shall think proper; he shall receive Ambassadors and other public Ministers; he shall take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed, and shall Commission all the Officers of the United States.

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1. Read and review the handout *George Washington's Notes*. Look at the pages on which George Washington made notations and check the box next to the term he used in reference to that section.

Notation	President	Presidential Power	Required
Article 1, section 7			
Article 2, section 2			
Article 2, section 3			

2. Name 3 parts of the President's job that are listed in the parts of the Constitution that George Washington marked in his copy.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

3. Name 1 part of the President's job that is listed in the Constitution that George Washington *did not* mark in his copy.

1. _____

4. Name 3 things that a president does today that is not listed in the Constitution.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

5. Why do you think George Washington chose to mark one passage "Required"? How is it different from the passages marked "President" or "Presidential Powers"?
