Advice and Authority

How the Cabinet helps the president

8.C.5.1.A "Describe the purpose of the Cabinet as established by Washington and its role in today's executive branch."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline why Washington sought advisers, circle the words that show who makes the final decision, and write 1 and 2 above the two duties of today's department heads.

From Washington's Advisers to Today's Cabinet

1 When George Washington became president in 1789, the Constitution gave him executive power but did not create a Cabinet. Congress set up departments to carry out the new government's work. Washington asked their leaders for advice on difficult choices. Thomas Jefferson, secretary of state, dealt with foreign affairs. Alexander Hamilton, secretary of the treasury, handled money matters. Henry Knox, secretary of war, advised on military concerns. Attorney General Edmund Randolph offered legal advice. Together, these advisers became known as Washington's Cabinet, a practice later presidents continued.

2 Advice did not mean agreement. In 1791, Hamilton supported creating a national bank to help manage federal money. Jefferson argued that the Constitution did not give the federal government power to create one. Washington heard their views and signed the bank bill into law. The Cabinet gave him expert opinions from different parts of government, but it did not vote to make his decision for him. This arrangement helped a new president weigh competing ideas while remaining responsible for the choice he made.

3 Today, the Cabinet includes the heads of 15 executive departments, such as the secretaries of state and education, along with the vice president. The president may also give other officials Cabinet-level status. Department heads advise the president about problems in their areas and lead agencies that carry out federal laws. For example, the secretary of transportation can explain how a proposed policy might affect roads and air travel. The president nominates department heads, and the Senate must confirm them. As under Washington, the Cabinet advises; the president remains responsible for executive decisions.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did Washington seek advice from department leaders instead of handling every difficult choice alone?

2. How does the national bank debate show both what Washington's Cabinet could do and what it could not do?

3. How do today's department heads help the president beyond offering advice?

4. What has stayed the same about the Cabinet's relationship with the president since Washington's time?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are president and severe floods have closed roads and forced families from their homes. In four sentences, explain why you would consult your Cabinet, name two relevant department heads and what each could advise, and state who makes the final executive decision.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 8 · 8.C.5.1.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline why Washington sought advisers, circle the words that show who makes the final decision, and write 1 and 2 above the two duties of today's department heads. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did Washington seek advice from department leaders instead of handling every difficult choice alone?	**The leaders had expertise in different areas of government and could help him weigh difficult choices.**
2	How does the national bank debate show both what Washington's Cabinet could do and what it could not do?	**Cabinet advisers could offer competing views. They could not make the decision for Washington; he signed the bill.**
3	How do today's department heads help the president beyond offering advice?	**They lead agencies that carry out federal laws.**
4	What has stayed the same about the Cabinet's relationship with the president since Washington's time?	**The Cabinet advises the president, but the president remains responsible for executive decisions.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would consult my Cabinet because its members have expertise in different parts of the government. The secretary of transportation could advise me about restoring travel on damaged roads. The secretary of homeland security could advise me about coordinating federal disaster assistance through FEMA. I would consider both views before making my executive decision.

Accept other relevant department heads if the student explains how each could advise on the floods. The response should distinguish Cabinet advice from the president's final executive decision.