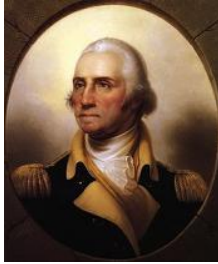


LEVEL: 3rd YEAR

TEACHER: Mrs. Haddad Mimouna

Module: American Civilization



George Washington and the New United States Government

George Washington was the United States' first president. He knew everything he did would set the stage for future presidents of the country. A heavy weight was on his shoulders, and much of what he established in his two terms set the precedent for presidents today.

Washington Takes Office

The strength of the U.S. today is due to the decisions of the founders about how to organize this government.

The **presidency of George Washington** began on April 30, 1789, when [Washington](#) was [inaugurated](#) or sworn in as the [first president of the United States](#), and ended on March 4, 1797. Washington was the top vote-getter. (**John Adams** received the second-highest number of votes to become vice president.) In April, he headed north to New York City, the new nation's capital. Washington was in a uniquely difficult position. He knew every action he took would set a precedent. After his retirement, he was succeeded by his vice president, [John Adams](#) of the [Federalist Party](#).

Washington's Cabinet

So what is this cabinet of Washington's? Congress had the job of creating departments to help the president lead the nation, but the president would be able to appoint the head of the departments. These department heads are to assist and advise the president with the nation's problems. This group is called the president's Cabinet.

Congress established three departments: **the War Department, the State Department and the Treasury Department.**

first, the War Department. The first Secretary of War was **Henry Knox**. The War Department would oversee the defense of the nation. Then the State Department and the first Secretary of State, Thomas Jefferson; the State Department oversees relations between the U.S. and other nations. And the Treasury Department: the first Secretary of the Treasury was [Alexander Hamilton](#). The Treasury Department manages the government's money. Washington picked **Edmund Randolph** as the first Attorney General to advise the government on legal matters.

Cabinet

The Washington Cabinet		
Office	Name	Term
President	George Washington	1789–1797
Vice President	John Adams	1789–1797

Secretary of State	John Jay	1789–1790
	Thomas Jefferson	1790–1793
	Edmund Randolph	1794–1795
	Timothy Pickering	1795–1797
Secretary of Treasury	Alexander Hamilton	1789–1795
	Oliver Wolcott Jr.	1795–1797
Secretary of War	Henry Knox	1789–1794
	Timothy Pickering	1794–1796
	James McHenry	1796–1797
Attorney General	Edmund Randolph	1789–1794
	William Bradford	1794–1795
	Charles Lee	1795–1797

Hamilton's Plan

In his new post as Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton inherited the old problem of the huge war debt. By 1789, it was \$52 million. Hamilton and the other leaders knew that the debt had to be paid to gain the respect of foreign nations. Respect equals business.

Hamilton believed in a strong central government; that is reflected in his plan. He knew the nation's economy would depend on rich merchants and manufacturers. He knew they needed to pay them back. In 1790 he proposes the plan to Congress:

1. **Pay off all war debts**
2. **Raise government revenues**
3. **Create a national bank**

He wanted the federal government to pay the states' war debt, but those states which had already paid theirs (Virginia, Georgia and other Southern states) didn't like the idea of covering the Northern states' debt.

To gain support, Hamilton got help from his political rival Thomas Jefferson. They reached a compromise. The South would support the plan to repay the debt, but the North agreed to move the capital to the South on the Potomac River between Maryland and Virginia. Today we call this spot **Washington D.C.**