

The students in Cal Lewis's tenth-grade U.S. history class are all in their seats before the bell rings, eagerly awaiting the start of the period. After the bell, in he walks dressed as George Washington, complete with an 18th century costume and powdered wig and carrying a gavel. He gravely takes his seat, raps the gavel, and says, "I now call to order this meeting of the Constitutional Convention."

The students have been preparing for this day for weeks. Each of them represents one of the 13 original states. In groups of two and three, they have been studying all about their states, the colonial era, the American Revolution, and the United States under the Articles of Confederation. Two days ago, Mr. Lewis gave each group secret instructions from their "governor" on the key interests of their state. For example, the New Jersey and Delaware delegations are to insist that small states be adequately represented in the government, whereas New York and Virginia are to demand strict representation by population.

In preparing for the debate, each delegation had to make certain that any member of the delegation could represent the delegation's views. To ensure this, Mr. Lewis assigned each student a number from one to three at random. When a delegation asks to be recognized, he will call out a number, and the student with that number will respond for the group.

Mr. Lewis, staying in character as George Washington, gives a speech on the importance of the task they are undertaking and then opens the floor for debate. First, he recognizes the delegation from Georgia. He randomly selects the number two, which turns out to be Beth Andrews. Beth is a shy girl, but she has been well prepared by her fellow delegates to represent Georgia, and she knows that they are rooting for her.

"The great state of Georgia wishes to raise the question of a Bill of Rights. We have experienced the tyranny of government, and we demand that the people have a guarantee of their liberties!" Beth goes on to propose elements of the Bill of Rights that her delegation has drawn up. While she is talking, Mr. Lewis is rating her presentation on historical accuracy, appropriateness to the real interests of her state, organization, and delivery. He will use these ratings in evaluating each delegation at the end of the class period. The debate goes on. The North Carolina delegates argue in favor of the right of states to expand to the west; the New Jersey delegation wants western territories made into new states. Wealthy Massachusetts wants taxes to remain in the states where they are collected; poor Delaware wants national taxes. Between debates, the delegates have an opportunity to do some "horse trading," promising to vote for proposals important to other states in exchange for votes on issues important to them. At the end of the week, the class votes on 10 key issues. After the votes are taken and the bell rings, the students pour into the hall still arguing about issues of taxation, representation, and powers of the executive.

After school, Rikki Ingram, another social studies teacher, drops into Mr. Lewis's classroom. "I see you're doing your Constitutional Convention again this year. It looks great, but how can you cover all of U.S. history if you spend a month just on the Constitution?"

Cal smiles. "I know I'm sacrificing some coverage to do this unit, but look how motivated these kids are!" He picks up a huge sheaf of notes and position papers written by the South Carolina delegation. "These kids are working their tails off, and they're learning that history is fun and useful. They'll remember this experience for the rest of their lives!"

Mr. Lewis knows the value of motivation, so he has structured a unit that taps many aspects of motivation. By placing students in groups and evaluating them on the basis of presentations made by randomly selected group members, he has created a situation in which students are encouraging each other to excel. Social motivation of this kind is very powerful, especially for adolescents. Mr. Lewis is rating students' presentations according to clear, comprehensive standards and giving them feedback each day. He is tying an important period in history to students' daily lives by immersing them in active roles of debating and trading votes. These

strategies are designed not only to make history fun but also to give students many sources of motivation to learn and remember the history they have studied. Mr. Lewis is right. The students will probably never forget their experience in his class and are likely to approach new information about the American Revolution, the Constitution, and perhaps history in general with enthusiasm throughout their lives.

Example and comment by Slavin (2018)