



Extended Analysis of the Whiskey Rebellion

Learning Objectives: The student will

1. Understand the Whiskey Rebellion and the challenge to the power of the national government it posed.
2. Analyze primary sources to understand Whiskey Rebellion and its impact on the national and state governments under the new Constitution.

TEKS: 8.5 A &B and 8.22A; 8.29A,B,&D

Vocabulary: excise, distilled, profit

Materials Needed: copies of the analysis sheet for each student; blank sheets of paper for the placemat activity

Teaching Strategy:

1. Prepare the copies of the analysis for each student.
2. Explain to the students that they will be working with a partner to complete a four-part analysis using primary documents and a secondary source to understand the importance of the Whiskey Rebellion and the challenge it presented to the new national government's power as defined in the Constitution.
3. Pair the students and hand out the analysis questions, a piece of blank paper to be used for the placemat activity, and a set of documents to each pair. Explain that they should begin with Part 1 to get an understanding of the event before working with the primary documents. After they complete Part 1, they can work on the other three parts in any order they wish.
4. Upon completion of the four-part analysis, the teacher can discuss the findings of the class before assigning the assessment to be completed individually.

Assessment/Exit Ticket: Write a letter to President Washington expressing your views on his actions as well as what you think the power of the national government should be with regards to the states. Use evidence from the analysis as support for your opinions.

Extended Analysis of the Whiskey Rebellion—Challenging the Authority of the National Government

Part One: Analyzing the Whiskey Rebellion

Whiskey Rebellion--1794

In 1794, Pennsylvania farmers took up arms in rebellion against government's tax collectors because they were angry about new taxes on whiskey. The excise tax on whiskey was part of Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton's financial plan to repay the debts of the American Revolution. The farmers were upset with the tax because part of the farmers' income came from selling whiskey distilled from their corn. This was going to cut into their profit. They also resented this new tax passed by the federal government because they felt taxation should be handled at the state level as it had under the Articles of Confederation. They argued this was a continuation of "taxation without representation" that had caused many of them to join the fight against the British just a few years before. President George Washington put on his old military uniform and with Alexander Hamilton led 13,000 federal militia troops to put down the rebellion. When the farmers heard about this, they fled. Many Americans saw the Whiskey Rebellion as the first serious test of the national government's strength and ability to survive under the new Constitution.

1. After reading the short summary of the event, identify three things you learned about the Whiskey Rebellion?

2. What is your initial opinion of the following:

The farmers' actions?

Washington's actions?

3. How would you describe this event to a person who has never heard about the Whiskey Rebellion?

4. How does this event help you understand the issues that are raised with the power of the national government and the power of the state under the new Constitution?

Part Two: Analyzing Point of Views in the Whiskey Rebellion

1. Use the piece of blank paper provided for this part. Turn the paper landscape view and write the following question in the center of the paper:
 - Was President Washington right in using the militia to put down the Western Pennsylvania farmers' protest against the whiskey tax imposed by the national government?
2. One person should sit on one side of the paper and plan to represent President Washington. The other should sit on the opposite side and represent a farmer in Western Pennsylvania hurt by the whiskey tax.
3. Answer the question from the point of view listed on your side of the paper, explaining your arguments for this position.
4. Rotate the paper, read the opposing point of view and add any new ideas or questions you might have on what your partner has written.
5. Finally, after discussing both points of view, come together to make a final decision on the answer to the question and write this under the question in the center of the placemat. Use factual support to back your final opinion.

Part Three—Analyzing an Image of the Whiskey Rebellion



Image—National Archives

1. Look at the image to answer the three questions about the ideas being conveyed in the image:
 - a. What is going on in the picture?
 - b. What is in each quadrant? (Zoom in on different sections of the image and identify what is going on in each?)
 - c. What is the relationship of this cartoon to the events described in the summary of the Whiskey Rebellion read in Part 1 of the analysis?
2. Next, review the image to determine what this image shows about the time period, location, or culture.
 - a. Describe the setting?
 - b. How does the setting help identify the time period?
 - c. What ideas about this time period can one learn by viewing this image?

3. Finally, evaluate the image to identify the most powerful and least powerful parts.
 - a. What is the first thing you notice when looking at this image?
 - b. What would a person from another time period learn from viewing this image?
 - c. If you were in the image, what role would you play and why?

4. Write an appropriate caption for this image.

Part Four—Analyzing a Letter from President Washington to Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton Dealing with the Whiskey Rebellion

Letter from George Washington to Alexander Hamilton, September 7, 1792

Mount Vernon, September 7, 1792.

Sir: The last post brought me your letter of the 1st instant, with the enclosures respecting the disorderly conduct of the Inhabitants of the Western Survey of the District of Pennsylvania, in opposing the execution of what is called the Excise Law; and of the insults which have been offered by some of them to the Officers who have been appointed to collect the duties on distilled spirits agreeably thereto.

Question:

1. Circle the words in the first part of the letter that indicate how President Washington feels about the Western Pennsylvanian farmers' protest.

Such conduct in any of the Citizens of the United States, under any circumstances that can well be conceived, would be exceedingly reprehensible; but when it comes from a part of the Community for whose protection the money arising from the Tax was principally designed, it is truly unaccountable, and the spirit of it much to be regretted.

Question:

1. Circle the words in this part of the letter that reinforce Washington's opinion of the protest.

.....But if, notwithstanding, opposition is still given to the due execution of the Law, I have no hesitation in declaring, if the evidence of it is clear and unequivocal, that I shall, however reluctantly I exercise them, exert all the legal powers with which the Executive is invested, to check so daring and unwarrantable a spirit. It is my duty to see the Laws executed: to permit them to be trampled upon with impunity would be repugnant to it; nor can the Government longer remain a passive spectator of the contempt with which they are treated.

Questions:

1. Underline the part of the letter that describes what Washington is prepared to do if Hamilton's efforts don't succeed.
2. Explain why you agree or disagree with Washington's plan of action?

Source: The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745- 1799. John C. Fitzpatrick, Editor.--vol. 32 Online

Location: http://www.eastconn.org/tah/1011CP2_WhiskeyRebellion.pdf