

Possible Impeachment of President Donald J. Trump
Lesson #1: The Impeachment Process

What is impeachment and why was it included in the Constitution?

Impeachment is the process through which the President of the United States and other elected and appointed officials of the executive and judicial branches can be accused of wrongdoing and removed from office. Technically, to be impeached through this process just means that an official is formally accused, and an official who is accused through this process is said to have been impeached whether or not s/he is ultimately found guilty and removed.

When our Constitution was written, it established a much more powerful national government than we had had under the Articles of Confederation. One of the changes was the creation of an executive branch, headed by a powerful president. This was considered necessary for the survival of the republic, but there were serious and widespread concerns about giving too much power to any individual or group – specifically, there were concerns about the potential for establishing a tyranny. For this reason, an elaborate system of checks and balances was built into the Constitution, and the impeachment process is a part of that system. It is meant to protect the country from any individual who might abuse the power of his or her office.

What is the process for impeachment?

The Constitution establishes the process for impeachment in the following sections:

Location in U.S. Constitution	What does it say (actual text, or notes)
Article I, Section 2 (just the last sentence)	
Article I, Section 3 (the 2nd to last paragraph)	
Article I, Section 3 (the last paragraph)	
Article III, Section 4 (all of it)	

What vote is required in the House to impeach a president? _____

What vote is required in the Senate to convict? _____

Who presides over a president's impeachment trial in the Senate? _____

Which presidents have been impeached before?

Only two U.S. presidents have been impeached: Andrew Johnson (in 1868) and Bill Clinton (in 1998). Neither one was convicted in the Senate, and so they both kept their jobs. Richard Nixon was actually never impeached, because he resigned from office just days after the House Judiciary Committee adopted articles of impeachment against him, but before the full House could take a vote to impeach. It is widely agreed that if he had not resigned, Nixon would have been impeached by the House, and subsequently convicted and removed from office by the Senate.

Some resources for more in-depth knowledge:

For any of the following that you are assigned, complete the following template.

Title & Source	
3 vocab terms from the article	something that surprised you or that you found interesting
5-10 key facts	a similarity or difference to the Trump impeachment process, or how something in the article might pertain to it
	a question you have

A) What the founders thought about impeachment and the president:

<https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/what-the-founders-thought-about-impeachment-and-the-president>

B) Andrew Johnson's impeachment:

https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/briefing/Impeachment_Johnson.htm

C) Bill Clinton's impeachment:

<https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/impeachment/clinton-impeachment-and-its-fallout>

D) Impeachment and Nixon:

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/complete-watergate-timeline-took-longer-realize>

E) An overview with some pictures:

<https://www.businessinsider.com/nixon-clinton-johnson-impeachment-timelines-history-2019-9#>

What questions do you have at this point?

Please write any questions you currently have, and submit them to your teacher so that they may be considered for inclusion in an upcoming lesson.