

Bell Ringer: The Antebellum Era: The New Nation of the USA Part 1

Instructions: Read the description below and answer the questions.



Description: When the Constitution was created, **three branches** were formed for the United States. These sections were called the Legislative (Congress), Judicial (Supreme Court), and Executive (President) branches. For the Executive branch, the President, **George Washington**, was allowed to create a Cabinet that could assist him in his duties. The following men were chosen to serve with Washington, **Henry Knox** became the Secretary of War, **Alexander Hamilton** became the Secretary of Treasury (finances), **Thomas Jefferson** became the Secretary of State (Foreign Affairs), and **Edmund Randolph** became the Attorney General (enforcing laws). These men became known as **Washington's "Cabinet"** to assist him.

1. Why was the government broken up into 3 branches? Why was there a desire to divide the power?

2. Why do you think Washington needed a cabinet? Why couldn't he just manage issues with war, foreign relations, finances, and legal matters all by himself?

Answers:

1. Why was the government broken up into 3 branches? Why was there a desire to divide the power?

The USA had just come out of the Revolution. They last thing they wanted was a government in which a monarch or a group could gain too much power. Breaking up the government's power was the idea of an Enlightenment thinker named Montesquieu. He believed that, if the government had branches that competed for power, it would create an atmosphere in which no one person or group gained too much power and oppressed the people.

2. Why do you think Washington needed a cabinet? Why couldn't he just manage issues with war, foreign relations, finances, and legal matters all by himself?

The President was the main leader for issues pertaining to war, foreign relations, finances, and enforcing legal matters. There was no way one man could manage all of this. The Secretaries and other leaders were used as advisors to help the President address these responsibilities. By delegating and hiring Secretaries for these roles, the President would be able to manage these responsibilities in a more organized, informed manner.