

Lesson plan for

THE PRESIDENCY

Introduction

This lesson is about the roles and powers of the executive branch of the United States government. You will lead the class through the ten questions from the naturalization test relating to the U.S. presidency. Then, students will further explore the current president's most recent inaugural address.

This exercise will familiarize students with the current president, as well as teach concrete examples of the responsibilities of the president. It will also teach students about the process of presidential inaugurations.

Objectives

The student will be better able to

- Recall the answers to the ten USCIS test questions in The Presidency theme.
- Identify political issues and federal government powers in the current president's inaugural speech.

USCIS Questions

In the Presidency theme:

15. Who is in charge of the executive branch?
32. Who is the Commander in Chief of the military?
33. Who signs bills to become laws?
34. Who vetoes bills?
28. What is the name of the President of the United States now?
30. If the President can no longer serve, who becomes President?
29. What is the name of the Vice President of the United States now?
31. If both the President and the Vice President can no longer serve, who becomes President?
35. What does the President's Cabinet do?
36. What are two Cabinet-level positions?

Related:

2. What does the Constitution do?
41. Under our Constitution, some powers belong to the federal government. What is one power of the federal government?

Time

Theme: 20 minutes

Activity and Discussion: 45 minutes

Materials

- Internet connectivity
- EITHER classroom projector OR enough computers for students to use as individuals or small groups
- *Preparing for the Oath* website, The Presidency theme (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/index.html?theme=5>)
- Inaugural Speech handout ([attached](#))
- Video clip of the most recent inaugural address (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/inaugural-address/>)

Challenge Words

You can find all of the bold words in the vignettes in the word list (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/pdf/Wordlist.pdf>). Listed below are some of those words that will come up often during the lesson.

Bill/bills: a plan for a law that the government reviews

Cabinet: a group of government leaders who advise the president

Enforce/Enforces: to make people follow laws

Military: the armed forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard)

Represent/Represents/Represented/Representation: to make decisions for another person or group of people; represented in the past tense

Serve/Serves: to work for a certain amount of time, usually in political office or in the military; served is the past tense form of serve. *She served as a congresswoman for six years.*

Signs/Signed/Signature: to approve a document or bill by writing your name on it; signed is the past tense form of sign; signature is the noun form of sign.

Treaties: formal written agreements between two or more countries

Teacher Tech Tips

To learn how to use *Preparing for the Oath*, visit the help page at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/help.html>

Depending on your students' proficiency level, you might want to offer a transcript of the narration for students to read along while watching and listening, or to have as a reference. You can find printable transcripts at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/pdf/Transcript.pdf>.

You may notice that the web address never changes as you navigate through *Preparing for the Oath*. In order to go directly to a specific theme or question on the site, you can find a list of links at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/pdf/Links.pdf>. These links may be useful for using your browser's "bookmark" tool or assigning student work. The link to go directly to the Presidency theme is <http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/index.html?theme=5>.

Some learning environments will be conducive to the sound features, while others will not. It is always possible to turn on and off the website's audio feature by clicking on this symbol: •) However, please keep in mind that the test itself is spoken aloud. Students will need to be comfortable responding to spoken questions, and be able to respond orally.

Don't feel tied down by the structure of the themes. Once you are inside a theme, the image tiles along the bottom represent the individual questions within that theme. You may click on the tiles out of order to view the questions as you choose. Similarly, you may jump around the three modes within each question: Learn, Practice, and Try.

Procedure

1. Before class, watch the most recent inaugural speech (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/inaugural-address/>). Select clips that would be best for your students, or decide to listen to the speech in its entirety.
2. Lead the class through The Presidency theme, as presented on the *Preparing for the Oath* website (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/index.html?theme=5>).
3. Review the answers to USCIS Questions 15, 32, 33, and 34. Allow students to ask any questions they have. Feel free to refer to the Background Information sheets ([attached](#)), as needed.
4. Give each student a copy of the Inaugural Speech handout ([attached](#)). Read the handout aloud.
5. Watch the most recent inaugural address (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/inaugural-address/>).
6. Have students fill out the handout while watching the address. Pause for discussion as necessary. Your class may need to watch the address more than once.
7. Go over the results of the handout as a class. Discuss reactions to the speech.

Learn More Links

Smithsonian's History Explorer

<http://historyexplorer.americanhistory.si.edu>

Your gateway to innovative online resources for teaching and learning American history, designed and developed by the National Museum of American History.

The American Presidency Online Exhibition

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/presidency>

The online exhibition accompanies *The American Presidency* exhibition at the National Museum of American History. The exhibition interprets artifacts from presidents throughout history. It looks at the changing responsibilities of presidents and their unique roles in the formation of American society and government.

The White House

<http://www.whitehouse.gov>

The official site of the current president contains biographical information, political stances, and reports recent presidential actions.

Background Information

- The president is both the head of state and head of government of the United States of America, and commander in chief of the armed forces.
- Under Article II of the Constitution, the president is responsible for the execution and enforcement of the laws created by Congress.
- Fifteen executive departments — each led by an appointed member of the president's cabinet — carry out the day-to-day administration of the federal government.
- The president has the power either to sign legislation into law or to veto bills enacted by Congress, although Congress may override a veto with a two-thirds vote of both houses.
- The executive branch conducts diplomacy with other nations, and the president has the power to negotiate and sign treaties, which also must be ratified by two-thirds of the Senate.
- The president can issue executive orders, which direct executive officers or clarify and further existing laws.
- The president has unlimited power to extend pardons and clemencies for federal crimes, except in cases of impeachment.
- The Constitution lists only three qualifications for the presidency — the president must be 35 years of age or older, be a natural born citizen, and must have lived in the United States for at least 14 years.
- Today, the president is limited to two four-year terms.
- Until the 22nd Amendment to the Constitution, ratified in 1951, a president could serve an unlimited number of terms. Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected president four times, serving from 1932 until his death in 1945; he is the only president ever to have served more than two terms.
- The Oath of Office:

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.

Article 2, Section 1 of the Constitution requires that before presidents can assume their duties they must take the oath of office. The completion of this thirty-five-word oath ends one president's term and begins the next.

- From the day George Washington placed his hand on the Bible and recited the oath, the inaugural ceremonies have been an important symbol of our government's continuity and permanence.

Inaugural Speech Handout

What is the name of the president now? _____

What was the date of the inauguration? _____

Is this President in his/her first term as president or second? _____

How long has he/she been in office? _____

Listen carefully to the speech.

Circle any words you hear.

challenge	free	liberty	right
Constitution	freedom	oath	war
equal	government	responsibility	

What other important words did you hear? _____

Draw a star next to the topics that are important to you. Then circle the topics that the President talks about in the speech.

civil rights	family	poverty	taxes
defense	foreign policy	rural	technology
economy	health care	seniors	veterans
energy	homeland security	social security	women
environment	immigration		

What were the main points of the speech? _____
