

“If I Were President...”

Grade Level: 3-5

Subject: Visual Arts

Time Required: (will vary)

Activity Overview and Objectives

This project is designed to introduce 3rd-5th grade students to the role of the President of the United States as well as to encourage them to understand the multi-dimensional roles and responsibilities of the position. The project will culminate in the visual expression of each child’s personal view of what the world would look like “If I 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.

Suggested Materials

- White sketch paper (8X10 or larger)
- Materials for collages are optional
- Writing utensils (pencils, markers, crayons, pastels, acrylic/tempura/oil paints, 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

Explain to the students that you will be discussing the role of the President of the United States, what that job entails, how the President is chosen, and things they may not know about the Presidency.

Begin by asking your students if they know who our current President is. You may want to provide a photograph of the President as a visual aid.

Briefly explain that being President is a very important job since he or she is to be responsible for all the people in the United States. As of November 4, the United States population was over 303 million people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007).

Explain the voting process and term limits of the Presidency.

Explain that the President is elected by the voting process to be President for four years. Towards the end of these four years, the President may choose to run for President again (against other candidates). If the President wins another four years, he or she may not run for the position again another four years later. No one may be elected for President more than twice.

Ask the students why they think this is. After some answers have been provided explain that the limit on the years a person can be President is in place in order to make sure that no one person is making the rules for America for a very long time. The eight year limit gives someone else a chance to use their ideas to guide and govern the nation.

Explain some of the duties of the President.

Explain that depending on what is going on in the country, the President may give more attention to some areas than others, but that there are many areas that every President must always pay very close attention to and make important decisions about. Explain to the students that even though a President may be very busy with one area, because we are such a big country, the President's job is still to pay attention to everything at once.

Some of these duties include...

- Evaluating and either approving or vetoing (saying “yes” or “no”) to new laws
- Deciding how much money to give to different causes such as hospitals, people who don't have much money, the environment, etc.
- Meeting with leaders from other countries to understand more about them and their countries
- Commanding our military

Ask the children if they can think of any other things the President does. Facilitate their responses according to time allotted for the project.

Part Two: If *You* Were President

Explain to the students that when people decide they would make a good President and decide to try to be elected, many times they have something called a “platform”. Explain that a platform is something that a person running for office thinks the United States needs or they think needs to happen that isn't currently happening. The person who wants to be President (also called a “candidate”) tells the people who are old enough to vote (18) that if they pick him or her to be President, they will make these changes happen in order to make the United States a better place to live. Sometimes this involves giving more money to older people, providing more help and materials to schools, or spending more money on taking care of our national forests.

Explain the project.

Depending on the time remaining, you may want to ask the students for ideas on what they would do if they were President. Would they make any changes? If so, what kinds of changes? Would the country look different than it does today? If so, how?

Explain to the children that they are now going to be given a chance to draw what the country or world would look like if they were President. They may even choose to draw a picture of what they imagine an ordinary day in their life would look like if that were the case. Explain that the choice is up to them. The only requirement is to use their imagination to draw what it would be like if they were the President of the United States.

Additional Source

U.S. POPClock Projection. U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved on November 4, 2007 from <http://www.census.gov/population/www/popclockus.html>.