Power and Its Limits

Presidential choices in the Early Federal Period

8.C.5 "Examine the political and economic changes that occurred during the Early Federal Period. Assess the legacy of President Washington on the nature of the presidency and the executive branch..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline examples of federal power in action. Circle places where the passage shows a risk, limit, or challenge to that power.

Building a Government, Testing Its Power

1 In the 1790s, Alexander Hamilton proposed that the federal government take on state war debts and create a national bank. Supporters hoped these steps would build credit; opponents feared a powerful central government. President George Washington asked department heads for advice, creating a Cabinet rather than leaving major decisions to one person. The Cabinet still advises presidents today. When protesters in western Pennsylvania resisted a federal tax on whiskey, Washington called out the militia in 1794. The uprising collapsed, showing that federal laws could be enforced.

2 Washington also sought a consistent policy toward Native nations. His administration used treaties to set boundaries for Tribal lands and promoted assimilation, or adoption of European American ways of life. After U.S. forces defeated a Native alliance, the 1795 Treaty of Greenville forced major land cessions; settlers continued to press onto Native lands. Washington declined a third term, setting a two-term tradition. His Farewell Address warned against political factions and permanent foreign alliances. He also linked morality to self-government, arguing that citizens needed principles to govern themselves.

3 Under President John Adams, fears of conflict with France sharpened arguments over federal power. In 1798, Congress passed the Alien and Sedition Acts. One act let the president order the removal of foreign residents judged dangerous; another punished some published criticism of the government. Federalists said these measures protected the nation, but critics saw threats to speech and fair treatment of immigrants. Democratic-Republicans answered with the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions. They argued that states could challenge federal laws they considered unconstitutional, raising a lasting dispute about who decides the limits of federal power.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Hamilton's proposals and Washington's Cabinet each change how the federal government worked?

2. Compare what Washington's government did about the whiskey tax and Native lands. What do the outcomes suggest about federal power?

3. How did Washington's third-term decision and the ideas in his Farewell Address aim to protect self-government?

4. Why did opponents criticize the Alien and Sedition Acts, and how did the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions respond?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you advise a president when people refuse a federal tax and a newspaper criticizes the government. In 5 to 6 sentences, recommend a response to each, use one example from Washington's presidency and one from Adams's, and explain how your plan balances federal power with individual rights.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 8 · 8.C.5

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline examples of federal power in action. Circle places where the passage shows a risk, limit, or challenge to that power. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Hamilton's proposals and Washington's Cabinet each change how the federal government worked?	**Hamilton's proposals would give the federal government responsibility for state war debts and a national bank to build credit. Washington's Cabinet gave the president advisers who led departments, a practice that continues today.**
2	Compare what Washington's government did about the whiskey tax and Native lands. What do the outcomes suggest about federal power?	**Washington called out the militia, and the whiskey uprising collapsed, showing that the government could enforce a tax. His administration used treaties to set Tribal land boundaries, but the Treaty of Greenville forced land cessions and settlers kept pressing onto Native lands. Federal power could enforce laws and gain land, but treaties did not stop pressure on Native lands.**
3	How did Washington's third-term decision and the ideas in his Farewell Address aim to protect self-government?	**Declining a third term set a tradition of leaving office after two terms. Washington warned that factions and permanent foreign alliances threatened unity, and he argued that morality helped citizens govern themselves.**
4	Why did opponents criticize the Alien and Sedition Acts, and how did the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions respond?	**Opponents saw threats to speech and fair treatment of immigrants. The resolutions argued that states could challenge federal laws they considered unconstitutional.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would tell the president to explain the tax and listen to protesters before taking stronger action. If people still block its collection, the president should enforce the law, as Washington did during the Whiskey Rebellion. I would not punish the newspaper just for criticizing the government. During Adams's presidency, the Sedition Act punished some published criticism and raised concerns about free speech. My plan protects the government's ability to carry out laws while leaving room for people to disagree in public.

Accept answers that distinguish enforcing federal law from protecting the right to criticize government. For the Native policy question, students should recognize both the treaty boundaries and the loss of Native land.