



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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Introduction

When in the course of third grade, it becomes necessary for students to examine the structure and purposes of government and understand that the ideals underlying American democracy are designed to promote the freedom of the American people, we must look at a unit developed in a seminar aptly titled, "The Idea of America".

The idea of America, hmm, what exactly is the idea of America? The best place to begin is the beginning. First we will investigate The Declaration of Independence which is the document that announced the thirteen colonies to be independent states and no longer a part of the British Empire, thus creating The United States of America. The Declaration was approved by representatives of the thirteen colonies who were attending the Continental Congress and states that people have certain rights and the ability to alter or abolish the government if those rights are violated. What is a right?

Next we will examine The Constitution of the United States of America; this document sets up the framework for the government, the law of the land! Within this framework, the organization of the federal government is detailed and the connection formed between the federal government, the states, and the citizens. The first three articles establish the three branches of government and the duties and powers of each branch. The Constitution lists some integral freedoms that are granted to the citizens of the United States. Since they are listed in The Constitution they become special and are safe. The Bill of Rights is a part of the Constitution and lists many of these freedoms. What does freedom mean to you?

Article 2 of the Constitution creates the office of the presidency and details the qualifications, duties, and powers of the president. When the president is inaugurated, he promises to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution. The inaugural address is not mandated by the U S Constitution however our first president, George Washington, decided that he had a duty to show his appreciation and gratitude to the nation. Our country and government were just being formed so no one knew what would lead to a tradition. John Adams and the other early presidents followed Washington's lead in delivering an inaugural address and current presidents now feel bound to make an inaugural address. Most presidents reveal what they believe will be the overarching theme of their presidency during this address. We can also learn a little more about the current president based on which prior addresses and presidents he respects and chooses to emulate.

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.

Demographics

The Red Clay Consolidated School District is located in Northern New Castle County, Delaware with a combination of urban and suburban settings. Some of its elementary schools are located in the heart of the largest city in the state. The district is comprised of 28 schools with approximately 1000 teachers. It services over 16,000 students. Of those students, 27% are African American, 4% are Asian, 20% are Hispanic, and 49% are White. Students' needs vary, with almost 15% receiving Special Education Services and 10% receiving English Language support. In addition, 41% of the students come from families with low incomes.

Highlands Elementary is an urban school in the city of Wilmington, Delaware. We are a small K-5 school with an enrollment of an average of 320 students. Our minority population represents 86% of our student body with 81% of the students falling into the low socio-economic status. I am a third grade teacher with a class size varying between 24-28 students which is representational of the make-up of the school.

Background Information

Declaration of Independence

The colonies were becoming increasingly frustrated with their lack of representation in the British Parliament. As they began to set up provincial governing bodies, the British tried to dissolve these and sent troops to reinstate authority. Fighting broke out between the British troops and the colonists. At the Second Continental Congress, held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, representatives from the thirteen colonies issued a statement declaring their independence from Britain. Thomas Jefferson, the representative from Virginia, wrote the Declaration. The Declaration listed the grievances the colonies had against the British Empire and affirms the rights of the people of the colonies. The Declaration was adopted by the Second Continental Congress on July 4, and Independence Day is celebrated as the birthday of our nation. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that , that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are ." ¹ This

sentence may be the most referred to sentence when discussing the idea of America. It has come to represent what the United States attempts to provide to all its citizens. What are the Rights of the American citizen?

The Constitution of the United States of America

The U.S. Constitution was written over 200 years ago and is considered the oldest constitution in the world; it is also the shortest, consisting of only 4400 words. Many countries throughout the world have used our Constitution as a model for their own government. The Founding Fathers knew the document was not perfect and set up a way for the Constitution to be altered or amended. The Bill of Rights are the first ten amendments in the Constitution and it protects many important ideas such as allowing you to say what you want, practice whichever religion you want, and helping to keep you safe. The Constitution was adopted on September 17, 1787, by the in , , and first by the state of Delaware on December 7, 1787. It was signed by two future presidents, George Washington and James Madison. George Washington declared November 26, 1789 a National Day of Thanksgiving in order to give thanks for the Constitution and this is still recognized today. This document defines the three branches of government and the duties and powers of each. The Bill of Rights has become a symbol of the fundamental freedoms and culture of our nation. What does Freedom mean to you?

George Washington: First President (1789-1797)

Any conversation or unit designed to discuss the presidents and idea of America should, of course, begin with our first president, George Washington. Washington was elected the first president in 1789 and is commonly referred to as the "Father of Our Country". He made the oath of office in New York City in the newly named Federal Hall. Washington had been the commander in chief of the Continental Army during the Revolution and presided over the Continental Congress which drafted the Constitution. Washington's goal as the first president was to set examples that would preserve a republic form of government after he left office and he persuaded the American people that their future lay in the union of a strong central government. The first Congress voted to pay him a sum of \$25,000, a large sum in those days, and as he was already wealthy and saw himself as a self-less public servant, he refused the salary. Ultimately he reversed his decision so that it would not be perceived that only independently wealthy individuals could serve without a salary. Washington's vision for this new country outlined a great and powerful nation that would be built on republican lines using federal power. He sought to use the national government to improve the infrastructure, open the western lands, promote commerce, found a permanent capital, and promote a spirit of nationalism. "The name of American", he said, must override any local attachments.

Inaugural Address Passage

"I behold the surest pledges that as on one side no local prejudices or attachments, no separate views nor party animosities, will misdirect the comprehensive and equal eye which ought to watch over this great assemblage of communities and interests, so on another, that the foundation of our national policy will be laid in the pure and immutable principles of private morality, and the preeminence of free government be exemplified by all the attributes which can win the affections of its citizens and command respect of the world." ²

Paraphrased for students

I see the surest of promises that no local powers or attachments, no separate or different views or political party dislikes, will alter or change the complete and equal eye which should watch over this great group of

communities and interests, so that the base of our national plan will be set in unchangeable standards of private beliefs, and the superiority of free government can be shown by all the parts which can win the love of the citizens and command respect from other countries.

Thomas Jefferson: Third President (1801-1809)

Thomas Jefferson was a Founding Father who wrote the Declaration of Independence, was governor of Virginia, Secretary of State during George Washington's presidency, Vice President to John Adams and then became our third President. Jefferson supported state's rights and believed the federal government should be limited. Jefferson outlawed the importation of slaves and opened the west for exploration when he purchased the Louisiana Territory from France, doubling the size of the United States. He commissioned Lewis and Clark to survey and explore the western territories. Jefferson died on, July 4th 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence and a few hours before John Adams, the second President. Jefferson believed in reducing the authority of the federal government while protecting civil liberties and minority rights. Jefferson's inaugural address is considered by some historians as the finest ever given. He used the phrase "fellow citizens" several times throughout his speech, attempting to include not only the influential men of the time, but also those with considerable less access to power. Even with this powerful phrase, Jefferson's idea of "fellow citizens" was not all inclusive; African Americans, Native Americans, and women were not included in thought or intent.

Inaugural Address Passage

"About to enter, fellow citizens, on the exercise of duties which comprehend everything dear and valuable to you, it is proper you should understand what I deem essential principles of our government, and consequently those which ought to shape its administration...equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political; peace commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none; ...the honest payment of our debts and sacred preservation of public faith; encouragement of agriculture, and of commerce...freedom of religion, freedom of the press, and freedom of person under the protection of the habeas corpus, and trial by juries impartially selected." ³

Paraphrased for students

As I begin the job of the president, it is right that you should understand what I think to be necessary beliefs of our government, and therefore those that should shape its administration. Equal fairness to all men, of whatever state of religious or political belief. Enter into peaceful and honest friendships and trade partnerships with other nations in the world, not entering into tangled or trapped deals with any nation of the world... the honest payment of our debts so the public still has faith in the government; support of farmers and of businesses(shops)...Jefferson also believed in the rights of men to have freedom to practice the religion of their choosing, freedom for the press to print the news, freedom from being unlawfully held by the government, and freedom to have a trial by a jury that is fair and neutral.

Abraham Lincoln: Sixteenth President (1861-1865)

Abraham Lincoln was the first president to be born outside of the original thirteen states. He was born in the territory of Kentucky and received almost no formal education. Lincoln taught himself law and passed the bar to become a lawyer. He entered the Illinois State legislature and then was elected to the House of Representatives. Lincoln was opposed to the expansion of slavery and won the presidential election in 1860. Abraham Lincoln steered the country through its most difficult time. The country was divided over the issue of

slavery. Thirteen southern states seceded from the Union and formed the Confederate States of America. In 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, freeing slaves in the Confederate states that did not return to the union. Many believed that Lincoln was only concerned with preserving the Union, however he often stated that he wished that all men everywhere could be free. Union victory was sealed when Lee's army surrendered at Appomattox, Virginia. Five days later Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. In 1865 the 13th Amendment was ratified completing the abolition of slavery, which had begun with Lincoln's issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation. This passage was taken from Lincoln's second inauguration and he was reminding the nation at that time he was working to avoid a civil war that they are now in the middle of. Throughout his time as president, Lincoln worked to improve individual freedoms and access to property, education, and legal remedies.

Inaugural Address Passage

"On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it, all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war-seeking to dissolve the Union and divide effects by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would accept war rather than let it perish, and the war came... With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations." ⁴

Paraphrased for students

On the occasion of my first inauguration, our thoughts were directed toward a coming civil war. All feared it, all looked to prevent it. While I was delivering my speech, committed completely to keeping the nation joined, protestors were looking to destroy the nation without war by leaving the Union without discussion. Both parties disapproved of war but the South would rather go to war than let the nation continue to change the stand on slavery and the North would rather go to war than let the nation be divided, so the civil war began... With hatred toward no one and tolerance or kindness for everyone, with the belief that we are right, let us struggle on to finish the work we are in (bring an end to the war), to fix the nation's wounds (physical, mental, and emotional problems caused by the war), to care for those who have suffered or lost their life in the battles, to do everything that will bring about and value or appreciate a fair a lasting peace among ourselves (the United States) and with other nations of the world.

Theodore Roosevelt: Twenty-sixth President (1901-1909)

Theodore Roosevelt is the youngest man to become president; he took over the office of president after the assassination of President McKinley. Roosevelt sought to control the power of large corporations and worked to improve worker rights. He steered the United States into a more active role of world politics and expanded the Monroe Doctrine to cover all of the Americas as he entered into an agreement with Panama to create a shortcut between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Theodore Roosevelt considered himself an outdoorsmen and some of his most effective and lasting achievements were adding to the national forests and preserving lands for public use. Roosevelt was the first American to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his role in negotiating an end to the Russo-Japanese War. Roosevelt earned a nomination for the Medal of Honor for his leadership in battle in Cuba during the Spanish-American War. This nomination was denied at the time yet Roosevelt was

awarded the medal posthumously on January 16, 2001. Theodore Roosevelt is the only president to receive both the Medal of Honor and The Nobel Peace Prize. Many historians place Theodore Roosevelt as one of the top presidents who extended the power of the executive office, and he did this without a national crisis of war, as Lincoln and F.D. Roosevelt, two other presidents named with this distinction. He developed the "stewardship" theory of the Presidency: the chief executive could and should take all measures necessary for the welfare of the American people, even if they were not specifically mentioned in the Constitution.

Inaugural Address Passage

"Modern life is both complex and intense, and the tremendous changes wrought by the extraordinary industrial development of the last half century are felt in every fiber of our social and political being, Never before have men tried so vast and formidable an experiment as that of administering the affairs of a continent under the forms of a Democratic republic...Upon the success of our experiment much depends, not only as regards our own welfare, but as regards the welfare of mankind. If we fail, the cause of free self-government throughout the world will rock to its foundations, and therefore our responsibility is heavy, to ourselves, to the world as it is today, and to the generations yet unborn. There is no good reason why we should fear the future, but there is every reason why we should face it seriously, neither hiding from ourselves the gravity of the problems before us nor fearing the approach these problems with the unbending, unflinching purpose to solve the aright... Yet, after all, though the problems are new, though the tasks set before us differ from the tasks set before our fathers who founded and preserved this Republic, the spirit in which these tasks must be undertaken and these problems faced, if our duty is to be well done, remains essentially unchanged. We know that self-government is difficult. We know that no people needs such high traits of character as that people which seeks to govern its affairs aright through the freely expressed will of the freemen who compose it. But we have faith that we shall not prove false to the memories of the men of the mighty past. They did their work, they left us the splendid heritage we now enjoy. We in our turn have an assured confidence that we shall be able to leave this heritage unwasted and enlarged to our children and our children's children. To do so we must show, not merely in great crises, but in everyday affairs of life, the qualities of practical intelligence, of courage, of hardihood, and endurance, and above all the power of devotion to a lofty ideal, which made great the men who founded this Republic in the days of Washington, which made great the men who preserved the Republic in the days of Abraham Lincoln" ⁵

Paraphrased for students

Today life is difficult and powerful and the great changes brought about by the growth of industries in the last fifty years are felt in every part of our lives. Never before have men tried such a difficult job as developing and working to keep the Democratic republic form of government moving forward (a government run by a president elected by the people)...Many things depend on our success to keep this type of governing moving forward, not only for us but for all mankind. If we fail, self-governing (by the people) will suffer. There is no reason we should think we will fail but we should take our role seriously and not hide from our responsibility nor should we be inflexible... Even though our problems are different than the problems of the past, it is our duty to keep the idea of self-government moving forward. We know that people with high character are needed in order to govern their own affairs. We have faith in our Constitution and we need to continue to follow this Constitution so that future generations will benefit from it as well. We need to honor it not only when we are in trouble but also in our everyday life as Washington did when this government was formed and when Lincoln preserved it during the Civil War.

Franklin D. Roosevelt: Thirty-second President (1933-1945)

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, commonly referred to as FDR, was the fifth cousin to the 26th president, Theodore Roosevelt. He is the only president elected to more than 2 terms, he was elected to 4 terms and was president for 12 years. FDR was elected during a time that the United States was in severe economic crisis and his persistent optimism and call to action were appealing to the public. In his first one hundred days, FDR created jobs, programs for economic recovery, and pushed for reform and regulation for the banking industry. As the decade progressed and war loomed on the horizon, FDR worked to keep the United States neutral. The US entered WWII when Japan launched an attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, a "date which will live in infamy", stating FDR. During FDR's four terms, he created many government programs, including Social Security. FDR died in April of 1945, just months before the end of WWII.

Inaugural Address passage

"I am certain that my fellow Americans expect that on my induction into the presidency I will address them with candor and a decision which the present situation of our nation impels. This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. 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. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory. I am convinced that you will again give that support to leadership in these critical days." ⁶

Paraphrased for students

I am positive that my fellow Americans expect on my entrance into the presidency I will speak to them with honesty and a decision which the present situation of our nation requires (the nation was in the state of economic depression). This is overwhelmingly the time to speak the truth. We do not need to hide from honestly facing the state our country is in. This great nation will last as it has lasted, it will restart and will grow. So, first of all, let me state my belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself (FDR wanted to give the nation hope and let them know that being afraid or nervous about their situation will only make things worse). It is useless and only stops the action to change losing progress into forward progress. In every hard time of our lives leading with honesty and strength has been supported by the people and this is important to succeeding. I am convinced that you again will give that support and leadership in these serious days.

John F. Kennedy: Thirty-fifth President (1961-1963)

John F. Kennedy, commonly referred to as JFK, was the youngest person to be elected to the office of the president. During the election, JFK and Richard Nixon participated in the first televised presidential debates. Nixon looked nervous and was perspiring while JFK appeared cool and confident. This was a turning point for the campaign and Kennedy began to take a slight lead in the polls. During his presidency, JFK inherited strained relations with the Soviet Union and struggled with the threat of communism. Involvement in Vietnam increased, and tensions grew with Cuba. Kennedy is known for developing the Peace Corps and instilling a sense of volunteerism within the citizens of the United States. The United States space program grew and he announced that we would land a man on the moon. Kennedy began to take a stand on the civil rights movement and initiated the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Kennedy would be assassinated before this came to pass. His assassination has spurred many theories and has proven to be one of the most studied and controversial assassinations in US history.

Inaugural Address passage

"Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, to assure the survival and the success of liberty...To those people in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required — not because the Communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right. If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich... 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." ⁷

Paraphrased for students

Let every other country know, whether it wishes us good or poorly, that we will pay any price, stand up to any problem, meet any difficulty, support any friendly country, fight any enemy, to promise the survival and the success of liberty. To those people in huts and villages in other parts of the world struggling to break free of the ties of sadness, we promise our best efforts to help them help themselves, for however long we are needed—not because Communists (another form of government) may be doing it, not because we want them to vote with us, but because it is the right thing to do. If a free society, like America, cannot help those who are poor, then those that are rich cannot be helped either. And so my fellow Americans, do not ask what the country can do for you, you should be asking what can I do to help this country. My fellow citizens of the world, do not ask what can America do to help you, but what can we do together to help make all people free.

Ronald Reagan: Fortieth President (1981-1989)

Ronald Reagan is the oldest man to be elected president, he was 69. Reagan believed in lower taxes to stimulate the economy, less government interfering in people's lives, and a strong national defense to combat Communism. He was the first president to survive being injured after being shot in an assassination attempt. He appointed the first female, Sandra Day O'Connor, to the Supreme Court. When he took over the office, inflation and unemployment levels were high and Reagan pledged to emphasize economic recovery through lower taxes and lessened government regulations. During Reagan's tenure, military spending increased, the minimum wage was frozen, and welfare became an object of attack as Reagan believed the federal government should have a lesser role and that the private sector would pick up where the government left off. By the end of the Reagan years, the gap between the rich and the poor grew dramatically and the national debt grew from \$997 billion to \$2.85 trillion during his presidency.

Inaugural Address passage

"Well, this Administration's objective will be a healthy, vigorous, growing economy that provides equal opportunities for all Americans with no barriers born of bigotry or discrimination. Putting America back to work means putting all Americans back to work. Ending inflation means freeing all Americans from the terror of runaway living costs... All must share in the productive work of this "new beginning," and all must share in the bounty of a revived economy... With the idealism and fair play which are the core of our system and our strength, we can have a strong and prosperous America at peace with itself and the world. So as we begin, let us take inventory... We are a nation that has a government — not the other way around. And this makes us special among the nations of the earth. Our Government has no power except that granted it by the people. It is time to check and reverse the growth of government which shows signs of having grown beyond the consent of the governed... It is my intention to curb the size and influence of the Federal establishment and to

demand recognition of the distinction between the powers granted to the Federal Government and those reserved to the states or to the people... All of us — all of us need to be reminded that the Federal Government did not create the states; the states created the Federal Government." ⁸

Paraphrased for students

Well my helpers and I have a goal to have a healthy, energetic, growing, economy (businesses and customers) that provides equal opportunities for all Americans with no walls started with racism or unfairness. Putting American back to work means putting all Americans (the people) back to work. Ending the rise of the cost of things means freeing all Americans from the fear of runaway living costs... All must share in the helpful work of this "new beginning," and all must share in the reward of a recharged economy (businesses and customers).

Barack Obama: Forty-fourth President (2009-)

Barack Obama is the first African American elected as President. When Obama took office, the nation was involved in an economic crisis involving a housing crisis, high unemployment figures, and a bank crisis as well as two ongoing wars in the Middle East. His campaign had focused on economic reform and the need to research alternative energy sources, educational reform, and reform of the health care system. In his first 100 days in office, Barack Obama reached out to improve relations with many foreign countries, worked to develop a global economy resolution, and worked to control and end the wars in the Middle East. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009.

Inaugural Address Passage

"Our challenges may be new. The instruments with which we meet them may be new. But those values upon which our success depends — honesty and hard work, courage and fair play, tolerance and curiosity, loyalty and patriotism — these things are old. These things are true. They have been the quiet force of progress throughout our history... What is demanded, then, is a return to these truths. What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility — a recognition on the part of every American that we have duties to ourselves, our nation and the world; duties that we do not grudgingly accept, but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character than giving our all to a difficult task... America: In the face of our common dangers, in this winter of our hardship, let us remember these timeless words. With hope and virtue, let us brave once more the icy currents, and endure what storms may come. Let it be said by our children's children that when we were tested we refused to let this journey end, that we did not turn back nor did we falter; and with eyes fixed on the horizon and God's grace upon us, we carried forth that great gift of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations." ⁹

Paraphrased for students

Our challenges may be new. The tools with which we meet them may be new. But those values upon which our success depends—honesty and hard work, courage and fair play, acceptance and curiosity, loyalty and love of America—these things are old. These things are true. They have been the quiet force of progress throughout our history.

What is required, then, is a return to these truths. What is required of us now is a new time of responsibility—a remembrance on the part of every American that we have duties to ourselves, our nation and the world; duties that we do meanly accept, but instead grab gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so filling

to the spirit, that explains us and our values then giving our best to a difficult job. America: in the face of danger, in this time of our hardship, let us remember these words that are timeless. With hope and goodness, let us brave the hard times that may come our way. Let it be told to our future generations that when we had to do a hard job we did not fail, we did not give up, we did not fumble, and with our mind set we carried forward the great gift of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations.

Strategies

My third grade classroom has students with a variety of reading levels ranging from first grade levels to fourth grade levels and perhaps beyond. It is my intention to scaffold vocabulary and comprehension instruction in order to provide an entry point for all learners. Many of the inaugural addresses are lengthy so I have chosen portions I feel to be valuable and worthy of investigation. I will provide the original text and modified versions and allow students to develop interpretations of these addresses. Vocabulary activities will play a large role in dissecting and analyzing the message embedded in the speeches as they relate to The Declaration of Independence and the U. S. Constitution. Students will work in cooperative learning groups comprised of students with a variety of levels of ability and learning styles. Each group will be assigned one president and will conduct research to gain basic background information. Next students will review and interpret the inaugural address segment. Each team member will be held responsible for learning about the subject matter and for helping the other member learn as well. This mutual support creates an atmosphere where all students can achieve and fosters a strong sense of community within the classroom. When the initial investigation is complete, groups will be re-formed and students will share their knowledge with their classmates. We will create a timeline of the presidents and make judgments about if and how the presidential messages have changed over time.

Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary development is an integral part of all content learning. There is an undeniable link between vocabulary understanding and comprehension. As a teacher in the elementary grades, one must realize that direct and implicit instruction of vocabulary is vital and should occur daily in the classroom. A variety of vocabulary activities can aid in highlighting the most important words for content area comprehension, two helpful strategies I use in my classroom are explained next.

Student VOC Strategy

This strategy helps students analyze word meanings from context. Create a list of key vocabulary words that are coming up. Have your students write the original sentence from where the vocabulary word is found. Your students should make a prediction of what this new vocabulary word means. They should then consult a friend or a reliable resource, such as a dictionary, to determine the meaning of the word. Students will create an original sentence to show the meaning of the word. Finally they should draw a picture that will help them understand the word and explain it. This is a fantastic way for students to analyze and decode words in a text they don't understand. This is the great strategy for students to tackle the vocabulary in the Inaugural Addresses.

Word Banks

Word Banks are places where students can keep a list of words they have learned so that they can refer to them as needed. I prefer to have students keep their word banks on rings. I use a variety of color coded index cards and assign a specific color to a specific part of speech, such as all nouns are on blue cards. Using the rings enables students to develop alphabetizing skills, parts of speech skills, and is more mobile than a journal. Students should be expected to use the words in their writing and their speaking.

Cooperative Learning Grouping

Think-Pair-Share

During Think-Pair-Share activities, students are given information or a question and must independently Think about how they will react to the prompt. The Think period should last a short time, no longer than 5 minutes. Next, they will Pair with a partner and conference about the prompt. During this period, they may develop new questions or clarify understanding. This period should also last a short time, no longer than 5 minutes. Then they will Share with another partner set, small group, or entire class. All information can be discussed and questions may lead to further investigations. The time frame on this portion will be dependent on the choice of sharing. As the essential questions are posed to stimulate student thinking, we will use the Think-Pair-Share model to inspire understanding and questions about our topic. This will provide a starting point for me as it can identify what the students already know, what they are confused about, what they know little or nothing about, and also what interests them and what they want to learn.

Jigsaw

This form of cooperative learning breaks larger topics or resources into small parts. Each group is given one part of the whole. The students read the given portion, discuss, and prepare a tutorial project for the rest of the class. After modeling how to read and interpret Washington's Inaugural Address, students will be broken into small groups of two to three. They will be assigned one of the remaining seven presidents. They will be responsible for conducting research to obtain some background information about their president. After they have developed a snapshot of their president, they will receive the corresponding vocabulary list and Inaugural Address. As a group, they will determine what they believe the idea or vision for America their president embodied. After this step, groups will be restructured and students will be responsible for sharing their expertise with the other group members and rationale for the determinations they arrived at. These new groups will then be able to create a timeline of the presidents and discuss similarities and differences within their messages.

Three Minute Review

I stop any time during a lecture or discussion and give teams three minutes to review what has been said, ask clarifying questions, or answer questions. Using this strategy, students will be able to have time to digest the information already presented, ask questions to clear up misconceptions, and formulate additional questions to begin to connect to future learning.

Reading Strategies

Differentiated Instruction

To meet the needs of all the learners in my classroom, I will use Differentiated Instruction. Differentiated Instruction is an approach to teaching content in ways that address a variety of learning styles and needs of

students while maximizing the potential of all learners. This will help me to accommodate the diversity of academic needs present in my classroom. My instruction as well as the students' research can be differentiated. I will differentiate according to content, process, or product. Through differentiated content students will have access to a varied level of texts and/or websites and could be "buddied" with a partner at a different level to assist with the learning. Differentiated process will involve the students being offered choices about the way they gather information; students will be given access to books, audio tapes, and videos. When differentiating products, students are given learning contracts which present them with a variety of options to create different products, such as plays, poems, or Power Points, based on their individualized learning style and interest.

Making Connections

Learning occurs when students can make personal connections to the prior knowledge and future learning. Each student comes to class with prior knowledge; this will be the starting point for new information. While reading, students will make text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections. These connections help students to become more aware of different genres, forms, and structures within the text. When students can make a connection to a character within a story, motives, thoughts, and feelings of that character are better understood and history becomes alive for them.

Questioning

"Curiosity spawns questions. Questions are the master key to understanding. Questions clarify confusion. Questions stimulate research efforts. Questions propel us forward and take us deeper into reading." Teachers need to monitor their students' understanding; the questioning strategy offers teachers an opportunity to check for understanding and clear up any misconceptions. Student formulated questions are an essential component to this process and help determine where the students want to go next in learning of the topic.

Visualization

It has been said, "A picture is worth a thousand words". Learning to interpret images—also symbols, graphs, and facial expressions—improves comprehension.

Determining Importance

Students need to discriminate between what is important in a reading passage and what is not important; this is the very definition of comprehension. Once students determine what is important, they can begin to apply meaning to the selection and can build reasoning skills.

Classroom Activities

Lesson One

Essential Question-What are some examples of fundamental rights, responsibilities, and privileges of American citizenship?

Background information- Students will have already investigated and discussed the events leading to the

writing of the Declaration of Independence. Students will have already read, discussed, and interpreted the Declaration of Independence. Students will have developed an elementary level of understanding of why this document is important in American history.

Instruction- The class will view a short video about the Preamble to the Constitution. Next we will examine the U.S. Constitution. It will be explained that the Constitution is the framework for our government and outlines the duties and powers of each of the three branches of the government.

Activity-Students will participate in a jigsaw activity. First students will be grouped and each group will explore a different Article of the Constitution. Then we will regroup and expert will give the information on their Article. Students will discuss which rights are important to them and which rights are important for the class. Groups will create their own classroom Constitution.

Assessment-Each group will create a presentation for their Constitution and will justify what they included in their Constitution.

Lesson Two

Essential Question- What does freedom mean to you?

Background Information- The Founding Fathers realized that the Constitution may need to be changed from time to time and provided for a procedure to amend the Constitution. The Constitution has 27 Amendments, the first ten are known as the Bill of Rights.

Instruction-Focusing on The Bill of Rights, we will investigate one right at time. Students will take quick notes about the Bill of Rights. As the notes are taken, examples will be given of their rights that are protected and what could happen if we didn't have this right. Discussion and examples of what could happen if this right was not included will occur.

Activity-Students will participate in an activity using the Think-Pair-Share cooperative learning format. As each right is introduced, students will "Think" about what this right means to them, making a connection to themselves. They will then "Pair", meaning they will find a partner and each will discuss the connections they have made to the right. Finally each pair will "Share" with the class their discussion and connections. Next, students will work in small groups and will receive a copy of the Bill of Rights. They will only be able to select 5 of the rights to start their own country. They must come to a consensus within their group and justify why they chose those rights. This hopefully will give the students an idea of how difficult of a task this was for the writers of the Constitution. They will need to present their chosen rights to the class and explain why they chose the rights they chose.

Assessment-Students will describe three freedoms that are granted to them by the Constitution and how it affects their everyday lives. Students will create a visual interpretation, such as poster, google doodle, or video representation, of one or more of the rights covered in The Bill of Rights.

Lesson Three

Essential Question-How does the ideas of the President shape the ideas of America?

Background information-There have been 44 Presidents elected to represent the interest of the citizens of the United States. The President pledges to "preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States"

during their inauguration. Each president that has been inaugurated after an election since Washington has also given an Inaugural Address. In this address, the president details what is their vision for America.

Instruction-Modeling how to dissect and interpret the presidential address will be completed as a whole group activity using Washington's Inaugural Address. A vocabulary list, see Appendix B, will be distributed to the students. Students will complete a Student VOC, see Appendix C, will be completed in groups, with students being able to jigsaw the words. Next the original copy of the selected Inaugural passage will be given to the students. Using the Think-Pair-Share cooperative learning strategy, students will develop an interpretation of the address. A paraphrased passage will then be handed out and students can compare the interpretations. Students will look to identify how the president explains his vision for American rights. As students work through the addresses, they will look for common ideas.

Activity-Once again a jigsaw cooperative strategy will be completed. Small groups of students will be assigned another of the preselected Presidential Inaugural Addresses. Each of these small groups will mimic the procedures modeled from Washington's Address. In addition to examining the address, students will research background information on their president in order to create a picture of what their president was facing. Next, students will be regrouped and will bring their expertise to their new group. Each student will bear the responsibility to impart their new knowledge on the other group members.

Assessment-Student groups will create a timeline of the studied presidents. They will compare and contrast the messages to determine if there are any common ideas that are present throughout the addresses. As a culminating activity, students will then have to write their own Inaugural Address. They will determine what American rights and freedoms are important to them and explain them in a speech.

Resources

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Appendix A

DE 3rd Grade Civics Standard #1 Students will examine the structure and purposes of governments with specific emphasis on constitutional democracy.

DE 3rd Grade Civics Standard #2 Students will understand the principles and ideals underlying the American political system.

DE 3rd Grade Civics Standard #3 Students will understand that American citizens have distinct responsibilities and privileges.

DE 3rd Grade Civics Standard #4 Students will develop and employ the civic skills necessary for effective, participatory citizenship.

DE 3rd Grade History Standard #1 Students will employ chronological concepts in analyzing historical phenomena.

DE 3rd Grade History Standard #2 Students will gather, examine, and analyze historical data.

DE 3rd Grade History Standard #3 Students will interpret historical data.

DE 3rd Grade History Standard #4 Students will develop historical knowledge of major events and phenomena in United States

history.

DE 3rd Grade ELA Standard #1 Students will use written language and oral English appropriate for various purposes and audiences.

DE 3rd Grade ELA Standard #2 Students will construct, examine, and extend the meaning of literary, informative, and technical texts through listening, reading, and viewing.

DE 3rd Grade ELA Standard #3 Students will access, organize, and evaluate information gained by listening, reading, and viewing.

DE 3rd Grade ELA Standard #4 Students will use literary knowledge assessed through print and visual media to connect self to society and culture.

Appendix B

Vocabulary Lists

Washington: behold-see; pledges-promises; prejudices-powers; animosities-dislikes; misdirect-alter or change; comprehensive-complete; foundation-base; policy-plan; immutable-unchangeable; principles-beliefs; morality-goodness; preeminence-superiority; exemplified-shown; attributes-parts

Jefferson: deem-think; essential-necessary; principles-beliefs; consequently-therefore; ought-should; justice-fairness; persuasion-view; commerce-trade or business; entangling-tangled or mixed up with; alliances-deals; preservation-keep; encouragement-support; habeas corpus-unlawful holding; impartiality-fairly

Lincoln: malice-hatred; charity-kindness; firmness-control; strive-struggle; bind-fix; cherish-value; just-fair; impending-coming; avert-prevent; insurgents-fighters; negotiation-discussion; deprecated-disapproved

T. Roosevelt: tremendous-great; wrought- brought about; intense-powerful; half century- fifty years; formidable-difficult

F.D. Roosevelt: certain-positive; induction-entrance; address-speak to; candor-honesty; impels-requires; preeminently-overwhelmingly; shrink-hide; conditions-state; endure-last; revive-restart; prosper-grow; assert- say; paralyzes-stops; convert-change; retreat-losing; frankness-honesty; vigor-strength; essential-important; critical-serious

J.F. Kennedy: nation-country; ill-poorly; bear-stand up to; hardship-difficulty; foe-enemy; bonds-ties; misery-sadness; pledge-promise

Reagan: administrations-the President and his helpers; objective-goal; vigorous- with energy; economy-business and customers; barriers-walls; bigotry-racism; discrimination-unfairness; inflation-rise in the cost of everyday things; terror-fear; productive-helpful; bounty-reward; revived-recharged

Obama: instruments-tools; tolerance-acceptance; patriotism-loyalty to America; demanded-required; era-specific period of time; recognition-remembrance or acknowledgement; grudgingly-meanly; seize-grab; satisfying-filling; virtue-goodness

Appendix C

Student VOC Strategy

Vocabulary Word: _____

1. Write the sentence where the word is found in the text.
2. Based on the sentence, what do you think the word means?
3. Consult an "expert" for the actual definition (friend, text, dictionary). Expert:

Expert's Definition:

4. Write the word in a sentence of your own.
5. Choose one of the following ways to help you remember the word's meaning: draw a picture; create a movement; connect the word to a story, song, or news report you've heard. Write down how you are going to remember this word.
6. Explain

Endnotes

1. (Declaration of Independence 1776)
2. (Washington 1789)
3. (Jefferson 1801)
4. (Lincoln 1865)
5. (T. Roosevelt 1905)
6. (F. D. Roosevelt 1933)
7. (Kennedy 1961)
8. (Reagan 1981)
9. (Obama 2009)

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