

A photograph of the Benjamin Harrison Presidential Site, a large, ornate red brick building with a prominent balcony decorated with American flags. The building is surrounded by trees and is illuminated by warm lights.

What's It Take To Create a State

Lesson Guide
4-5



BENJAMIN HARRISON PRESIDENTIAL SITE

#23RD
IN
THE 21ST



What's It Take to Create A State

The process of statehood has been a fundamental part of American history, beginning with the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which established the requirements for territories to become states. These requirements included a governing body, a constitution aligned with the federal U.S. Constitution, and a population of at least 60,000. Indiana, home state of Benjamin Harrison, followed this path and became a state in 1816. As the 23rd president, Benjamin Harrison had an unprecedented impact on state expansion, admitting six states – North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Washington, Idaho, and Wyoming – more than any other president in history. Today, the debate over statehood continues, particularly regarding Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico. Supporters argue that D.C. residents, who pay federal taxes but lack congressional representation, experience modern-day taxation without representation. Opponents cite constitutional concerns and political implications. Harrison valued statehood and voting rights, and while we can't know how he would handle today's debates, his legacy of expansion and advocacy for representation remains relevant in the 21st century.

While watching and engaging with the 23rd in the 21st Century Project: What's It Take to Create a State, students are introduced to the statehood process as established by the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. After seeing Indiana's statehood process, students learn that President Harrison annexed 6 states during his term before learning of the ongoing statehood debate in Washington D.C.. In this lesson, students will work in teams to see which states experienced obstacles on their journey to statehood, identify what these obstacles were and evaluate how the statehood process has become more complex since Harrison's era.



What's It Take to Create A State

Indiana State Standards

4th Grade Indiana State Standards

4.H.3 Explain the importance of the Revolutionary War and other key events and people that influenced the development of Indiana as a state. (E)

4.H.4 Summarize and explain the significance of key documents in Indiana's development from a United States territory to statehood.

4.H.7 Give examples of Indiana's increasing agricultural, industrial, political, and business development in the nineteenth century.

4.H.14 Construct a brief narrative about an event in Indiana history using primary and secondary sources.

4.C.1 Explain the major purposes of Indiana's Constitution, as stated in the Preamble. (E)

4.C.2 Describe individual rights, such as freedom of speech and freedom of religion, which people have under Article I of Indiana's Constitution. (E)

4.C.5 Give examples of how citizens can participate in their state government and explain the right and responsibility of voting.

5th Grade Indiana State Standards

5.C.3 Identify and explain key ideas about government as noted in the Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, Northwest Ordinance, United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. (E)

5.H.9 Understand how political, religious, and economic ideas brought about the American Revolution

5.H.15 Explain why the United States Constitution was created in 1787 and how it established a stronger union among the original 13 states by making it the supreme law of the land. Identify people who were involved in its development. (E)

5.C.3 Identify and explain key ideas about government as noted in the Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, Northwest Ordinance, United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

5.C.7 Examine ways by which citizens may effectively voice opinions, monitor government, and bring about change in government, including voting and participation in the election process.



What's It Take to Create A State

Indiana State Standards

8th Grade Indiana State Standards

8.H.7 Identify and explain the steps taken during the Washington administration and the First and Second Congresses of the United States to establish a stable and lasting national government. (E)

US Government and History Indiana State Standards

USG.3.9 Analyze the election of Benjamin Harrison, his approach to the presidency, his relationship to the legislative branch, and his re-election defeat, considering the effects of party politics and public opinion.

USG.5.8 Use information from a variety of sources to describe and discuss current American political issues.

USH.2.6 Describe and assess the contribution of Indiana's only president, Benjamin Harrison, to national policies on environmental protection, business regulation, immigration, and civil rights.



BENJAMIN HARRISON
PRESIDENTIAL SITE



What's It Take to Create A State

Materials and Outline

Grade 4: Territory Postcards

Description:

Students imagine they are a resident of a territory that faced or currently faces obstacles to statehood. After learning the requirements of statehood, students become experts on one territory and identify the qualifications and obstacles. They then write a postcard to Congress explaining why they want their territory to become a state, touching on the requirements.

Materials:

- Territory information profiles
- Simplified reading of the Northwest Ordinance
- Postcard Template

Learning Targets:

Students will be able to identify the key requirements for statehood as outlined in the Northwest Ordinance.

- *This target directly addresses the initial learning about the Northwest Ordinance and its foundational criteria ("Congress, Constitution, Crowd").*

Students will be able to describe at least one historical obstacle a territory faced in its journey to becoming a U.S. state.

- *This target focuses on the "problems getting admitted" aspect of the lesson, requiring students to understand that statehood wasn't always straightforward for all territories.*

Students will be able to construct a persuasive postcard to Congress, using information about a territory's qualifications and/or challenges to advocate for its statehood.

- *This target assesses their ability to apply what they've learned, synthesize information from their readings, and communicate their understanding in a creative format.*
-

Materials and Outline

| Time | Actions Steps |
|--|---|
| Teacher Introduces Era and Concept of Statehood (7 mins) | <p>Hook/Engagement (5-7 mins):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin by displaying a large map of the U.S. Ask students: "Look at our country's map. What do you notice about it?" (Hopefully, they notice 50 states, different shapes/sizes). Pose questions: "How did we get from 13 colonies to 50 states? Did all these states just appear at once? What do you think a place needs to become a state, like Indiana is a state?" Explain that long ago, new areas of our country were called "territories." These were like "starter" areas, not yet full states. The people living there wanted to have a stronger voice in our country, just like the original 13 states. Introduce the "23rd in the 21st Century" Project: Explain that today's lesson is part of a special project about the 23rd President, Benjamin Harrison (who was from Indiana!). We'll learn how he helped make our country bigger and how the ideas from his time are still important today. |
| Introduce Benjamin Harrison (5-7 mins): | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefly introduce Benjamin Harrison as the 23rd U.S. President from Indiana. Mention his significance for this lesson: "President Harrison was very important because he helped more territories become states than any other president in history!" Explain that this lesson will explore why that was important then, and why the idea of statehood is still talked about today. |
| Teacher Introduces Northwest Ordinance (5 min) | <p>Historical Context (5 mins):</p> <p>Explain that when the U.S. was a young country, it decided it needed a fair way for new areas to become states.</p> <p>Introduce the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 as a very important "rulebook" or "plan" for how new territories could become states. This was decided even before Benjamin Harrison was president, but it was the rules he followed!</p> |

Materials and Outline

| Time | Actions Steps |
|---|---|
| Teacher Introduces Northwest Ordinance: Congress, Constitution, Crowd (15 min) | Identifying Requirements (10–15 mins): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute Handout 1: Simplified Northwest Ordinance Excerpt & "Three Requirements" Worksheet. • Read aloud the simplified excerpt of the Northwest Ordinance (or have students read in pairs). • Focus on the "Three C's": Guide students to identify the three main requirements summarized as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Congress (representatives: a governor, assembly, a non-voting delegate to Congress). Teacher clarifies this means a form of government/leadership. b. Constitution (a state constitution that follows the ideas of the U.S. Constitution). Teacher clarifies this means a set of rules for their own government. c. Crowd (a population above 60,000 people). Teacher clarifies this means enough people living there to form a state. • Students fill in the "Three Requirements" section on their worksheet with brief notes/details for each. |
| The 23rd in the 21st Century Project: What's It Take to Create a State (6 min) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce Video: Explain that this video from the Benjamin Harrison Presidential Site will show them how these rules worked, especially for Indiana and during President Harrison's time. It will also show them why statehood is still talked about today in debates. • Play Video: The 23rd in the 21st Century Project What's It Take to Create a State • Brief Check-in: After the video, ask a few quick questions: "What was Indiana's connection to statehood?" "How many states did Benjamin Harrison admit?" "What are some places today that want to be states?" |
| Group Work: Territory Research & Checklist (10 min) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divide students into table groups (3–4 students per group). • Explain that each group will become "experts" on one territory or area. • Explain the task: They will read about their territory, use a checklist to see if it meets the Northwest Ordinance rules, and identify any special problems or arguments. |

Materials and Outline

| Time | Actions Steps |
|--|---|
| Group Work: Territory Research and Checklist (cont. 10 min) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students read their "Territory Information Card" together. They complete the "Statehood Checklist": <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does it have Congress (representatives/government)? (Yes/No) Does it have a Constitution (or is ready to write one)? (Yes/No) Does it have a large enough Crowd (population)? (Yes/No) If Yes to all three: "My territory does meet the basic requirements for statehood!" If No to any: "My territory does not meet all the basic requirements yet because..." Identify Main Issue: Students discuss and write down the main obstacle or argument against their territory becoming a state, or the main reason it should be a state despite past issues (e.g., "The main problem for Kansas was the fight over slavery," or "The main argument for DC is they pay taxes but don't have a vote!"). |
| Territory Postcard Creation (15 min) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition: "Now that you're experts on your territory, it's time to convince Congress (or President Harrison!) to make your territory a state!" Distribute Handout 3: "Territory Postcard" template. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students draw a picture on one side of their postcard representing their territory. On back: Students write their persuasive message to Congress (or President Harrison). They should focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explaining why they should be a state, using the "Three C's" framework. (e.g., "We have a good government," "We have written our constitution," "We have many people!") If their territory had an obstacle, they should briefly mention it and argue why it shouldn't stop them now (e.g., for Kansas, "Even though we had fights, we are united now!"). Expressing the residents' desire for representation and a voice. Teacher provides a sentence starter if needed (e.g., "Dear Honorable Members of Congress, My territory of [Name] should become a state because..."). |

Materials and Outline

| Time | Actions Steps |
|---|--|
| Conclusion (5 min) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postcard Sharing: Have each group's "expert" present their postcard to the class, showing their drawing and reading their message. • Class Discussion/Reflection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ "What did you notice about the different territories' journeys to statehood?" ◦ "How are the reasons people wanted statehood a long time ago similar to why people want it today?" ◦ "What do you think Benjamin Harrison would say if he read all your postcards?" ◦ "Why is it important for all people in our country to have a voice in Congress?" |
| Differentiation /Extension Ideas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For struggling readers/writers: Provide pre-highlighted key terms on info cards, offer sentence frames for postcard writing, pair with a stronger reader/writer. • For advanced learners: Challenge them to add a fourth "C" (Culture/Contribution) to their arguments, research a specific famous person from their territory, or debate which territory they think should be the next state based on their research. • Gallery Walk: After all postcards are done, display them around the room for a "gallery walk" where students can read about all the territories. • Vote for Statehood: After presentations, have students "vote" for which territory they think should become a state (emphasizing it's just for fun, not a real vote!). |