

Cobblestone™

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

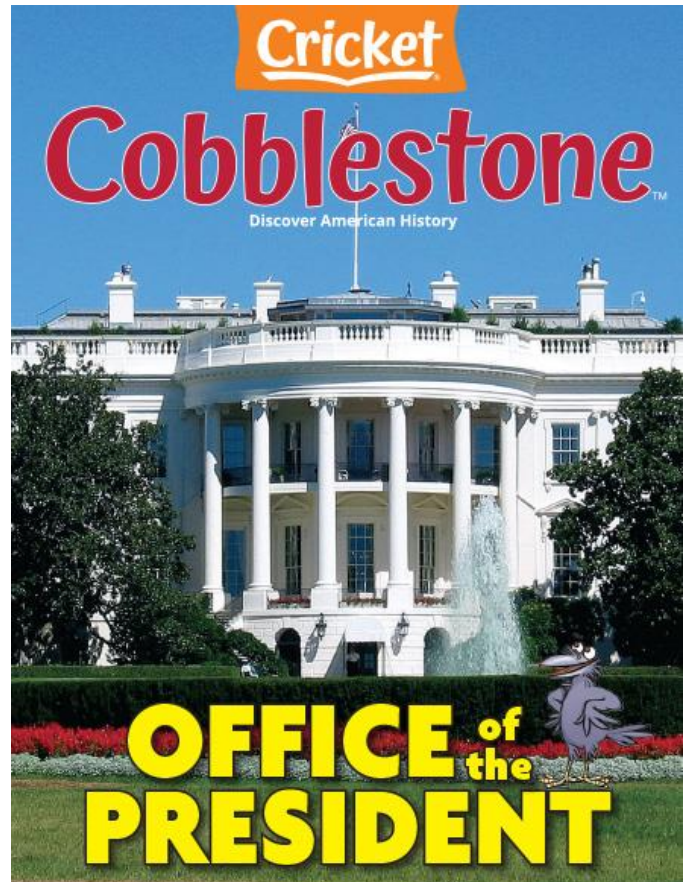
Use the articles, lessons, and activities in this Teacher Guide to help students understand the past and present roles of the country's chief executive.

CONVERSATION QUESTION

Why is the role of President of the United States important to the functioning of our democracy?

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

- Students will explore the office of the U.S. presidency over time.
- Students will compare past U.S. presidents.
- Students will write a skit.
- Students will analyze the accomplishments of past presidents.
- Students will examine why it is important to have “checks and balances” within the government.
- Students will investigate why it is important to have three branches of government.
- Students will participate in a debate.
- Students will explore the different responsibilities of the president.
- Students will compare the importance of different presidential roles.
- Students will write a Help Wanted advertisement.



In addition to supplemental materials focused on core Social Studies skills, this flexible teaching tool offers vocabulary-building activities, questions for discussion, and cross-curricular activities.

SELECTIONS

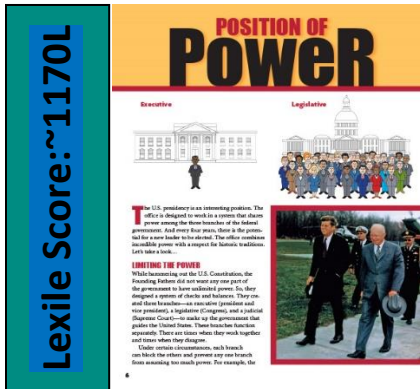
- **Position of Power**
Expository Nonfiction, ~1170L
- **Ghosts of the Oval Office**
Historical Fiction, ~1050L
- **A Juggling Act**
Expository Nonfiction, ~1050L

Cobblestone® Teacher Guide: October 2024

Position of Power

pp. 6–7, Expository Nonfiction

Use this article about the presidency as a position of power to help students understand the structure of the U.S. government.



OBJECTIVES

- Students will examine why it is important to have “checks and balances” within the government.
- Students will investigate why it is important to have three branches of government.
- Students will participate in a debate.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **legislation** (p. 6) the act or process of making or enacting laws
- **constitutional** (p. 7) having to do with the document that is the foundation of a government
- **amendment** (p. 7) a formal or official change made to a law, contract, constitution, or other legal document

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: Why is the role of President of the United States important to the functioning of our democracy?

Briefly discuss with students the difference between a monarchy, where one king or queen rules a country, and a democracy, where the power does not belong just to the president. Explain that the U.S. government has a system of checks and balances to make sure that no one person has all the power. Why do they think this is necessary? What might happen without a “balanced” government?

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Define each word with students. Then have each student make a simple word search puzzle that includes the three words. Have students trade and complete each other’s puzzles. Finally, tell students to look for these words as they read the story.

READ & DISCUSS

Have students read the article. Then use these questions for discussion:

1. Why is it important to spread out the power in the U.S. government?
2. Give an example of what might happen if one of the three branches of government had all the power.
3. Why is it also important that each branch can block another branch?
4. Why is a peaceful and orderly transfer of power so important?

CONCEPT/SKILL FOCUS: Analyzing Perspectives

INSTRUCT: Explain to students that this article is about the importance of a balanced government where all the power is spread between three branches. Divide the class into three groups. One will argue in favor of the current system of checks and balances. Another group will argue that the U.S. should have one person or branch to have complete power. The third group will judge the debate and decide whose argument is the strongest, by assigning points to each side based on the points they make.

ASSESS: Asses the arguments each side uses in the debate, as well as the way in which the third group assessed their peers.

EXTEND

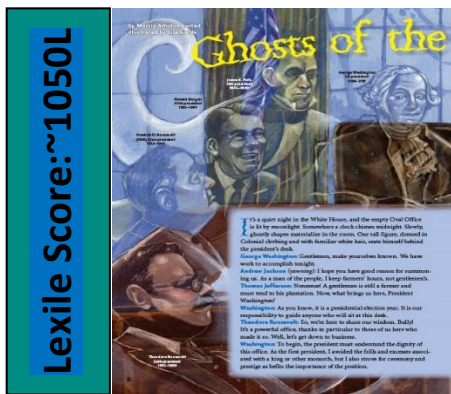
Language Arts: Invite students to use print and digital sources to research a country in history that moved from a monarchy or dictatorship to a democracy. Have them use their research to create a one-page summary that includes who/what/where/when/how, in the style of a journalist.

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Ghosts of the Oval Office

pp. 8–12, Historical Fiction

Use this fictional conversation between past presidents to describe presidential roles and responsibilities.



ENGAGE

Conversation Question: Why is the role of President of the United States important to the functioning of our democracy?

Ask students which presidents they remember who served in their lifetime, including the current president. What do they know about those presidents? What have those presidents done during their terms in office? Now ask them to think about a president in the past who is remembered today. What sort of things are those presidents remembered for?

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Define each word with students. Then arrange students in small groups and have them practice using two or even three of the words in a single sentence. Finally, tell students to look for these words as they read the story.

RESOURCES

Classifying Information

OBJECTIVES

- Students will explore the office of the U.S. presidency over time.
- Students will compare past U.S. presidents.
- Students will write a skit.
- Students will analyze the accomplishments of past presidents.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **materialistic (p. 8)** believing that having money and possessions is the most important thing in life
- **manifest destiny (p. 9)** the belief that the United States had the divine right to expand westward
- **secede (p. 10)** to separate from a nation or state and become independent

READ & DISCUSS

Have students read the article. Then use these questions for discussion:

1. How has the office of the presidency changed over time? What is different about life today that has changed their roles from those of the early presidents in U.S. history?
2. How do current events affect the role of a president during a certain time in history?
3. What current events may affect the roles of the president?
4. What is the most important role of a president?

CONCEPT/SKILL FOCUS: CLASSIFYING INFORMATION

INSTRUCT: Explain to students that this article describes past U.S. presidents and what they are known for in history. Working in pairs, have students identify the specific president and what they are known for, then fill in the *Classifying Information* graphic organizer listing the specific president and the examples from the article.

ASSESS: Have students compare their organizer with the rest of the class and discuss any differences, especially how each student classified the information.

EXTEND

Social Studies: Invite students to use print and digital sources to research three presidents elected since 1960, then write a skit where those presidents discuss with the others what their most famous accomplishments and roles were.

Classifying Information:

Classifying information from an article is a helpful way to understand and remember that information and why it is important. In this article, the ghosts of many past presidents have come together and are discussing their accomplishments. Choose six of the presidents and put their names in the left column, then list one of their accomplishments in the right column.

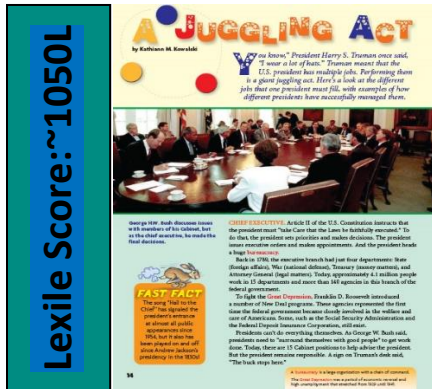
PRESIDENT	ACCOMPLISHMENT

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A Juggling Act

pp. 14–17, Expository Nonfiction

Use this article to help students understand the many roles and responsibilities of the President of the United States.



OBJECTIVES

- Students will explore the different responsibilities of the president.
- Students will compare the importance of different presidential roles.
- Students will write a Help Wanted advertisement.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **priority (p. 14)** something that you do or deal with first because it is more important or urgent than other things
- **ceremonial (p. 15)** having to do with an occasion is extremely formal and has many rituals
- **policy (p. 15)** a set of ideas or a plan for action followed by a business, a government, a political party, or a group of people

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: Why is the role of President of the United States important to the functioning of our democracy?

Ask students to think of a job that includes many different roles, such as a teacher, a nurse, or a parent. How many different roles can they think of for that job? How many roles do they have as students? Then explain that the President of the United States also has many roles as part of his job, and each president must manage them in his own way.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Define each word with students. Then arrange students in three groups and have each group use a dictionary or thesaurus to come up with two other words that have a similar meaning. Have each group share their words with the class. Finally, tell students to look for these words as they read the story.

READ & DISCUSS

Have students read the article. Then use these questions for discussion:

1. Of all the different roles of the U.S. president, which do you believe is most important and why? Which do you think is the least important?
2. Which presidential roles might be more important to U.S. citizens than citizens of other countries? Which role might be most important to someone who is not a citizen?
3. In an election, which presidential role(s) do you think would be most important to American voters and would influence their choice on Election Day? Is this different from your personal opinion from question 1?

CONCEPT/SKILL FOCUS: Summarizing Information

INSTRUCT: Explain to students that this article describes the many different roles that a U.S. president must perform as part of his job. Using the information from the article, create a Help Wanted poster advertising the job of president. Use art or digital graphics to make the advertisement attention-grabbing.

ASSESS: Have students hang their posters in the classroom and discuss with the rest of the class how appealing and complete they are. Compare how accurately each student summarized the information.

EXTEND

Social Studies: Invite students to use print and digital sources to research a presidency from the earliest years of the United States, and compare the roles performed by that president in a compare-and-contrast chart.