

## Module 8: The Presidency and Executive Power

In this module, students will uncover how Article II of the Constitution establishes the executive branch of the national government, headed by a single President. The President's primary responsibility is to carry out the executive branch's core function—namely, enforcing the nation's laws. Students will look at sections of Article II that outline the method for electing the President, the scope of the President's powers and duties, and the process of removing one from office. They will also explore how the Supreme Court and Congress have shaped the role of the Presidency over time. The Google Drive folder for this module, containing the student content guide, worksheets, a vocabulary sheet, the project overview, and transcripts for all videos is [here](#).



### Vocabulary

**Concept Words** – These words will help students understand the big ideas

- **cabinet:** the group of department heads and other key officials who help the president manage the executive branch and make important decisions
- **elector:** a person who has the right to vote in an election, especially someone chosen to vote in the Electoral College for the President and Vice President
- **executive order:** a rule made by the president that has the power of law
- **execute:** to put something into action, such as a law
- **Federal Reserve:** the central bank of the United States, responsible for managing the country's money and controlling interest rates
- **infringe:** to violate or break a rule, law, or right
- **impeachment:** the process of formally charging a government official, like the President, with misconduct or wrongdoing; if impeached, they may be put on trial to remove them from office
- **natural-born citizen:** a citizen by birth

**Speed Bump Words** – These words can help students better comprehend the text.

- **circumvent:** to find a way around something, like a rule or an obstacle
- **concur:** to agree with someone or to have the same opinion about something
- **corruption:** dishonest or unfair behavior by someone in power, such as lying, cheating, or taking bribes
- **diplomacy:** managing relationships and solving problems between countries
- **negotiate:** to talk with others in order to reach an agreement

- **strike:** when workers stop working as a protest to demand better conditions or wages at their place of work
- **treaty:** a written agreement between countries

## Learning Objectives

- Identify within Article II the requirements to be president, the election process, presidential impeachment, and the President's primary powers and duties.
- Describe how and why the President's role in our constitutional system has changed over time.
- Explore the role of the Supreme Court and Congress in checking the President.
- Define and describe an Executive Order.

## Background Information

Below is a list of resources that may help provide you with additional background information on the important concepts presented in this lesson. These are not essential to read or watch before teaching the module, but can support with lesson administration, if necessary.

- If you want additional information on the meaning of different sections of Article II, use the links below to read the common interpretations provided by legal scholars:
- Article II, Section 1: The Vesting Clause
  - [Common Interpretation](#)
- Article II, Section 2: Commander in Chief Power
  - [Common Interpretation](#)
- Article II, Section 3—the “Take Care” Clause and other Presidential Powers/Duties
  - [Common Interpretation](#)
- Article II, Section 2—The President's Treaty Power and Appointment Power
  - [Common Interpretation](#)
- Article II, Section 4—The Impeachment Process
  - [Common Interpretation](#)

## Lesson Structure and Activities

### [Student Content Guide](#)

Topic 1: The Role and Responsibilities of the Executive Branch	
8.1: Activate Prior Knowledge (5 min)	<p>Students will brainstorm what they know about the Presidency.</p> <p><b>Handout:</b> <a href="#">8.1: The Presidential T-Chart</a></p> <p><b>Activity Type:</b> Individual Reflection</p>

## Topic 1: The Role and Responsibilities of the Executive Branch

	<p><b>Implementation Tips:</b> Students will have the opportunity to return to this chart over the course of the lesson to add more insight. You may also choose to create a classwide list that consolidates all student answers.</p> <p>Watch the <a href="#">Unboxing the Constitution</a> video to provide a foundation of Article II to begin building student understanding.</p>
8.2: The President (10-15 min)	<p>Students will explore the roles and responsibilities of the President.</p> <p><b>Handout:</b> <a href="#">Student Content Guide</a></p> <p><b>Activity Type:</b> Individual Activity</p> <p><b>Implementation Tips:</b> Lead a class discussion and ask students to reflect on the roles the President plays. Have students reflect back to the Presidential T-Chart they completed at the beginning of the module. Take an opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings with students.</p>
8.3: The President's Cabinet (10-15 min)	<p>Students will work with a partner to review the different departments or agencies represented in the President's Cabinet. Review the answers with the class.</p> <p><b>Handout:</b> <a href="#">8.3: The President's Cabinet</a></p> <p><b>Activity Type:</b> Partner Activity</p> <p><b>Implementation Tips:</b> After reviewing student answers, consider leading a discussion with the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are any of these agencies unfamiliar to you?</li> <li>• How do these agencies affect your own family or community?</li> </ul>
8.4: Article II Scavenger Hunt (15-20 min)	<p>Students will work together to locate where the structure, powers, and limitations of the executive branch are outlined in Article II of the Constitution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Article II, Section 1</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Article II, Section 2</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Article II, Section 3</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Article II, Section 4</a></li> </ul> <p>Student groups will work to complete the scavenger hunt. After the activity is complete, review the answers using the Article II Scavenger Hunt Answer Key to ensure that students understand Article II and to</p>

## Topic 1: The Role and Responsibilities of the Executive Branch

	<p>discuss the answers to the questions.</p> <p><b>Handouts:</b> <a href="#">8.4.1: Article II Scavenger Hunt</a> and <a href="#">8.4.2</a>, <a href="#">8.4.3</a>, <a href="#">8.4.4</a>, and <a href="#">8.4.5</a> handouts of Articles listed above</p> <p><b>Activity Type:</b> Group Activity</p> <p><b>Implementation Tips:</b> Article II, Section 1 is the longest of the readings, at about a page and half. Article II, Section 2 and Article II, Section 3, are both about a paragraph. The final reading is one sentence, with several potentially new vocabulary terms—such as “treason” and “bribery”. Groups can be made with student interest and ability level in mind.</p> <p>You may choose to lead a discussion after students have completed the activity, considering the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you describe the role of the President in your own words?</li> <li>• How is the executive branch structured?</li> <li>• What are some of the powers and limits of the presidency?</li> </ul>
8.5: Closing Activity (5-10 min)	<p>Students will check in on the Key Question(s).</p> <p><b>Handout:</b> <a href="#">8.5: Key Question Reflection</a></p> <p><b>Activity Type:</b> Individual Reflection</p> <p><b>Implementation Tips:</b> You may ask students to share the words they wrote down to build consensus throughout the class.</p>

## Topic 2: Presidential Powers and Limits

### 8.6: Key Debates (20-25 min)

Watch the [Inside the Constitution](#) video to gain foundational insight into the debates around the creation of the presidency during the Constitutional Convention.

Afterward, students will work with a group to learn and share more information about one specific debate about the President's role.

Break students into five groups. Assign each group one of the key debates (structure, election, length and reelection, lawmaking, and impeachment.) Give groups time to review the information and discuss the key points of their assigned debate and develop their own ideas. Groups will share what they've learned with the rest of the class.

**Handout:** [Student Content Guide](#)

**Activity Type:** Group Activity

**Implementation Tips:** Student groups can be created with student interest and ability level in mind. Contextual information can also be found in the Student Content Guide.

This is a great option for flipped classroom usage. You can also access a transcript of the video [here](#).

### 8.7: What is the Electoral College? (10-15 min)

In this activity, students explore how the President is elected. Share the video, [Why did the founders create the Electoral College?](#), for foundational support. Students can also read more about the electoral college both in the handout and in the [Student Content Guide](#).

**Handout:** [Student Content Guide](#)

**Activity Type:** Individual Activity

**Implementation Tips:** When students have finished, you may choose to lead a discussion on the following questions:

- What do you think are positive and negative aspects of the Electoral College?
- Do you think we should continue to use the Electoral College? Why or why not?
- If not with the Electoral College, how do you think the president should be chosen?

## Topic 2: Presidential Powers and Limits

<p>8.8: Tests of Presidential Power (10-15 min)</p>	<p>Students will examine one major test of presidential power– the landmark case of <i>Youngstown Sheet &amp; Tube Co. v. Sawyer</i>.</p> <p><b>Handout:</b> <a href="#">8.8: Tests of Presidential Power</a>;  <i>More information about the Youngstown Sheet &amp; Tube Co. v. Sawyer can be found in the <a href="#">Student Content Guide</a>.</i></p> <p><b>Activity Type:</b> Individual Activity</p> <p><b>Implementation Tips:</b> You may choose for students to work in pairs or small groups for this activity. After the activity, ask students to share their answers to the following questions with the class: How would you restate the summary and arguments in your own words? How did the Supreme Court decide? What were the opposing views? Do you agree with this ruling? Why or why not?</p>
<p>8.9: Executive Orders (10-15 min)</p>	<p>Students will work with a partner to look at Executive Order data from the American Presidency Project and complete the Executive Orders Handout.</p> <p><b>Handout:</b> <a href="#">8.9: Executive Orders</a></p> <p><b>Activity Type:</b> Partner Activity</p> <p><b>Implementation Tips:</b> Students may work individually or in small groups for this activity. You may choose to lead a class discussion about the questions when students complete the handout.</p>
<p>8.10: Impeachment (10-15 min)</p>	<p>Students will work with a partner to learn more about the impeachment process. Students should read Article II, Section 4, and read more of the content in the <a href="#">Student Content Guide</a>, as them to answer the questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What actions can lead to impeachment?</li> <li>• Why do you think the Founders included this process?</li> </ul> <p><b>Handout:</b> Content can be found in the <a href="#">Student Content Guide</a> for this module.</p> <p><b>Activity Type:</b> Partner Activity</p> <p><b>Implementation Tips:</b> You may choose for students to answer these questions in whatever method best serves their learning, including a discussion, displaying answers on paper around the room, or sharing independently.</p>

## Topic 2: Presidential Powers and Limits

8.11: Civic Connection: Analyzing an Executive Order (15-20 min)	<p>Students will explore a possible executive order and decide whether they think the President has the legal authority to issue it, based on existing laws or the Constitution.</p> <p><b>Handout:</b> <a href="#">8.11: Civic Connection: Analyzing an Executive Order</a></p> <p><b>Activity Type:</b> Independent Work</p> <p><b>Implementation Tips:</b> You may choose to have students work in partners or small groups for this activity.</p>
8.12: Reflect (5 min)	<p>Students will revisit the Presidential T-Chart handout and complete the Key Question Reflection.</p> <p><b>Handouts:</b> <a href="#">8.1: Presidential T-Chart</a> and <a href="#">8.5: Key Question Reflection</a></p> <p><b>Activity Type:</b> Individual Reflection</p> <p><b>Implementation Tips:</b> You may choose to have students share their answers to the Key Question(s).</p>

### Answer Guidance

Review the handouts below for specific guidance on student answers:

- [Article II Scavenger Hunt Answer Key](#)

## Module 8 Learning Project: Presidential Power Play

[Teacher Overview](#)

[Student Instructions](#)

In this activity, students will work in small groups to design and create a board game based on the powers and limits of the presidency. The game will incorporate challenges, rules, and gameplay elements. When they are finished, students will present their design, an overview of the rules, and discuss their answers to the following questions:

- How does your game represent the debates at the Constitutional Convention?
- How does your game illustrate the evolution of presidential power through history and Supreme Court cases?
- What did you learn about the balance of power in our government?

**Activity Type:** Small groups

**Implementation Tips:** In this activity, students will work in teams to design a board game and create a set of rules for gameplay. Depending on the time allocated for the project, you may choose to provide additional time and materials so that student groups can create a prototype of their board games.