

Introduction and Reflection

- Creating a Maine Identity Grades 7-12-

Themes & Sources (for teacher use):

- Creating physical structures for the new state
 - Source 1: State House painting
 - Source 2: State House lock & key
- Deciding on a system of government
 - Source 3: Governor William King portrait
 - Source 4: Working Copy of Maine's Constitution
- Choosing symbols and icons to represent the State
 - Source 5: Sketch of the Maine State Seal
 - Source 6: Painting of the Maine State seal

Possible connections between the sources (for teacher use):

- **Source 1 and 2:** The lock and key were on the door of the State House at the time when it was painted. What would it have been like to have to physically build a whole new capital?
- **Source 3 and 4:** William King was the most important leader of the effort to write Maine's first constitution, even before he became Maine's first governor. He would have contributed to the ideas in this working copy.
- **Source 5 and 6:** These sources show two versions of the state seal. One is the first draft sketch, and the other is a later, more colorful and stylized version.

Did you know?

- On March 15, 1820 Maine entered the Union as the 23rd state.
- In 2020, Maine is turning 200 years old! To compare, America is 243 years old.

Maine's changes:

Wabanaki homeland → English Colony → District within the state of Massachusetts → State of Maine

Introduction

*Try to imagine what it's like to make a new state. It isn't easy! No one snapped their fingers and *POOF* invented Maine! This isn't the whole story, but it gives you an idea of some of the tough decisions people had to make.*

What was Maine before it was a state?

Maine became a state in 1820. People lived in Maine for thousands and thousands of years before that. The land was the same, but in 1820 it got a new name and a new government. Because this is 2020, Maine is 200 years old this year. “Bicentennial” means 200th anniversary. To compare, America is 243 years old.

Native people's story began long before Europeans arrived. Native Americans were the first people to live in Maine, and they've been here for over 13,000 years. There are still lots of Wabanaki people living in Maine today! Today's tribes are the Abenaki, Maliseet, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot. Together, they are called the Wabanaki. Have you heard those names before?

Europeans moved to Maine and started making homes here in the 1500s. At first there were just a few of them, but over the years their population grew and grew. There was less space for the Wabanaki people. The Wabanaki protected their way of life and their rights to the land and water.

How do you decide who owns the land? Many different groups of people fought over who should be allowed to live here, and what they should be allowed to do. For example, who's allowed to fish and hunt? Who's allowed to cut down trees and sell them? Who's allowed to build homes? Who gets to make the rules?

When Maine was part of Massachusetts, it was called the “District of Maine.” People in Maine had to follow Massachusetts laws and go to Boston for help with political problems. It took a long time for Maine to break away from Massachusetts. The story is very messy and complicated, and lots of people had different ideas about what should happen!

What does it mean to be a state?

As an independent state, the people of Maine had a lot more control over their land and their government. They could send their own politicians to the United States Senate and House of Representatives. They could have their own state Constitution. They could write their own laws and elect their own leaders. William King became the first Governor of Maine. Not everyone agreed on the laws or who should be in charge. People still argue about the same stuff today!

Maine's statehood had a huge impact on everyone living here, especially the Wabanaki peoples. When Maine took over governmental authority from Massachusetts, it also took over the treaties that Massachusetts had made with Passamaquoddy and Penobscot people. Wabanaki people were put under 'legal guardianship' of the state, meaning state officials had some legal and financial controls over the tribes. Lots of land and many rights were taken away from tribal members. Wabanaki people have worked hard over the centuries to resist this control and protect their sovereignty. Sovereignty is the right of a nation to exercise its own government and authority over the people living within its borders.

There was a Maine state constitutional convention in October 1819. Maine delegates had to decide how to create guidelines for the new state. They used the Massachusetts constitution of 1780 as their model but made some important changes.

A few ways Maine's first constitution was different:

- Made it illegal for the state to support any religious group. This was different from Massachusetts, which gave tax money to the Congregational Church.
- Gave men of European and African descent the right to vote even if they didn't own property. Maine denied voting rights to "untaxed Indians" living on reservation lands. This meant that Native Americans who were members of a tribe couldn't vote. They couldn't vote in Maine until 1954.

How do you make a new state identity?

People also had to decide what Maine's identity should be. Your "identity" is all the stuff that makes you who you are. For example, you might identify as a brother, an artist, or an animal lover. Maine's identity is all the stuff that is important to Maine--that makes Maine special.

When Maine became a state, they made a state seal full of symbols to show pride in Maine. Maine's state seal changed a few times over the years, but it has always had a moose, a pine tree, a sailor and a farmer. There is water, forest, and farmland. The North star is at the top, over the word "Dirigo." Dirigo means "I lead" in Latin. Why do you think they chose these symbols to represent Maine? What symbols would you choose?

When Maine became a state, they needed to make a state capital. As you can imagine, there were lots of fights about this. Where would you have put Maine's capital? Southern Maine, where there are more people? Farther north, to be closer to the middle of the state? Portland was the first capital, from 1820-1832. In 1827 they decided to make Augusta the official capital. They started building the State House, which was completed in 1832. That's when they officially moved the capital to Augusta, where it is today.

Maine was a brand-new state. People living here wanted the rest of the country to respect Maine as independent and strong. The decisions they made were both important to everyone living in the state and important to how the rest of the world thought about Maine.

After the topic has been introduced to students, hand out the primary sources and complete the worksheet activity

[OPTIONAL] Extra information on the state seal:

Here's what that the official rules say must be in the state seal:

- Silver shield
- Pine tree
- Moose lying under the pine tree
- [Left side of the shield] Farmer "resting on" a scythe
 - A scythe is a tool with a long handle and a sharp blade used to cut plants. It is pronounced like "sigh" with a "th" sound at the end.
- [Right side of the shield] Sailor "resting on" an anchor
- [Front of the shield] Land and sea
- [Under the shield] The name of the state, MAINE, in capital letters
- The North Star
- The state motto "Dirigo" should be between the North Star and the shield. Dirigo means "I lead" in Latin. It is pronounced "dee-rig-oh."

Notice there is no rule about what color the seal should be.

Class Reflection Questions:

- Many things that we take for granted as foundations for how we live today—like our state constitution—were created by people arguing and testing things and making compromises. Does this change the way you think about Maine?
- Can people still shape the laws and government of Maine today?
- Do you think the state seal that Mainers designed in 1820 still represents Maine today? Why or why not? Do you feel that it represents your experience of Maine?
- What, or who, is missing from the original Maine State Seal?
- What parts of Maine’s identity are important to you?