



PRESIDENTS AT WAR

DRIVEN TO SERVE. DESTINED TO LEAD.

2-NIGHT EVENT
FEBRUARY 17
HISTORY**TEACHING GUIDE****WWII and Presidential Leadership**

Use this discussion guide to get students started on historical research projects.

Objective

Students will synthesize research from multiple online sources and use critical-thinking skills to create a presentation about the impact of WWII on future U.S. presidents who served.

Time

60–120 minutes

Materials

- ▶ Student Research Guide
- ▶ Organize Your Research activity sheet
- ▶ Computers and internet access
- ▶ *Presidents at War* documentary series on HISTORY (optional)

Note: The TV series *Presidents at War* is rated TV-14. Review the episodes yourself before showing them to your students.

INTRODUCTION

1 Tell students about the outbreak of WWII and America's entry into the war following the Pearl Harbor attack in 1941. Nearly 16 million Americans served during the war, whether they were drafted or they enlisted voluntarily. (See WWII Cheat Sheet on the next page for quick facts and key dates.)

2 Explain that among those who served were eight future U.S. presidents: Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and George H.W. Bush. Though they were from different backgrounds and experienced WWII in different ways, their service had a lasting effect on each of them, instilling skills they brought with them to the White House and influencing their strategy with domestic issues, war, and diplomacy. (Examples: Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis; Nixon opening relations with China.)

3 Invite students to brainstorm what the word *leadership* means. What are some of the qualities of a leader? (Examples: ability to solve problems, thrive in the face of ambiguity, motivate people, learn from failure, consider a range of opinions in order to make decisions, etc.) Guide students to give examples of people they think are good leaders and why.

RESEARCH PROJECT

1 Explain that students will be doing a research project about the U.S. presidents who served during WWII. They will choose from one of four topics, answer guiding questions based on their research, and present their findings to the class.

2 Review the difference between primary and secondary sources. Provide examples of where they can find reliable sources to help them answer their research questions. (Examples: presidential libraries, online presidential sites like the Miller Center, and government agencies and organizations, including the National Archives, Library of Congress, and Department of Defense sites.)

3 Distribute the Student Research Guide. Explain that the guide includes resource links they can use as a jumping-off point, but that they should look for additional reliable sources as they work.

4 Have students work individually or in pairs on their research topic. Hand out the Organize Your Research activity sheet. Students should investigate sources, use critical-reasoning skills to decide which ones are credible, gather facts, answer the guiding questions, and create a presentation.

FINAL ACTIVITY

When your students are finished with their research, they will share what they've learned with the class via a creative oral or multimedia presentation. Here are some options:

- ▶ Make a short video presentation.
- ▶ Record a brief podcast interview.
- ▶ Write a report in the form of a WWII news article, slide presentation, or blog post.
- ▶ Present research to the class as a historical reenactment or a mock press conference.
- ▶ Write a first person narrative, from a president's perspective, on what he would think about an event happening today.
- ▶ Alternatively, you can have students present findings in a short written report; they should include a list of sources at the end of their document.

Chance to Win Free Books

Take the survey for your chance to win:
scholastic.com/presidentsatwar/survey.



WWII Cheat Sheet

A quick refresher on important war dates, plus some key facts about the presidents who served.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Served in WWII 1941–1945
34th President 1953–1961
bit.ly/EisenhowerInfo

- Named Commanding General of the European Theater in 1942.
- Oversaw planning and implementation of invasion of Normandy that began on D-Day, June 6, 1944.
- Led the Allied advance across Europe that culminated in Germany's surrender in May of 1945.

John F. Kennedy

Served in WWII 1941–1945
35th President 1961–1963
bit.ly/KennedyInfo

- After training school, he was stationed in Panama as commander of a torpedo boat, but requested transfer to the Pacific Theater in 1943.
- When his PT-109 boat collided with a Japanese destroyer, he helped save the lives of 10 of his crew members. Awarded the Purple Heart.

- Elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1946, successfully capitalizing on his reputation as a young war hero.

Lyndon B. Johnson

Served in WWII 1941–1942
36th President 1963–1969
bit.ly/LBJInfo

- Was a member of Congress representing Texas when he reported for active duty three days after the Pearl Harbor attack in December 1941.
- Worked as an observer on South Pacific bomber missions; avoided disaster when he accidentally missed boarding a plane that crashed on a mission.
- He served for just six months until FDR recalled all members of Congress to Washington, DC.

Richard Nixon

Served in WWII 1942–1945
37th President 1969–1974
bit.ly/NixonInfo

- Already a successful California lawyer, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1942 (despite his pacifist Quaker upbringing).

- Served in the Pacific at an aviation base; supervised logistics, prepared flight plans and manifests, and oversaw aircraft cargo.

- Returned to the U.S. and served in the Navy's Bureau of Aeronautics; released from active duty in March 1946. Ran for Congress later that year.

Gerald Ford

Served in WWII 1942–1945
38th President 1974–1977
bit.ly/GeraldFordInfo

- His background as a college football player and athletic trainer made him a good candidate for the U.S. Navy's V-5 aviation cadet program in 1942.
- He requested sea duty and was assigned to a light aircraft carrier in the Pacific.
- His ship was heavily damaged by a fire during a typhoon in 1944, and he narrowly avoided being thrown overboard.

Jimmy Carter

Served in WWII 1943–1945
39th President 1977–1981
bit.ly/CarterInfo

- Received an appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy in 1943.
- Although considered an active duty midshipman during the war, Carter did not see combat.

Ronald Reagan

Served in WWII 1942–1945
40th President 1981–1989
bit.ly/ReaganInfo

- A well-known Hollywood actor, he was excluded from overseas duty because he had poor eyesight.
- Served in the Army Air Force's First Motion Picture Unit in Los Angeles, which produced 400 training films.
- Was one of the public faces of the war, selling War Drive Loans to raise funds and appearing at public speaking events.

George H.W. Bush

Served in WWII 1942–1945
41st President 1989–1993
bit.ly/BushInfo

- Delayed going to college and joined the U.S. Navy as an aviator on his 18th birthday; he was one of the youngest Naval aviators at the time.
- Was an officer on the light carrier USS San Jacinto.
- In September 1944, the plane he was flying was hit by enemy anti-aircraft fire during a bombing run over Chichi Jima, causing his engine to catch fire and his plane to go down.
- Flew more than 58 missions and earned the Distinguished Flying Cross.

IMPORTANT WWII DATES

SEPTEMBER 1, 1939

WWII begins with Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland.

APRIL–MAY 1940

Germany invades Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, and France.

JULY 1940

Germany begins bombing raids against Great Britain.

DECEMBER 7, 1941

Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The next day, the U.S. declares war on Japan. Later that month, Italy and Germany declare war on the U.S.

JUNE 6, 1944

D-Day invasion of Normandy (Operation Overlord).

OCTOBER 26, 1944

Allied victory at the Battle of Leyte Gulf in the Philippines.

MAY 7, 1945

Germany surrenders to the Allies, ending World War II in Europe.

AUGUST 6, 1945

United States drops atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Three days later, the U.S. drops a second bomb on Nagasaki.

SEPTEMBER 2, 1945

Japan formally surrenders to the Allies, ending WWII.

Research Topics and Resources

Eight future U.S. presidents were among the 16 million Americans who served during World War II. Their experiences serving in the armed forces changed how they viewed themselves and the world around them. Their service also instilled the leadership and organizational skills that they brought with them to the White House. Choose one of the research topics below, and use the resource links to explore the events of WWII and the impact the war had on these future presidents. Be sure to look for additional primary and secondary resources as you do your research.

TOPIC 1 Presidential Leadership

Your Mission Choose two of the presidents who served in WWII, and compare and contrast their wartime and presidential experiences.

Guiding Questions

- ▶ How were their experiences in WWII different? How were they similar?
- ▶ Describe two examples of how your chosen presidents demonstrated leadership skills while in the military, and two examples of how they displayed leadership during their presidencies.
- ▶ How did their wartime service influence the decisions they made while in office?
- ▶ What makes a president a good leader (and, if relevant, what makes a president a bad leader)?

Resources

- ▶ bit.ly/LeadershipResource1
- ▶ bit.ly/LeadershipResource2
- ▶ bit.ly/LeadershipResource3



General Dwight D. Eisenhower addresses U.S. paratroopers before D-Day.

TOPIC 2 Wartime Propaganda



Ronald Reagan in a WWII military training film.

Your Mission Explore how Ronald Reagan's WWII role was different than that of other future presidents.

Guiding Questions

- ▶ What role did propaganda play in WWII and what different kinds of propaganda were created?
- ▶ How did Reagan's position as a Hollywood actor help him become the "face of the war" in wartime propaganda films produced by the military?
- ▶ How did Reagan's wartime service and background as an actor influence his use of media as president? Why was he known as the Great Communicator?
- ▶ Compare and contrast how war propaganda has changed and evolved since WWII and provide some recent examples.

Resources

- ▶ bit.ly/PropagandaResource1
- ▶ bit.ly/PropagandaResource2
- ▶ bit.ly/PropagandaResource3

TOPIC 3 WWII and Cold War Diplomacy



President John F. Kennedy meets with Nikita Khrushchev in Vienna, 1961.

Your Mission Analyze how each president's wartime experience colored his view of diplomacy, providing an example for each.

Guiding Questions

- ▶ How did their wartime experience change the way these future presidents viewed the world?
- ▶ Did it make them more likely to use diplomacy as a tool, or less likely?
- ▶ Why did they react differently to the events of the Cold War, including the Korean and Vietnam Wars?
- ▶ What lessons and skills from WWII did they use while president to deal with Cold War crises, Communism, and the Soviet Union?

Resources

- ▶ bit.ly/ColdWarResource1
- ▶ bit.ly/ColdWarResource2
- ▶ bit.ly/ColdWarResource3

RELIABLE SOURCES FAQ

Historians consult both primary and secondary sources when they do research. Before you get started, consult these questions and guidelines for finding reliable sources.

What are primary sources? Official documents, scholarly journals, oral histories, and first person accounts.

What are secondary sources? These include textbooks, magazine and newspaper articles, encyclopedias, videos, and interactive media including websites.

What websites have reliable historical info? Good places to start include the National Archives, Library of Congress, Presidential Studies Quarterly, and the presidential materials collection at the Miller Center. Governmental and educational resources, including the U.S. Department of Defense, National Park Service, and U.S. Department of State, also contain a wealth of information on this topic.

What about presidential libraries? They are also excellent research sources. The National Archives manages the presidential library system, including sites for all presidents featured in this series. (Go to [archives.gov](https://www.archives.gov) and type the president's name plus "library" into the search bar.)

What if I'm not sure? For each resource you use, be sure to evaluate the material's reliability and accuracy, noting who created the resource, when and why it was produced, who its intended audience is, and what point the resource is trying to make. (As a general rule, websites ending in .gov and .org are trustworthy.)

TOPIC 4 Presidential Key Moments



George H.W. Bush in the cockpit of his plane, 1944.

Your Mission Choose one president who served in WWII and show how a key experience he had in the war influenced his presidency.

Guiding Questions

- ▶ What was your chosen president's most important event, moment, or experience during the war?
- ▶ How did this event change his way of thinking during and after the war?
- ▶ What are some examples of how this moment affected a decision he made (positive or negative) during his presidency?

Resources

- ▶ bit.ly/KeyMomentsResource1
- ▶ bit.ly/KeyMomentsResource2
- ▶ bit.ly/KeyMomentsResource3

Name _____

Organize Your Research

Ready to sharpen the focus of your research topic? Keep track of your thoughts and the useful sources you find in a digital document or on a separate sheet.

My Topic _____

Jimmy Carter in the Oval Office, 1977.

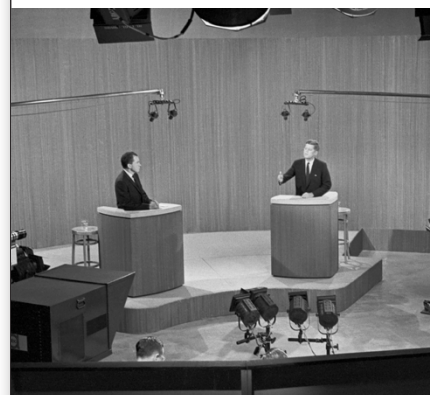


Gather Info

- ▶ Start by building timelines and learning more basic facts about the presidents you're researching, both during WWII and their time in office as president.
- ▶ Read the Guiding Questions posed in your chosen research topic, which will help direct and focus your research.
- ▶ Use a combination of primary and secondary sources. Keep track of primary and secondary sources you want to investigate and sources you've found that are credible. Jot them down in a two-column chart.

Build an Argument

- ▶ As you gather data and background information, write down answers to the questions included in your research topic.
- ▶ Keep a running list of key points you'd like to make in your presentation.



Televised presidential debate between Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy, 1960.

Ronald Reagan, 1983.



Create a Presentation

- ▶ Write down the type of presentation you'll be creating (video, historical reenactment, newspaper article, etc.).
- ▶ Make a checklist of any special equipment or props that you'll need.