

Focusing on the First Lady

Lesson Plan #4: First Kids

Subject: U.S. History; Government

Grade level: 8-12

Rationale or Purpose: The children who live in the White House because of their parent's job face many pressures and situations that are different than their peers. This lesson lets the student explore the issues associated with having such a famous father or mother.

Materials:

- Copies of the four photographs of First Ladies needed for this lesson. These photographs may be projected onto a screen or downloaded to reproduce as transparencies (NOTE: See Web Site Resources for Lesson Plans page).

<http://www.cah.utexas.edu/photojournalism/detail.php?nickname=nixon&picid=13>

Dirck Halstead/Wally McNamee, 1974

Surrounded by his family, an emotional President Nixon bids a final farewell to his White House staff after resigning the presidency the previous day. The House Judiciary Committee voted three articles of impeachment against Nixon on July 30th, which quickly led to his resignation on August 8th.

<http://www.cah.utexas.edu/photojournalism/detail.php?nickname=ford&picid=2>

David Hume Kennerly, 1974

On the first night of his presidency, Gerald Ford and his wife, Betty, celebrate with three of their four children: Steve, Jack and Susan. President Ford commuted from his home in Alexandria, Virginia to the White House for several weeks in 1974 following Richard Nixon's departure.

<http://www.cah.utexas.edu/photojournalism/detail.php?nickname=carter&picid=1>

Dirck Halstead, 1976

The cover of the July 26, 1976 issue of *Time* magazine features presidential nominee Jimmy Carter at the 1976 Democratic National Convention in New York City. Carter's wife, Rosalynn, looks at daughter, Amy, in her father's arms as vice presidential nominee Walter Mondale and his wife, Joan, beam with pride.

<http://www.cah.utexas.edu/photojournalism/detail.php?nickname=clinton&picid=6>

Dirck Halstead, 1996

President Clinton embraces his wife, Hillary, and his daughter, Chelsea, at the 1996 Democratic Convention. Clinton would go on to win re-election with 70 percent of the electoral vote.

- First Kids discussion questions

Objectives:

- U.S. History 24 – applying critical thinking skills to organize and use

information from a variety of sources including electronic technology

- U.S. History 25 – communication in written, oral, and visual forms

Activity:

Step 1. Allow the students to look at each of the four photographs of the President and his children.

Step 2. Use the First Kid discussion question to explore the issues of the “First Kids.”

Step 3. After the discussion, the student will pretend that he or she is the son or daughter of the President of the U.S. and write a letter to an imaginary friend describing a day in their life.

Modification: The students will write a song, poem, or rap using the title: “I’ve Got the Famous Mom/Dad Blues.”

Student Product:

1. classroom participation in the discussion
2. a letter to an imaginary friend
3. a song, poem, or rap

Closure: Ask the students to describe a perk or problem that comes with being a child of the President of the U.S.

Assessment or evaluation: student participation in the assigned activity

Extension: Being followed by a Secret Service agent is a fact of life for the children of the president. The students can brainstorm possible ways for the First Children to outwit their bodyguard.

First Kids Discussion Questions

1. What do you think would be the advantages associated with being the President's child?
2. What would be the disadvantages?
3. Do the children of the President have a special responsibility to always demonstrate exemplary behavior in public? Why or why not?
4. How do you think the First Kids cope with the negative things concerning their parents they hear on television or see in print?
5. When Bill Clinton was first elected his daughter Chelsea was a young teenager with the typical problems of early adolescents such as wearing braces and being shy. A number of comedians included jokes about Chelsea in their routines. Do you think the children of the President should be the subject of jokes at their expense?
6. Betty Ford gave an interview on national television in which she was asked what she would do if she discovered that her eighteen year old daughter was involved in a sexual relationship. Mrs. Ford replied that she would not be surprised but she would want her daughter to feel free to talk to her mother about it. The public reaction to Mrs. Ford's response was initially very negative. What do you think Mrs. Ford's daughter said to her mother about that statement? How would you feel if your parent said something very personal about you in public? How far does the First Family's right to privacy extend?
7. How do you think the First Family tries to keep some sense of normalcy in their daily lives?