8th Grade Lesson Plan
Understanding Citizenship and Civic Responsibilities in Early America

Objective:
Students will be able to identify different points of view of political parties in early America, evaluate the importance of free speech and press in the formation of the republic, define unalienable rights, and explain the importance of personal responsibilities in the new nation.

Assessment:
Students will create a detailed compare and contrast chart that:

1. Compares the views of two early American political parties (Federalists and Democratic-Republicans) on key issues
2. Explains the importance of free speech and press in the early republic
3. Defines and provides examples of unalienable rights as understood by the Founding Fathers
4. Describes the personal responsibilities of citizens in the new nation, including voting, obeying laws, and paying taxes

Key Points:

- Early American political parties (Federalists and Democratic-Republicans) had differing viewpoints on important issues
- Freedom of speech and press were fundamental rights protected by the First Amendment and were essential for the formation of the new republic
- Unalienable rights, as described in the Declaration of Independence, were central to the founding of the United States
- Personal responsibilities of citizens in the new nation included voting, obeying laws, and paying taxes
- Understanding these early concepts of rights and responsibilities is crucial for comprehending the foundations of American citizenship

Opening (5 minutes):

- Begin the lesson by displaying a quote from either Alexander Hamilton (Federalist) or Thomas Jefferson (Democratic-Republican) about government or citizen responsibilities
    - **Andrew Jackson (Democratic-Republican and later Democrat)**
        - "The people are the government, administering it by their agents; they are the government, the sovereign power."
        - "Every man is equally entitled to protection by law; but when the laws undertake to add to these natural and just advantages artificial distinctions...to make the rich richer and the potent more powerful, the humble members of society—the farmers, mechanics, and laborers—who have neither the time nor the means of securing like favors to themselves, have a right to complain of the injustice of their government."
        - "The great can protect themselves, but the poor and humble require the arm and shield of the law."
    - **Alexander Hamilton (Federalist)**
        - "A well-adjusted democracy, based on justice and the common good, will naturally tend to produce liberty and happiness for all."
        - "A government ought to contain in itself every power requisite to the full accomplishment of the objects committed to its care and the complete execution of the trusts for which it is responsible."
        - "The fabric of American empire ought to rest on the solid basis of the consent of the people. The streams of national power ought to flow immediately from that pure, original fountain of all legitimate authority."
        - "Real liberty is neither found in despotism or the extremes of democracy, but in moderate governments."
- Ask students to share their initial thoughts about the quote
- Discuss how different Founding Fathers might have varying opinions on the same issue
- Introduce the lesson's focus on understanding citizenship, rights, and responsibilities in early America

Introduction to New Material (15 minutes):

- Present a brief overview of the early American political system, focusing on Federalists and Democratic-Republicans
    - **Federalists**: Led by Alexander Hamilton, the Federalists believed in a strong central government that could effectively manage the nation's economy, maintain order, and build a strong, unified country. They supported a national bank, a robust military, and close ties with Britain. Federalists thought that the federal government should have significant power to make decisions for the country as a whole, which they believed would lead to stability and prosperity.
    - **Democratic-Republicans**: Led by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, the Democratic-Republicans favored a more limited federal government, with greater power reserved for the states. They believed that too much central power could lead to tyranny, much like the British monarchy they had fought against. Democratic-Republicans supported an agrarian economy, emphasizing the importance of farming and rural life. They were more inclined to support France in foreign affairs and were wary of strong central control.
- Explain the concept of free speech and press, providing context from the colonial and early republic periods
    - **Free speech and press** refer to the rights protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, allowing individuals to express their opinions and publish ideas without government interference. During the colonial period and the early republic, these rights were considered fundamental to ensuring that citizens could openly discuss and criticize their government. This freedom was seen as essential for the health of the new democracy, as it allowed for a marketplace of ideas where different viewpoints could be heard and debated. The concept of free speech and press was crucial for the political discourse of the time, enabling the vigorous debate between Federalists and Democratic-Republicans.
- Define unalienable rights and provide examples from the Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights
    - **Unalienable rights** are fundamental rights that cannot be taken away or denied. These rights are inherent to all people and are often described as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, as stated in the Declaration of Independence. The Founding Fathers believed that these rights were given by nature or by God and that no government had the authority to remove them. Examples of unalienable rights include the right to freedom of speech, the right to a fair trial, and the right to own property. These rights are further protected by the Bill of Rights, which includes amendments that safeguard individual freedoms, such as freedom of

religion, the right to bear arms, and protection from unreasonable searches and seizures.

- Discuss the personal responsibilities of citizens in the new nation, emphasizing their importance in establishing a functional republic
    - **Personal responsibilities** in the new nation refer to the duties and obligations that citizens were expected to fulfill to help establish and maintain a functional republic. These responsibilities included:
        - **Voting**: Citizens were expected to participate in elections to choose their leaders and make decisions on important issues. Voting was seen as a critical way for individuals to have a voice in the government and ensure that it reflected the will of the people.
        - **Obeying Laws**: Following the laws set by the government was essential for maintaining order and protecting the rights of all citizens. By obeying laws, citizens contributed to a safe and stable society.
        - **Serving on Juries**: Serving on a jury was an important responsibility that allowed citizens to participate in the justice system, ensuring that trials were fair and just.

        - **Paying Taxes**: Citizens were required to pay taxes to fund the government's activities, including building infrastructure, maintaining a military, and providing public services. Paying taxes was considered a necessary duty to support the common good.

Guided Practice (20 minutes):

- Divide the class into small groups
- Provide each student with a copy of the text "Federalists vs. Democratic-Republicans: Early American Political Parties"
- Instruct groups to analyze the text by highlighting the viewpoints of each party in two different highlighter colors.
- Guide students in discussing how freedom of speech and press allowed these diverse viewpoints to be expressed
- Have groups share their findings with their group, encouraging discussion
- Alternative Option: Provide each group with a set of primary source excerpts from Federalist and Democratic-Republican leaders on topics such as:
    1. Role of the federal government
    2. States' rights
    3. Economic policies
    4. Foreign relations

Independent Practice (30 minutes):

- Students will work individually to create their compare-and-contrast charts
- The chart should include:
    1. At least three key issues and the stance of both Federalists and Democratic-Republicans on each
    2. A brief explanation of how freedom of speech and press contributed to political discourse in early America
    3. A definition of unalienable rights with two examples from the text or founding documents
    4. Three personal responsibilities of citizens in the new nation

Closure (10 minutes):

- Ask students to share one interesting thing they learned about early American political parties or citizenship
- Discuss how understanding these historical concepts helps us better comprehend modern citizenship and civic responsibilities

Homework:

Students should write a short paragraph reflecting on the following question:

- How did the early American political parties (Federalists and Democratic-Republicans) view the responsibilities of citizens, and how do these responsibilities compare to those of citizens in today's politics?

Primary Source Resources for Teachers

1. Library of Congress

The Library of Congress offers a vast collection of primary sources, including writings from Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, and other Founding Fathers. You can search their digital collections for specific documents or quotes related to your lesson.

2. National Archives

The National Archives provides access to founding documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and other critical primary sources. Their website often includes annotated versions that are useful for educational purposes.

3. Founders Online

Founders Online is a resource provided by the National Archives that contains a searchable collection of the writings and correspondence of several Founding Fathers, including Hamilton and Jefferson. You can find letters, essays, and public documents that reflect their viewpoints on various issues.

4. Avalon Project (Yale Law School)

The Avalon Project offers primary source documents in law, history, and diplomacy. It includes a comprehensive collection of documents from the American Revolution and early republic, such as the Federalist Papers and Anti-Federalist Papers.

5. Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History

The Gilder Lehrman Institute provides access to primary sources and teaching resources related to American history. It includes documents, essays, and multimedia resources that can be useful in constructing your lesson.

8. Teaching American History

This site offers teachers access to primary documents and lesson plans focusing on the American founding and political history. It includes collections of speeches, letters, and essays from key figures in early American history.