



“Meet the Press:” American Presidents

Intended Grade Level: High School

Lesson Purpose: Using the weekly news show “Meet the Press” as a model, students will portray George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Barack Obama in a television interview. Students will develop answers to the host’s questions by researching primary documents and current news articles.

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will gain insight into the views and character of President Washington, Lincoln, Roosevelt and Obama.
- Students will use primary documents and current news articles to compare and contrast the economic, international, and political context of each president.

National Standards:

NSS-USH.5-12.3 ERA 3: REVOLUTION AND THE NEW NATION (1754-1820s)

- Understands the causes of the American Revolution, the ideas and interests involved in forging the revolutionary movement, and the reasons for the American victory
- Understands the impact of the American Revolution on politics, economy, and society
- Understands the institutions and practices of government created during the Revolution and how they were revised between 1787 and 1815 to create the foundation of the American political system based on the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights

NSS-C.9-12.2 FOUNDATIONS OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

What are the Foundations of the American Political System?

- What is the American idea of constitutional government?
- What are the distinctive characteristics of American society?
- What is American political culture?
- What values and principles are basic to American constitutional democracy?

NSS-EC.9-12.16 ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

There is an economic role for government in a market economy whenever the benefits of a government policy outweigh its costs. Governments often provide for national defense, address environmental concerns, define and protect property rights, and attempt to make markets more competitive. Most government policies also redistribute income.



NL-ENG.K-12.8 DEVELOPING RESEARCH SKILLS

Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

NL-ENG.K-12.12 APPLYING LANGUAGE SKILLS

Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Timeframe: Approximately three class sessions

Procedures:

1. As the longest running television show, “Meet the Press” has brought political and government leaders together for over sixty years to discuss U.S. politics, social change and world events. Have students watch an episode if they are not familiar with the show, or share the website, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21849387/displaymode/1107/s/2/>, which provides a pictorial history of the leaders that have appeared on the show since 1947.
2. Divide students into four groups- each group will represent President Washington, Lincoln, Roosevelt, or Obama. Distribute the Host’s Questions (included below) to students. Remind students that a copy of their group answers must be submitted with all sources cited. Groups will need to do research either during at least two class periods, or as homework. Have students choose the person who will portray their president before the day of the show.
3. For the show, arrange desks in the front of a room so that the presidents sit facing the class. One student from each group will portray the president and the teacher will be the host. Having them answer in order of their presidency (first Washington, then Lincoln, Roosevelt, Obama) will allow the class to see how our country has changed over time. As each question is asked, give each president one minute to answer, but do not discourage class discussion that may result. As a fun extension, you may choose to have students dress up as their president or videotape the show.



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As the longest running television show, “Meet the Press” has brought political and government leaders together for over sixty years to discuss U.S. politics, social change and world events. As a class, we will produce our own episode of “Meet the Press,” with Presidents George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, and Barack Obama as guests. As a group, you will use primary documents and news articles to research your assigned president and prepare one minute answers to the questions below. The more sources you use, the stronger your answers. Each group will submit a printed copy of their answers with all sources cited on the day of the show.

Host’s Questions

1. The only thing you seem to have in common is your status as presidents- can you give our audience a brief summary of your life leading up to the Inauguration?
2. Which events in your life have helped prepare you for the presidency?
3. What role has political parties played on your presidency?
4. Each of you has led our nation through a significant war- what are three circumstances that propelled us into war in the first place?
5. How did the nation’s economic circumstances during your war differ from that during the wars of the other presidents?
6. What international policies have you pursued as president? Which countries are our strong allies and with which do we have difficulties?
7. How has your wife embraced her role as First Lady?
8. What advice would you give a future president?