

# OUR WHITE HOUSE

LOOKING IN, LOOKING OUT

## EDUCATION RESOURCE GUIDE

### PART II. STRUGGLING TO STAND

This education resource guide is designed to augment the content included in Part II of the NCBLA's anthology *Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out*. Included on these pages are engaging activities and discussion questions regarding some of the articles and stories in Part II of *Our White House*. We invite you to print and share these materials with young people at home and in the classroom. Education resource guides for the other parts of *Our White House* are available [OurWhiteHouse.org](http://OurWhiteHouse.org).

#### **The White House Prepares for War: 1812** (pages 30-33)

by **Ralph Ketcham**

#### **Activity Suggestions and Discussion Questions**

Ask young people to research a president and then to describe in an oral presentation or a written report the diplomatic strategies he employed when faced with the possibility of war. Encourage students to include their thoughts on whether they agree or disagree with that president's strategies and to explain why or why not. Some presidents to consider researching include: James Madison, James Munroe, Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Lyndon Baines Johnson, and George W. Bush.

Host a debate regarding the War of 1812. Ask young people to research the War of 1812 and to each come up with five reasons for and against the war. Divide the class into two groups. One will present arguments for the war and the other against. In a large class, designate a third group to ask questions or be the decision makers. Take a vote at the end. Was anyone's initial opinion swayed by their classmates' arguments?

Ask kids to read a British point of view on the War of 1812 in "The Burning of the White House" by Susan Cooper in *Our White House, Looking in Looking Out*. Ask young people to research a battle from the war and to write their own first person narrative from both British and American points of view.

Pose the following questions to young people:

- What is diplomacy? When might diplomacy be used?
- What kinds of diplomatic strategies do you use to resolve issues in your own life?
- What are some examples of diplomatic measures presidents have taken to resolve conflicts or to avoid war?
- Do you think war is ever justified, and if so, when?
- Why was the War of 1812 called the "Second War of American Independence?" What are the similarities and differences between the first and second wars?

### **Read and Learn MORE**

Watch three short videos on James Madison and the War of 1812, and read about the causes, events, and aftermath of the war on the History Channel website:

<http://www.history.com/topics/war-of-1812>

Read Madison’s “War Message to Congress” and other communications about the war in the “Selected Works of James Madison” on the Constitution Society’s website:

<http://www.constitution.org/jm/jm.htm>

Learn how our national anthem evolved from the War of 1812 in “Star Spangled Presidents:”

<http://ourwhitehouse.org/star-spangled-presidents/>

Read about President James Madison in the “Presidential Fact Files:”

<http://ourwhitehouse.org/james-madison-1809-1817/>

### **The Burning of the White House** (pages 34-35)

**by Susan Cooper**

#### **Activity Suggestions and Discussion Questions**

Ask young people to read an American point of view on the War of 1812 in “The White House Prepares for War: 1812” by Ralph Ketchum in *Our White House, Looking in Looking Out*. Ask students to research a battle from the war and write a first person narrative from both the British and American points of view.

At the end of Susan Cooper’s story, British Admiral Cockburn says, “If General Washington had been president, we should never have thought of coming here!” Ask young people what they think he meant by this and then discuss as a group.

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<http://www.constitution.org/jm/jm.htm>.

## **Dolley Madison Rescues George Washington** (pages 36-38)

Written and Illustrated by Don Brown

### **Activity Suggestions and Discussion Questions**

Ask young people to read about Dolley Madison. They can do their research at your school library, your local library, or online if possible. Once young people have completed their research, ask them why they think Dolley Madison has been called the “first First Lady.”

Pose the following questions to young people:

- Who is your favorite first lady? What life experiences prepared her for the role of first lady? What contributions did she make to America?
- Why do you think Dolley Madison risked her own personal safety to save George Washington’s portrait? Why did she choose this particular treasure to save? If you had been in her shoes, would you have chosen something else to save? What would you have saved and why?
- If you had to leave your house and never come back, what three items would you save and why?

### **Read and Learn MORE**

Ask young people to read “Primary Sources: Dolly Madison’s Letter to her Sister about the Burning of the White House” on OurWhiteHouse.org: <http://ourwhitehouse.org/primary-sources-dolley-madisons-letter-to-her-sister-about-the-burning-of-the-white-house/>

Then review the extensive discussion questions and activity suggestions included at the end of the article.

Watch the video “American Experience: Dolley Madison” on the PBS website:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/dolley/>

Read about the life of Dolley Madison from her childhood through her difficult later years on the Montpelier website: <http://www.montpelier.org/james-and-dolley-madison/dolley-madison>

Learn about [Dolley Madison](#) and our other first ladies in the “First Lady Fact Files:”

<http://ourwhitehouse.org/first-lady-fact-files/>

Read “From White House Hostess to American Powerhouse: The Evolution of the First Lady’s Title and Role:”

<http://ourwhitehouse.org/from-white-house-hostess-to-american-powerhouse/>

Research our first ladies using the references listed on OurWhiteHouse.org:

<http://ourwhitehouse.org/presidential-fact-files-reference-sources/>

Read the following articles about America’s first ladies in *Our White House, Looking in Looking Out*: “Elizabeth Keckly” by Patricia C. and Fredrick L. McKissack; “Mrs. Cleveland, White House Bride” by Jennifer Armstrong; “A White Mouse in the White House” by Anita Silvey; and “Mrs. Bush Inspires a National Book Festival” by John Y. Cole.

**The First White House Memoir: 1865** (pages 39-42)

by Paul Jennings

**Activity Suggestions and Discussion Questions**

Ask young people to pretend they each are a slave attending to Dolley Madison or President Madison before one of their famous parties. Have them consider the following questions: What might their responsibilities include? What might they talk about with the first lady or president? Do they think they would be able to express an opinion? If young people find it difficult to answer such questions, ask them to read other accounts of slaves and their relationships with owners. Using what they have learned, ask young people to write their own short memoir of what they imagine their experience would have been to attend the first lady or president.

Pose the following questions to young people:

- What is a memoir and why is it important in history? Should a memoir be considered factual or not?
- What roles did free and enslaved African Americans play during the War of 1812? Were slaves treated differently? What obstacles did they face?

**Read and Learn MORE**

Read more about the participation of African Americans in the War of 1812 in the following online sources:

“African American Service in the War of 1812:”

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resource-management/archives/african1812.htm>

“Black Americans in the US Military from the American Revolution to the Korean War: The War of 1812:” <http://dmna.state.ny.us/historic/articles/blacksMilitary/BlacksMilitary1812.htm>

“Black Sailors and Soldiers in the War of 1812:”

<http://www.pbs.org/wned/war-of-1812/essays/black-soldier-and-sailors-war/>

**Another All-American Girl** (pages 43-47)  
by Meg Cabot

**Activity Suggestions and Discussion Questions**

Meg Cabot’s short story “Another All-American Girl” is a **time-slip narrative**, a story in which a character travels back or forward in time. In Cabot’s story, the protagonist—a modern young woman named Samantha Madison—falls asleep and travels into the past, finding herself interacting directly with Dolley Madison in the midst of her escape from the White House during the War of 1812. Talk to young people about other time-slip narratives they may have read and what they like or dislike about the genre. How does Cabot’s story differ from historical fiction?

Ask young people to research other people who played some type of role in the War of 1812, such as congressmen, army or navy figures, statesmen, or even civilian volunteers. Based on their research, ask each young person to select one particular person of interest to them and to write a description of that person’s life and how he or she was involved in the war. As a follow-up activity, ask each young person to write a short story (inspired by Meg Cabot’s story!) in which each student interacts with their chosen historical figure. Students can choose to write their story in the form of a time travel experience or to write a piece of historical fiction that features themselves as members of nineteenth-century society. A good resource for finding examples of historical figures to research is “War of 1812: People of the War of 1812:” <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/warof1812/people-of-the-war-of-1812.htm>

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