

Northwest Territory Protection and Governance

Northwest Territory Defense Discussion

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OVERVIEW: Just two years into the Presidency of George Washington and four years into the great experiment that was the United States of America, the discussion became what the responsibility was of the U.S. Government in territories in the far reaching west. Mainly, there were discussing the protection of the people living in the Northwest Territory from Indian attacks and also possible attacks from British and or French soldiers still prominent in the area. The Northwest Territory was also disputed by the governments of the nations, and thus fighting was almost unavoidable. And, the Native Americans, who truly lived in the land longer than any, also had to be contended with. The writing of Secretary of War Henry Knox to President George Washington outlines his suggestions on how the people desperately need some type of protection against these enemies.

SUGGESTED COLLECTION PIECES: Northwest Territory Collection

Henry Knox Letter to George Washington (#4)

<http://images.indianahistory.org/u?/ONWT,455>, pages 1-15

OBJECTIVES: *Learners will...*

- Analyze primary and secondary sources directly from the era.
- Discuss the importance of protection of citizens by the government of the United States.
- Decide the responsibility of protecting citizens from outer threats, government of U.S., government of the territory, or they are on their own.
- Evaluate how to best work with the Native Americans in the area.

DESCRIPTION:

1. **Review.** The government of the United States is brand new, and the discussion will need to be had to discuss the overall responsibilities of the new government. The students can come up with many interesting things, but the discussion should move towards protection of citizens by the government, and if the government of the country or the state reigns in the situation that will be discussed.
2. **Reflect/Decide.** Now, ask the students about who they believe should protect them from the threats in present day: if we in Indiana are under attack, who should protect us? (1) Local government, (2) state government, and (3) national government. Why did they choose who they did?
3. **Analyze.** The first five pages will be passed out to half the students in the class. They will read and analyze the contents of the writings and make notes on the sheets passed as to what was being discussed in the document. The final five pages of the first half of the document will be passed to the second half.

4. **Collaborate.** Students will be paired with students who read the same pages as they did and discuss what the document was stating. Then, after a short period of time, the pair of students will pair with a second group with a different set of pages and collaborate together on what the object of the first half of the document was. The main idea will be to analyze the position of the Secretary of War, and if what he is asking for thus far is possible.
5. **Bringing it home.** This may take two class periods or can go for an entire block. So, review and assessment of the ideas can be done through a discussion with each group at the end of the review/analysis time. The idea is to get learners to think about the responsibility of the government in lands that are not “states,” and if territories deserve the same protection and rights as those in the states of the union.

STANDARDS:

- 8.1.29 *Differentiate between facts and historical interpretations, recognizing that the historian’s narrative reflects his or her judgment about the significance of particular facts.*
- 8.1.30 *Formulate historical questions by analyzing primary* and secondary sources* about an issue confronting the United States during the period from 1754–1877.*
- 8.2.4 *Examine functions of the national government in the lives of people.*