

“If I Were President...”

Grade Level: K-2
Subject: Visual Arts
Time Required: (will vary)

Activity Overview and Objectives

This project is designed to provide a general introduction to the K-2 age level to the position of President of the United States and to supply them with rudimentary knowledge of what that position entails as well as the manner by which the President is elected. The lesson will culminate in a visual arts project in which the child will illustrate what he or she believes a day in their life would look like if they were President.

The purpose of this project is not to direct children to any particular partisan train of thought with the examples or questions included in this packet. Teachers are encouraged to expand upon included examples with suggestions that conform to no specific party, but instead provide students with a broad understanding of major duties included in the office of the President of the United States.

This activity is a part of Your Art Here’s Billboard Generation VI project. Chosen artwork from grade school through high school winners will be displayed on billboards in Bloomington and Indianapolis in celebration of National Youth Art Month in March 2008.

Suggested Materials

- White sketch paper
- Colored construction paper
- Materials for collages are optional
- Writing utensils (crayons, markers, colored pencils, etc.)

Please note: For this year’s BBG VI we will not be able to review entries with images of recognizable people (i.e. politicians).

Project Discussion

Part One: The Job of President

Begin the conversation by pointing out that many people in our country have different jobs. Some people work as farmers, doctors, firemen, teachers, cooks, etc. Ask the children to name a few other jobs.

When the children have offered several additional different jobs, ask them *where* many people who have those jobs work. For instance, a farmer works on a farm, a teacher in a school, a cook in restaurant, etc.

Point out to children that while each of these jobs are very important to our country, there are many farmers, doctors, etc. in the United States, but there is only one President of the United States at a time. Ask the students if they know where the President works. You may also ask the children if they have any guesses as to what the President of the United States is supposed to do with his or her job.

Use this discussion as a springboard to discuss that, unlike most jobs where there are many people doing the same job all over the country, we have only one President at a time and what that job entails.

Ask the children if they know who our current President is. If possible, you may want to have a photograph of the President on hand as a visual aid.

Explain to the children some of the duties of the President.

- The job of the President of the United States can last for four or eight years, then it is someone else's turn. This is because if one President wasn't very good at his or her job, then there can be someone else who may have better ideas to take his or her place.
- The President is in charge of what is called the "executive branch" of the country whose duties are to make sure that the laws of the country are carried out and followed
- Being the President of the United States is an important job that is much too big for one person (even a President) to run alone. Because of this, the President has people who work with him to help him with things he or she can't take care of alone.
- Depending on various things, the President can decide who he or she needs as helpers at the job (Supreme Court judges, ambassadors, and other people to give him or her advice). They can help on things the President might not understand or need help with. Even Presidents need help with some things!
- Explain that while the President cannot come up with laws all by themselves, they have the power to say yes or no to ideas for laws that other people who work for our country bring to the President.

Give the children some examples of privileges of being the President.

- The President and his or her family get to live in the White House in Washington, D.C.
- The President gets to have his or her own special airplane called Air Force One to fly him or her along with other special people to where they're going.
- The President gets to have his or her own special helicopter called Marine One.
- The President gets to travel all over the world and meet other presidents (even kings and queens).

Ask the children if they are aware how the President is chosen, allowing ample time for different answers and various ideas. Explain that the President is chosen by votes from the American people and that those over the age of 18 are given opportunities to vote for the person they think would make the best President. The votes count as points. The person who gets the most points wins. (Obviously, it can be difficult—if not impossible—to explain the process of the electoral college to this age group. Therefore, it should be sufficient to merely explain that the candidate with the most points from the votes wins.)

If time and resources allow, you may want to provide the children with an example of a voting process by having available two different kinds of snacks and asking the children to vote on which kind of snack the class should enjoy after the project. After the votes have been taken (by a method of your choosing), declare the snack with the most votes the "winner". To avoid possible squabbling, you may want to provide each child with the snack he or she "voted" for instead of restricting them to the "winner" (PBS Kids). You will be the best judge as to whether this will cloud the explanation and understanding of the voting process to your class.

Part Two: If You Were President...

Explain to the children that they will be creating pictures of how they think their life would look if they were the President of the United States. While taking care not to dictate to the children exactly how their individual projects should look, offer examples of what a day in the life of the President may look like. Include the examples mentioned earlier in the discussion, including addressing large crowds for speeches, doing paperwork behind the desk, being in transit via Air Force One, etc.

Allow sufficient time for the children to utilize provided materials to complete the project.

Additional Source

PBS Kids. "If I Were President..." Retrieved November 4, 2007 from http://pbskids.org/arthur/parentsteachers/activities/acts/if_president.html