Impeachment Inquiry

■ Editorial Cartoons: Tom Toles  |  Impeachment Inquiry
■ Student Activity: A Closer Look  |  Impeachment Inquiry
■ Post Editorial Reprint: “A distraction that can’t be ignored”
■ Student Activity: Steps to Impeachment
■ Think Like a Reporter: Explain a Constitutional (or Legal) Concept
The U.S. Constitution established that the House of Representatives members were to decide if there was enough evidence of wrongdoing and breaking the oath of office to impeach the president, vice president and other civil officials. If yes, it was then the Senators’ duty to hold a trial to convict or not convict of “Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors.”

On September 24, 2019, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi addressed the American people to inform them that an official impeachment inquiry of President Donald Trump would begin. To help students to understand what an impeachment is use the Steps to Impeachment.

To discuss the current situation from the perspective of Washington Post editorial cartoonist use Tom Toles’ Impeachment Inquiry cartoons and the questions that are provided. Students might be asked to draw their own points of view. Another statement of opinion comes from The Post editorial board: “A distraction that can’t be ignored.”

And to localize and explain the concept of impeachment, teachers might ask students to Think Like a Reporter, to be explanatory journalists. Take the first steps toward understanding — inquiry.
Tom Toles | Impeachment Inquiry

The historic decision of House speaker Nancy Pelosi on September 24 to officially initiate impeachment inquiry into President Donald Trump, elicited many points of view. Among them were the visual commentary of The Washington Post’s editorial cartoonist Tom Toles.

In each cartoon, Toles’ alter ego appears in the lower right corner to emphasize the word play, satirize actions, expand the image or add another dimension to his point of view. “Read” each political cartoon before answering the questions.

September 22, 2019 | Whistleblower’s Alert

September 25, 2019 | A “Grave” New Chapter

September 29, 2019 | Now he’s in up to his neck

October 1, 2019 | Spoiler Alert: The 2020 ballot revealed!
TOM TOLES

A Closer Look | Impeachment Inquiry

September 22, 2019 | Whistleblower’s Alert
1. Cartoonists label people and items to ensure the meaning is clear.
   a. What label is given to establish the central image?
   b. What kind of vessel has Toles drawn?
2. Who are the figures on the ship of state?
3. What or who is a whistleblower?
   a. Is it significant that the whistle is part of the vessel?
   b. How do you interpret the sound of the whistleblower?
4. What do Toles and his alter ego communicate to readers?
5. What is your point of view about whistleblowers? And the law protecting whistleblowers from retaliation?

September 25, 2019 | A “Grave” New Chapter
1. Who are the two figures in the panel?
2. Define the terms that appear on the wall of the hole.
3. As the figure with the shovel looks up, he asks about “HIGH crimes.”
   a. To what does this allude?
   b. What contrast does Toles create?
4. “Dirt digging” is a reference to a current event. Explain it.
5. Do you agree or disagree with Toles’ position on the “grave new chapter”?

September 29, 2019 | Now he’s in up to his neck
1. Who is the female figure in the panel? What is her position?
2. The figure to the right of her speaks in the bubble.
   a. Who does he represent?
   b. Six papers are scattered on the ground. To what actions or events do they allude?
3. Toles likes to use word play. What is the “sextuple assault”?
4. Why does the figure labeled “Nancy” hold a key?
5. What is your point of view on the issue?

October 1, 2019 | Spoiler Alert: The 2020 ballot revealed!
1. What iconic figure appears in both panels?
2. What do the details of both figures in the second panel indicate?
3. Several components of the editorial cartoon, work together to add depth of commentary.
   a. Who is the female figure in the panel?
   b. Where is this figure?
   c. Who is on the ballot?
4. What is Toles’ view of the 2020 national election?
5. Who is the “he” of the alter ego’s comment?
A distraction that can’t be ignored

Mr. Trump must be held accountable for his intimidation tactics.

President Trump is promising a civil war within the union he is supposed to lead.

“If the Democrats are successful in removing the President from office (which they will never be),” the commander in chief tweeted this weekend, roughly quoting the right-wing pastor Robert Jeffress on the “Fox & Friends” Sunday show, “it will cause a Civil War like fracture in this Nation from which our Country will never heal.”

The outrageous declaration is only one among many disseminated from the digital bully pulpit over the past few days. “Arrest for Treason?” Mr. Trump suggested of Rep. Adam B. Schiff (D-Calif.), who is heading up the impeachment inquiry in the House. “Was this person SPYING on the U.S. President? Big Consequences!” he warned the person who blew the whistle on his extortionary phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. “You know what we used to do in the old days when we were smart? Right? The spies and treason, we used to handle it a little differently than we do now,” he said at a private event with diplomatic officials last Thursday.

These missives might seem to distract from the substance of the Ukraine matter, which perhaps is what Mr. Trump intends. They muffle the roar of misconduct and seize control of the narrative. But the threats can’t be ignored, because in one respect, they are the substance. The president stands accused of attempting to strong-arm another nation to sabotage a political rival, and with trying to cover it up. Now he means to menace Congress, anyone else with knowledge of his misdeeds and the public into not holding him to account.

What whistleblower in the future will come forward knowing the reward will be demonization and even potential prosecution? What does this say to aides
or other officials who could speak to investigators as they probe the matter? Most Republicans are already far too reluctant to condemn Mr. Trump’s actions, much less do anything about them. Democrats, too, fear how far a man who cares nothing for the rule of law will go to mobilize his supporters against anything that imperils his presidency. Now, he is showing them.

Already, amateur Internet “sleuths” are scrambling to unmask the person who wrote the complaint released late last week. Two pro-Trump activists claim they are offering a $50,000 reward for the details. The president himself told reporters Monday that “we’re trying to find out” the whistleblower’s identity. Mr. Trump has winked at violence before. No wonder a lawyer for the whistleblower wrote to leaders of the congressional intelligence committees Saturday to say there were “serious concerns for our client’s personal safety, as well as for others connected to this matter.”

The only response to the president’s attempt to cow the country into letting him get away with abusing his office is not to let him get away with abusing his office. Congress and the nation must make Mr. Trump answer for his undemocratic intimidation tactics and for the bigger scandal he is using them to obscure.

— October 1, 2019
Steps to Impeachment

From the beginning the United States had high expectations of the “President, Vice President and all civil Officers of the United States.” Through the years these individuals took an oath that they were expected to practice. If they did not, provisions for impeachment were in place.

What is impeachment?
Impeachment is a process to remove federal or civil officers from office — even judges, vice presidents and presidents. In Federalist 65, Alexander Hamilton stated that impeachment was to face or scrutinize the offenses that result from the “misconduct of public men, or in other words from the abuse or violation of some public trust.”

STEP ONE: Impeachment Inquiry
Article 1, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution gives the House of Representatives the “sole Power of Impeachment.” The Founding Fathers established steps of impeachment and Congress updated rules to conduct proceedings. Under current rules, the actual impeachment inquiry begins in the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives. Members hold hearings, seek eyewitnesses and examine documents during the inquiry. The Committee, to do this serious job, diligently collects all that is relevant to the inquiry.

The Committee produces Articles of Impeachment. These are the reason or reasons that they believe a trial of impeachment should be held. After the Committee votes on the Articles of Impeachment, the results are reported to the whole House of Representatives.

STEP TWO: House Vote on the Articles of Impeachment
After debate, a vote of all House members takes place. A simple majority vote is required to approve.

If the House approves one or more of the Articles of Impeachment, the official is officially impeached. This means that members have determined that evidence shows wrongdoing. The oath of office has been broken.

STEP THREE: Trial in the Senate
Article 1, Section 3, gives the Senate “the sole Power to try all Impeachments.” Senators are the jury. Alexander Hamilton continued to write in Federalist 65: “Where else, than in the Senate could have been found a tribunal sufficiently dignified, or sufficiently independent? What other body would be likely to feel confidence enough in its own situation, to preserve unawed and uninfluenced the necessary impartiality between an individual accused, and the representatives of the people, his accusers?”

The archives of the House of Representatives list the “Managers” who have served at impeachments. These Representatives handle the trial in the Senate assisted by attorneys employed for the prosecution of the impeachment case.
“When the President of the United States is tried, the Chief Justice shall preside,” according to the U.S. Constitution (Article 1, Section 3, Clause 6). The official who is charged selects his or her legal team. As jury members, senators must remain quiet, but they may direct questions by sending them in writing to the Chief Justice.

**STEP FOUR: Senate Deliberation**
After Senators have listened to the evidence presented and closing arguments, they retire to private chambers. Here they may debate, discuss points and deliberate before voting.

**STEP FIVE: Vote in the Open Session**
After making their decision, Senators return to the Senate Floor. Every Senator votes whether to convict the President of wrongdoing or vote against conviction. If two-thirds vote to convict, the President is removed from office.

As stated in the U.S. Constitution Article II, Section 4: The President, Vice President and all civil Officers of the United States, shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors.

The Senate vote is final, and the official has no right of appeal.
Explain a Constitutional (or Legal) Concept

I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.

— Presidential Oath or Affirmation
— Article II, Section 1

The President, Vice President and all civil officers of the United States, shall be removed from office on impeachment for, and conviction of, treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors.

— Executive Power and Impeachment
Article III, Section 4

Whistleblower rights and protections were initially addressed by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978. In 1989, Congress passed the Whistleblower Protection Act to “strengthen and improve protection for the rights of federal employees, to prevent reprisals, and to help eliminate wrongdoing within the Government.”

— Whistleblower Protection Act: An Overview
Findlaw.com

Many conversations — and a few arguments — center on the decision of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to begin an impeachment inquiry. Should President Donald Trump be impeached? Did seeking information from the president of Ukraine about former Vice President Joe Biden’s and his son’s dealings in Ukraine rise to an impeachable offense? Or was the president wanting to know more about Ukrainian handling of corruption in general?

And what about whistleblowers? Are they heroes or villains? Patriots or spies?

The U.S. Constitution and laws are linked to all of these questions. What do students in your school know about the supreme law of our country and the ways it and other laws apply to elected officials and federal employees?

Think like a reporter. What issues do you think students should understand, whether they are thinking about voting in their first national election in 2020 or preparing to be informed and good citizens?
Determine Your Focus

You will be acting as an explanatory reporter. The first step is to determine what issue or aspect of a larger issue or concept needs to be explained. How can you abate or eliminate confusion?

What do you know about the constitutional provision for impeachment of a president or vice president of the United States, for example? For another focus, you might use the emolument restriction (Article I, Section 1), the oath of office, or the Whistleblower Protection Act.

Get the Facts and Background

Begin with the U.S. Constitution, Amendments to the Constitution, Federalist Papers or the act of Congress and its latest update.

Find other reliable sources. A government or U.S. history educator may be able to help you — either with information (see interview) or leads to good resources.

You might better explain the issue by using your state law about impeachment or one of the other topics. This could be particularly helpful if there was a recent local case of abuse or wrongdoing.

Interview Local People for the Local Angle

Prepare a list of questions that you have. If you are going to help others to understand the principle, concept or issue, you need to understand it also. What wording or annotation do you not understand? Locate a nonpartisan source who can help you to understand the basic issue.

Adding depth and fairness to explaining the concept may require interviewing people with different points of view of what the document or law means in today’s society. Locate reliable sources. These may be people in your community (lawyers, officials in state or federal offices) or online interviews.

Listen and carefully record their responses. If you want to record the interview, but sure to get permission when you set up the appointment.

Whenever possible, relate to the people in your community. Find the local angle. Will civic groups be holding rallies or meetings? Do your state whistleblower laws correlate with the national law? How often has this provision for protection from retaliation been used in your state or community?

Use an Anecdote

Bring the concept to life with a real person’s story. Especially if there is a local connection, humanize the issue.

If no local or state case relates to the issue or concept, perhaps an overheard conversation may provide an effective lede to your article.

Organize Your Information

• Eliminate information that is not directly related to your topic
• Personalize if there is a local angle. Write the story of the individual(s) who represent the problem, the benefits, the issue. Be concise but give enough concrete details to bring the person and focus to life. Decide if you will begin your article with an anecdote or present the personal side of the topic after you have established your focus.
• Select the most helpful quotations. These individuals provide the insight, the analogy, the concise explanation that helps you — and your readers — to understand the topic.
• Put the questions that guided your reading and research in a logical order. Does this sequence help to explain the focus without confusion? Remove the questions and work on writing smooth transitions. Or keep the questions in the final text if they will be helpful to your readers.