

Name:

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Class/Period:

From Student to Stateswoman:
The Life and Legacy of Barbara Jordan: Primary Source Analysis
The Watergate Hearing

Instructions: With a partner, examine the original primary source document and answer the following questions. These excerpts are taken from arguably the most famous and important speech of Barbara Jordan's career. This speech was delivered to the House Judiciary Committee during the Watergate Scandal hearings and came to define the course of the hearings.

All text used for this document analysis in this worksheet is from: Barbara Jordan Scrapbook, July - September, 1974. The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph616583/m1/33/zoom/>, crediting Texas Southern University.

Excerpt 1 -

"We, the people"--It's a very eloquent beginning. But when that document was completed on the seventeenth of September in 1787, I was not included in that 'We, the people.' I felt somehow for many years that George Washington and Alexander Hamilton just left me out by mistake. But through the process of amendment, interpretation, and court decision, I have finally been included in 'We, the people.' Today I am an inquisitor. I believe hyperbole would not be fictional and would not overstate the solemnness that I feel right now. My faith in the Constitution is whole; it is complete; it is total. And I am not going to sit here and be an idle spectator to the diminution, the subversion, the destruction, of the Constitution."

Excerpt 2 -

It is wrong, I suggest, it is a misreading of the Constitution for any member here to assert that for a member to vote for an article of impeachment means that that member must be convinced that the President should be removed from office. The Constitution doesn't say that. The powers relating to impeachment are an essential check in the hands of the body of the Legislature against and upon the encroachments of the Executive. The division between the two branches of the Legislature, the House and the Senate, assigning to the one the right to accuse and to the other the right to judge, the Framers of this Constitution were very astute. They did not make the accusers and the judges—and the judges the same person. We know the nature of impeachment. We've been talking about it awhile now. It is chiefly designed for the President

and his high ministers to somehow be called into account. It is designed to 'bridle' the Executive if he engages in excesses. 'It is designed as a method of national inquest into the conduct of public men.' The Framers confided in the Congress the power if need be, to remove the President in order to strike a delicate balance between a President swollen with power and grown tyrannical, and preservation of the independence of the Executive.

Excerpt 3 -

"A President is impeachable if he attempts to subvert the Constitution.' If the impeachment provision in the Constitution of the United States will not reach the offenses charged here, then perhaps that 18th-century Constitution should be abandoned to a 20th-century paper shredder! Has the President committed offenses, and planned, and directed, and acquiesced in a course of conduct which the Constitution will not tolerate? That's the question. We know that. We know the question. We should now forthwith proceed to answer the question. It is reason, and not passion, which must guide our deliberations, guide our debate, and guide our decision."

Analysis Questions for The Watergate Hearing:

1. What was the purpose of this speech?
2. What was Barbara Jordan's overall tone in this speech?
3. Based on Excerpt 1, what can you infer about why the words of the Constitution are so important to Barbara Jordan?

4. Based on Excerpt 2, why does Jordan believe the Constitution permits impeachment?

5. Based on Excerpt 3, summarize the main argument being made by Barbara Jordan in support of impeachment.