

PROJECT: IMPEACHMENT

The leader of a nation has a lot of expectations to live up to. A leader should display:

- Honesty
- Integrity
- Patriotism
- Humility

Citizens expect these traits in a leader in order to have confidence in the direction they are being led. They need to know that their leader is guiding them along a path of strength, not weakness. And, they need to know their leader is not above the law. So, what happens to a country when the leader betrays the trust given to that person?

In our nation's history, three presidents have faced articles of impeachment due to behavior unworthy of their higher calling. The Constitution spells out the acts that can get a president impeached. America's founders placed such safeguards in our most sacred document.

The Law of the Land

Before you can understand whether an impeachment of a president was justified, you will need a better understanding of the rules of impeachment. To obtain that, you will need to read and understand the first two articles of the Constitution. The rules of impeachment are found in Article I, section 2 and section 3, and in Article II, section 4. These articles set forth the rules regarding presidential impeachment

Article. I, Section. 2

The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature. No Person shall be a Representative who shall not have attained to the Age of twenty five Years, and been seven Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State in which he shall be chosen. Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons. The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct. The Number of Representatives shall not exceed one for every thirty Thousand, but each State shall have at Least one Representative; and until such enumeration shall be made, the State of New Hampshire shall be entitled to chuse three, Massachusetts eight, Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations one, Connecticut five, New-York six, New Jersey four, Pennsylvania eight, Delaware one, Maryland six, Virginia ten, North

Carolina five, South Carolina five, and Georgia three. When vacancies happen in the Representation from any State, the Executive Authority thereof shall issue Writs of Election to fill such Vacancies. The House of Representatives shall chuse their Speaker and other Officers; and shall have the sole Power of Impeachment.

Article. I, Section. 3.

The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof, for six Years; and each Senator shall have one Vote. Immediately after they shall be assembled in Consequence of the first Election, they shall be divided as equally as may be into three Classes. The Seats of the Senators of the first Class shall be vacated at the Expiration of the second Year, of the second Class at the Expiration of the fourth Year, and of the third Class at the Expiration of the sixth Year, so that one third may be chosen every second Year; and if Vacancies happen by Resignation, or otherwise, during the Recess of the Legislature of any State, the Executive thereof may make temporary Appointments until the next Meeting of the Legislature, which shall then fill such Vacancies. No Person shall be a Senator who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty Years, and been nine Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State for which he shall be chosen. The Vice President of the United States shall be President of the Senate, but shall have no Vote, unless they be equally divided. The Senate shall chuse their other Officers, and also a President pro tempore, in the Absence of the Vice President, or when he shall exercise the Office of President of the United States. The Senate shall have the sole Power to try all Impeachments. When sitting for that Purpose, they shall be on Oath or Affirmation. When the President of the United States is tried, the Chief Justice shall preside: And no Person shall be convicted without the Concurrence of two thirds of the Members present. Judgment in Cases of Impeachment shall not extend further than to removal from Office, and disqualification to hold and enjoy any Office of honor, Trust or Profit under the United States: but the Party convicted shall nevertheless be liable and subject to Indictment, Trial, Judgment and Punishment, according to Law.

Article. II, Section. 4.

The President, Vice President and all civil Officers of the United States, shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors.

Consider the language of “treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors.” What does this language mean, and who has the right to interpret these terms? This is something to keep in mind as you continue learning more about the impeachment process.

Impeaching a President

The term *impeachment* means "the making of formal charges against." So, impeachment is not the actual removal of an official from office, but, the term refers to the process of having formal charges made. As you learned from the Constitution, the House of Representatives has the sole power to bring charges against the president or vice president; but, then, what? There are actually seven steps that are included in the impeachment process. Using the Internet, research and record the seven steps of impeachment. You will need to refer to these later.

Directions

There have been only three sitting presidents who have been impeached, but the impeachment process itself removed none of them. Research the impeachment stories of Andrew Johnson, Richard M. Nixon, and Bill Clinton and fill out the attached worksheet.

As you are doing your research, be sure that you are using valid sources for your search. Often, historians can skew the story or the facts that surround historical moments. You'll want to be sure that you are avoiding personal blogs and Web sites. If you are reading information on the Internet, you want to consider the source by evaluating the publisher of the information. Is that publisher credible and reliable? Is that author well-known and respected in that person's sphere? Be sure that you are using reliable, credible sources as you investigate the impeachment stories of these three presidents.

The Impeached

Andrew Johnson

What “crime” did Johnson commit, and how did it relate to the “treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors” clause in the Constitution?

Summarize the circumstances that led to his impeachment: How far did the impeachment process go (which step in the seven steps)?

What was the outcome of the impeachment?

Was the impeachment justified according to the Constitution? Why?

Sources used:

Richard M. Nixon

What “crime” did Nixon commit, and how did it relate to the “treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors” clause in the Constitution?

Summarize the circumstances that led to his impeachment: How far did the impeachment process go (which step in the seven steps)?

What was the outcome of the impeachment? (This is an interesting one.)

Was the impeachment justified according to the Constitution? Why?

Sources used:

Bill Clinton

What “crime” did Clinton commit, and how did it relate to the “treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors” clause in the Constitution?

Summarize the circumstances that led to his impeachment: How far did the impeachment process go (which step in the seven steps)?

What was the outcome of the impeachment?

Was the impeachment justified according to the Constitution? Why?

Sources Used: