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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2011 Volume III: The Idea of America

My Fellow Americans...A Trip through American History via Presidential Inaugural Addresses

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by Kathleen G. Gormley

In teaching third-graders history, it is important to make the past seem real, not some abstract set of facts that are read from books or heard from the adults in their lives. Students need to find a way to make connections to their own lives and the events that are occurring today, as one day these experiences will be woven into the history of America. I will help students make this connection as we create a classroom Constitution and each student writes an inaugural address. What message will they create to share with the nation of our classroom?

Concentrating on our history and civic standards, students will be introduced to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution for the United States. After we interpret some major themes found in these documents, we will begin to read and analyze the Inaugural Addresses of selected United States Presidents. Using the presidential inauguration addresses, we will explore what the presidents have chosen to highlight as they address the nation. Are there any common themes? How, if at all, has the message changed as our nation grew?

(Developed for Social Studies, grade 3; recommended for Social Studies, grade 3)

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