



## James Madison | Lesson Plan

How did James Madison's contributions to the founding of the United States shape the nation's development?

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Students will understand how James Madison played a crucial role in drafting the U.S. Constitution, advocating for its ratification, and serving as a leader during the early years of the United States. They will also understand how Madison's leadership helped shape the nation's government and its democratic principles.

### Learning Objectives:

- Identify the key life events of James Madison.
- Explain how James Madison contributed to the founding of the United States and the development of its Constitution.
- Describe the lasting impact of James Madison's contributions on the U.S. government and its democratic principles.
- Evaluate James Madison's leadership skills and decisions, which have made him one of the United States' most important Founding Fathers.

### Key Vocabulary:

- **Federalist Papers:** A series of essays advocating for the ratification of the U.S. Constitution.
- **Bill of Rights:** The first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution protecting fundamental freedoms.
- **Articles of Confederation:** The original agreement between the 13 colonies that created a weak federal government.
- **Virginia Plan:** Madison's proposal for a new constitution which called for a stronger federal government with three branches.
- **Constitutional Convention:** The 1787 meeting where the U.S. Constitution was drafted.

**Educational Standards:** CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.7, CCRA.W.2, CCRA.W.4, CCRA.W.9, CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2

**Academic Subject Areas:** Biography, U.S. Presidents, Historical Figures, Founding of the United States

### What You'll Need

- Video: *Guess or Mess: James Madison* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Guess or Mess: James Madison* (Click [Here](#))
- PragerU Kids biographical book: James Madison (Download [Here](#))
- Large paper or poster board for each group, along with markers



## Lesson Plan: Read and Discuss (60 minutes)

### **Introduction to Madison: (5 minutes)**

1. Begin with a brief discussion about the Founding Fathers and the qualities that make a great leader. Ask students if they know any key figures who played a role in creating the U.S. government or the Constitution.
2. Display the James Madison digital book using an electronic device. Briefly highlight Madison's significance as the 4th president and his role in drafting the Constitution and Bill of Rights. Show images from the digital book to give a visual overview of his life and achievements.

### **Madison History Huddle: (25 minutes)**

1. Read the "Meet James Madison" section on page 2 together as a class, with the teacher leading this page to model fluent reading and set the tone for the lesson.
2. After completing the teacher-led reading, explain that students will now explore other key aspects of Madison's life in small groups.
3. Split the class into small groups and assign each group a different section of the digital book to explore:
  - Group 1: *Young Jemmy, Interesting Facts* (page 3)
  - Group 2: *Early Career, Father of the Constitution* (pages 4-5)
  - Group 3: *The New Government* (pages 6-7)
  - Group 4: *Dolley, President* (pages 7-8)
  - Group 5: *Retirement, Legacy* (page 9)
4. Allow time for each group to read their assigned section, taking turns reading aloud. As students read, they should discuss the main ideas.
5. Provide each group with a large piece of paper or a poster board and markers to write down key points and any interesting facts or quotes they find.
6. Allow each group one to two minutes to present their findings to the class. After each presentation, provide time for classmates to ask questions and discuss the content.

### **Worksheet Workshop: (15 minutes)**

1. Hand out individual copies of the worksheet to each student. Explain how to fill out each section of the worksheet with these instructions:
2. **Timeline:** Students should select key dates and events mentioned throughout the digital book. The following are recommendations, but the teacher and students can use other dates mentioned in the book:
  - 1751 - Birth of James Madison
  - 1787 - Constitutional Convention
  - 1809-1817 - Presidency
  - 1812 - War of 1812
3. **Interesting Quote:** Have students choose a meaningful quote from the book to fill in the quote section on their worksheet.

4. **Interesting Fact:** Ask students to select an interesting fact about James Madison that stood out to them and write it in the space provided.
5. **Vocabulary Builder:** Instruct students to choose a word from the Glossary on page 10 that they find interesting and use it in a sentence that conveys its meaning.
6. **Multiple Choice:** Explain that students should complete the multiple-choice section of the worksheet individually. (Note: The multiple-choice section corresponds to the *Guess or Mess* episode about James Madison and can also be used to play along while watching. See “Extension Activity” below.)

### **Reflection Round-Up: (10 minutes)**

1. Briefly summarize the key points covered about James Madison, focusing on his life, contributions to the Constitution, and his presidency.
2. **Think-Pair-Share:** Ask students to recall one fact about James Madison and share it with a partner. Encourage them to discuss why that fact was significant.
3. Give each student a sticky note or index card and ask them to answer one of these three sample reflection questions:
  - What did you find most interesting about James Madison?
  - How do you think his role in creating the Constitution impacted the United States?
  - Can you think of a modern issue that relates to something Madison dealt with?
4. **Bonus Activities:** If time allows, let students complete the puzzle on page 2 by finding hidden letters throughout the book.

### **Extension Activity: (20 minutes)**

*Guess or Mess* Trivia Show: After the lesson, students can participate in the *Guess or Mess* trivia show for James Madison—direct students to the multiple-choice section of the worksheet. Students can play along with the contestants to see if they can answer the trivia questions correctly.

### **PragerU 5-Minute Videos:**

Did you know that PragerU has a comprehensive video catalog of U.S. Presidents in an easy-to-watch 5-minute format? Enhance this lesson plan with one of our insightful, engaging, and educational videos, which provide students with a deeper dive into the lives and legacies of America’s leaders. To view *James Madison: The Great Pragmatist*, click [here](#), and *James Madison and the Constitution: Making America* [here](#).

### **Don’t have time for a full lesson? Quick Activity (30 minutes)**

Read the *James Madison* book together as a class, with students taking turns reading aloud. Then, watch the *Guess or Mess* video and play along with the trivia questions.