

# SECTION ONE: GRADES FOUR THROUGH SIX

Studying the presidency offers students a new way to explore American history. What does it mean to be the president of the United States of America? What is the relationship of the presidency to the American people? Using artifacts and documents, students can begin to uncover this uniquely American experience. The activities suggested are adaptable to various learning styles and levels and are keyed to the *National Standards for History*. The content in this section relates directly to the curriculum requirements of grades 4 through 6. The time line included in this manual supports many of the activities in this section, so keep it handy for your students' easy referral. The topics chosen are based on *The American Presidency: A Glorious Burden*, an exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History.

## TOPICS

### I. Campaigning: Styles and Slogans

Presidents Addressed: Washington, Madison, W. H. Harrison, McKinley, Truman, Eisenhower  
Time Periods Covered: 1789-1952

### II. Inauguration: Understanding Primary Sources

Presidents Addressed: F. Roosevelt, Kennedy  
Time Periods Covered: 1930s, 1960s

### III. What Does the President Do? A Current Events Project

This activity is based on the job of the president. It can be applied to any president or time period, but is most easily adapted to the administration in office at the time you teach the lesson.

### IV. Life in the White House: Internet Research

Presidents Addressed: Adams, Jackson, Lincoln, Cleveland, B. Harrison, F. Roosevelt, Eisenhower  
Time Periods Covered: 1797-1955

### V. Assassination and Mourning: Recording Oral History

Presidents Addressed: Lincoln, Garfield, McKinley, F. Roosevelt, Kennedy  
Time Periods Covered: 1865-1963

## I. Campaigning Styles and Slogans

**Objectives:** Students will be able to explain the purpose of political campaigns and the changes in campaign styles over time, and will be able to describe the various functions of slogans in presidential politics.

**Skills:** Vocabulary building, reading comprehension, research, creative writing, design, comparison of ideas, evaluation of historical information.

**Time:** Depending on the number of activities chosen, anywhere from 40 minutes to 3 class periods.

**Standards:** National Standards in Historical Thinking 1(Chronological Thinking), 2 (Historical Comprehension), 3 (Historical Analysis), Eras 3-9 (1787-1950s).

**Materials:** Time line (provided), poster boards or large sheets of plain white paper, pencils, rulers, markers, photocopies of the student reading and questions printed below.

## Teacher Background

Below is a brief text on presidential campaign styles in American history, followed by student activities. You may photocopy these materials for your students' individual use. Before you begin, however, we recommend the following introduction. Write the word "campaign" in large letters on the wall board. Ask your students to pronounce the word and define it. Is it a noun, a verb, or both? Using a comprehensive dictionary, have a

student look up “campaign.” (It comes from the Italian word for “countryside” and was first used in reference to a military operation, with a general leading his troops on a “campaign” throughout the countryside.) Have your students speculate as to why we use the word “campaign” in popular politics today. How is a political campaign different from a military campaign? How is it the same?

## Student Reading: Presidential Campaign History

George Washington was the first and only president of the United States to be elected **unanimously** by the Electoral College. From then on, **candidates** have **campaigned** for the office of the presidency. In most presidential elections, there have been only two or three main candidates.

The style of presidential campaigning has changed over the course of United States history. Until the mid-nineteenth century, many people thought it was **undignified** for a candidate to campaign for himself. For example, James Madison’s supporters campaigned for him by writing letters to newspapers and **pamphlets** about his beliefs—and about why his **opponent**, Charles Pinckney, was a bad choice. Madison did not travel around the country telling people “Vote for *me!*”

Little by little, the style of campaigning changed. By 1840, when William Henry Harrison was running for president, his supporters staged events in many states to encourage voters to support their candidate. They developed two popular **slogans** to sum up Harrison’s appeal, so that people would remember him. One slogan was “Tippecanoe and Tyler Too!” The other was “Log Cabin and Hard Cider.” People chanted the slogans and wrote them on banners. Torchlight parades became a popular way of demonstrating public enthusiasm for a political candidate, as well.

By the middle of the 1800s, these parades became a highlight of every election. Hoping to inspire the

public to get out and vote for their candidate, hundreds if not thousands of marchers in cities across the country walked through the streets carrying lighted torches on the evenings leading up to an election. During Harrison’s campaign, people sold all sorts of items, such as hats and plates, with pictures of log cabins on them, which supported Harrison’s election.

While the campaign organizers of a candidate created elaborate events and festivities, the men running for the office of the presidency did not necessarily participate, retaining the perceived **dignity** of the candidate. In the 1896 campaign, for example, William McKinley was an active candidate, speaking largely to crowds and voters brought to his home in Canton, Ohio, but unlike his opponent he did not travel throughout the country. McKinley’s style became known as the “**front porch**” **campaign**.

By the twentieth century, however, campaigning styles had changed. In 1948, when Harry S. Truman ran for his second term in office, he crisscrossed the country by train, giving speeches from the railway car to communities around the nation. Truman’s **whistle-stop campaign** proved very effective. Today, presidential candidates travel all over the United States, to meet voters, understand local issues, and build support for their election. They also rely on the power of television and other media to reach audiences directly. Television has had a **profound** impact on presidential campaigns.

## Student Activities

**1. Reading Comprehension:** Have students answer the following text-based questions:

- Define the following vocabulary words: **campaign**, **candidate**, **dignity**, “**front porch**” **campaign**, **opponent**, **pamphlet**, **profound**, **slogan**, **unanimously**, **undignified**, **whistle-stop campaign**.
- Which president did *not* campaign for the office? Why did candidates in the 1800s let their supporters and organizers represent them in presidential campaigns?

**Class Discussion:** Why did supporters encourage only certain people to vote for their candidate for much of the nineteenth century? Who was excluded from voting? Why?

2. **Time Line:** Refer to the time line provided in this manual. Locate James Madison, William Henry Harrison, William McKinley, and Harry S. Truman on the time line. Create a chart with dates that shows the changes in campaign styles illustrated by these four presidents. Students may include images of these different styles.
3. **Discussion:** Why do candidates use slogans? When Dwight (“Ike”) Eisenhower ran for president in 1952, his slogan was “I like Ike.” What makes a good slogan? Imagine that you or someone you know is running for president. What slogan would you use? With your whole class, write a list of slogans that you think are very effective.
4. **Research Project:** Research William Henry Harrison before he became president, using primary and secondary sources. On a piece of paper, or in class, answer the following questions based on what you’ve discovered: Who or what was Tippecanoe? Who was Tyler? What was Harrison’s family background? Why was the phrase “Log Cabin and Hard Cider” effective as a slogan? Why do you think his campaign managers wanted people to think that Harrison grew up in a log cabin?
5. **Campaign Poster:** Create a colorful campaign poster for a presidential candidate. You may choose a president from history, or you may “nominate” your own favorite role model or individual, or nominate yourself. Include a catchy slogan. What beliefs, or “platform,” does your candidate stand for? Indicate these commitments on your poster.

## II. Inauguration: Exploring Primary Sources

**Objectives:** Students will differentiate between primary and secondary sources, analyze a historic quotation, and be able to explain the function of a presidential inauguration.

**Skills:** Research, analysis and evaluation of historical data, writing, vocabulary building.

**Time:** About 90 minutes.

**Standards:** National Standards in Historical Thinking 1 (Chronological Thinking), 2 (Historical Comprehension), 3 (Historical Analysis), 4 (Historical Research), Eras 8-10 (1933-1960s).

**Materials:** Time line (provided), writing paper, pencils or pens, copies of the Constitution.

### Teacher Background

Two quotations from famous inaugural addresses have been chosen for students to analyze. The more context students bring to these quotes, one by Franklin D. Roosevelt and one by John F. Kennedy, the more they will extrapolate. You may want to begin by establishing what students know about the state of the country during these eras. This lesson starts with a short presentation on the etymology of “inaugurate.”

### Student Activities

1. **Inaugural Addresses:** The day before you present this lesson, write the word “inaugurate” in large letters on your wall board. Beneath it, isolate the root word, “augur.” Have your students look up these two words in a dictionary at home or in the library. The more comprehensive the dictionary, the more information they will find. (According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “inaugurate” comes from the Latin verb, *inaugurare*, literally meaning “to tell the future from the flight of birds.” The Romans used inaugurations to begin an official’s career with good omens. Today, of course, an inauguration is the formal ceremony marking the commencement of an office—in this case, the new president of the United States.) Have your students report on the derivations they found at the beginning of the class period.

- **Discussion:** With your class, discuss the two important events that occur at a presidential inauguration: the Oath of Office and the Inaugural Speech. The oath is taken from the United States Constitution. Have your students find the section of the Constitution that includes the Oath of Office. A member of your class should read it aloud so that everyone is familiar with it.
- **Primary and Secondary Sources:** This is a good moment to introduce the difference between primary sources and secondary sources. For example, you can point out that the Constitution is a primary source, an original document created at the time of an event. Primary sources in history are created by people who participated in or witnessed an event at the time it took place. A photograph and a newspaper interview are two other examples of primary sources. Generally, a secondary source is created by a person or group of people who did not witness an event, but based their information on other sources. A textbook is one example of a secondary source. Create two lists on your wall board with the headings “Primary” and “Secondary.” Have your class identify at least four examples for each list. You may offer your own suggestions and have individuals identify the list to which your suggestions belong. One of your suggestions should be “a presidential inaugural address.” Make sure your class understands that a speech, such as an inaugural address, is a primary source.
- **Inaugural Excerpt Analysis:** Below are two quotations from inaugural addresses, one by Franklin D. Roosevelt and one by John F. Kennedy. You may write them on the board, or you may photocopy them and distribute them to your class. As homework or as part of an in-class discussion, your students should complete the activities that follow the quotations. (The full-length inaugural addresses can be found at [www.cc.ukans.edu/carrie/docs/amdocs\\_index.html](http://www.cc.ukans.edu/carrie/docs/amdocs_index.html).)

### Student Inaugural Excerpt Analysis

#### **Franklin D. Roosevelt, First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933** (excerpt)

*The United States was experiencing a terrible economic depression, known as the Great Depression, at the time of Roosevelt's first inauguration.*

So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.

#### **John F. Kennedy, Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961** (excerpt)

*In his speech, Kennedy declared that his presidency would represent the “celebration of freedom,” closing with these two sentences:*

And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.

1. Locate the author of each document from which the quotation is taken on the Time Line of the Presidency. How long did each of them serve as president of the United States?
2. Using a dictionary, make sure you can define all the words used in each quotation.
3. Paraphrase each quotation. On a piece of paper, write an explanation of what the author meant. Compare your explanation with the explanations of other students in your class.

**Class Discussion:** Do these quotations still have meaning for people today? Do they express useful ideas for people to remember? Why or why not?

**Extended Activity:** Discuss why a presidential inauguration is a public ceremony. What is the purpose of an inaugural address? Compare that to the purpose of a state of the union address. If you were elected president, what would you like to include in your inaugural address? Create a list on your wall board of ideas your class would like to hear in an inaugural speech. As individuals or in small groups, write your own inaugural speeches and present them to the class.

### III. What Does the President Do? A Current Events Project

**Objectives:** Students will name and explain the various roles and responsibilities of the president of the United States. Students will use newspapers and news magazines as an information source.

**Skills:** Research, reading comprehension, analysis of definitions, classification, creative presentation of work, small group work.

**Time:** 15 minutes a day for at least ten days.

**Standards:** National Standards in Historical Thinking 1 (Chronological Thinking), 2 (Historical Comprehension), 3 (Historical Analysis), 4 (Conducting Historical Research), Eras 3-10 (1787-present).

**Materials:** Poster board, tape, markers, plus clippings brought in by class members.

#### Teacher Background

The president of the United States serves the country through a variety of roles. Each individual president brings his own strengths and personality to the office. The events that occur during his administration require different abilities as well. In this activity, your class will create posters that define and illustrate presidential responsibilities. By following current events in newspapers and news magazines, and bringing in relevant clippings, your students will learn to identify the different roles of the president and become familiar with political news coverage.

#### Student Activities

**1. Presidential Roles Brainstorm:** Have your students brainstorm about the president's primary responsibilities. One student should write these ideas on your wall board.

- **Discussion:** Below is a list of the president's primary responsibilities developed by the National Museum of American History. Discuss these roles with your class to ensure comprehension: **Commander in Chief, Chief Executive, Chief Diplomat, Ceremonial Head of State, National Leader, Party Leader, and Manager of the Economy.** (See page 13 for a description of each role.)

**2. Presidential Roles Poster Project:** Divide the class into seven groups. Each group is assigned one poster. Each poster represents one of the main presidential responsibilities, and should be titled appropriately. For example, one poster should be titled "Commander in Chief."

- **Poster:** Examples of what the president does under each category should be clearly listed on the left side of the poster. The right side will become a scrapbook for clippings illustrating this category of responsibility. The clippings may include photographs as well as articles. The clippings do not have to correspond exactly to the written examples on the left side of the poster.
- **Clippings:** Every day, students should bring in clippings from home about the president. You may choose to make this a contest between groups, or they may all work together in bringing in clippings. However, each group will be ultimately responsible for its poster. At the end of the project, prominently display the posters around the classroom.

**Extended Activity:** Similar posters, with student-created "clippings," may be developed for presidents in American history. Referring to the time line provided and to reference books, web sites, etc., each student may choose one president and show how that president fulfilled, or did not fulfill, the various roles and responsibilities of his office.

## IV. Life in the White House: Internet Research

**Objectives:** Students will describe the various functions and the symbolic meaning of the White House, and become familiar with its history. Students will be able to identify tensions between public duties and expectations and private and family needs.

**Skills:** Internet research, identification and evaluation of historical data, writing.

**Time:** Approximately 1 hour online.

**Standards:** National Standards in Historical Thinking 1 (Chronological Thinking), 2 (Historical Comprehension), 3 (Historical Analysis), 4 (Conducting Historical Research), Eras 3-10 (1787-Present).

**Materials:** Access to the World Wide Web.

### Teacher Background

This topic has been designated as an Internet project because of the quality of student-friendly web sites pertaining to the White House. Here you will find two carefully selected sites and some suggestions for activities.

### Student Activities

- 1. White House Brainstorm:** Before you begin, have your class brainstorm about the White House. Where is it? What purposes does it serve? The four functions of the White House are: the home of the president and his family, the office and headquarters for the president and his staff, a historic museum for the public, and a symbol of the United States presidency.
- 2. White House as Symbol:** Clarify the role of the White House as a symbol. What is a symbol? The American eagle is a symbol of the United States. The Star-Spangled Banner is another national symbol. The White House symbolizes the president. That's why a reporter may say, "Today the White House issued a statement on foreign policy." Obviously, a building does not give a statement, but its name symbolizes the presidency. On the wall board, have your students list other symbols with which they are familiar.
- 3. Web Quest:** Two easy-to-use web sites have been provided, [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov) and [www.whitehousehistory.org](http://www.whitehousehistory.org). (When your students visit the [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov) site, make sure they use ".gov," not ".com," as the extension for this web address, as the latter is an inappropriate site.) The answers to the questions below are located on these sites. The questions may be photocopied for distribution.

### White House Web Quest

Visit these two web sites: [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov) and [www.whitehousehistory.org](http://www.whitehousehistory.org) to answer these questions:

1. Who was the original architect of the White House?
2. Why did Calvin Coolidge stop sitting on the White House front porch?
3. Who owned Fala?
4. Who was Baby McKee?
5. What is the Blue Room used for?
6. On the mantel of the State Dining Room is a quotation by John Adams. What does it say?
7. Briefly report a story about Tad Lincoln.
8. Why is the White House white?
9. Describe Andrew Jackson's inaugural reception.
10. Which president gave the first televised news conference?
11. Can you list ten facts about the White House? (Indicate which of the four functions of the White House your facts support. Also indicate which web site provided the information.)

**Extended Activity:** Have your students address the following questions: Would it be fun to grow up in the White House? Would it be hard to lose your privacy? What does it mean to "live in a fishbowl"? Using the web sites mentioned above and other reading materials, students should research and take notes on family and private life at the White House. The next day, two students should each create a list on the wall board. One list should be headed "Pros," the other "Cons." Your class should debate the pros and cons of growing up in the White House, citing specific examples from their research. The students at the board should write down the arguments mentioned under the appropriate heading.

## VI. Assassination and Mourning: Recording Oral History

**Objectives:** Students will be able to describe and explain how tragic public events have a significant impact upon private individuals, how personal memory is valid history, and how they can be part of recording history.

**Skills:** Research, interviewing, use of tape recorder to capture primary source material, note-taking, oral presentation.

**Time:** This is primarily a homework assignment, with possible class time allotted for oral presentations; 1 class period is sufficient for setting up the assignment.

**Standards:** National Standards in Historical Thinking 1 (Chronological Thinking), 2 (Historical Comprehension), 3 (Historical Analysis), 4 (Conducting Historical Research), Eras 8 and 9 (1929-1970s).

**Materials:** Time line (provided), pencils, paper, and history textbook or other sources. Optional: still cameras, audiocassette recorders, videotape recorders.

### Teacher Background

The death of a president, especially by assassination, traumatizes the nation and plunges it into a period of questioning, reflection, and mourning. Four presidents—Lincoln, Garfield, McKinley, and Kennedy—have died from assassins' bullets. Millions of Americans can never forget where they were or what they were doing when they heard that John F. Kennedy was shot and killed in Dallas, Texas, on November 22, 1963. Many Americans vividly remember the day Franklin D. Roosevelt died, after thirteen years in office during one of the most dramatic eras in our nation's history.

### Student Activities

1. **Oral History:** Divide your class in half. One half should be assigned the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt; the other should be assigned the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Individual students or small groups of students should interview a family member or neighbor about his or her recollections of one of these events.

- **Research:** The more background the interviewers understand about the event, the better the interview. Encourage your students to read about the topic they have chosen before they develop their questions.
- **Interview:** Students may take notes on paper, record the interview with an audiotape recorder, or use a video camera with the help of an adult or older sibling. (Guidelines for interviewing techniques can be found at [www.historychannel.com/classroom](http://www.historychannel.com/classroom).)
- **Presentation:** Students may present the results of their oral history interviews through a poster, in an oral presentation in class, or by playing their recordings in class. All presentations should be less than six minutes. All students should create a one-page description of their interview, including the name of the person interviewed, the date, the topic, and a brief story summary. These may be compiled and presented to the community library or local historical society.
- **Discussion:** After the presentations, discuss the pros and cons of oral history with your class. What is missing from a personal story that a textbook provides? What is unique about oral histories? What did your class learn that impressed them the most?

**Extended Activity:** Students may research another assassination or death of a president in office and create their own diary or newspaper account of the event and the public's reaction.