

Growing Voters and Election 2016

Activity Title:

Primary Students Use Primary (Original) Sources: Presidents in History

Elementary grades*

Overview

Students use online primary resources to research and write a short paragraph about one of the past Presidential elections. The Library of Congress has a variety of great resources including speeches, music, photos, and letters. Have students work in pairs or groups and get a chance to click through sources that show actual documents and artifacts from past Presidents.

Particular websites are suggested on the Growing Voters link. For example:

[American President: An online reference resource](http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident) - A comprehensive collection of material about the US Presidents; features essays about the President's life before, during, and after each presidential term. <http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident>

Students can see here transcripts and recordings of speeches, photos, and watch videos (where available). They can get to know something about the real life of a past president. Here is a sample format on offer for a president:

A Life in Brief • Life Before the Presidency • Campaigns and Elections • Domestic Affairs • Foreign Affairs • Life After the Presidency • Family Life • The American Franchise • Impact and Legacy • Key Events

Students can download photos, music, and cut and paste from letters and memoirs. Their paragraph should draw upon what they found from primary (original) sources.

Past campaign materials could be incorporated (optional.)

Students can also illustrate their paragraphs with their own artwork (or collage using Photostory.com)

Alternatives and Extensions

Optional extension: have students write their paragraph summaries using Word or PowerPoint so that the whole class' work can be easily assembled and shown to others.

Teach the Presidential Election: A range of technology-infused classroom activities, resources, and tools are **available for free** at GrowingVoters.org, a non-partisan educational effort to enliven and motivate student engagement in the political process. Professor Jo-Anne Hart is the project creator with support from *Lesley University* Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA: Hart@Lesley.edu

Consider using Padlet.com to put the whole class' work online for presentation and easy sharing.

The teacher can select one former president so that the students focus on various aspects of his presidency, campaign, life before and after, etc. A text or photo of the selected President can be put on **Voicethread.com** or **Padlet.com**. Then each student (or team of students) can record a summary of their research.

Another option would be to combine this activity with the Growing Voters activity on students making trading cards – using former presidents here.

***easily adaptable to upper grades** by making the original research elements more rigorous. Students could construct their own PowerPoint slides or Photostory.com montage.