



The Story of Statehood

Objective: Students will learn about the events that led to the formation of the state of West Virginia.

GRADE LEVEL

Eighth Grade

TIME REQUIRED

One or two class periods

STRATEGIC VOCABULARY

statehood
sectionalism
economic
political
social
legislation
representation
Trans-Allegheny
constitution

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What are the geographic differences between Virginia and West Virginia?
2. How did these very different geographies propel the two Virginias to go in separate directions?
3. Was slavery a dividing factor between the two Virginias?

LESSON ACTIVITIES

1. Video clip: Have students view the following clip on the formation of West Virginia.
<http://www.wvencyclopedia.org/articles/2034>.
2. Article: Have students read the following article: “Sectionalism and the Virginias” at
<http://www.wvencyclopedia.org/articles/229>. Provide copies of the attached chart. Complete the chart with the students as they read the article together as a class. Be certain that the students understand the differences between eastern and western Virginia before continuing with the lesson.
3. Fence-riding debate on West Virginia statehood: Have the students read the following articles. Remind the students they are looking for issues of sectionalism between the two Virginias between 1700 and 1860. Remind the students that their reading should focus on looking for topics of division between the two Virginias. Encourage them to refer to their



completed chart and look for more specific ideas relating to geography, politics, and economics.

- Turnpikes: <http://www.wvencyclopedia.org/articles/797>
- Constitution of 1830: <http://www.wvencyclopedia.org/articles/1546>
- Constitution of 1851: <http://www.wvencyclopedia.org/articles/1550>

Divide students in two groups, leaving 4, 5 or 6 students as undecided. Students in each group will take opposing sides (as assigned by the teacher) on the issue of West Virginia statehood. Students may be arranged in chairs facing each other, or they can stand in a straight line facing each other. The fence-riders sit in the middle between the opposing sides. Students have one minute to present their argument for or against statehood and secession from the state of Virginia and the opposing side has one minute to ask questions. Then the debate will go to the other team with the same time limits. During this time the fence-riders will listen and decide their opinion on the issue. The fence-riders will have time to ask questions and then they make their decision. The side that receives the most fence-riders wins!

4. Formation of West Virginia: Students can finalize their work by reading the following article: <http://www.wvencyclopedia.org/articles/2034>. Have the students write a letter to the editor stating their opinion on West Virginia statehood. Have them use the articles and reasons they used to support their sides during the debate as support for their opinion in their letter to the editor. The fence-riders can write their letters based on the sides they chose during the debate.

WEST VIRGINIA NEXT GENERATION CONTENT STANDARDS AND OBJECTIVES

SOCIAL STUDIES

SS.8.21 : Demonstrate an understanding of the American Revolution, including western Virginia’s part in the development of the nation.

- Compare and contrast the perspectives and roles of different western Virginians during the American Revolution including those of political leaders, soldiers, patriots, Tories/Loyalists, women and Native Americans.
- Identify the key conflicts, battles and people of the American Revolution in western Virginia and their effects on the area (e.g., Battle of Point Pleasant, Siege of Fort Henry, Attacks at Fort Randolph and Fort Donnally).
- Summarize events related to the adoption of Virginia’s constitutional conventions, the role of western Virginia and its leaders in the Continental Congress, and the ratification of the U.S. Constitution.
- Explain the economic and political tensions between the people of western and eastern Virginia including the economic struggles of both groups following the American Revolution and their disagreement over representation.

SS.8.22 Demonstrate an understanding of the American Civil War including its causes, effects and the major events that led to West Virginia statehood.

- Explain the effect of key events leading to western Virginia’s separation from Virginia after secession (e.g., First and Second Wheeling Conventions and John Brown’s Raid).



- Describe the moral, ethical and legal tensions that led to the creation of the new state of West Virginia and how these tensions were resolved (e.g., Virginia vs. West Virginia 1871).
- Compare and contrast the military strategies of the North and South with regard to specific events and geographic locations in West Virginia (e.g., the Battle of Philippi, Rich Mountain, Droop Mountain, Battle of Scary Creek and Battle of Carnifex Ferry).
- Identify significant contributions of men and women of West Virginia during the Civil War and identify the roles of ethnic and racial minorities.

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Topic of Division	Western Virginia	Eastern Virginia
Geography		
Politics		
Economics		

