

For the President, All in a Day's Work

Time Needed: One class period

Materials Needed:

Student worksheets

Copy Instructions:

Anticipation Activity (1 page;
class set)

Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

- Identify powers of the executive branch described in Article II of the U.S. Constitution
- Describe the responsibilities of the president and vice president
- Evaluate the difficulty of certain presidential responsibilities
- Name the current president and vice president and their political party
- Recall the length of a president's term and the number of terms to which a president may be elected

STEP BY STEP

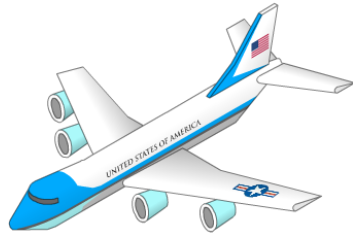
- ANTICIPATE** by asking students to think of one responsibility the president's job might involve. Ask students to share, and record their answers on the board.
- DISTRIBUTE** one Anticipation Activity worksheet to each student.
- ASSIGN** students to complete Groups A, B, and C of the Anticipation Activity. (Tasks are grouped in threes to make the ranking and discussion more manageable.)
- DISCUSS** each group of tasks with the class, asking how students ranked each task.
- DISTRIBUTE** the reading pages to the class.
- READ** with the class. Explain that the boxes on the first page contain the actual text of the Constitution. The president's powers are underlined to make them easier to spot. Discuss them as you read. (*Please note: The reading highlights the current president and vice president and their political party. This information will be updated as appropriate.*)
- CHECK** for understanding by doing the yes/no informal assessment with the class. Use each statement as an opportunity for quick review.
- DISTRIBUTE** the worksheet activities to the class.
- READ** the directions for the worksheet activities with the class. (The "I've Got the Power" matching exercise will help them link the tasks they ranked in with the powers they read about in the Constitution.)
- ASSIGN** students to complete the two worksheet pages.
- CLOSE** by asking students to compare the responsibility they thought of at the beginning of class to the responsibilities they learned about in the lesson. On pieces of scrap paper, have students write down the responsibility they thought of and the presidential power that most closely matches it. Have students hand you their scraps as an exit ticket.

All In a Day's Work

Name: _____

The Coolest Job in the Country!

Imagine you have been elected President of the United States. What do you think would be the best part of the job? Having your own personal jet? Living in the White House? Having a bowling alley in your house? (Yes, there's a one lane bowling alley in the basement of the White House!)

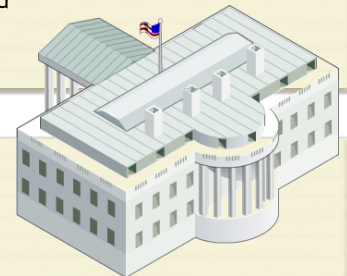


Being president is not just fun and games. You have real responsibilities. Below is a list of things you would do as president of the United States. Which do you think would be the hardest to do? Which do you think would be the easiest?

Rank the tasks in each list from 1 (hardest) to 3 (easiest). There is no correct answer! Use your own judgment.

Task List A

- _____ Lead weekly meetings where I ask the leaders of executive branch departments for advice on how to handle the country's most difficult problems.
- _____ Go to Congress and give my yearly "State of the Union" speech on what's happening in the U.S., which is broadcast live on television.
- _____ Decide whether to approve or reject a bill Congress has sent me that would cut research funding for a serious disease that not many people have.



Task List B

- _____ Follow the Constitution and the law even if I disagree with it.
- _____ Decide whether to send more troops into war knowing that some will die, but it will keep the country safe.
- _____ Make sure the Department of Homeland Security carries out new safety laws at airports even though I know many travelers will be angry.

Task List C

- _____ Answer difficult questions from reporters at a press conference where I'm asking Congress to spend a lot of money on space exploration.
- _____ Try to negotiate an agreement with another country that would lower the taxes each one adds to the sale of items from the other country.
- _____ Choose a new Supreme Court justice to replace one who is retiring.

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The President's Rule Book

The President of the United States is the leader of our nation and the leader of the executive branch of government. The Constitution of the United States gives all the rules for being president. It tells who can become president, what powers the president has, and some of the roles and duties the president takes on.

Read it for yourself:



Donald Trump is the current president of the United States. He was elected in November 2016 and took office on January 20, 2017.

from Article II of the United States Constitution

Section 1

The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America. . . .

Before he enter on the Execution of his Office, he shall take the following Oath or Affirmation:--"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

Section 2

The President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the Militia of the several States, when called into the actual Service of the United States; he may require the Opinion, in writing, of the principal Officer in each of the executive Departments, upon any Subject relating to the Duties of their respective Offices, and he shall have Power to grant Reprieves and Pardons for Offences against the United States, except in Cases of Impeachment.

He shall have Power, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, to make Treaties, provided two thirds of the Senators present concur; and he shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, Judges of the supreme Court, and all other Officers of the United States . . .

Section 3

He shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient; . . . he shall receive Ambassadors and other public Ministers; he shall take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed, and shall Commission all the Officers of the United States.

from Article 1, Section 7

Every Bill which shall have passed the House of Representatives and the Senate, shall, before it become a Law, be presented to the President of the United States: If he approve he shall sign it, but if not he shall return it. . .

Lawmaking and the Prez

One of the President's most important functions is not in Article II—it's in Article I, which talks about Congress! (The Constitution can be sneaky that way.)

Congress is the lawmaking branch of government, but the Constitution requires the president's approval before a bill can actually become a law. The president either signs the bill to approve it or rejects the bill with a **veto** and sends it back to Congress.

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Second In Command

The Constitution of the United States gives the president a helper: the vice president. However, the Constitution doesn't say much about what the vice president does, except that the VP is also the president of the Senate (one of the two lawmaking chambers in Congress). But the VP only presides over the Senate to cast a tiebreaking vote or when there is a ceremony. The rest of the time, the vice president advises the president, travels the world negotiating with other countries, helps carry out laws here at home, and is important to many functions in the executive branch of government.



Photo credit: Gage Skidmore

Mike Pence is the current vice president of the United States.



Trump and Pence belong to the Republican Party.

Political Party Leaders

The president and vice president act as the leaders of their political party. This role is not part of the Constitution, but has evolved over time as part of the political process. A political party is an organized group of people who share similar views and work to influence the government in support of those views. As party leaders, the president and vice president work to accomplish the party's goals for how the government should address the issues facing our nation. The Republican and Democratic parties are the two major political parties in the U.S.

Becoming President

In the United States, presidential elections happen every four years. A president cannot serve more than two 4-year terms—a total of eight years. This rule is found in the 22nd Amendment to the Constitution, which was added in 1951. If a president has only served one term and wants to be re-elected, that president ends up spending a lot of time campaigning during the last year of the term. If the president has already served a second term, often the vice president will decide to become a presidential candidate. Many presidents started out as the vice president.



Before the 2-term limit, President Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected to four terms in a row! He took office in 1933 and died in 1945, a few months into his fourth term.

Presidential Line of Succession

1. Vice President of the U.S.
 2. Speaker of the House
 3. President pro tempore of the Senate
 4. Secretary of State
 5. Secretary of the Treasury
 6. Secretary of Defense
 7. Attorney General
- (list continues with 10 more members of the president's cabinet)

What If the President Dies?

There have been several times in the history of the United States where a president has died. When that happens, the Constitution provides that the vice president becomes president. It also gives Congress the power to make a law saying who becomes president if something happened to both the president and the vice president. Congress did this in the Presidential Succession Act, which puts the speaker of the House (the leader of the House of Representatives) next in line after the vice president and lists everyone who is in line after that.

All In a Day's Work

Name: _____

A. I've Got the Power! Match each responsibility of the president and vice president with the correct power or duty found in the Constitution.



President's Responsibilities

- 1) ____ Lead weekly meetings where I ask the leaders of executive branch departments for advice on how to handle the country's most difficult problems.
- 2) ____ Go to Congress and give my yearly "State of the Union" speech on what's happening in America.
- 3) ____ Decide whether to approve or reject a bill that Congress has sent me.
- 4) ____ Follow the Constitution and the law even if I disagree with it.
- 5) ____ Decide whether to send more troops into war knowing that some will die, but it will keep the country safe.
- 6) ____ Make sure the Department of Homeland Security properly carries out new airport safety laws that will anger some travelers.
- 7) ____ Hold a press conference where I ask Congress to spend more money on space exploration.
- 8) ____ Decide whether to let someone out of prison based on the prisoner's good conduct and particular circumstances
- 9) ____ Negotiate an agreement with another country that would lower the taxes each one adds to the sale of items from the other country.
- 10) ____ Choose a new Supreme Court justice to replace one who is retiring.

Vice President's Responsibilities

- 11) ____ Take over as president if I'm needed.
- 12) ____ Act as leader of the Senate.
- 13) ____ Cast a tiebreaking vote in the Senate.
- 14) ____ Work with the president to run the executive branch.

Powers & Duties Listed in the Constitution:

- A. Power to carry out the laws
- B. Must protect and defend the Constitution
- C. Commander in Chief of the military
- D. Elected with the president to hold office in the executive branch
- E. May ask advisors, who lead parts of the government, for their opinion on different issues
- F. Is the president of the Senate
- G. Pardon someone for a crime, canceling their punishment
- H. Make treaties with other countries (with Senate approval)
- I. Take office as president if the current president dies, resigns, or is unable to do the job
- J. Choose new Supreme Court justices (with Senate approval)
- K. Make recommendations to Congress about what laws are needed
- L. Update Congress on how things are going in the country
- M. Sign (approve) or veto (reject) bills from Congress
- N. Can vote in the Senate if the senators are equally divided on a vote

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B. So Many Laws, So Little Time! The executive branch is in charge of carrying out thousands of laws, but the President doesn't do this alone. Departments inside the executive branch are responsible for carrying out certain kinds of laws. Complete the table by matching each executive department to its function. Use the word/picture bank for help.



Justice



Education



Treasury



Defense



Health and Human Services



Homeland Security



Agriculture



Transportation

	EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT	FUNCTION
1		Works to protect the country against terrorism and make sure the borders are safe.
2		Makes coins and paper money, tries to help the economy, and collects taxes.
3		Keeps the United States safe using the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard, and other military resources.
4		Enforces federal laws, prevents crime, and punishes those convicted of federal crimes.
5		Supports farmers, makes sure our food is safe, and gives recommendations about good nutrition.
6		Works to protect the health of all Americans and offers medical and other basic services to people in need.
7		Builds and maintains federal highways and railroads, makes rules for air travel, and promotes transportation safety.
8		Provides funding to public schools and helps students pay for college.

C. Crossword! Complete the puzzle using information from the lesson.

Across

- Name of the current president
- Length of a presidential term, in years
- Word that refers to the sequence of who will become president if something happens

Down

- Political party of the current president and vice president
- Name of the current vice president
- Number of times a president can be elected

The crossword puzzle grid consists of the following numbered squares:

- 1**: Top row, first square.
- 2**: Top row, second square.
- 3**: Top row, fifth square.
- 4**: Middle row, first square.
- 5**: Middle row, eighth square.
- 6**: Bottom row, first square.

The grid is 8 squares wide and 6 squares high. The following squares are empty:

- Top row: squares 3, 4, 6, 7, 8.
- Middle row: squares 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9.
- Bottom row: squares 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

Informal Assessment: Yes or No

Directions: After working through the reading pages with the class, read each of the following presidential powers out loud. Have the class respond as a group by...

- Saying "yes" or "no" as a chorus
- Showing thumbs-up for yes and thumbs down for no

Watch or listen for wrong or mixed answers. Use each power as a springboard for quick review/discussion before moving on.

1. Defend and protect the Constitution *(yes)*
2. Draft laws and pass them *(no)*
3. Commander in Chief of the armed forces *(yes)*
4. Decide who wins court cases *(no)*
5. Execute laws that have been passed *(yes)*
6. Tell Congress what laws it must pass *(no)*
7. Recommend laws for Congress to consider *(yes)*
8. Ask for advice from department heads *(yes)*
9. Cast a tiebreaking vote in the Senate *(no)*
10. Make treaties without approval *(no)*
11. Nominate Supreme Court judges *(yes)*
12. Nominate ambassadors *(yes)*
13. Run for a third term in office *(no)*
14. Appoint a governor for each state *(no)*
15. Approve or reject laws that have been passed *(yes)*
16. Pardon a politician who has been impeached *(no)*
17. Receive ambassadors from other countries *(yes)*
18. Give information to Congress about the State of the Union *(yes)*

All In a Day's Work

**** TEACHER'S GUIDE ****

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- 2) L Go to Congress and give my yearly "State of the Union" speech on what's happening in America.
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- 6) A Make sure the Department of Homeland Security properly carries out new airport safety laws that will anger some travelers.
- 7) K Hold a press conference where I ask Congress to spend more money on space exploration.
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