



The Soul of the Senate



A Documentary of
Senator Robert C. Byrd

Senator Robert C. Byrd rose from poverty to be a powerful force in the United States government. He has been called the soul of the senate and was named the West Virginian of the century. He's worked as a welder, gas station attendant, produce boy and a butcher, but he will be remembered as a political legacy and a Senator who has truly been a servant to his state.

His Senate career has spanned more than 45 years. He has held more positions and cast more votes than any other senator in history. He has said that he has worked *with* 11 presidents, but never *under* any of them. His integrity and willingness to oppose presidents has been noticed on a number of occasions including his stance on the line-item veto and the War in Iraq.

Though the Senator has written many books himself, no one has yet to attempt to write about him. The purpose of this guide, in conjunction with the documentary and website, is to inform people about this giant of a political figure and his accomplishments.

The study guide begins with a timeline of the life of Senator Robert C. Byrd and continues with a sectional, detailed biography. The sections include The Early Life; The Value of Hard Work and Perseverance; Entering Politics at the State Level; Emerging onto the National Scene; The Senate Years; Upholding the Constitution; and A Man of Vision. The study guide, documentary and website reinforce each other and are suggested to be used together.

Following the sectional biography, the guide contains a section called "Themes for Discussion." The themes focus on topics that influenced the Senator's life and include: The Value of Education; A Good Work Ethic; The Importance of Good Character; The Soul of the Senate; Protecting the Integrity of the Constitution. Each theme contains suggested questions for discussion, quotes from Byrd and other field experts called "In Their Own Words", and activities to be used in groups or individually.

Senator Byrd has quite a repertoire of authored texts. Lists of these works are included for you following the "Themes for Discussion."

The final section in this guide is to serve as a kit using photocopies of actual documents relevant to the life of Senator Byrd. These documents are provided with suggestions for activities that will visually exemplify the Senator's childhood culture and political career. This section works in conjunction with The Soul of the Senate website. One photocopied example is included in this guide. The other examples may be downloaded or copied from the website.

It is suggested that teachers show the documentary in segments, pausing after each theme to lead the students to an understanding of the major events and influences in Senator Byrd's life.

After viewing the entire documentary, teachers may use the questions and activities that follow each theme to generate discussion, provide time for reflection, and give students an opportunity to apply what they have learned. The questions and activities are designed to be general in nature in order to allow the teacher the flexibility to tailor them to the content of his/her class. The West Virginia Instructional Objectives and Standards listed in this guide focus on secondary education social studies.

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Timeline: The Life of U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd



- 1917** – Born Cornelius Calvin Sale, Jr., in Wilkesboro, North Carolina
- 1918** – Mother died of influenza
- 1920** – Moved to West Virginia
- 1934** – Graduated from Mark Twain High School
- 1935** – Worked as a gas station attendant in Helen
- 1935** – Worked as a produce boy for the Koppers Company
- 1937** – Married Erma Ora James
- 1941** – Became the head of the meat department in Crab Orchard
- 1946** – Elected to the West Virginia House of Delegates
- 1950** – Enrolled at Morris Harvey College (University of Charleston)
- 1950** – Elected to West Virginia Senate
- 1952** – Elected to the United States House of Representatives
- 1953** – Enrolled in law classes at George Washington University School of Law
- 1958** – Elected to the United States Senate
- 1963** – Graduated cum laude from American University's Washington College of Law
- 1967** – Elected Secretary of Senate Democratic Conference (reelected 1969)
- 1969** – Began Robert C. Byrd Scholastic Recognition Award Program
- 1971** – Elected Senate Majority Whip (reelected 1973 and 1975)
- 1976** – First United States Senator from West Virginia to win a seat without opposition
- 1977** – Elected Majority Leader of the United States Senate (1977-1980)
- 1981** – Elected Senate Minority Leader (1981 to 1986)
- 1983** – Received the Horatio Alger Award
- 1987** – Elected Majority Leader of the United States Senate (1987-1988)
- 1989** – Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee and Elected President pro tempore of the Senate (1989-1994)
- 1994** – Awarded BA in political science from Marshall University
- 2000** – Elected to 8th consecutive six-year Senate term
- 2001** – Named West Virginian of the 20th Century
- 2001** – Chairman, Senator Appropriations Committee and Elected President pro tempore of the Senate (June 2001-2002)



The Soul of the Senate

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U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Early Life of Senator Byrd ★



Robert Carlyle Byrd

Robert C. Byrd, West Virginian of the 20th century and one of the most influential members of the United States Senate, began his life with a different name. The future senator was born Cornelius Calvin Sale, Jr. on November 20, 1917, in Wilkesboro, North Carolina. His parents, Cornelius and Ada Sale, had four other children—three boys and one girl. The United States was engaged in World War I when Cornelius Sale, Jr. was born. The day the armistice was signed ending the war, November 11, 1918, the youngster’s mother died of influenza. The death of his mother changed the life of her youngest child forever.

Before her death, Ada Sale asked her husband to give their sons to other family members. According to her wishes, young Cornelius was given to his mother’s sister and her brother-in-law, Vlurma and Titus Byrd. The Byrds, who had no children of their own, adopted the baby and changed his name to Robert Carlyle Byrd. The Byrd family moved to West Virginia when young “Robert” was about two years old. Because he left North Carolina, Robert was an adult before he met his siblings.

The senator’s earliest memories are of living in Bluefield where his adoptive father drove a wagon and team for a local brewery. Seeking a better life, Titus Byrd moved his family to McDowell County where he landed a job as a coal miner. The Byrds returned to Mercer County and settled in Algonquin (later called Lamar). It was here that young Robert started to school. He attended a two-room school and finished four grades in two years. School became an important part of Byrd’s life. By now a life-long learner, his thirst for knowledge began to shape his life.

While living in Algonquin, Byrd’s “mother” took in boarders to supplement the family income. One of the boarders talked frequently of his life on a farm on Wolf Creek. Intrigued with these appealing stories, Titus Byrd decided to leave the mines and try his luck as a farmer.

The family bought a small farm on Wolf Creek and, while living there, young Robert attended another two-room school. The Byrd house, which was near the head of a hollow, had no electricity, indoor running water or telephone. As Abraham Lincoln made do with light from a fireplace, Robert pursued his love of learning with the light of an oil lamp. In the summer the youngster hoed corn, bugged beans, milked cows, and peddled chickens, eggs and vegetables. Although the family worked hard, they could barely make a living, so Titus Byrd returned to the mines.

Hoping to earn enough money to pay off the loan on the farm, Titus moved the family to Stotesbury in Raleigh County. In Stotesbury Robert brought in the wood and coal and recalled stopping by neighbors’ houses to collect scraps of food to feed the hogs. Once the farm was paid off, the family returned to Wolf Creek. Robert, now in the 8th grade, again walked three miles to get an education. This time he walked three miles to catch a bus, and then traveled four more miles to a school in Spanishburg.

With all the moving the family did, Robert eventually graduated from Mark Twain High School in Stotesbury. Many things happened to him while attending Mark Twain, but two of the most important were that he met his future wife and he developed an interest in music. Local fiddlers and banjo players often played in town on Friday evenings and Robert loved to listen to them. He decided that he, too, would like to play the violin, so Titus took him to Beckley and bought him a violin. Robert was to reflect in his later life that he was not given toys. Instead, his parents bought him books and watercolors – and a violin. Robert played the violin in the school orchestra and the bass drum in the band. His interest in music would play a major role in his future political career.

Robert was the valedictorian of his graduating class of twenty-eight students. He always worked hard and did his best in school. Byrd had a good memory and loved history and mathematics. His heroes were statesmen and soldiers of the founding period, such as George Washington, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin and Francis Marion.



Titus & Robert Byrd

The Value of Hard Work and Perseverance ★

After graduating from high school, Robert wanted to go to college, but without money that was not possible. Graduating in the middle of the depression also made getting a job difficult. Eight months after his graduation Byrd finally took a job in a gas station in Helen, some four miles from his home. He began the job in January, the middle of the winter. He did not have a car or even an overcoat to keep warm. If he had to walk to Helen, he borrowed a coat; other times he hitched rides. Robert worked from 6:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. On many days he walked a total of eight miles to and from work.

After a short time, Byrd was offered a job as produce boy with the Koppers Company in his hometown. The Koppers Company owned the coal operation in Stotesbury as well as the gas station in Helen. Robert was happy to change jobs because he would no longer have to travel several miles to work.



Erma Ora James

While a student at Mark Twain High School, Byrd was attracted to a young woman who was a grade behind him. Erma Ora James was a coal miner's daughter. In fact, her father, Fred James, was one of the miners who played the fiddle on Friday evenings.

Robert had a unique way of courting Erma. A fellow student would often bring candy to school, and Byrd made it a point to be one of the first students to greet his friend each morning, hoping to be offered some of the sweet treats. When the offer was extended, Robert graciously accepted, but not for himself. He promptly sought out Erma James and gave the candy to her. Thus, Robert courted his sweetheart with another person's sweets.

While Robert worked at the gas station in Helen, he did not have much time to see Erma; but once he became a produce boy in the company store, the couple was able to spend more time together. When they decided to get married in 1937, Robert was earning \$75 a month. After their wedding, the newlyweds lived in two upstairs rooms in the coal camp house of Erma's sister and brother-in-law. The first of the Byrd's two daughters, Mona, was born while they lived in those two rooms.

Robert, like his father, always looked for ways to make a better living. He taught himself the art of cutting meat by watching and helping the meat cutter who worked in the Koppers Company store. He also read a manual to learn more about the process. After acquiring this skill, Byrd worked as a meat cutter at a number of stores in Fayette and Raleigh Counties. It was during this period of his life that a second daughter, Marjorie, was born.

While working as a meat cutter, Byrd took classes in welding at Beckley College. During World War II he used this skill to build cargo ships, known as victory or liberty ships, in Baltimore, Maryland and Tampa, Florida. But when the war ended in 1945, the Byrds returned to Crab Orchard where Robert again worked at the Carolina supermarket.

Entering Politics at the State Level ★

Robert C. Byrd, the only West Virginian to serve in both houses of the state legislature and both houses of the United States Congress, became interested in state government while he was working in Crab Orchard. In 1946 he decided to run for the West Virginia House of Delegates. In the campaign, the political newcomer faced fierce competition from twelve other people, including three incumbents.

Robert had no previous political experience, but he learned a great deal in his very first political campaign. Besides being a newcomer to politics, he still could not drive an automobile. Therefore, he had to rely on a friend to drive him to meetings as well as around the county so he could meet the voters. Another disadvantage was that he had no name recognition. Since he was an unknown in political circles, he soon realized that he needed a gimmick to attract attention and make himself recognizable. His gimmick became his violin. Byrd took the violin everywhere and at meetings offered to play a couple of tunes before giving his speech. The gimmick worked! He became so well known that when the results of the election came in Byrd led the ticket.

Shortly before his reelection to the West Virginia House of Delegates in 1948, Robert and Erma opened their own grocery store in Sophia. When Robert was in Charleston, Erma operated their small business. In his second term in the House, Byrd again turned his attention to education. To embark on his dream of a college education, he enrolled at Morris Harvey College (now the University of Charleston). He continued his college studies, taking classes at Concord and Marshall Colleges (now Marshall University).

In 1950 Byrd decided to vacate his seat in the House of Delegates and run for the state Senate. He was elected to the office, but about half way through his first term in the state Senate, one of West Virginia's representatives in the United States House of Representatives decided not to run for reelection. This opened up a seat in Byrd's Congressional district. The new Senator decided if he ever was to serve his state at the national level, this was the time.



Senator Robert C. Byrd

Emerging onto the National Scene ★

The Congressional election of 1952 proved to be one of the most trying times Robert Byrd would ever know. He was pressured to take sides in the state's gubernatorial race, but he knew that to do so would hinder his chances to be elected to Congress. Because he refused to take sides, he was not invited to political gatherings. Focused and determined to win the election, Byrd did not let the lack of an invitation stop him from attending rallies. He would just show up, usually with his violin in hand. At one such gathering, after the meeting was adjourned without his being allowed to speak, Byrd and two friends began to play some favorite musical selections—songs like “Turkey in the Straw” and “Cripple Creek.” Soon, a large number of people began to make their way back into the meeting room. Robert and his friends continued to play and, when a crowd was assembled, he gave his speech.

The second thing that made the campaign of 1952 so difficult was the resurgence of a story of Byrd's past membership in the Ku Klux Klan. He had joined the Klan in the early 1940s because of its stand against Communism, a doctrine that he firmly opposed. The story first surfaced before the primary election and, in characteristic style, Byrd faced the issue head on. He addressed the Klan issue honestly, openly acknowledged his involvement and the reasons for it. He admitted he had made a mistake. The voters appreciated his honesty and he won his party's nomination by a large margin. During the campaign before the general election, the story resurfaced. This time a letter that Byrd had written to the Imperial Wizard of the Klan, asking that the organization be revived in West Virginia, was made public. He had written this letter in 1946, later than the period of time he acknowledged association with the Klan. Governor Okey Patterson asked Robert to withdraw from the race, but he refused. Again, he accepted the challenge, confronted the issue head on and won the election. His willingness to face issues in a straightforward manner would become a pattern throughout his political career. Byrd resigned from the West Virginia Senate and went to Washington, D.C. to begin his illustrative service at the national level.



President John F. Kennedy & Senator Robert C. Byrd - 1963

Byrd served six years in the House of Representatives. He did not gain much seniority during that time, and as a member of the minority party, did not enjoy much support from the House leadership. He spent his time working in his Congressional district, getting to know people and learning what issues his constituents favored. During his second term in the House, however, Byrd was assigned to the Foreign Affairs Committee. As a member of this committee, he traveled overseas for the first time.

While serving in the House, Byrd did initiate a personal goal—earning a law degree. In 1953 he enrolled in night classes at George Washington University's School of Law. He transferred to American University's Washington College of Law after learning that George Washington would not confer a law degree because he lacked the prerequisite baccalaureate degree. Byrd worked on his law degree for the next ten years, completing it as a member of the United States Senate in 1963. When the commencement speaker, then President John F. Kennedy, conferred the degree, he remarked that Robert C. Byrd was the only person to begin and complete the requirements for a law degree while serving as a member of Congress.

The Senate Years ★

In 1958, Robert Byrd decided to run for the United States Senate. He saw the Senate as a means of doing more for the whole state of West Virginia. This campaign was especially difficult because special interest groups, like the United Mine Workers, had already expressed support for another candidate, William C. Marland, a former governor. Byrd received a message from John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers, telling him not to run for the Senate. This message only furthered Byrd's determination not only to run, but also to win the office. Tensions were relieved when a second seat opened up with the death of Senator Matthew Neely. Marland announced for the vacant seat, eliminating a confrontation with Byrd. John L. Lewis could now support Marland and Byrd in their quests for Senate seats. Byrd won his seat, defeating Chapman Revercomb to become the 1,579th person to serve in the Senate since its beginning in 1789. The other Senate seat went to Jennings Randolph.



Senator Robert C. Byrd

As a new senator, Byrd soon became friends with some of the nation's most powerful leaders—among them, Senate Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson and Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee Carl Haden. As a freshman senator, Robert received a unique honor when he was appointed to the Appropriations Committee.

Byrd became a strong supporter of Lyndon Johnson, but the senator for whom he perhaps developed the greatest respect was Richard Russell of Georgia. He referred to Russell as the “father” of the Senate, primarily because he was known for his knowledge of rules and

precedents. Byrd believed that knowing rules and precedents was power. His creative interpretation of Senate rules has helped him obtain passage or rejection of a number of bills, perhaps one of the best known returning the Panama Canal to Panama.

Byrd has served continuously in the Senate since 1959. During that time he has held more leadership positions than any other senator in history. Some of the positions of leadership include Secretary of the Democrat Conference, Majority Whip, Majority Leader, President Pro Tempore, and Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Byrd has also cast more votes than any other senator.

Byrd is often called the “soul of the Senate” because of his vast knowledge of its history and his obvious affection and respect for the government institution. He is considered by his colleagues to be the custodian of the Senate’s values and ideals. He provides orientation to all newly elected senators and, in 1989, published a four-volume history of the Senate.

Upholding the Constitution

Robert C. Byrd has as much love and respect for the Constitution as he does the Senate. He has said that the United States Constitution is the only one of its kind ever written. The Constitution is important today because it provides our government with three distinct divisions—executive, legislative, and judicial—each of which is equal to the others. Byrd believes the problem with the Constitution is that people do not know much about it. Even within the Senate he sees fellow senators who show what he terms too much political partisanship, something that is not mentioned in the Constitution. He decries people who view the chief executive’s role as more important than the framers of the Constitution intended it to be. As a result, he has had differences with many presidents, regardless of political affiliations.

Two recent examples of differences with chief executives were his opposition to the line-item veto under President Bill Clinton and his reluctance to give President George W. Bush the power to declare war. President Clinton supported a bill to give the president the ability to cancel specific items in spending and tax bills. This was known as the line-item veto because the president could choose the particular items he wanted to delete. Byrd opposed the line-item veto, citing the Constitution, which stated that bills must be presented to the president in the form in which they were passed. The president then had to accept or reject the bills in their entirety. The line-item veto was passed with Byrd’s opposition, but in 1998 the Supreme Court, exercising its authority of judicial review, declared the law unconstitutional. This vindicated Byrd’s position in regard to the language of the Constitution.



Senator Robert C. Byrd

trade agreements, and, according to the Constitution, only Congress has the power to regulate commerce. He said that this act prevents the Senate, as representatives of the people, from exercising its constitutional responsibility to reject or modify trade agreements, which is not in the best interest of the American people.

Byrd stands by the principle that “as long as this country shall stand, we should uphold the Constitution.” So he will continue to fight for separation of powers as provided in the Constitution. He will fight against any bill that is not in keeping with the intent of the founding fathers.

After the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, Byrd was concerned that Congress was handing over its Constitutional right to declare war to President George W. Bush. He favored an anti-terrorist response to the attacks, but he maintained Congress alone had the Constitutional power to declare war. He further contended that Congress did not have the authority to surrender that constitutional duty to the president. In response to the power given the President to initiate military action in Iraq in March, 2003, Byrd quoted Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution, which grants Congress the power to declare war and call forth the militia “to execute the Laws of the Union, suppress Insurrection and repel Invasions.” He emphatically pointed out that nowhere is it written in the Constitution that the president has the authority to call forth the militia to preempt a perceived threat.

Another area where Byrd believes the executive branch infringed on the power of the legislative branch was with the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement. He opposed this agreement because, again, he believed it gave powers to the executive branch that were reserved to Congress by the Constitution. He charged that the agreement gives future presidents “carte blanche” to negotiate and determine what will be contained in

A Man of Vision

Robert C. Byrd has been classified as a conservative when it comes to preserving and perpetuating all that is time tested and good in the American system, but he is labeled a progressive in favor of change when change is needed.

When he became Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, he said he welcomed the challenge afforded him because it gave him the opportunity to become West Virginia's leading industry. He has certainly done that – bringing billions of federal dollars into the state. Many of the projects for which he has secured funding have preserved the past. Others, however, show that he keeps abreast of current technologies and their impact on economic development.

Byrd recognized that if West Virginia wanted to move from coal to a high tech economy the state needed to build an infrastructure— better water, sewage facilities and roads. He worked in Congress to secure funding for these projects and many more. He has been instrumental in bringing high tech industries to West Virginia. He also has secured funding for high tech educational opportunities for young people, especially in the areas of biometrics and health care.

Robert C. Byrd rose from poverty to become a powerful force in United States government. He has said that he became a senator in order to serve all West Virginians and he has been true to his word. Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., in describing Robert Byrd has said, “His number one priority has always been the people of West Virginia. It has been a great example for all of us to never lose sight of the fact that you are elected by the people from your state and the people from your state should have priority.” Byrd made it a priority early in his career to determine what issues West Virginians believed were important. As a result, he has focused much of his time and energy in Congress on issues to improve the quality of life, education, health care, transportation and employment. While working in the Senate, he has accomplished great things, doing what he believes is right and not compromising his integrity. Retired Senator Sam Nunn, D-Ga., has said of Byrd, “It has been said that great men are like eagles. You find them one at a time, soaring alone, using their skill and their strength to reach new horizons. Such a man is Robert Byrd.” All one has to do is look anywhere in the state to see the realization of his efforts. Many people call him the West Virginian of the 20th century.

Books by Robert C. Byrd

[The Senate, 1789-1989, Vol. I: Addresses on the History of the United States Senate](#) (US Government Printing Office, 1989).

[The Senate, 1789-1989, Vol. II: Addresses on the History of the United States Senate](#) (US Government Printing Office).

[The Senate, 1789-1989, Vol. III: Classical Speeches, 1830-1993](#) (US Government Printing Office).

[The Senate, 1789-1989, Vol. IV: Historical Statistics, 1789-1992](#) (US Government Printing Office).

[The Senate and the Roman Republic: Addresses on the History of Roman Constitutionalism](#) (US Government Printing Office, 1995).

Themes for Discussion

THE VALUE OF AN EDUCATION

Questions to Discuss

1. How does Robert C. Byrd's life illustrate the value he places on education?
2. Do you think young people today are as committed to getting an education? Why or why not?
3. As a youngster, Byrd received educational materials, like books and watercolors, rather than toys. What educational materials did you receive as a child?
4. What are some things that can be done to promote education in the home?
5. Should education be a responsibility of citizenship?

In Their Own Words

1. When Robert C. Byrd accepted the award as West Virginian of the 20th Century, he said,
"I also hope that increased numbers of children will rediscover the joys of reading, that more and more students will find unfathomed challenges in mathematics and the sciences and in history, and that a new generation of well-educated, keenly interested, and highly dedicated and industrious students will emerge from our schools to assure our state's preeminence in every field of learning, business, industry and endeavor known to man, and many fields yet unknown but waiting for some blade-sharp West Virginia intellects to invent and open doors to them."

- What can you do to meet Byrd's challenge?
- What are some fields that might be important in the future?

2. Sen. Hilary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., has said of Byrd,

"He is always curious. He wants to know about new ideas. . . . He always is trying to expand his understanding, to just drink in the wisdom of the past so that he can apply it today and tomorrow."

- What does Clinton's analysis of Byrd tell you about him?
- What are some things that Byrd has done to illustrate he is always learning?

Individual and/or Group Activities

1. Follow education bills that are introduced in the state or national legislature. Decide which are the most important. Then write a letter to your legislator showing your support for the bill.
2. Research to find some education bills that Byrd has supported.
3. To broaden your own education as well as accept one of Byrd's challenges, read one of the literary classics.
4. Byrd has said his Doctor of Jurisprudence degree is one of his proudest possessions. He views it as a symbol of fulfillment of the dream of a poor boy from the coalfields who had determination to reach a goal. Interview someone in your family or community who has reached a goal through education. Share what you find with your class.
5. In 1985, Byrd created the only national, merit-based scholarship program funded through the United States Department of Education. In 1993, the program expanded to provide college scholarships of up to \$6,000 over a four-year period. Go to <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/HEP/dues/byrd.htm> to find out more about the Robert C. Byrd Scholarship program.
6. In 1969, Byrd began his Scholastic Recognition Award, presenting a savings bond to valedictorians from West Virginia's public and private schools. Go to http://byrd.senate.gov/byrd_issues/byrd_education/byrd_education.htm to learn more about this program.

WV STANDARDS and OBJECTIVES

SS.9.1.3 – make informed decisions as to what government should and should not do

SS.10.1.3 – analyze the nature of civic responsibility in various cultures

SS.11.1.3 – analyze the changing nature of civic responsibility

SS.11.1.4 – develop positions and formulate actions on problems of today and predict challenges of the future (e.g., terrorism, religious conflict, weapons of mass destruction, population growth).

SS.12.1.3 – describe and analyze the personal and civic responsibilities of U.S. citizens.

SS.12.1.4 – describe and explain dispositions or traits that are important to the preservation and improvement of American democracy (e.g., individual responsibility self-governance or self-discipline, civility, patriotism, respect for the rights of other citizens, honesty, respect for the law, open mindedness, critical mindedness, negotiation and compromise, civic mindedness, and compassion).

SS.12.2.39 – identify and explain the rights, privileges, and responsibilities granted U.S citizens.

SS.12.2.43 – use intellectual skills essential for informed, effective, and responsible citizenship that enable individuals to learn and apply civic knowledge in the many and varied roles of citizens.

A GOOD WORK ETHIC

Questions to Discuss

1. What did Sen. Byrd do to better his life financially?
2. What are some of the jobs that Byrd had?
3. If Byrd did not have a strong work ethic, how might his life have been different?
4. Do you think Robert C. Byrd would have been as successful if he were born today?

In Their Own Words

1. Robert C. Byrd has said,
“The only paths to success are education and hard work.”
 - What do you think he meant by this statement?
2. Someone said Sen. Byrd’s career proves that difficulties and obstacles can be overcome by an individual possessed of a dream, the determination to make that dream come true, and the willingness to work hard to achieve that dream.
 - Give some examples from Byrd’s life that prove this statement is true.
3. Senate Majority Leader Thomas Daschle, D-S.D., has said of Robert C. Byrd,
“Senator Byrd’s life story could be summarized in one sentence: Yes, you can. Because I think that’s what it says. It says to people all over this country you can become all that you want to be if you’ve got the dedication, persistence, and the character required. . . .”
 - Do you have a goal for your life? What will you have to do to achieve that goal?
4. Former Sen. Robert Dole has said of Byrd,
“He is the most single-minded, hard-working person I have probably ever dealt with. I can remember when an issue was going to be called up in September, him calling me in January or February to talk out what he was going to do and how he was going to do it. He was prepared. That was his life.”
 - Why is it important to be prepared? How do you prepare for a major test or project?

Individual and/or Group Activities

1. Robert Byrd has said the secret of the great Roman legions was due to stern discipline. Research the early history of Rome and list characteristics that made the civilization great.
2. Finding a job was difficult during the 1930s. Research the Great Depression to find out how unemployment affected the country.
3. Interview some prospective employers. Ask them what characteristics they want in prospective employees.
4. Survey your community to determine what jobs are available today. Predict how these will change in the future.
5. Research to find bills affecting employment that Sen. Byrd has supported.

WV STANDARDS and OBJECTIVES

SS.10.3.5 – identify the causal relationship of economic changes and their effects on the job market (e.g., supply and demand, technology, industrialization)

SS.11.3.1 – evaluate the lifestyle changes brought on by industrialization, technology and transportation (debated industrialization vs. maintaining natural environment and the implication of tourism)

SS.11.5.5 – analyze and explain the effects of the Great Depression on worldwide economic conditions

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD CHARACTER

Questions to discuss

1. What are some traits that make up one's character?
2. Robert Byrd credits his adoptive parents with instilling within him good values that developed his character. Identify incidents in his early life that illustrate good character traits.
3. Throughout his personal and political life, Robert Byrd has stood up for what he believes. He has refused to allow politics to dictate how he votes on issues. What does this attitude tell about his character?
4. What does it mean to be a person of good character?

In Their Own Words

1. One of Robert C. Byrd's favorite quotations comes from Horace Greeley:

*Fame is a vapor
Popularity an accident;
Riches take wing;
Those who cheer today may curse tomorrow;
Only one thing endures: character*

- What do you think the quotation by Horace Greeley says about character?

2. Robert Byrd has said,

"In the real world, exemplary conduct can sometimes achieve much more than any political agenda. Comity, courtesy, charitable treatment of even our political opposites, combined with a concerted effort to not just occupy our offices, but to bring honor to them, will do more to improve people and restore their faith in us, their leaders, than millions of dollars of 30-second spots . . ."

- What are character traits identified in this quotation?
- What does the statement say about character and behavior vs. a media blitz?

3. Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, D-SD, has said,

"Robert C. Byrd is truly a legend in his own time, not only for his accomplishments, but also for his principles."

- What is a principle?
- What principles does Byrd possess?

Individual and/or Group Activities

1. Research some of Byrd's decisions in Congress that show his character.
2. The Six Pillars of Character include trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. Give an example of something in the life of Robert Byrd that illustrates each of these six pillars.
3. Write an essay describing someone you think exhibits good character.
4. Citizenship is one of the six pillars of character. To become a better citizen, develop a project to make your school or community better.
5. Good citizens stay informed. Read the daily newspaper or watch the television news and record important issues in our state or community.
6. Go to <http://www.charactercounts.org./dosdents.htm> and make a poster illustrating one of the character traits listed here. Display the posters in the classroom.
7. Examine the language of the United States Constitution and list references to character.
8. One character trait is respect. Develop a plan to address conflicts in a non-violent, respectful manner.
9. Research world or national conflicts and propose a way to have settled or settle the conflict peacefully.

WV STANDARDS and OBJECTIVES

SS.9.1.2 – explain the importance of the fundamental democratic values and principles of United States Constitutional democracy upon individuals, communities and nations

SS.9.1.3 – make informed decisions as to what government should and should not do

SS.9.1.5 – evaluate ways conflicts can be resolved in a cooperative, peaceful manner that respects individual rights and promotes the common good

SS.10.1.3 – analyze the nature of civic responsibility in various cultures

SS.11.1.1 – discuss ways citizens can work cooperatively to resolve personal, local, regional and world conflicts peacefully

SS.11.1.4 – develop positions and formulate actions on problems of today and predict challenges of the future (e.g., terrorism, religious conflict, weapons of mass destruction, population growth)

SS.12.1.4 – describe and explain dispositions or traits that are important to the preservation and improvement of American democracy (e.g., individual responsibility self-governance or self-discipline, civility, patriotism, respect for the rights of other citizens, honesty, respect for the law, open mindedness, critical mindedness, negotiation and compromise, civic mindedness, and compassion).

SS.12.2.2 – examine and analyze the basic ideas and core democratic values the Framers used in creating the government they thought would best protect the rights of each individual and promote the good of all.

SS.12.2.3 – describe the influence of the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Age of Enlightenment on the thinking of the Founders and analyze how they were influenced by the classical periods of ancient Greece and Rome (e.g., civic virtue, common good)

SS.12.2.45 – develop civic dispositions (habits of the heart) that pervade all aspects of citizenship and personal traits of private and public character essential to the preservation and improvement of American constitutional democracy. Explain that American constitutional democracy cannot accomplish its purposes unless its citizens participate in public policy and civic life.

THE SOUL OF THE SENATE

Questions to discuss

1. How has Robert Byrd lived up to his desire to serve in the Senate in order to represent all of West Virginia?
2. Byrd has said the Senate is unique because it has unlimited freedom to offer amendments and unlimited freedom to debate. Do you think it is important for the Senate to keep these powers? Why or why not?
3. Byrd has accused the Senate today of lacking civility. He says many senators simply vote with their political party. How do you think senators should vote?
4. How might the changes that have occurred in the Senate since the time of Byrd's birth (for example, women members, television coverage, direct election by the people) have caused the founding fathers to have a different view of the institution?

In Their Own Words

1. Robert C. Byrd has great love and respect for the United States Senate, and he believes it is the branch of government that is closest to the people. He has said,

“The Senate is the sum total of its 100 members. When the duly elected Representatives of the people gather in the Senate Chamber, they become much, much more than the combined intellects, talents and idiosyncrasies of 100 individuals. They become the living, breathing manifestation of the vision of the Framers—the guardians of the spirit and the soul of the sovereign people of this nation.”

- What does this statement tell you about Byrd's perception of what the Senate should be?
 - Sen. Byrd has been called the “soul of the Senate.” Why do you think he was given that title?
2. Former Republican Senator and now Governor of Alaska, Frank Murkowski, wrote of Byrd,
“When future historians are writing about the 20th century Senate, Senator Robert Byrd will surely be remembered as one of the giants who followed in the footsteps of Henry Clay and Daniel Webster.”
- Would Sen. Byrd want to be remembered as a giant? Why or why not?

Individual and/or Group Activities

1. Research the requirements one must meet to run for the United States Senate.
2. Research one or more of the historic senators from the past, that is, Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun. Compare your choice to Robert C. Byrd.
3. Research the compromises at the Constitutional Convention that resulted in the creation of a two-house legislature.
4. Go to <http://www.Congress.org/Congressorg/home/> By giving your zip code, you are hyperlinked to your elected officials. Write an email message to one of your senators requesting information or stating your opinion on a bill under consideration. This site also contains a listing of issues and sample letters others have written to their elected leaders.
5. Go to <http://www.senate.gov/senators> to find hyperlinks to the 100 United States senators. Access the home page of your two senators.
6. Go to <http://byrd.senate.gov/> to find the home page of Robert C. Byrd. This site contains hyperlinks to speeches, issues and a virtual newsroom. Access one of Byrd's speeches and analyze his position on the issue being addressed.
7. Go to <http://rules.senate.gov/> to find an index of the Senate's standing rules. Access one or more of the rules.

WV STANDARDS and OBJECTIVES

SS.9.1.3 – make informed decisions as to what government should and should not do
SS.9.2.1 – identify and describe the fundamental democratic principles and values in core American documents and identify the discrepancies between the expressed ideals and realities
SS.9.2.4 – summarize documents and philosophies that are the basis for representative democracy in the United States (e.g., Greek, Roman, John Locke, Magna Carta, English Bill of Rights)
SS.9.2.5 – explain the purpose, organization and functions of the legislative, executive and judicial branches, and analyze the separation of powers, checks and balances
S.9.2.12 – evaluate, take and defend positions about the functions of political leadership and the importance of public service in American democracy
SS.9.5.10 – explain the major challenges faced by the framers of the Constitution, and describe the compromises reached at the Constitutional Convention
SS.10.2.2 – identify and analyze the contributions of the classical civilizations to the development of representative democracy in the United States Constitution
SS.12.2.3 – describe the influence of the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Age of Enlightenment on the thinking of the Founders and analyze how they were influenced by the classical periods of ancient Greece and Rome (e.g., civic virtue, common good).
SS.12.2.4 – trace and explain the British origins of American constitutionalism (e.g., Magna Carta, Petition of Right and English Bill of Rights) and describe how the evolution of constitutional (parliamentary) government in England influenced the Founders.
SS.12.2.13 – analyze and evaluate the major debates that occurred during the development of the Constitution and their ultimate resolutions (e.g., shared powers, divided state-federal power, slavery, the rights of individuals and states).
SS.12.2.14 – explain how and why the Framers debated the powers granted to the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the Federal government.
SS.12.2.17 – explain the constitutional provisions of how the powers of the national government are distributed, shared and limited.
SS.12.2.22 – analyze and explain the structure, function, responsibilities and powers of the legislative branch of the federal government and describe the changes in congressional power from the founding era to present day.

PROTECTING THE INTEGRITY OF THE CONSTITUTION

Questions to discuss

1. What are some examples of national concern that illustrate the breakdown in the checks and balances provided by the founding fathers?
2. Are there times when one branch of government should relinquish its power to another branch?
3. Justice Louis Brandeis once observed in *Myers v. United States*, in 1926, “*The doctrine of separation of powers was adopted by the Convention of 1787, not to promote efficiency, but to preclude the exercise of arbitrary power.*” Which is more important today – efficiency or the preclusion of arbitrary power? Defend your position.
4. In your opinion, which branch of the government should have the most power? Defend your position.

In Their Own Words

1. Robert C. Byrd, speaking of the Constitutional duties of the Senate, has said,
“As long as there is a forum in which questions can be asked by men and women who do not stand in awe of a chief executive and one can speak as long as one’s feet will allow one to stand, the liberties of the American people will be secure.”
 - Should senators be permitted to ask questions and speak indefinitely on an issue?
 - Sen. Byrd was concerned that the Senate invoked cloture after only 30 hours of debate on the Homeland Security Bill. Why would he be opposed to this limitation? Why would he be displeased with his fellow senators?
2. Sen. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., has said of Robert Byrd,
“He’s renowned for his vast ability on the issues, his extraordinary knowledge of Senate history and his constant dedication to insisting that the Senate live up to the ideals of the Constitution.”
 - Give examples that illustrate Byrd’s attempts to get the Senate to live up to its ideals and Constitutional duties.

Individual and/or Group Activities

1. Read the first three articles of the United States Constitution and list the powers that are given to each of the three branches of government.
2. Go to <http://memory.loc.gov/const/const.html> to find a searchable copy of the United States Constitution. This site also provides a link to its history.
3. Research one or more of the founding fathers and write a biography of each.
4. Go to http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/Leaders_Lecture_Series_Byrd.htm and read the address Robert Byrd made regarding the history and responsibilities of the United States Senate. Summarize the main points.
5. Sen. Byrd fears the Homeland Security Act might build a massive “chamber of secrets” that will compromise the right of privacy. He fears, in the name of security, the government will peer into the daily transactions and private lives of citizens. Debate the issue and decide which is more important: Security or Privacy?
6. Review the process of amending the Constitution. Then, propose an amendment to the Constitution that addresses checks and balances.
7. One of the historical methods of delaying a vote in the Senate (and possibly killing a bill) was the use of the filibuster. Research some of the famous historical filibusters.

WV STANDARDS and OBJECTIVES

- SS.9.1.6 – evaluate, take and defend positions on issues in which fundamental democratic values and principles are in conflict (e.g., liberty and equality, individual rights and the common good, majority rule, minority rule)
- SS.9.2.5 – explain the purpose, organization and functions of the legislative, executive and judicial branches, and analyze the separation of powers, checks and balances
- SS.9.5.8 – analyze and evaluate the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights and describe challenges faced by the new United States government
- SS.9.5.9 – identify the Constitution as a response to the political, economic and social conditions that existed after the American Revolution
- SS.9.5.10 – explain the major challenges faced by the framers of the Constitution, and describe the compromises reached at the Constitutional Convention
- SS.11.2.2 – explain the role of the president in the formation of national and foreign policy
- SS.11.2.3 – critique the interaction of the three branches of the federal government in an increasingly complex society
- SS.11.2.7 – analyze judicial review and the procedure used to render decisions
- SS.12.2.13 – analyze and evaluate the major debates that occurred during the development of the Constitution and their ultimate resolutions (e.g., shared powers, divided state-federal power, slavery, the rights of individuals and states.
- SS.12.2.14 – explain how and why the Framers debated the powers granted to the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the Federal government.
- SS.12.2.17 – explain the constitutional provisions of how the powers of the national
- SS.12.2.18 – explain how the Constitutional system of checks and balances protects individual citizens’ liberties.
- SS.12.2.22 – analyze and explain the structure, function, responsibilities and powers of the legislative branch of the federal government and describe the changes in congressional power from the founding era to present day.
- SS.12.2.23 – analyze and explain the structure, function, responsibilities and powers of the judicial branch of the federal government (e.g., Judiciary Act of 1789, judicial review, writ of mandamus, original jurisdiction, *Marbury v. Madison*, methods of interpretation) and trace the changes in judicial power from the founding era to present day.
- SS.12.2.37 – describe United States foreign policy and national security objectives and their importance to individual citizens. Discuss sources of tension and propose resolutions to the growing conflicts between the guaranteed rights of individuals and increased national security needs.

