

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 466 426

SO 033 954

TITLE Launching the New U.S. Navy. Teaching with Documents.  
INSTITUTION National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.  
PUB DATE 2002-06-18  
NOTE 15p.; Photographic images of primary sources may not reproduce adequately. For additional "Teaching with Documents" materials, see SO 033 955-958.  
AVAILABLE FROM National Archives and Records Administration, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20740-6001. Tel: 866-272-6272 (Toll Free); Fax: 301-837-0483; e-mail: orderstatus@nara.gov. For full text:  
[http://www.archives.gov/digital\\_classroom/teaching\\_with\\_documents.html](http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/teaching_with_documents.html).  
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS Academic Standards; Curriculum Enrichment; Intermediate Grades; National Standards; \*Primary Sources; Secondary Education; Social Studies; Student Research; Teacher Developed Materials; \*United States History  
IDENTIFIERS Document Analysis; National Civics and Government Standards; National History Standards; \*Navy

## ABSTRACT

Although the U.S. Constitution of 1787 strengthened the national government and provided for the reestablishment of a national navy, congressional debate on rebuilding the Navy did not begin in earnest until the end of 1793. On March 27, 1794, Congress reestablished the Navy with authorization for six vessels. In 1797 the launching of the first three frigates laid the foundation for the new U.S. Navy. This lesson plan uses five primary historical documents, written and disseminated between 1793 and 1798, to study the establishment of the new U.S. Navy. The lesson plan contains teaching activities, including history and civics and government standards correlation activities and document analysis activities. Reproductions of the five documents and a written document analysis worksheet are provided. (BT)

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June 18, 2002

**TEACHING WITH DOCUMENTS**

**Launching the New  
U.S. Navy**

SO 033 954

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## Teaching With Documents Lesson Plan: Launching the New U.S. Navy

### Background

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The United States won its independence from Great Britain with the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783, but freedom of the seas was yet to be achieved. In the years following the Revolutionary War, Barbary pirates preyed on American vessels and held seamen for ransom. As a result of such foreign interference with essential trade, the new country's weak economy began to suffer, and a national debate ensued. Suspicious of centralized power and a standing military, followers of Thomas Jefferson thought it was wiser and cheaper to meet the demands for ransom, while Federalists believed that a national navy would win America international respect and ensure its freedom on the seas. Although the Constitution of 1787 strengthened the National Government and provided for the reestablishment of a national navy, congressional debate on rebuilding the Navy did not begin in earnest until the end of 1793. On March 27, 1794, Congress reestablished the Navy with authorization for six vessels. Finally, in 1797 the launching of the first three frigates, U.S.S. *United States*, U.S.S. *Constellation*, and U.S.S. *Constitution*, laid the foundation for the new United States Navy.



On December 3, 1793, in his annual address to Congress, President George Washington warned, "If we desire to avoid insult, we must be able to repel it; if we desire to secure peace, . . . it must be known, that we are at all times ready for war." (Document 1: Annual Address by George Washington, December 3, 1793) A few days later, Washington learned of a truce that had been signed between Portugal and Algiers. This truce opened the way for Barbary pirates to cruise the Atlantic and threaten American trade with much of Europe. In response to these events, on January 2, 1794, the House of Representatives resolved that a naval force to protect American commerce ought to be provided and appointed a committee to prepare a report on what kind of naval force would be necessary. Three weeks later, the committee chairman, Thomas Fitzsimons, a Federalist from Pennsylvania, reported that a force of six frigates would be sufficient.

In March of 1794, the House of Representatives and the Senate passed the "Act

to provide a Naval Armament." It authorized the President to acquire six frigates, four of 44 guns each and two of 36 guns each, by purchase or otherwise. In addition, it specified how many crew members would be necessary and what their pay and daily rations would be. (Document 2: Senate Draft of an "Act to provide a Naval Armament", March 18, 1794, Page 1 and 2)

Two weeks after Congress authorized the construction of six frigates, President George Washington sent a message to Congress nominating the six men who would command the newly authorized vessels. (Document 3: George Washington's Message to the U.S. Senate, June 3, 1794) John Barry headed the list as senior captain. He was one of the most courageous and successful officers in the Revolutionary War navy. He was also the last officer of the Continental Navy in active service.

The act that authorized construction of the first six frigates called for a halt in construction if peace with Algiers was secured. Such a peace came in early 1796--before the ships were completed--but President Washington urged continued congressional support. Congress approved completion of three frigates, the U.S.S. *United States*, the U.S.S. *Constellation*, and the U.S.S. *Constitution*. The three vessels were completed and launched in 1797. The Department of War was responsible for their construction, and the Department of the Treasury was responsible for all related contracts and disbursements. Officials in those departments and others recommended to Congress that a separate naval department be created that would be staffed with persons competent in, and solely responsible for, naval affairs. At the same time, tensions with France prompted greater support for a strong navy. The act establishing the Department of the Navy was signed by President John Adams on April 30, 1798. (Document 4: A Bill to Establish the Department of the Navy, April 11, 1798)

On May 18, 1798, President John Adams nominated Benjamin Stoddert as the first Secretary of the Navy to lead the newly created executive department. Stoddert was a merchant from Maryland who had served as secretary to the Continental Board of War during the American Revolution. He was committed to the establishment of a strong Navy and served as Secretary from June 1798 until March 1801. (Document 5: John Adams's Message to the U.S. Senate, May 18, 1798)

### **Related Web Site**

Naval Historical Center <http://www.history.navy.mil/>

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### **The Documents**

Document 1: Annual Address by George Washington, December 3, 1793

Document 2: Senate Draft of an "Act to provide a Naval Armament", March 18, 1794

Document 3: George Washington's Message to the U.S. Senate, June 3, 1794

Document 4: A Bill to Establish the Department of the Navy, April 11, 1798

Document 5: John Adams's Message to the U.S. Senate, May 18, 1798

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## **Lesson Resources**

Standards Correlations

Teaching Activities

Document Analysis Worksheet

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## Teaching Activities

### Standards Correlations

#### **This lesson correlates to the National Standards for United States History:**

- Era 3 - Revolution and the New Nation (1754-1820s)
  - Standard 3A: Demonstrate understanding of the issues related to the creation and ratification of the United States Constitution and the new Government it established.

#### **This lesson also correlates to the National Standards for Civics and Government:**

- Standard I. A. 2: Explain the major arguments advanced for the necessity of politics and government.
- Standard III. B. 1: Evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding the purposes, organization, and functions of the national government.

### Cross-curricular Connections

Share this exercise with your history and government colleagues.

### Analyzing the Document

1. Provide students with a copy of the United States Constitution and ask them to locate general references to the common defense and specific references to the Navy in the document.
2. Encourage students to share their findings with the class. As students identify references, write down the article and section numbers and a brief statement about each one on the board. The most important references include the following:

In the Constitution's preamble: ". . . provide for the common defense."

In Article I, section 8: "The Congress shall have Power To . . . provide and maintain a Navy . . . make Rules for the Government and Regulation

duties to the rest of the world, without ever  
preparing upon you the necessity of placing  
ourselves in a condition of complete de-  
fence, and of reacting upon them in the  
fulfilment of their duties towards us.  
— The United States ought not to erudely  
a persuasion, that, contrary to the order  
of human events, they will forever keep  
at a distance those painful appeals to  
arms, with which the history of every o-  
ther nation abounds. — There is a rank  
due to the United States among Nations,  
which will be withheld, if not absolute-  
ly lost, by the reputation of weakness. —  
If we desire to avoid insult, we must be  
able to repel it; — if we desire to secure  
peace, one of the most powerful instru-  
ments of our rising prosperity, it must  
be known, that we are at all times rea-  
dy for War. — The documents, which  
will be presented to you, will show the  
amount, and kind, of arms and milita-  
ry stores now in our magazines and  
arsenals: — and yet an additional war  
to

Document 1: Annual Address by George Washington, December 3, 1793

*An Act to provide a Naval Armament.*

1 **W**HEREAS the depredations committed by the Algerine corsairs  
2 on the commerce of the United States, render it necessary that a  
3 naval force should be provided for its protection.

1 **SECT. I.** *Be it therefore enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives*  
2 *of the United States of America in Congress assembled,* That the President  
3 of the United States, be authorized to provide, equip and employ, four  
4 ships to carry forty four guns each, and two ships to carry thirty six  
5 guns each.

*by purchase  
or otherwise.*

1 **SECT. II.** *And be it further enacted,* That there shall be employed on board  
2 each of the said ships of forty four guns, one captain four lieutenants,  
3 ~~one captain~~ and one lieutenant of marines, one chaplain one surgeon,  
4 and two surgeon's mates; and in each of the ships of thirty six guns,  
5 one captain, three lieutenants, one lieutenant of marines, one surgeon,  
6 and one surgeon's mate, who shall be appointed, and commissioned, in  
7 like manner as other officers of the United States are.

1 **SECT. III.** *And be it further enacted,* That there shall be employed in  
2 each of the said ships, the following warrant officers, who shall be appointed  
3 by the President of the United States, to wit: one sailing master,  
4 one purser, one boatswain, one gunner, one sailmaker, one carpenter,  
5 and eight midshipmen; and the following petty officers, who shall be  
6 appointed by the captains of the ships, respectively, in which they are  
7 to be employed, viz. two master's mates, one captain's clerk, two boat-  
8 swain's mates, one cook's mate, one sailmaker's mate, two gunner's  
9 mates, one yeoman of the gun-room, nine quarter-gunners, (and for  
10 the four larger ships) two additional quarter-gunners, two carpenter's  
11 mates, one armourer, one steward, one cooper, one master at arms,  
12 and one cook.

1 **SECT. IV.** *And be it further enacted,* That the crews of each of the  
2 said ships of forty four guns, shall consist of ~~200~~ <sup>150</sup> seamen, ~~400~~ <sup>100</sup> midshipmen,  
3 and ordinary seamen, one sergeant, one corporal, one drum, one file,  
4 and fifty marines; and that the crews of each of the said ships of thirty  
5 six guns, shall consist of one hundred and ~~eighty~~ <sup>thirty</sup> able seamen and  
6 midshipmen, ~~eighty~~ <sup>thirty</sup> ordinary seamen, one sergeant, two corporals, one  
7 drum, one file, and forty marines, over and above the officers herein  
8 before mentioned.

*Ships  
thirty*

0 *Section 5. And be it further enacted that the*  
*President of the United States, be and he is*  
*authorized, empowered to provide, by purchase or*  
*otherwise, in lieu of the said five ships a naval*  
*force not exceeding in the whole, that by this*  
*act directed, so that no ship thus provided*  
*shall carry less than twenty two guns: or he may*  
*so provide any proportion thereof, which in*  
*his discretion he may think proper.*



7.  
 1 Sect. 4. *And be it further enacted,* That the pay to be allowed to the  
 2 petty officers, midshipmen, seamen, ordinary seamen and marines, shall  
 3 be fixed by the President of the United States. Provided, That the whole  
 4 sum to be given for the whole pay aforesaid shall not exceed ~~10,000~~ <sup>27</sup> dol-  
 5 ars per month: and that each of the said persons shall be entitled to one  
 6 ration per day.

1 Sect. 5. *And be it further enacted,* That the ration shall consist of as  
 2 follows:

- Sunday, 1lb. bread,  
 1 1/4 beef,  
 1/2 pint of rice,
- Monday, 1 bread,  
 1 pork,  
 1/2 pint pease, or beans  
 and 4oz. cheese,
- Tuesday, 1lb. bread  
 1 1/4 beef,  
 and 1 potatoes or turnips, and pudding,
- Wednesday, 1lb. bread,  
 2oz. butter, *or in lieu thereof 1/2 lb. of*  
 4 cheese, *old cheddar*
- Thursday, 1/2 pint rice,  
 1lb. bread,  
 1 pork,  
 and 1/2 pint pease, or beans,
- Friday, 1lb. bread,  
 1 salt fish, 2oz. butter or 1 gill of oil.
- Saturday, 1lb. bread,  
 1 pork,  
 1/2 pint pease, or beans,  
 and 4oz. cheese, *half pound*

*[Handwritten notes and signatures in a vertical column, including names like 'John C. Calhoun' and 'James M. Smith']*

And there shall also be allowed one ~~gallon~~ <sup>half</sup> of distilled spirits per day  
 or in lieu thereof one pint ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> half of beer per day to each ration.

1 Sect. 6. *Provided always, and be it further enacted,* That if a peace  
 2 shall take place between the United States and the regency of Algiers,  
 3 that no farther proceedings be had under this act.

*Passed the House of Representatives, March 10th, 1794.*

*Bill Naval  
 Armament  
 2 Head and amend.  
 March 18  
 1794*

Document 2: Senate Draft of an "Act to provide a Naval Armament", March 18, 1794, Page 2

United States 3<sup>d</sup> June 1794.

Gentlemen of the Senate,

I nominate the following persons to be Captains of the Ships to be procured in pursuance of the Act to provide a naval armament. — The assistance of these officers will be necessary in the building of the said Ships, but the other officers will not be required until the Ships shall be nearly completed. —

John Barry,  
Samuel Nicholson,  
Silas Talbot,  
Joshua Barney,  
Richard Dale, and  
Thomas Truxtun.

G. Washington

## A Bill

To establish an Executive department, to be denominated the department of the Navy.

1 SECTION 1. **B**E it enacted by the Senate and House of Repre-  
2 sentatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled,  
3 That there shall be an Executive Department under the deno-  
4 mination of the Department of the Navy, the chief officer of  
5 which shall be called the Secretary of the Navy, whose duty it  
6 shall be to execute such orders as he shall receive from the  
7 President of the United States, relative to the procurement of  
8 naval stores and materials and the construction, armament,  
9 equipment and employment of vessels of war, as well as all  
10 other matters connected with the Naval establishment of the  
11 United States.

12 SECT. 2. And be it further enacted, That a principal clerk ~~and~~  
13 ~~and~~ other clerks <sup>whom</sup> ~~which~~ he shall ~~deem~~ <sup>think</sup> necessary, shall be ap-  
14 pointed by the Secretary of the Navy, who shall be employed  
15 in such manner as he shall deem most expedient. In case of ~~the~~  
16 vacancy <sup>in the Office of the Secretary</sup> of the chief officer, by removal or otherwise, it shall  
17 be the duty of the principal clerk to take the charge and cus-  
18 tody of all the books, records and documents of the said office.

19 SECT. 3. And be it further enacted, That the Secretary of the  
20 Navy shall be authorized, and he is hereby authorized and  
21 empowered, immediately after <sup>he shall be appointed</sup> ~~his appointment~~ and <sup>and shall order</sup> ~~entering~~  
22 upon the duties of his office, to take possession of all the re-  
23 cords, books and documents, and all other matters and things  
24 appertaining to this department, which are now deposited in  
25 the office of the Secretary at war.

1 Sect. 4. And be it further enacted, That there shall be allowed  
2 to the Secretary of the Navy an annual salary of 3000.  
3 dollars, payable quarter yearly at the Treasury of the United  
4 States, and the respective clerks in the Office of the said department shall receive  
the same compensation as is provided by an act  
presented to the act establishing the Treasury department & for a further compensation to

*25-1-18*  
*continue Officers, in the Office of  
the other executive departments.*

1 Sect. 5. And be it further enacted, That so much of an act  
2 entitled "An act to establish an Executive department, to be  
3 denominated the department of war," as vests any of the powers  
4 contemplated by the provisions of this act, in the Secretary for  
5 the department of war, <sup>shall</sup> be and the same is hereby repealed from  
and after the period when the Secretary of the Navy  
shall incur on the duties of his Office.

*agreed*

PRINTED BY JOHN PHEND,  
PRINTER TO THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

*B. Hall*  
*Secretary of the Navy*  
*April 12*  
*1798*

*Apr. 11. recd 1<sup>st</sup> & passed to a c.*  
*12. recd 2<sup>d</sup> & postponed.*  
*13. passed to 3<sup>d</sup> reading.*  
*16. recd S. & passed.*

*S. George*  
*J. S. Gifford*

Document 4: A Bill to Establish the Department of the Navy, April 11, 1798, page 2)

Gentlemen of the Senate

Innominate Benjamin  
Stoddert of Maryland to be Secretary  
of the Navy, in the Place of George  
Cabott who has declined his appointment.

George Woodruff of Georgia  
to be Attorney for the District of Georgia  
in the Place of Charles Jackson resigned.

Frederick William Lutze  
of Stetin in Prussia to be Consul of  
the United States at Stetin.

John Adams

United States May 18  
1798

Document 5: John Adams's Message to the U.S. Senate, May 18, 1798

## Written Document Analysis Worksheet

1. TYPE OF DOCUMENT (Check one):

- |                                     |  |   |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper  | <input type="checkbox"/> Map           | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letter     | <input type="checkbox"/> Telegram      | <input type="checkbox"/> Congressional record |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patent     | <input type="checkbox"/> Press release | <input type="checkbox"/> Census report        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Memorandum | <input type="checkbox"/> Report        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                |

2. UNIQUE PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF THE DOCUMENT (Check one or more):

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interesting letterhead | <input type="checkbox"/> Notations        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handwritten            | <input type="checkbox"/> "RECEIVED" stamp |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Typed                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seals                  |   |

3. DATE(S) OF DOCUMENT:

\_\_\_\_\_

4. AUTHOR (OR CREATOR) OF THE DOCUMENT:

\_\_\_\_\_

POSITION (TITLE):

\_\_\_\_\_

5. FOR WHAT AUDIENCE WAS THE DOCUMENT WRITTEN?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. DOCUMENT INFORMATION (There are many possible ways to answer A-E.)

A. List three things the author said that you think are important:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

B. Why do you think this document was written?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

C. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

D. List two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

E. Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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of the land and naval Forces."

In Article I, section 10: "No State shall, without the Consent of Congress . . . keep Troops or Ships of War in time of Peace . . ."

In Article II, section 2: "The President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy . . ."

3. Divide students into five groups. Provide each group with a different Navy document and a copy of the Document Analysis Worksheet.
4. Instruct each group to analyze their document and respond to the questions on the Document Analysis Worksheet.
5. Ask a spokesperson from each group to describe their document to the class. While listening to the presentations, students should determine which Constitutional provision each document relates to.
6. Lead a discussion to compare student answers. Encourage students to further analyze the Constitution and determine the relationship between Congress and the President with regard to nominations as illustrated by documents #3 - Washington and #5 - Adams.
7. As a follow-up activity, ask students to research current government activities related to the Navy and determine which provisions in the Constitution they relate to. The Web sites of the Senate [<http://www.senate.gov>], the House of Representatives [<http://www.house.gov>], & the White House [<http://www.whitehouse.gov>] are online resources for such information.

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