

OUR WHITE HOUSE

LOOKING IN, LOOKING OUT

EDUCATION RESOURCE GUIDE

PART IV. ONE LAMP LIGHTS ANOTHER

This education resource guide is designed to augment the content included in Part IV 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 IV 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 on OurWhiteHouse.org.

Mrs. Cleveland, White House Bride (pages 82-85)

by Jennifer Armstrong

Activity Suggestions and Discussion Questions

In this essay Jennifer Armstrong explains how Americans were captivated by the romance and wedding of President Cleveland and Frances Folsom. Armstrong writes, “Never mind what the president was doing as leader of the country. Americans wanted all the details of the upcoming wedding.” Ask young people to find out what other news was making the headlines in 1885 and 1886 and what issues President Cleveland was wrestling with. Researching the past is easy at your local library. Ask a librarian to show kids how to review old newspapers and magazines.

Pose the following questions to young people: What news do YOU think was most important at this time? The White House wedding or something else? Do you think the impending White House wedding served as a diversion from every-day problems for many Americans? Do you think big White House events—and other celebrity engagements and weddings—also serve as entertaining diversions for Americans today? Why? Cite examples.

The Community and Society pages of newspapers provide engagement, wedding, birth, and other personal event announcements to the public. Ask kids to look through your local newspaper and find your community’s announcements, then try writing their own announcements. Kids can choose to write an announcement for a past event (such as the Cleveland wedding) or for an event in your own life. The announcement could be related to a student’s own personal achievement or event or to something related to a family member, friend, or even your school or club. If working with a class or group, collect all the announcements and publish them together. Decide together how the announcements should be arranged, such as by date or by type of announcement.

Read and Learn MORE

Read about Frances Folsom Cleveland in the “First Lady Fact Files:”

<http://ourwhitehouse.org/frances-folsom-cleveland/>

Read about President Grover Cleveland in the “Presidential Fact Files:”

<http://ourwhitehouse.org/grover-cleveland-1893-1897/>

Learn how the title and role of the first lady has changed over time in “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/>

Check out the wedding breakfast menu served in the White House State Dining Room for President Grant's daughter Nellie in 1874 in "[A Taste of the Past: White House Kitchens, Menus, and Recipes](#)." Think about how this menu compares to what is commonly served at weddings today. Ask kids if they would choose any of Nellie Grant's menu items for their own special event?

Seven from Ohio (For Some Reason) (pages 86-88)

Written and illustrated by Natalie Babbitt

Activity Suggestions and Discussion Questions

Natalie Babbitt explains how seven of America's presidents hailed from Ohio "for some reason."

Pose the following questions to young people: Do you have a theory why so many presidents have come from Ohio? Do you think the state where someone is born and raised contributes to how he or she grows up and the person he or she becomes? Or, do you think the state is irrelevant? If you think the state where someone grows up is influential, explain how.

Ask kids to find out what presidents have come from YOUR state or area of the country. Choose one president and research his life and presidency. Ask kids if they think this president learned something during his childhood in your state that influenced his thinking or policies as president? How so?

If you live in Ohio, you can choose from quite a few presidential birthplaces and homes to visit. Even if you don't live in Ohio, there is likely to be some sort of presidential historical site near you or in a state where you may be traveling. Refer to "[Field Trip Guide! Presidential Birthplaces, Houses, and Libraries](#)" for site locations by state and for visitors' information.

Read and Learn MORE

Read more about Ohio-born presidents Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, James A. Garfield, Benjamin Harrison, William McKinley, William Howard Taft, and Warren G. Harding in the "[Presidential Fact Files](#)."

Read about the first ladies from Ohio and other states in the "[First Lady Fact Files](#)."

Learn what type of pet President Taft brought with him to the White House in "[Lions and Tigers and Bears, Oh My! Wild Animals at the White House](#)."

The Eyes and Ears of the Public (pages 89-92)
by Katherine Paterson, Illustrated by Andrea Wesson

Activity Suggestions and Discussion Questions

In “The Eyes and Ears of the Public,” author Katherine Paterson recalls how veteran White House reporter Helen Thomas has stated her belief that it is the duty of the press to ask the president “hard questions—the ones they least want to answer.” Ask young people to watch a presidential press conference or an interview with the president or other prominent politician on TV. Encourage kids to listen carefully to the questions posed by the reporter. Following the interview, ask kids the following: Do you think the reporter asked “hard” questions? Did the interviewee respond to all the questions? Did the interviewee avoid answering any of the questions? If so, did he or she refuse to answer or simply talk about something else? Do you think the reporter asked appropriate follow-up questions? If not, what additional questions do you think should have been asked?

Invite kids to imagine that they are reporters. Ask them to write a list of questions they would like to ask the president. Encourage kids to share their questions with others in the group or class and see what questions they came up with. As a group, write your most pressing questions and send them to the White House. You can send questions to the White House using the online form at [WhiteHouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/submit-questions-and-comments) (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/submit-questions-and-comments>), or you can send your questions in a letter to:

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Paterson finishes her article stating that the press serves the country not only by asking the hard questions of the president, but also by informing the president of what is “in the minds and hearts of the people he has been elected to serve.” Ask kids how they think the press serves this role?

Many people believe that certain news shows are **biased**, with some networks tending to offer a more conservative perspective on the news and other networks offering a more liberal approach. Discuss the meaning of the word “biased” with students, then explain and discuss basic definitions of conservative and liberal ideas, including how they differ. (A good article for launching this discussion is “Liberal vs. Conservative Values” on the News-Basic.com site: <http://news-basics.com/2010/liberal-vs-conservative-values/>) Once everyone has a good grasp of liberal and conservative ideas, discuss whether reporters and news shows should offer a biased perspective on the news. Why or why not?

Over the course of one or two weeks, ask young people to watch the nightly newscasts on at least three different networks. Encourage kids to take notes as they watch each newscast and to write down examples of reporters’ questions, statements, or reports that they find to be either conservative or liberal. Ask kids to share this information with others in your class and see if they agree with their assessment.

Read and Learn MORE

Read about the role of the press in the 1948 presidential election in “[The Second Shall Be First: The 1948 Presidential Election—Truman V. Dewey.](#)”

Discover how the press can be used to fight political battles in “[Choosing Sides: The Rise of Party Politics.](#)”

Learn about First Lady Anna Eleanor Roosevelt and how she was the first First Lady to meet with reporters on a weekly basis in the “[First Lady Fact Files: Anna Eleanor Roosevelt.](#)”

Theodore Roosevelt’s Letters to His Children (pages 93-95)

by Leonard S. Marcus

Activity Suggestions and Discussion Questions

Leonard Marcus tells readers that Theodore Roosevelt championed a life philosophy “believing that life was a struggle that should also be a joy.”

Pose the following questions to young people: Does this philosophy resonate with you? Have you experienced struggles in your own life? Do you think people who have struggled or suffered are better able to enjoy life’s joys? Why or why not?

Roosevelt wrote thousands and thousands of letters in his lifetime, including many letters to his children sharing the simple joys of everyday activities. Ask kids to write a friendly letter to a friend or family member; he or she doesn’t have to live far away for the young person to choose him or her. Encourage kids to write the letter the way Roosevelt did—with paper and pen! Also encourage kids to include descriptions of what they and others they know are doing. For inspiration, read some of the letters Roosevelt wrote to his kids. You can check out *Theodore Roosevelt’s Letters to His Children* at your local library. If you can use a computer with Internet access, you can read the book online on the Project Gutenberg website:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/6467/6467-h/6467-h.htm>

Read and Learn MORE

Read about President Theodore Roosevelt in the “[Presidential Fact Files: Theodore Roosevelt.](#)”

Read about First Lady Edith Roosevelt in the “[First Lady Fact Files: Edith Kermit Carow Roosevelt.](#)”

Discover what activities (including reading!) were enjoyed by Roosevelt and his family in “[Presidents Are People Too!](#)”

Learn more about what type of pets President Roosevelt and his family (and other presidents) kept at the White House in “[Lions and Tigers and Bears, Oh My! Wild Animals at the White House.](#)”

Read how Theodore Roosevelt and his family absolutely adored living in the White House in Albert Martin’s article “Storming Down the Stairs” in *Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out.*

Read the story of how Roosevelt acted to preserve America’s natural resources in “Executive Order for Nature” by Jean Craighead George in *Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out.*

Read what improvements President Roosevelt made to the White House in “[The Oval Office: The World’s Most Famous Office.](#)”

Storming Down the Stairs (pages 96-99)

by Albert Marrin

Activity Suggestions and Discussion Questions

Albert Marrin tells us that “pets were everywhere” in Theodore Roosevelt’s White House.

Ask young people to read the animal anecdotes in Marrin’s story and think about what it would be like to live in a house with so many pets. Pose the following questions to young people: Do you think the Roosevelt family had too many pets? Should the White House have rules in place for keeping pets contained...or not? If you could have one of the pets owned by the Roosevelts, which one would it be?

Invite kids to check out the “The Presidential Pet” story and coordinating illustration by Steven Kellogg in *Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out* and decide which famous presidential pet deserves the Best in Show prize. Encourage kids to be sure to pay close attention to the pets’ names. Ask kids which pet they think deserves the prize for best name?

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Read what improvements President Roosevelt made to the White House in “[The Oval Office: The World’s Most Famous Office.](#)”

Discover what activities (including reading!) were enjoyed by Roosevelt and his family in “[Presidents Are People Too!](#)”

Compare the activities of the Roosevelt children to those of the Kennedy children in “The Kennedy White House” by Barbara Harrison in *Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out.*

Read all about how President George Washington bred mules and hounds in “[Presidential Menageries: George Washington, Hound Dogs, and Super Mules.](#)”