



Springboard:

Students should read “The President’s Cabinet” and answer the questions.

Objective: The student will be able to explain the roles of some key executive departments and their department heads.

Materials: The President’s Cabinet (Springboard handout)
Department Depictions (handout)

Terms to know: **cabinet** - a board to advise the President

Procedure:

- After reviewing the Springboard, explain that *in this lesson the student(s) will learn more about the executive departments represented by the members of the cabinet.*
- Hand out the “Department Depictions” note taking form.
- **For individualized instruction** have the student research each department, briefly explaining and creating pictures to illustrate each. Then discuss.
- **For group instruction** divide students into groups of two or three, assigning each one or more departments. The groups should briefly research and devise a short skit explaining the function(s) of their assigned department(s).
- Have students act out their skits as others take notes on their “Department Depictions” handout and discuss.
- During the discussion have the student(s) reiterate the importance of the executive departments to the president. *(The president cannot keep track of everything, so various departments handle one or more major areas of responsibility each. Cabinet members, who head up each of the departments, meet regularly with the president to keep him/her apprised of what is going on in each department.)*



The President's Cabinet



The job of the president would be impossible without the help of the many government agencies, departments, and so forth, but by far the most important group is the president's cabinet. Members of the cabinet, which is composed of the vice president, the attorney general, and the heads of various executive departments, serve as the president's most trusted advisors. The president's cabinet is based on Article II: Section 2 of the Constitution, which states the president "may require the opinion, in writing of the principle officer in each of the executive departments, upon any subject relating to the duties of their respective offices." To become members of the cabinet, secretaries are appointed by the president and must be confirmed by a majority vote in the Senate. However they can be dismissed by the president without Senate approval.

The Constitution does not say which or how many departments should be represented in the cabinet. Though they can vary somewhat, the departments usually included are Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Labor, State, Transportation, Treasury, and Veterans Affairs. At times the head of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the Director of the National Drug Control Policy, the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security, and the U.S. Trade Representative have also been cabinet members.

The president meets at least weekly with his cabinet to be updated on the workings of each department and discuss policy matters. Other officials, such as the President's Chief of Staff, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors, the President's council (lawyer), the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, and the U.S. Representative to the United Nations are sometimes invited to attend.

The president's cabinet could be described as

- A. an executive department.
- B. a Senate committee.
- C. an advisory board.
- D. a secretarial pool.

Which person is **NOT** traditionally part of the cabinet?

- A. Defense Secretary
- B. Secretary of State
- C. Vice President
- D. FEMA Director

Which statement **BEST** explains why department heads are included in the president's cabinet?

- A. They are trusted advisors administering departments.
- B. Cabinet members have experience as secretaries.
- C. Department heads are active members of the Senate.
- D. They work in the various executive departments.

Why do you think Senate approval is required for members of the president's cabinet?

The President's Cabinet Answers and Explanations



The job of the president would be impossible without the help of the many government agencies, departments, and so forth, but by far the most important group is the president's cabinet. Members of the cabinet, which is composed of the vice president, the attorney general, and the heads of various executive departments, serve as the president's most trusted advisors. The president's cabinet is based on Article II: Section 2 of the Constitution, which states the president "may require the opinion, in writing of the principle officer in each of the executive departments, upon any subject relating to the duties of their respective offices." To become members of the cabinet, secretaries are appointed by the president and must be confirmed by a majority vote in the Senate. However they can be dismissed by the president without Senate approval.

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- A. an executive department.
- B. a Senate committee.
- C. an advisory board. *
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(All or parts of each answer choice appears in the passage. Students must reason that cabinet members are advisors, so choice C is the best option.)

Which person is **NOT** traditionally part of the cabinet?

- A. Defense Secretary
- B. Secretary of State
- C. Vice President
- D. FEMA Director *

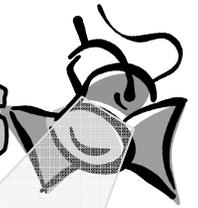
(Again, students can't just scan for information to answer this. The answer is in the last paragraph, but all options are listed.)

Which statement **BEST** explains why department heads are included in the president's cabinet?

- A. They are trusted advisors administering departments. *
 - B. Cabinet members have excellent secretarial skills.
 - C. Department heads are active members of the Senate.
 - D. They work in the various executive departments.
- (Each can report on what is happening in his or her department.)*

Why do you think Senate approval is required for members of the president's cabinet?
This contributes to the balance of power in federal government. The Senate provides a check on the power of the presidency.

Department Depictions



Agriculture -

Commerce -

Defense -

Education -

Energy -

Health and Human Services -

Homeland Security -

Housing and Urban Development -

Interior -

Labor -

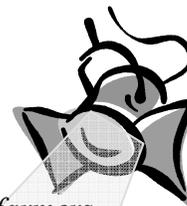
State -

Transportation -

Treasury -

Veterans Affairs -

Department Depictions Suggestions for Answers



Agriculture - It oversees farm production to ensure fair prices; helps farmers financially; helps food producers sell goods overseas; runs food aid and nutrition programs. The USDA inspects and grades foods to make sure they're safe.

Commerce - It promotes trade, economic growth, and technological advancement to keep the U.S. competitive in world markets and to prevent unfair trade practices. It also gathers and analyzes statistics for business and government.

Defense - It oversees everything regarding America's military: the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and specialized combat groups. It also helps with flood control, developing oceanic resources, and managing oil reserves.

Education - It is in charge of federal education programs including: student loans, migrant training, vocational education, and programs for people with special needs.

Energy - It is responsible for the research and development of energy technology; conservation; use of nuclear energy; regulation of energy production and use; pricing and distribution of oil; and it sets standards for reducing harmful effects of energy.

Health and Human Services - It oversees Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid; social services for children, Native Americans, poor families, and other needy people; mental health and substance abuse facilities; infectious disease control; the safety of the nation's food and drug supply; and conducts research on cancer, AIDS, and other issues.

Homeland Security - It was created from 22 separate agencies in response to the 9-11 attacks. Its function is to protect the nation against threats to the homeland.

Housing and Urban Development - It works to promote community development; administer fair-housing laws; and provide affordable housing for the needy.

Interior - It works to protect the natural environment; develop America's natural resources; manage national parks, monuments, outdoor recreation, and historic sites; oversees wildlife refuges and research centers; oversees development and environmental protection of public land; and helps Native Americans living on reservations.

Labor - It works to protect workers' rights; improve working conditions; and promote good relations between labor and management. The Bureau of Labor Statistics tracks employment, prices, and other national economic statistics.

State - It helps the president with international affairs and in carrying out U.S. foreign policy; maintains relations between foreign countries and the U.S.; negotiates treaties and agreements with nations; speaks for the U.S. in the United Nations and other international organizations; and oversees embassies and consulates abroad.

Transportation - It sets national transportation policy including highway planning, development, and construction; aviation; mass transit; and railroads. It helps ensure the safety of waterways, ports, highways, and oil and gas pipelines. It is also in charge of the Coast Guard, which conducts search and rescue at sea and enforces laws that protect oceans and waterways.

Treasury - It oversees and reports on the financial state of the government and economy; regulates the sale of alcohol and firearms; supervises printing of stamps and money; curbs counterfeiting; and operates the Customs Service, which regulates and taxes imports. The IRS, a branch of the Treasury, regulates tax laws and collects federal taxes.

Veterans Affairs - It provides benefits and services to former service men and women and their dependents: pensions, education, rehabilitation, home loans, burial, payments for disabilities or death related to military service, and a medical care program.

This is one InspirEd lesson from “I Think: Government – The Executive Branch.”
Below is the Table of Contents for the entire unit, which is available for purchase at

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i Think: Government - The Executive Branch

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| 1303 | America's Colonies |
| 1304 | America's Revolution |
| 1305w | America's Government |
| 1306 | America's Expansion |
| 1307 | America's Civil War |
| 1308 | Re/Constructing America |
| 1309 | America and W.W.I. |
| 1310 | America's Boom & Bust |
| 1311 | America and W.W.II. |
| 1312 | Post War America |
| 1313 | Modern America |
| 1502 | U.S. Regions |
| 1801M | Economics and Me |

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| 4100 | Pre-Colonial Africa |
| 4101 | Ancient Mesopotamia |
| 4102 | Ancient Egypt |
| 4103 | Ancient Asia |
| 4104 | Ancient Greece |
| 4105c | Ancient Rome |
| 4108 | Medieval Europe |
| 4109 | Middle Ages Asia |
| 4110 | The Renaissance |
| 4111 | Age of Revolutions |
| 4112 | Nations & Empires |
| 4113 | World War I |
| 4114 | Interwar Years |
| 4115 | World War II |
| 4118 | The Holocaust |

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| 7102S | Short Stories |
| 7103s | Literary Themes |
| 7104C | Biographies |
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| 2106 | Judicial Branch |

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I Think: U.S. History

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| | |
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