

THE WHITE HOUSE

Teacher Guide



From Foundation to
Renovation: Unveiling the
Legacy and Significance
of the White House

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Fourth Grade Teacher Guide



National Mall, Canva Pro

Key Themes

- American Identity and Unity
- Leadership
- Monuments

Core Values

- Community
- Liberty

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

- Identify the White House as the official residence and workplace of the President of the United States.
- Describe the historical significance of the White House and its role in American government.
- Recognize key architectural features of the White House, such as the columns, porticos, and iconic design.
- Explore the layout and function of different rooms and areas within the White House, including the Oval Office, East Room, and State Dining Room.
- Discuss the role of the First Family in living and working within the White House.



The White House, Canva Pro

Key Terms

- 01 **bayonet:** a weapon like a knife attached to the front end of a rifle for use in close fighting.
- 02 **compromise:** a way of reaching an agreement in which each person or group gives up something that was wanted in order to end an argument or dispute.
- 03 **cornerstone:** an important stone that forms part of a corner or angle in a wall.
- 04 **Federal Hall:** the first capitol building of the United States, where George Washington was inaugurated as America's first president in 1789.
- 05 **Oval Office:** a very special room in the White House where the President of the United States works.
- 06 **portico:** a covered walk or porch with a roof that is held up by columns.
- 07 **quarry:** a large outdoor pit where people dig up rocks and stones that are used for building things like houses and roads.
- 08 **Resolute Desk:** a nineteenth-century desk used by several presidents of the United States in the Oval Office.
- 09 **Washington, D.C.:** the capital of the United States. It was named after George Washington, our country's first president.

Introduction

TELL Students

I am going to give you a riddle to solve. Please listen carefully and raise your hand when you have the answer.

*In a city of grandeur, I proudly stand,
With history and power at my command.
My walls have witnessed tales of might,
As leaders within plan day and night.
With columns gleaming, I catch the eye,
In Washington, D.C., under the sky.
My name suggests a color so bright,
Yet within, decisions shape our nation's flight.*

ASK Students

What is the riddle talking about?

TELL Students

That is right! Today, we are going to learn about the White House. In your house, you live with your family. The White House is where the President of the United States lives with their family while they are president. But, it is also their office where they work and meet with other important people from all around the world. Your house might have a few bedrooms, a kitchen, and a living room, right? The White House is much, much bigger! It has 132 rooms, including its own movie theater, a bowling alley, and even a big room just for making chocolate!

ASK Students

How is your house similar to the White House? How is your house different from the White House?

Introduction

TELL Students

Most houses can be all sorts of colors, but the White House is always white. It would be silly to paint the White House blue and call it the White House! The White House is white because it is made of a special kind of stone called Aquia Creek sandstone, which comes from a quarry in Virginia. A **quarry** is a large outdoor pit where people dig up rocks and stones that are used for building things like houses and roads. When this stone is new, it looks more grayish, but over time, it gets lighter and turns white because of the weather. Also, people painted the outside of the White House with a special kind of paint called whitewash to make it look even whiter and more elegant. The White House is white because of the stone it is made of and the paint people put on it.

ASK Students

Why is the White House white?

TELL Students

Just like your house has spaces for homework and playtime, the White House has offices and a lot of places for fun too. But, the President works in a special room called the Oval Office, which is shaped like an egg! The **Oval Office** is a very special room in the White House where the President of the United States works. You might have friends and family come to visit your house. The White House has visitors too, but it also has tours for people to come and learn about its history and the presidents who have lived there.



Oval Office, Canva Pro



Easter Egg Roll, Wikipedia

Introduction

ASK Students

Have you ever visited the White House?

TELL Students

You might celebrate birthdays or holidays at your house. The White House hosts big celebrations for things like Easter with the Easter Egg Roll and other important events with leaders from around the world. So, even though the White House might seem really different from your house, it is also a place where a family lives, works, and plays—just on a much bigger scale!

Let's watch another episode of Star Spangled Adventures to learn more!

WATCH

[Star Spangled Adventures Cartoon Ep. 28:
The White House](#)



Lesson

TELL Students

Did you know that when George Washington, America's first president, was in charge, there was no White House? At this time, the White House had not been built. And Washington, D.C. was not even a city! **Washington, D.C.** is the current capital of the United States. It was named after George Washington, our country's first president. However, the first capital of the United States was in New York City. This is where George Washington took his oath of office in a special place called Federal Hall. **Federal Hall** is the first capitol building of the United States, where George Washington was inaugurated as America's first president in 1789.

ASK Students

What is Federal Hall?

TELL Students

When George Washington became president in 1789, he did not have the White House to move into because it had not been built yet, and Washington, D.C. did not exist. The first capital of the United States was New York City, where Congress met and where George Washington took his oath of office. Since there was no White House, Congress found a house for him to live in on 3 Cherry Street. This house was rented from a man named Samuel Osgood for \$845 every year. To make the house nice for President Washington and his family, Congress spent \$8,000 to buy furniture and make some changes. They wanted the house to be comfortable and perfect for America's first family to live in. It was a good place at first, but soon it became too small and too far from important places.



George Washington, Canva



Federal Hall, Canva Pro



3 Cherry Street, Wikipedia

Lesson

ASK Students

Where did George Washington live when he became president?

TELL Students

In 1790, George Washington and his family moved to a larger house on 39 Broadway. When our country was new, there was a big decision to make about where the government would be located. The people who made these important decisions, called Congress, had different ideas. But after a lot of talking and negotiating, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison finally reached a compromise. A **compromise** is a way of reaching an agreement in which each person or group gives up something they wanted in order to end an argument or dispute.

ASK Students

What do you remember about Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison? Why are these men important?

TELL Students

On July 16, 1790, President George Washington signed a special law called the Residence Act. This law said that for 10 years, Philadelphia would be the capital of the country.



Hamilton, Madison, & Jefferson, Wikipedia



Washington D.C., Canva Pro

Lesson

TELL Students *(continued)*

After the 10 years ended, the capital would move to a new city. George Washington helped plan the new city. They named it Washington, D.C., and it became the capital of the United States.

ASK Students

Where is the capital of the United States today? Why is it named Washington, D.C.?

TELL Students

When George Washington finished his time as president, John Adams moved into the President's House in Philadelphia, which was the official residence for presidents before the White House was built. During the time when presidents lived in Philadelphia, our nation was busy building its capital city, Washington, D.C.

ASK Students

Who became president after George Washington?

TELL Students

The design of the White House, which was then called the "President's House" or the "Executive Mansion," was decided through a contest announced by Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson. The winner of the contest would receive either \$500 or a medal of equal value. An Irish-born architect named James Hoban won the contest.

ASK Students

Who won the contest to design the White House?



James Hoban, Wikipedia

Lesson

TELL Students

Construction began on October 13, 1792, with the laying of the cornerstone. A **cornerstone** is an important stone that forms part of a corner or angle in a wall. This was a big project! Land had to be cleared, roads built, trees cut down, bridges constructed, and materials gathered. Bricks for the inside of the White House were made nearby, and trees were cut in Maryland and Virginia for floors and roof timbers. Many workers were involved in this hard work.

ASK Students

Do you think the White House was easy to build?

TELL Students

Please carefully read the following passage to learn more about the construction of the White House. (A Student print-out is included at the end of the lesson guide).

The White House was not easy to build. It is located at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue and has a rich history that dates back to its construction. Until after the Civil War, it was the largest house in America. In 1798, the two-story structure was covered with a lime-based whitewash, which gave rise to its nickname and later formal name. The construction of the White House cost a total of \$232,372, and after eight years, it was ready for its first residents.



John & Abigail Adams Wikipedia



War of 1812, Canva Pro

Lesson

TELL Students *(continued)*

Although some finishing touches were still needed, President John Adams and his wife, Abigail, moved into the White House on November 1, 1800. Since then, every president has lived in the White House. However, over the years, it has undergone numerous additions, updates, and renovations. As a result, the White House looks different today than it did 200 years ago. Various presidents have left their own marks on the structure, adding to its rich history and significance. And, it was rebuilt after it burned down in a war with Great Britain called the War of 1812.

ASK Students

What happened to the White House in the War of 1812?

TELL Students

During the War of 1812, which was a conflict between the United States and England, British soldiers came to the nation's capital and set fire to the White House on August 24, 1814. Before the attack, President James Madison and First Lady Dolley Madison left to stay safe. When the British soldiers got to the White House and saw that the Madisons were gone, some stories say they had a meal of leftovers using the fancy dishes and silverware from the White House. They also did some things that were unkind, like putting the president's hats on their bayonets and marching around. A **bayonet** is a weapon like a knife attached to the front end of a rifle for use in close fighting. The British soldiers broke windows, moved furniture, and even lit torches and threw them through the broken windows.



British soldiers attack D.C., Wikipedia

Lesson

ASK Students

What did the British soldiers do in the White House during the War of 1812?

TELL Students

After the British soldiers left, the Madisons returned to the city three days later. But they could not stay in the White House because it was destroyed. The person who made the White House in the first place, James Hoban, was asked to fix it. And by 1817, he finished. He worked with another builder named Benjamin Henry Latrobe to add a big porch with columns in 1824 (called the South Portico) and another one in 1829 (called the North Portico). A **portico** is a covered walk or porch with a roof that is held up by columns. These porches made the White House look even more beautiful!

ASK Students

What is the South Portico and the North Portico?

TELL Students

In 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt made some big changes to the White House. He brought the house into the modern age with electric lights and added a whole new section called the West Wing. This is a really important part of the White House because it is where the president works and meets with his top advisors. The West Wing contains the Oval Office, the Cabinet Room, the Situation Room, and the Roosevelt Room.



North & South Portico, Wikipedia



Madisons in Octagon House, Canva Pro

Lesson

TELL Students

Originally, President Theodore Roosevelt worked in a temporary space in the West Wing, but it wasn't until President William Howard Taft came along that the Oval Office was created. Taft was the first president to use the Oval Office.

ASK Students

Where does the president work and meet with his top advisors?

TELL Students

The **Oval Office** is a very special room in the White House, which is where the President of the United States works. Imagine a big, oval-shaped room—like an egg—filled with a large desk, comfy chairs, and lots of pictures and flags. This room is important because it is where the president makes big decisions, meets with other leaders from around the world, and talks to people who help run the country.

ASK Students

What is the Oval Office?

TELL Students

There is a famous desk inside the Oval Office called the Resolute Desk where the president sits to do his work. The **Resolute Desk** is a nineteenth-century desk used by several presidents of the United States in the Oval Office.



West Wing, Wikipedia



Oval Office, Canva Pro

Lesson

TELL Students *(continued)*

This desk has a cool history—it was made from the wood of a British ship and has been used by many presidents. The room also has special decorations chosen by each president, so it changes a little bit every time a new president comes in.

ASK Students

How would you decorate the Oval Office if you were the President of the United States?

TELL Students

Today, the White House is a huge building with a lot of interesting features! It is about 55,000 square feet big. That is like having many school gymnasiums all in one place! Over the years, presidents have added rooms and features to the White House. President Franklin D. Roosevelt had an indoor swimming pool installed. And, President Gerald R. Ford added an outdoor pool. There is also a bowling alley, putting green, movie theater, tennis court, and running track.

ASK Students

What would you add to the White House if you were the President of the United States? Who would you invite to live with you at the White House?



White House Areas, Wikipedia

Lesson

TELL Students

Did you know that many presidents of the United States had pets living with them in the White House? These special animals brought joy and companionship to the presidents and their families while they lived in the country's most famous residence. Some presidents had dogs, cats, and even horses as pets, while others had more unusual companions like alligators, parrots, and even a pet raccoon! One president's children were given a pair of adorable pets, while another president had a pet parrot that could whistle.

ASK Students

What types of animals have lived in the White House?

TELL Students

Please carefully read the following passage to learn more about White House pets. (A Student print-out is included at the end of the lesson guide).

Many fascinating pets have called the White House home throughout history. For example, George Washington was the first president to have a pet while in office, a dog named Sweetlips. President John F. Kennedy had a dog named Bo and President John Quincy Adams had a pet alligator in the White House. President Theodore Roosevelt famously had a pet pony named Algonquin. President Andrew Jackson had a parrot named Poll that could whistle. President Kennedy's children had pets named Macaroni the pony and Tom Kitten the cat. President Calvin Coolidge had a pet raccoon named Rebecca.

Lesson

ASK Students

What type of pet did George Washington have while in office?

TELL Students

The White House serves as the official residence and workplace of the President of the United States. It is where crucial decisions regarding the nation are deliberated and made. It offers visitors a unique opportunity to learn about American history and the leadership legacies that have shaped our nation. Exploring the White House provides valuable knowledge about our country's governance and the contributions of its leaders. Maybe one day, you could even live and work there too!

A Day in the White House Journal

Objective: To engage fourth-grade students in a creative writing activity that encourages them to imagine and describe a typical day in the White House from the perspective of a resident or visitor.

Materials Needed:

- White House reference materials (books, pictures, etc.)
- Writing journals or paper
- Pens or pencils
- White House-themed writing prompts (optional)

Introduction: Begin by providing students with an overview of the White House and its significance as the official residence and workplace of the President of the United States. Discuss the layout and key features of the White House, as well as the daily routines and activities that take place there.

Brainstorming: Encourage students to brainstorm ideas for their "A Day in the White House" journal entry. Discuss potential perspectives they could write from, such as being a member of the First Family, a White House staff member, or a visitor on a tour.

Writing Prompts: Provide students with White House-themed writing prompts to help spark their creativity and guide their journal entries. Prompts could include questions such as:

- What would it be like to wake up in the White House?
- Describe a typical breakfast in the White House.
- How would you spend your morning in the White House?
- What activities would you participate in during the afternoon?
- Reflect on your experiences in the White House at the end of the day.

A Day in the White House Journal

Journal Writing: Give students time to write their journal entries, encouraging them to use their imaginations to vividly describe their experiences in the White House. Remind them to include details about their surroundings, interactions with other people, and any special events or activities that occur throughout the day.

Sharing and Reflection: After completing their journal entries, invite students to share their writing with the class. Encourage them to read aloud their descriptions of a typical day in the White House and listen attentively to their classmates' contributions. Following the sharing session, lead a discussion on the similarities and differences between the various perspectives presented.

Extension Activities: To further engage students in their exploration of the White House, consider incorporating extension activities such as:

- Creating illustrations or drawings to accompany their journal entries, depicting scenes from their imagined day in the White House.
- Researching and presenting factual information about specific rooms or areas within the White House mentioned in their journal entries.
- Collaboratively compiling the journal entries into a class "A Day in the White House" booklet or display to showcase their creative writing skills and insights.

Fill-in-the-Blank Worksheet

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: Read each sentence carefully and fill in the blanks with the correct words or phrases based on the lesson about the White House.

1. The White House is the official residence and workplace of the _____ of the United States.
2. The White House has over _____ rooms, including unique features like a movie theater and a bowling alley.
3. The exterior of the White House is made from _____ sourced from a quarry in Virginia, contributing to its iconic white appearance.
4. Before the White House was built, George Washington's temporary residence in New York City was located at _____ Street.
5. The capital of the United States was moved to Washington, D.C., following a compromise between Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and _____.
6. Irish-born architect _____ won the contest to design the White House, which began construction in the year _____.
7. The White House was set on fire by British soldiers during the _____, necessitating its later reconstruction.

Fill-in-the-Blank Worksheet

8. Additions like the _____ Portico and North Portico enhanced the architectural beauty and grandeur of the White House.
9. President _____ _____ modernized the White House by adding the West Wing, which houses the Oval Office.
10. Among the various pets that have lived in the White House, George Washington had a pet _____ named Sweetlips.
11. The White House was significantly expanded with the construction of the West Wing under President _____ _____, introducing the Oval Office.
12. If I were President, I would decorate the Oval Office with _____ (allow students to answer creatively).
13. The White House hosts significant events and celebrations, such as the _____ Egg Roll, reflecting its role as a symbol of the nation's traditions.
14. The Residence Act, signed by President George Washington, designated Philadelphia as the temporary capital before moving to _____ _____.
15. During the War of 1812, _____ and _____ Madison had to flee the city before the British soldiers arrived and damaged the White House.

Answer Key

1. The White House is the official residence and workplace of the **President** of the United States.
2. The White House has over **132** rooms, including unique features like a movie theater and a bowling alley.
3. The exterior of the White House is made from **Aquia Creek sandstone** sourced from a quarry in Virginia, contributing to its iconic white appearance.
4. Before the White House was built, George Washington's temporary residence in New York City was located at **3 Cherry** Street.
5. The capital of the United States was moved to Washington, D.C., following a compromise between Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and **James Madison**.
6. Irish-born architect **James Hoban** won the contest to design the White House, which began construction in the year **1792**.
7. The White House was set on fire by British soldiers during the **War of 1812**, necessitating its later reconstruction.
8. Additions like the **South** Portico and North Portico enhanced the architectural beauty and grandeur of the White House.
9. President **Theodore Roosevelt** modernized the White House by adding the West Wing, which houses the Oval Office.
10. Among the various pets that have lived in the White House, George Washington had a pet **dog** named Sweetlips.
11. The White House was significantly expanded with the construction of the West Wing under President **William Howard Taft**, introducing the Oval Office.

Answer Key

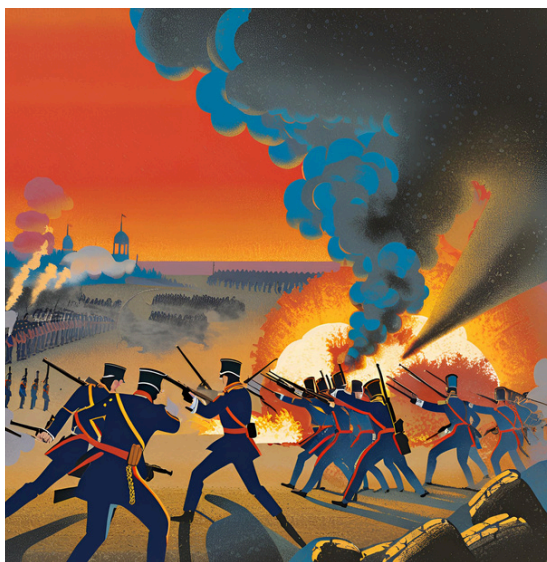
12. If I were President, I would decorate the Oval Office with (student's creative answer).
13. The White House hosts significant events and celebrations, such as the Easter Egg Roll, reflecting its role as a symbol of the nation's traditions.
14. The Residence Act, signed by President George Washington, designated Philadelphia as the temporary capital before moving to Washington, D.C.
15. During the War of 1812, James and Dolley Madison had to flee the city before the British soldiers arrived and damaged the White House.

Student Text

Please carefully read the following passage to learn more about the construction of the White House.

Passage 1

The White House was not easy to build. It is located at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue and has a rich history that dates back to its construction. Until after the Civil War, it was the largest house in America. In 1798, the two-story structure was covered with a lime-based whitewash, which gave rise to its nickname and later formal name. The construction of the White House cost a total of \$232,372, and after eight years, it was ready for its first residents. Although some finishing touches were still needed, President John Adams and his wife, Abigail, moved into the White House on November 1, 1800. Since then, every president has lived in the White House. However, over the years, it has undergone numerous additions, updates, and renovations. As a result, the White House looks different today than it did 200 years ago. Various presidents have left their own marks on the structure, adding to its rich history and significance. And, it was rebuilt after it burned down in a war with Great Britain called the War of 1812.



War of 1812, Canva Pro



John & Abigail Adams, Canva Pro

Student Text

Please carefully read the following passage to learn more about White House pets.

Passage 2

Many fascinating pets have called the White House home throughout history. For example, George Washington was the first president to have a pet while in office, a dog named Sweetlips. President John F. Kennedy had a dog named Bo and President John Quincy Adams had a pet alligator in the White House. President Theodore Roosevelt famously had a pet pony named Algonquin. President Andrew Jackson had a parrot named Poll that could whistle. President Kennedy's children had pets named Macaroni the pony and Tom Kitten the cat. President Calvin Coolidge had a pet raccoon named Rebecca.

Resources

- <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/new-york-historic/%C2%A0%C2%A0>
- https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/treasures_of_congress/text/page2_text.html%C2%A0%C2%A0
- <https://history.house.gov/Historical-Highlights/1700s/The-first-inauguration-at-Federal-Hall-in-New-York-City/%C2%A0>
- <https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/how-philadelphia-lost-the-nations-capital-to-washington%C2%A0%C2%A0>
- <https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/presidential-residency-in-new-york/%C2%A0%C2%A0>
- <https://guides.loc.gov/residence-act%C2%A0%C2%A0>
- <https://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/the-first-president/building-the-new-nations-capital/%C2%A0%C2%A0>
- <https://www.history.com/news/how-did-washington-d-c-get-its-name%C2%A0%C2%A0>
- <https://www.nps.gov/inde/learn/historyculture/places-presidentshousesite.htm%C2%A0%C2%A0>
- <https://www.nps.gov/inde/learn/historyculture/the-presidents-house-washington-and-adams.htm%C2%A0%C2%A0>
- <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/photos/fotoware?id=5E1FCB3066744273%2097AC1F8FB685754A%C2%A0%C2%A0>
- <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/questions/how-did-the-white-house-get-its-name%C2%A0%C2%A0>
- <https://www.history.com/topics/landmarks/white-house%C2%A0%C2%A0>
- <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/building-the-white-house%C2%A0%C2%A0>
- <https://www.history.com/news/white-house-history-facts-presidents%C2%A0%C2%A0>

Resources

- <https://www.history.com/news/white-house-history-facts-presidents%C2%A0%C2%A0>
- <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/construction-of-the-white-house%C2%A0%C2%A0>
- <https://www.history.com/topics/landmarks/white-house%C2%A0%C2%A0>
- <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/british-troops-set-fire-to-the-white-house%C2%A0%C2%A0>
- <https://www.foxnews.com/lifestyle/this-day-history-august-24-british-troops-ransack-torch-white-house-capitol%C2%A0%C2%A0>
- <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/british-troops-set-fire-to-the-white-house%C2%A0%C2%A0>
- <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/white-house-renovations-timeline%C2%A0%C2%A0>
- <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/questions/has-the-white-house-ever-been-renovated-or-changed%C2%A0%C2%A0>
- <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/questions/why-is-the-oval-office-oval%C2%A0%C2%A0>
- <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/questions/how-big-is-the-white-house%C2%A0%C2%A0>
- <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/the-grounds/the-white-house/#:~:text=Our%20first%20president%2C%20George%20Washington,architect%20James%20Hoban%20was%20chosen%C2%A0%C2%A0https://www.whitehousehistory.org/questions/does-the-white-house-have-a-pool>

