

THE WHITE HOUSE

Teacher Guide



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

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Third 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.



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 **Resolute Desk:** a nineteenth-century desk used by several presidents of the United States in the Oval Office.

08 **Washington, D.C.:** the capital of the United States. It was named after George Washington, our country's first president.

Introduction

TELL Students

We are going to play a scavenger hunt! You are going to find clues about today's learning topic! [Put students into groups of three and hide clues prior to starting this activity.] When I say go, your team will find each clue to help you guess today's learning topic. Look for a picture of the American flag. Beneath it, you will find your first clue. Clue 1: This has 132 rooms, including 35 bathrooms and 28 fireplaces. Find a book about U.S. presidents. Open it to page 42. Your next clue is hidden inside. Clue 2: This has been the official residence of a very important leadership position since John Adams in 1800. Now, search for a picture of the White House. Look behind it to find your next clue. Clue 3: This is located at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW in Washington, D.C. Find a map of Washington, D.C. The next clue is taped to it. Clue 4: This place has hosted countless historic events, including state dinners, ceremonies, and meetings with world leaders. [Once students have found all the clues, explain that they will be learning about the White House, a significant symbol of American history and culture.]

ASK Students

Who lives in the White House?

TELL Students

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!

Introduction

ASK Students

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

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!

ASK Students

How would you describe the White House?

TELL Students

Just like your house has spaces for homework and playtime, the White House has offices and lots of places for fun too. But, the President works in a special room called the Oval Office, which is shaped like an egg! 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.

ASK Students

Have you ever visited the White House?



Oval Office, Canva Pro



Easter Egg Roll, Wikipedia

Introduction

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 capital of the United States. It was named after George Washington, our country's first president.

ASK Students

Who was the first President of the United States?

TELL Students

Yes, George Washington! 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

Where was the first capital of the United States?



George Washington, Canva Pro



Federal Hall, Canva Pro

Lesson

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.

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.



Home on 3 Cherry Street, Wikipedia



Hamilton, Madison, & Jefferson, Wikipedia

Lesson

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. 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?



Washington D.C., Canva Pro

Lesson

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?

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

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.



James Hoban, Wikipedia



John & Abigail Adams Wikipedia

Lesson

TELL Students *(continued)*

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.

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.



War of 1812, Canva Pro



British soldiers attack D.C., Wikipedia

Lesson

ASK Students

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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.

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.



Madisons in Octagon House, Canva Pro



North & South Portico, Wikipedia

Lesson

TELL Students

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. 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. The **Oval Office** is a very special room in the White House where the President of the United States works. Taft was the first president to use the Oval Office.



West Wing, Wikipedia

Lesson

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 a lot 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. 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.



Oval Office, Canva Pro

Lesson

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.



White House Areas, Wikipedia

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?

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.

Lesson

ASK Students

What types of animals have lived in the White House?

TELL Students

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.

ASK Students

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

TELL Students

The White House is not just for fun, it is the place where the President works and lives. Important decisions are made in the White House. Visiting the White House is a special experience. You can learn about our country's history and the leaders who helped shape it. Maybe one day, you could even live and work there too!

WATCH

[Learn More With Liberty: Why is the White House white?](#)



Design Your Own White House

Objective: To engage third-grade students in a fun and interactive activity where they can design their own version of the White House.

Materials Needed:

- Paper
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- White House coloring sheets or templates (optional)
- Scissors
- Glue (optional)
- Various craft supplies (stickers, glitter, sequins, etc.)

Introduction: Begin by discussing what students learned today about the White House. Show pictures or illustrations of the White House to familiarize them with its appearance and key features.

Brainstorming: Encourage students to brainstorm ideas for their own version of the White House. Ask questions such as:

- What colors do you want to use for your White House?
- What architectural features would you like to include?
- Are there any additional elements you want to add to make it unique?

Design Phase: Provide each student with a piece of paper and art supplies. Encourage students to be creative and think outside the box!

Design Your Own White House

Construction: Once students have completed their designs, they can cut out their White House shapes if necessary. If desired, they can use glue to attach additional craft supplies such as windows, doors, columns, or other decorations.

Sharing and Presentation: After the designs are finished, allow students to share their creations with the class. Each student can briefly explain their design choices and what makes their White House special.

Display: Finally, display the students' White House designs around the classroom or in a designated area. This allows them to admire each other's work and serves as a visual representation of their creativity and imagination.

Multiple Choice

Review

Instructions: Read the questions below and circle the correct answer.

1. Who was the first President of the United States?
 - A) Thomas Jefferson
 - B) George Washington
 - C) Abraham Lincoln
 - D) John Adams
2. Where was the first capital of the United States?
 - A) Philadelphia
 - B) Washington, D.C.
 - C) Boston
 - D) New York City
3. Where did George Washington live when he became president?
 - A) White House
 - B) 3 Cherry Street
 - C) 39 Broadway
 - D) Mount Vernon
4. Who were the key negotiators in reaching a compromise for the location of the capital city?
 - A) Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock, Paul Revere
 - B) George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton
 - C) Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, John Adams
 - D) Alexander Hamilton, John Quincy Adams, Abraham Lincoln

Multiple Choice

Review

Instructions: Read the questions below and circle the correct answer.

5. Where is the capital of the United States today, and why is it named Washington, D.C.?
- A) New York City; named after the first president
 - B) Philadelphia; named after the first capital
 - C) Washington, D.C.; named after Thomas Jefferson
 - D) Washington, D.C.; named after George Washington
6. Who won the contest to design the White House?
- A) James Hoban
 - B) Thomas Jefferson
 - C) Alexander Hamilton
 - D) Benjamin Franklin
7. What is a cornerstone?
- A) A special stone in a corner of a building
 - B) A large clock
 - C) A type of dessert
 - D) A type of musical instrument
8. What event led to the burning of the White House during the War of 1812?
- A) A fire accident
 - B) A hurricane
 - C) An earthquake
 - D) An attack by British soldiers

Multiple Choice Review

Instructions: Read the questions below and circle the correct answer.

9. Who was the first president to live in the White House?
- A) Thomas Jefferson
 - B) John Adams
 - C) James Madison
 - D) George Washington
10. Which president added the West Wing to the White House?
- A) Abraham Lincoln
 - B) Theodore Roosevelt
 - C) Franklin D. Roosevelt
 - D) John F. Kennedy

Answer Key

1. B) George Washington
2. D) New York City
3. C) 39 Broadway
4. B) George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton
5. D) Washington, D.C.; named after George Washington
6. A) James Hoban
7. A) A special stone in a corner of a building
8. D) An attack by British soldiers
9. B) John Adams
10. B) Theodore Roosevelt

Resources

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

Resources

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- <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/white-house-renovations-timeline>
- <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/questions/has-the-white-house-ever-been-renovated-or-changed>
- <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/questions/why-is-the-oval-office-oval>
- <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/questions/how-big-is-the-white-house>
- <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>
- <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/questions/does-the-white-house-have-a-pool>

