



Save Our History: The President Slept Here focuses on the restoration of some of the most historically significant homes in America – the dwellings where presidents once lived and made some of the most important decisions in American history. Three key sites are featured in this program: James Madison’s Montpelier mansion; Abraham Lincoln’s other home in Washington, DC, known as Lincoln’s Cottage; and the Longfellow House, which George Washington used as his headquarters for a phase of the Revolutionary War. *Save Our History: The President Slept Here* traces the roles these homes played in the lives of these national leaders, revealing new insights into critical chapters in their presidential careers. In addition to giving historical context about each of these sites, this program documents the efforts to restore and preserve these national treasures.



Curriculum links

Save Our History: The President Slept Here is appropriate for middle school and high school students studying American History and Culture, Social Studies and Historic Preservation. It fulfills the following standards as outlined by the National Council for History Education: (1) Civilization, innovation, and cultural diffusion; and (2) Patterns of social and political interaction.

Vocabulary

Using the dictionary at www.merriamwebster.com, an Internet resource such as www.History.com, or an encyclopedia, students should define or explain the significance of the following terms:

aggregate	configuration	formidable	ponder	turmoil
articulate	emancipate	panoramic	retreat	

Discussion questions

1. Each of the homes featured in *Save Our History: The President Slept Here* is one of national historic value. What makes these houses, or any other house, historically significant?



Montpelier Mansion: Photo courtesy of The Montpelier Foundation.



Lincoln's Cottage: Photo courtesy of National Trust for Historic Preservation.



Longfellow House: Photo courtesy of Longfellow National Historic Site.

- Each of these homes is undergoing an extensive restoration. Why do presidents’ residences pose such a challenge to restoration?
- What is the historical importance of Montpelier? How does it reflect the time period in which James Madison lived?
- What is the historical importance of the Longfellow House? Why is it known as the Longfellow House?
- President Abraham Lincoln lived in the Soldiers’ Home instead of the White House from 1862 to 1864. Why did he live there instead of the White House?
- What role do you think Lincoln’s Cottage played in Abraham Lincoln’s life? How did his time there shape him as a president and as a man?
- Historic restoration is a complicated process, requiring a vast array of skilled craftspeople. What are some of the skills required to successfully renovate a historic house?
- What is the role of the archaeologist in a historic renovation?
- What role did the National Trust for Historic Preservation play in restoring Lincoln’s cottage? What are the other activities of the Trust?
- The structures undergoing renovations in this program are quite old. The techniques craftspeople use in restoring them can be modern and state-of-the-art as well as old-fashioned. Discuss the different techniques, both high-tech and low-tech, that are used in the restoration process of these historic homes.
- Discuss the distinct phase of deconstruction in the process of restoration.

Extended activities

Previewing Activities

- To establish a clear understanding of the terms restoration and preservation, have students look the words up in a dictionary. Ask students, “What does historic restoration mean? Why should we care about old buildings and landmarks?”
- Have students visit the websites (listed on right) for each of the historic homes highlighted in *Save Our History: The President Slept Here*. Have them discuss the historical importance of these homes.

Postviewing Activities

1. Students can design their own plan for the restoration of a local building of significance. If possible, they can implement some of their plans through work with a local preservation

effort or organization. (Visit www.saveourhistory.com for useful suggestions on how to get involved and for links to the HISTORY Educator’s Manual on historic preservation.)

- Students can create a guide or poster illustrating the process of historical renovation. Encourage them to include the relevant terminology and methods associated with renovation projects as outlined in the program.
- In order to understand the relevance of restoration to their own lives, students can create historical narratives of their own homes’ past and the significance of their homes in their families’ histories.
- Using a medium of your choice, have students create a model of one of the historic homes featured in *Save Our History: The President Slept Here*.

Websites & books

WEBSITES

- Longfellow National Historic Site: www.nps.gov/long
- Lincoln Cottage: President Lincoln and Soldiers’ Home National Monument. National Trust Historic Sites: www.nationaltrust.org/national_trust_sites/lincoln.html
- James Madison’s Montpelier: www.montpelier.org
- National Trust for Historic Preservation: www.nationaltrust.org

BOOKS

- Camburn, Herbert and Michael Gaughenbaugh. *Old House, New House: A Child’s Exploration of American Architectural Styles*. (The Preservation Press, 1993).
- Heilbroner, Joan and Stephen Marchesi (Illustrator). *Meet George Washington* (Random House Children’s Books, 1989).
- January, Brendan. *James Madison* (Scholastic Library Publishing, 2003).
- Pinsker, Matthew. *Lincoln’s Sanctuary: Abraham Lincoln and the Soldiers’ Home* (Oxford University Press, 2003).