



Impeachment | Lesson Plan

What is the process and criteria for impeaching a government official in the United States, as outlined by the Constitution?

Students will understand the impeachment process, underscoring its constitutional basis, procedural stages, and pivotal role in upholding the integrity of public office.

Learning Objectives:

- Describe the constitutional framework and criteria for impeachment, including the House of Representatives and Senate roles.
- Distinguish between impeachment and removal from office, understanding their separate implications for governance and the rule of law.
- Analyze historical examples of impeachment to comprehend its impact on American political life and the safeguarding of democratic principles.
- Evaluate the balance between holding officials accountable and ensuring stability in the government's functioning.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Impeachment:** The formal process by which a legislative body levels charges a government official with wrongdoing.
- **Removal from Office:** The potential outcome for an impeached official following a trial and conviction in the Senate.
- **Treason:** The crime of betraying one's country, especially by attempting to kill or overthrow the government.
- **Bribery:** Offering or receiving something of value in exchange for influencing an official in their public duties.
- **High Crimes and Misdemeanors:** Serious offenses by a public official that, while not necessarily criminal, are significant breaches of trust or abuses of power.

Educational Standards: CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.L.5, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.R.6

Academic Subject Areas: Civics, U.S. History, Western Civilization

What You'll Need

- Video: *Street Smarts: Impeachment* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: Impeachment* (Click [Here](#))
- Whiteboard and markers (or digital equivalent)
- Printed scenarios (optional)

Scan to watch episode:



Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

Warm Up: (15 minutes)

1. Write the word "impeachment" on the board. Help students to develop a definition of the word by connecting it with terms like treason, bribery, and high crimes and misdemeanors.
2. Present a hypothetical scenario to the class involving a fictional high-ranking government official accused of serious but unspecified misconduct. For example, "Imagine a high-ranking official in the government is accused of misusing their power for personal gain. The details are not clear, but there are calls for his/her impeachment."
3. Divide students into small groups and ask them to discuss the following questions:
 - What do you think impeachment means in this context?
 - Why might impeachment be necessary in a representative democracy?
 - What might be the consequences of not holding officials accountable for their actions?
4. Bring the class back together and ask a few groups to share their thoughts. Write down key points from the discussion on the whiteboard, highlighting students' initial perceptions of impeachment, its purposes, and implications.
5. Conclude the warm-up by connecting the discussion to the day's lesson. For example, "Today, we will explore what impeachment really involves, how it's carried out according to the U.S. Constitution, and why it's a critical process for our representative democracy."
6. Give each student a copy of the "Street Smarts: Impeachment Worksheet" and display it on a screen.

Watch and Complete: (20 minutes)

1. Watch the video as a class, answering the blanks on the worksheet as each question is addressed in the video.
2. Pause the video after each key question and concept is presented, especially when terms like impeachment, removal from office, treason, bribery, and high crimes and misdemeanors are discussed. Encourage students to share their answers to check for accuracy and understanding.

Wrap-Up: (10 minutes)

1. After the video, allow students to ask questions or express their opinions about what they learned about impeachment in the United States. Ask questions to check for understanding:
 - What is impeachment?
 - Why do we have impeachment?
 - What happens to someone who is impeached?
 - What is the difference between impeachment and removal from office?
 - In what ways does impeachment help protect the rule of law in our country?
2. Collect the completed worksheet as a formative assessment or participation credit.

Extension Activities:

If desired and preparation time allows, consider having a simple role-play activity where students act out a scenario involving a school study body president who has to go through an “impeachment” for not following agreed-upon rules. Roles could include a student body president, accuser, witnesses, defense, jury, and teacher/moderator. Produce a specific scenario, such as littering or stealing school lunches, for students to talk about.

Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (15 minutes)

Distribute the worksheet and allow students to complete it while they follow along with the video.