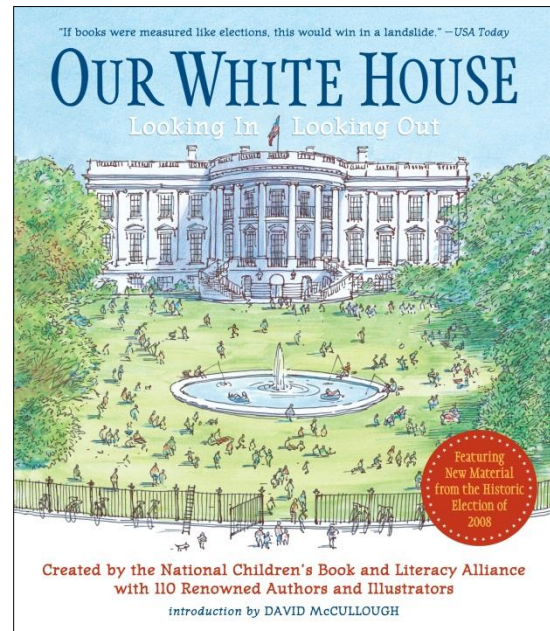


# **The Our White House Inauguration Celebration Kit for Kids!**

**Created by The National Children's Book and Literacy Alliance  
for parents, family members, teachers, librarians, and community leaders**

The National Children's Book and Literacy Alliance has created this Inauguration Celebration Kit to assist all adults who live and work with young people to engage with our kids in informed discussions about the presidency and American government, teach them to think critically, and energize them to learn more about the political process in America—using the presidency and inauguration as the focus. This Kit includes:

- Exclusive articles covering such topics as why presidential inaugurations are held on January 20th, the oath of office, inaugural parades, and how Thomas Jefferson's first inauguration helped unite the country following a bitter election battle.
- Hands-on activities to use with young people in the classroom or at home, such as ideas for designing a parade float, hosting an inaugural ball for kids, and writing poetry.
- Games to engage kids in this year's inauguration, such as "Inaugural I Spy."
- Discussion questions you can share during class, around the dinner table, and at a club meeting.



We invite you to check out the interactive version of this Kit on our education website [OurWhiteHouse.org](http://OurWhiteHouse.org), the online companion to our award-winning anthology ***Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out*** (Candlewick Press). *Our White House* is an incomparable collection of essays, personal accounts, historical fiction, poetry, and a stunning array of original art, offering a multifaceted look at America's history through the prism of the White House. Some of the ideas and activities provided in this Kit coordinate with the content and illustrations in *Our White House*, but most can be used independently of the book.

We believe you know the kids with whom you live and work far better than we do, so we leave to your judgment the articles and activities that best serve the needs and ages of the young people in your life. Please print what you need and feel free to share this Kit with others.

The National Children's Book and Literacy Alliance is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit education and advocacy organization, founded in 1997 by award-winning young people's authors and illustrators. The NCBLA acts as a freelance nonpartisan advocate creating and developing original projects and events that promote literacy, literature, humanities, and the arts and educate the public about practical literacy solutions. We are distinguished from other literacy organizations by the fact that we not only promote reading and learning, we also create books and online materials, both entertaining and educational, that motivate young people to read. We also believe there is a direct link between literacy and civic engagement, that literacy is intrinsic to a healthy democracy.

To learn more about the NCBLA, please visit our website ([thencbla.org](http://thencbla.org)) and our Facebook page ([facebook.com/TheNCBLA](https://facebook.com/TheNCBLA)).

*Note: The Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies has announced that the 2021 inauguration will be orchestrated mostly as a virtual event with no large public gatherings due to the COVID-19 pandemic. President Biden and Vice President Harris will be sworn in at the West Front of the Capitol as is traditional. Other events will take place across the country and be broadcast on television and online.*

*This new interpretation of the inaugural activities provides a perfect educational opportunity for young people, teachers, and parents to compare and contrast how inaugural events were organized in the past to how they will be organized this year when our nation is experiencing a public health crisis. We encourage you to use these materials in creative ways to maximize their educational impact with the young people in your lives.*

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## Why Are Presidential Inaugurations Held on January 20th?

by Mary Brigid Barrett

Washington's first inauguration took place on April 30, 1789 on the balcony of Federal Hall in New York City. Throngs of well wishers lined Queen Street, Great Dock, and Broad Street—now the foot of Wall Street in southern Manhattan—cheering the new president after the oath was administered. But it was Washington's second inauguration—held in the Senate Chamber of Congress Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on a date determined by the Continental Congress—that established March 4, 1793 as the official inauguration date. In the future, if March 4th fell on a Sunday, the inauguration was then held on the following Monday, March 5th, out of respect for the Sabbath, and because most public government offices were closed on Sundays. James Monroe, Zachary Taylor, Rutherford B. Hayes, and Woodrow Wilson all delivered their inaugural addresses on March 5th.

Presidents need time between the presidential election and their inauguration to organize their cabinet and make plans for their government. By 1932, Congress realized that the length of time between election day and the March 4th inauguration date was too long, often keeping the incoming president from addressing national problems that needed urgent attention. President Franklin Roosevelt's first inauguration illustrated that dilemma; an urgent need existed for the incoming president to confront with immediacy the serious challenges facing the nation during the Great Depression. In response to this need, Congress passed and on January 23, 1933 ratified, the **Twentieth Amendment of the United States Constitution**.

Section One of the Twentieth Amendment stipulates that “the terms of the President and the Vice President shall end at noon on the 20th day of January,” meaning the *incoming* President and Vice President must take their oaths of office as close to noon on January 20th as possible so that the nation has continuous leadership. As established with the previous inaugural date of March 4th, when the January 20th date falls on a Sunday, the inauguration then takes place on Monday, January 21st. Since 1933, three presidents have held their public inaugural ceremonies on January 21st—Dwight Eisenhower, Ronald Reagan, and Barack Obama.

In 2013 January 20th once again fell on a Sunday, and consequently the public inaugural ceremony was held on Monday, January 21st. This one-day delay created a remarkable historical coincidence, for our nation also celebrated *Martin Luther King Day* that year on January 21st. Our nation's first African-American president publicly took the oath of office for his second term on the day we honor the service and sacrifice of an African-American national hero, Martin Luther King, Jr.

Since the Constitution stipulates January 20th as the official presidential transition date, Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts administered the oath of office to President Obama in the White House on Sunday, January 20, 2013 in a private, simple ceremony. The press and the media covered the private ceremony so that the public could “witness” the swearing-in. The public inauguration, parade, and celebratory balls all took place the next day.

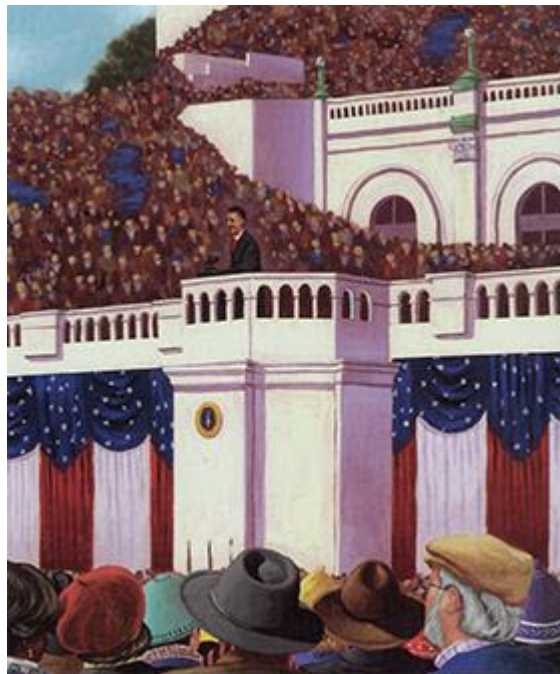


Illustration (c) by A. G. Ford

On January 20, 2009 when Chief Justice Roberts administered the presidential oath to President Obama at his first inauguration in a public ceremony on the west front of the Capitol building, Justice Roberts misspoke the oath. “Out of an abundance of caution,” according to the White House, the Chief Justice then enacted a second oath-taking for the president, privately, in the Map Room of the White House. Although the circumstances are different in his second term, President Obama again took the oath twice in both a public and private ceremony. He has taken the presidential oath a total of four times. The only other president who has taken the oath of office four times is President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who served four terms in office—another remarkable historical coincidence given that both President Obama’s supporters and detractors have compared his Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, more commonly known as Obamacare, to the achievements of President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal accomplishments.

### Read More

- **Read the complete text of the Twentieth Amendment.**
- Learn more about the Twentieth Amendment on the **[Exploring Constitutional Law website](#).**
- Read the *USA Today* article “**[2013 inaugural ceremony to be pushed back a day](#).**”

*Mary Brigid Barrett is the founder, president, and executive director of the NCBLA, as well as a children’s book author and illustrator. Her most recent books are: ALL FALL DOWN and PAT-A-CAKE, illustrated by LeUyen Pham, published by Candlewick Press Publishing.*

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## The Presidential Oath of Office

by Geri Zabela Eddins

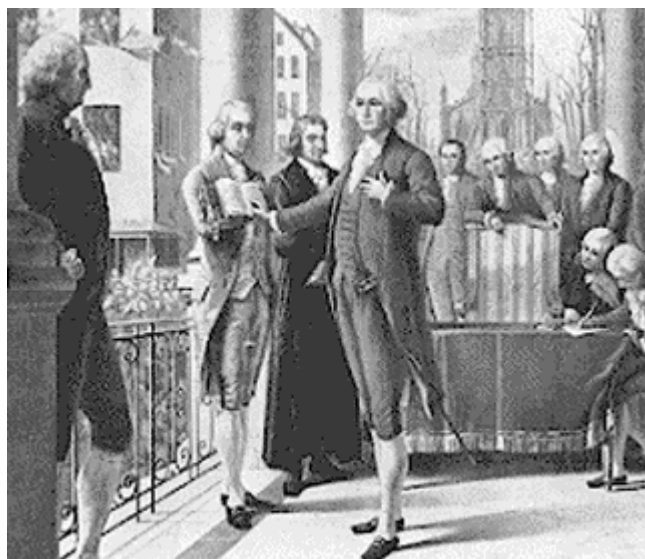
**“I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute  
the Office of President of the United States,  
and will to the best of my Ability,  
preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.”**

*- The Constitution of the United States. Article II, Section 1.*

### America Celebrates Its First Presidential Inauguration

With the United States finally at peace and a bold new Constitution leading the road to a democratic future, the American people were ready for a celebration. The inauguration of the new country's first president provided the perfect incentive for a large-scale celebration that lasted over two weeks and spanned nearly three hundred miles from the coast of Virginia to America's first capital, New York City. The festivities culminated with the inaugural ceremony on April 30, 1789, when the nation's beloved General George Washington arrived in a carriage to the steps of Federal Hall. On this crisp, sunny day, banners and flags rippled across the city, while more than ten thousand cheering citizens crammed into the streets, peered through the windows of neighboring buildings, and gathered on rooftops to welcome Washington and witness his inauguration.

The tall, stately Washington wore an American-made brown suit fastened with metal buttons emblazoned with eagles. He carried a ceremonial sword at his side. Washington strode up the stairs to the second-floor balcony that overlooked the city. From there he could see the thousands of spectators, which included the entirety of Congress assembled on a platform facing the hall. A table covered in red velvet was situated in the middle of the balcony, and on it rested a Bible. With Vice President John Adams at his side, Washington placed one hand on the Bible. Prompted by New York Chancellor Robert R. Livingston, Washington repeated the oath of office as required by the Constitution. Upon Washington's completion of the thirty-five word oath, Livingston proclaimed, “It is done. Long live George Washington, President of the United States.” The crowds erupted into thunderous cheers and bells tolled throughout the city.



George Washington at his first inauguration.  
Federal Hall in New York City, April 30, 1789.  
Engraving (c) National Archives

Shortly after swearing the oath of office, Washington addressed both the Senate and the House of Representatives in the Senate chamber, then walked up Broadway with a group of legislators and local political leaders to pray at St. Paul's Chapel. Washington's inaugural day festivities concluded with fireworks exploding over the city.

## The Oath of Office Signals the Transfer of Power

Most inauguration days continue to be festive events celebrated by traditional ceremonies, parades, and balls, but it is the oath of office that reigns as the highlight. The oath is in fact the only part of our elaborate inaugural ceremonies and celebrations that is required by the Constitution. **Article II, Section 1** provides the short—but imperative—oath that every president beginning with George Washington has sworn to: “I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.” Every single president has stated these same words to swear his duty to the country and the Constitution, whether he was elected or required to assume the presidency following a president’s death or resignation.

The exact moment when a president-elect concludes the oath signals that he or she is now officially president and commander in chief. Regarding the remarkable significance of this uniquely peaceful transfer of power from one president to the next, historian Jim Bendat writes in *Democracy’s Big Day*, “Our Inauguration Day is one that demonstrates the continuity of our country and the renewal of the democratic process, as well as the healing that is sometimes needed after an election battle.”

## Washington’s Inauguration Established Long-lasting Traditions

Soon after his inauguration, Washington wrote, “I walk on untrodden ground. There is scarcely any part of my conduct which may not hereafter be drawn into precedent.” With no guidelines having been prescribed in the Constitution for a presidential inauguration, many of Washington’s inaugural actions have served as precedents that continue to be followed by most of his successors: he took the oath of office in the open overlooking a crowd, he kissed the Bible after swearing the oath, and he delivered his inaugural address immediately after the oath ceremony. Those presidents who chose not to deliver an inaugural address—John Tyler, Millard Fillmore, Andrew Johnson, Chester Arthur, and Gerald Ford—all assumed the presidency following his predecessor’s death or resignation and so decided that it would be inappropriate to give an inaugural address.

## To Swear or to Affirm?

The Constitution does allow a president the choice of swearing or affirming the oath of office, but only one president—Franklin Pierce—chose to affirm his oath. It is unclear exactly why Pierce chose to affirm the oath. Some historians note that Pierce’s religious beliefs may have deemed swearing the oath unethical. Others note that the tragic death of Pierce’s son soon after he was elected may have triggered his desire to “affirm” rather than “swear” the oath. The newly elected president had been traveling with his wife and young son in a train from Boston when it suddenly derailed and crashed into a field below the tracks; the Pierce’s son was killed. Pierce may have interpreted his son’s horrific death as punishment for his own sins. As a result, he refused to swear the oath at his 1853 inauguration and instead “affirmed” his loyalty to the Constitution.

## Modern Inaugural Ceremony Highlights

Presidential inaugurations used to be celebrated on March 4, but Congress moved the date to January 20 when they ratified the Twentieth Amendment in 1933. The four-month delay between election and inauguration was needed in the early years of our country, but modern communication and transportation enabled newly elected administrations to assume power in a more timely manner. Following the passage of the Twentieth Amendment, Franklin Roosevelt became the first president to be inaugurated on January 20 in 1937.

Today inaugurations take place in Washington, D.C., on January 20 at the west front of the U.S. Capitol according to a schedule very similar to Washington’s. Though inaugural celebrations may last way past midnight, the swearing-in ceremony begins at 11:30 a.m. sharp. Following introductory band music, an invocation, and on occasion a poetry reading, the vice president-elect is sworn in first. At noon the president-elect is sworn in and then addresses the crowds and nation in his or her inaugural speech. The ceremony ends with a benediction and the playing of the “Star-Spangled Banner.” The new president and

his or her family then join guests inside the Capitol's Statuary Hall for lunch before parading back to the White House.

## Historical Moments

Though tradition plays a dominant role in presidential inaugural ceremonies, special circumstances and personal preferences sometimes compel changes.

- John Adams was the first president to receive the oath of office from the chief justice. Washington was not sworn in by the chief justice at his first inauguration because the Supreme Court had not yet been established. And for his second inauguration, Washington was sworn in by Associate Justice William Cushing.
- James Monroe was the first president to take the oath of office outdoors in Washington, D.C. After Washington swore his first oath of office before the city of New York from the balcony of Federal Hall in 1789, all subsequent inaugural oaths were sworn indoors until 1817. Washington swore his second oath of office in the Senate Chamber of Congress Hall in Philadelphia. John Adams swore the oath of office in the Hall of the House of Representatives in Philadelphia's Federal Hall before a joint session of Congress. For both of his inaugurations Thomas Jefferson swore his oath in the new Senate Chamber of the partially built Capitol building in Washington, D.C. And James Madison was administered the oath of office in the Hall of the House of Representatives in the Capitol.
- The inauguration of Martin Van Buren in 1837 marked the first time both the incumbent and president-elect rode together to the Capitol for the inaugural ceremony.
- In 1853 Franklin Pierce affirmed his oath, with his hand placed on the Bible, instead of swearing it.
- Because inauguration day was a Sunday in 1877, Rutherford Hayes was sworn in before the actual inauguration day, and for the first time, a president swore the oath privately in the White House on Saturday. He then swore the oath in public that Monday.
- In 1917 Woodrow Wilson became the first president to swear the oath on a Sunday. He also was the first to swear the oath in the President's Room at the Capitol in private.
- In 1953 Dwight Eisenhower chose not to kiss the Bible, but to recite a personal prayer following the oath.
- President Lyndon Johnson was the first to ask his wife to actively participate in the inaugural ceremony. In previous years, the clerk of the Supreme Court would be asked to hold the Bible for the oath. However, Johnson asked his wife, Lady Bird Johnson, to hold the Bible. First Lady Johnson wrote about the experience, "I was touched that Lyndon wanted me to hold the Bible for the swearing-in. We used the Bible Lyndon's mother had given us . . . and I stood facing the throng between the Chief Justice and Lyndon while he took the oath." A new tradition was born. Since Johnson's inauguration in 1965, every subsequent first lady has held the Bible for her husband's oath.

## Tragedy Necessitates Speed and Improvisation

Following the death of a president, it is critical that power be transferred immediately to the successor. Many vice presidents have therefore been sworn in as president under unusual circumstances.

- President William Henry Harrison died just thirty-one days after his inauguration, thrusting Vice President John Tyler into the presidency. Tyler swore the oath of office two days after Harrison's death at Brown's Indian Queen Hotel in Washington, D.C. Chief Judge William Cranch of the U.S. Circuit Court for the District of Columbia administered the oath.
- Expediency in the wake of the assassination of President James Garfield in 1881 forced Vice President Chester Arthur to be sworn in at his own home in New York.
- Vice President Theodore Roosevelt was sworn in quickly following the assassination of President William McKinley in 1901. He swore the oath at a friend's house—with no Bible, but with his hand raised.
- Calvin Coolidge became president when President Warren Harding died unexpectedly. Coolidge was visiting his family farm in Vermont and sleeping when messengers arrived with the news. His father happened to be a notary public, and so he administered the oath of office. Although a family Bible was available, Coolidge did not use it for the ceremony. His father also had the privilege of being the first to address him as "Mr. President."
- Following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson was sworn in on an airplane. He swore the oath on the presidential jet Air Force One at Love Field in Dallas, Texas. This was also the first time a president was sworn in by a woman, Sarah T. Hughes, who was the U.S. District Judge of the Northern District of Texas.

## Read More

- **Read the original text of the Constitution, including the presidential oath of office in Article II.**
- Review the dates and locations at which each president swore the oath of office at: [Memory.loc.gov](http://Memory.loc.gov).
- And read the story of presidential and vice presidential succession in this article on OurWhiteHouse.org: "**A Heartbeat Away: The Story of Presidential and Vice Presidential Succession.**"

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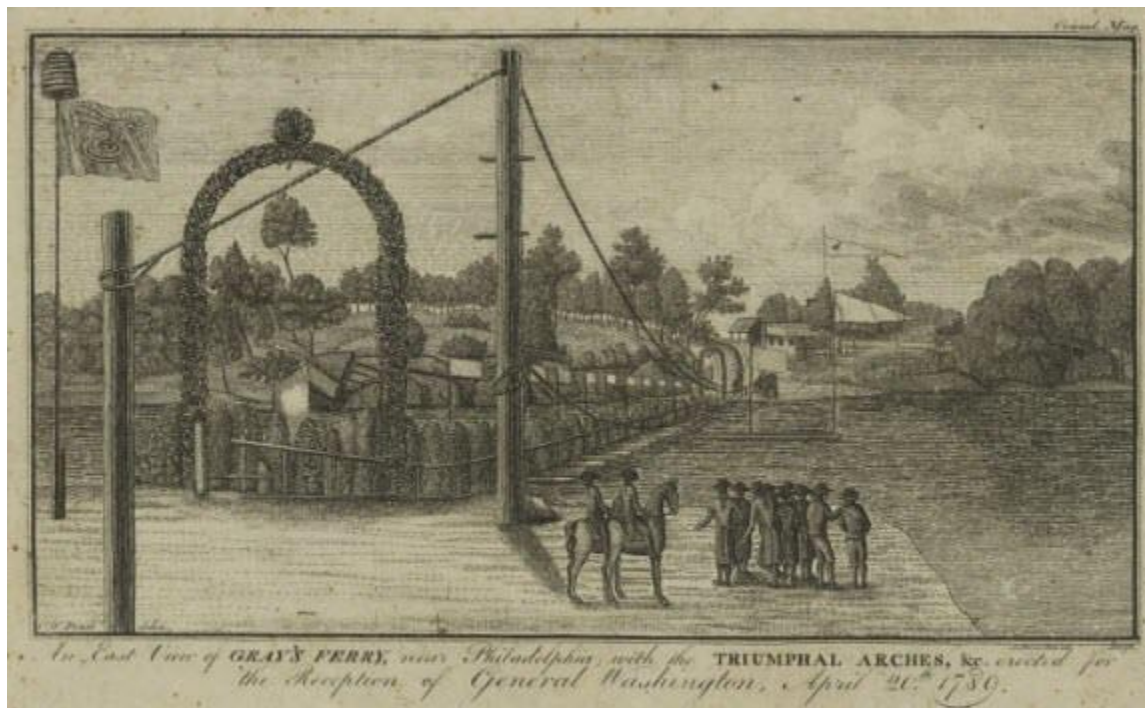
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## Americans Love a Parade

by Geri Zabela Eddins

### President Washington Parades to the First Inauguration

Upon learning that his election as president was official, George Washington traveled leisurely over a period of seven days from his home at Mount Vernon to the country's temporary capital in New York City, riding on horseback through Alexandria, Georgetown, Washington, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. Throngs of enthusiastic crowds cheered Washington along the many miles of his journey and treated him like royalty, crowning him with laurel wreaths, hosting banquets in his honor, and saluting him with cannon fire. Loyal members of local militias joined Washington's procession to New York in increasing numbers as if they were following an irresistible piper. Members of the Continental Army, legislators, political leaders, and ordinary American citizens who were gathered in New York for the inauguration on April 30, 1789, also joined Washington's "parade" as he left in a carriage from the home of Governor George Clinton, where he had stayed, to the steps of Federal Hall for the ceremony. The admiring crowds swarmed Washington a third time after he finished his inaugural address and accompanied him as he walked to a prayer service at St. Paul's Chapel. In subsequent years impromptu parades of supporters also escorted John Adams and Thomas Jefferson to their inaugurations.



East view of Gray's Ferry, near Philadelphia, with the triumphal arches erected for the reception of General Washington, April 20, 1789, as he paraded to New York for the inauguration.

Etching (c) Library of Congress

## Spontaneous Parades Make Way for Officially Planned Processions

Although Thomas Jefferson was the first president to be inaugurated in the new capital of Washington, D.C., he preferred a more subdued atmosphere for his ceremony than the pageantry and splendor of Washington's inauguration. He therefore chose to walk with a few friends from his hotel to the Capitol. After swearing the oath and delivering his inaugural address, Jefferson walked back to his hotel and ate dinner. Following his second inaugural ceremony in 1805, Jefferson rode from the Capitol to the White House on horseback and was accompanied by several hundred well wishers that included mechanics from the nearby navy yard, Congressmen, and diplomats. The Marine Band also joined the parade and played patriotic music as they marched.

Inaugural parades continued to be spontaneous, unplanned events until the inauguration of James Madison in 1809. An official parade that included a cavalry unit from Georgetown was organized to escort Madison to the Capitol. The officially planned inaugural parades continued to precede the inaugural ceremony until 1873. In the waning years of the nineteenth century, however, the inaugural parade had transformed into a much grander and more time-consuming event involving thousands of participants. So it was decided that the parade would no longer precede the inaugural ceremony, but follow it as a grand-scale public celebration.

## Modern Traditions

Today's inaugural parade continues to follow the inaugural ceremony and serves as a two-hour celebration that is not only enjoyed by the thousands of people lining the streets of Washington, but also the millions watching on television. After the newly sworn-in administration enjoys lunch in the Capitol's Statuary Hall, the parade begins! The president and his or her spouse lead the way down Pennsylvania Avenue, followed by the Vice President and his or her spouse, all the way to the White House. Most presidents choose to ride in a limousine but may stop at certain points along the way, leave the car, and greet the cheering supporters. Once the president and vice president arrive at the White House, they and their spouses join special guests in the reviewing stand, a special viewing section constructed specifically for each inaugural parade and designed for both comfort and safety. Following the assassination of John F. Kennedy, each reviewing stand has been encased in bullet-proof glass to ensure the president is safe.



Dwight and Mamie Eisenhower wave during the 1953 inaugural parade.  
Photograph. National Park Service.

From the reviewing stand, the country's new administration enjoys the remainder of the parade—a grand, festive spectacle that features thousands of marchers—military and high school marching bands playing patriotic music, tumbling cheerleaders, proud citizens' groups, and military regiments representing all branches of the armed forces. Elaborately decorated floats celebrating American life in all fifty states also delight the crowds. The record for the most number of marchers in an inaugural parade was set in 1913 for the inauguration of Woodrow Wilson. Over 40,000 people participated in that parade. The parade celebrating Dwight Eisenhower's inauguration, however, holds the record for the longest. Those who watched the entirety of Eisenhower's parade stood for four hours and thirty-nine minutes!

With the COVID-19 pandemic killing thousands of Americans a day, the Presidential Inaugural Committee is orchestrating major changes to the 2021 inauguration celebrations for Joe Biden. To ensure the health and safety of all, the celebration will feature the first "Virtual Parade Across America" instead of the traditional parade that typically attracts hundreds of thousands. The virtual parade will include video of the new president, vice president, and their families processing to the White House, as well as musical acts, poets, dance troupes, and other entertainers from different states. Inaugural planners note, "The parade will celebrate America's heroes, highlight Americans from all walks of life in different states and regions, and reflect the country's diversity, heritage, and resilience." The virtual parade will be broadcast on TV and the internet to ensure all Americans are able to view it.

### Historic Moments Along the Parade Route

- From the moment Washington journeyed from his home at Mount Vernon escorted by enthusiastic supporters to his inauguration, the American people have honored their new presidents with festive parades. Many parades have included marchers and floats that revealed significant aspects of the new president's life or issues of concern for the time.
- Thomas Jefferson walked to and from his first inaugural ceremony in 1801, but chose to ride on horseback from the Capitol to the White House after being sworn in for his second inauguration in 1805. Jefferson was the only president who ever walked to and from an inaugural ceremony.
- The first full-scale parade accompanied Andrew Jackson from the Capitol to the White House in 1829. Jackson's parade was followed by a public reception at the White House, which was celebrated by a famously rowdy crowd of thousands that destroyed many of the interior furnishings. In later years the parade replaced public receptions as the primary public celebration.
- Floats were used for the first time in Martin Van Buren's inaugural parade in 1837.
- Over the years parades became increasingly longer, and the parade that celebrated Zachary Taylor's inauguration in 1849 was so long that it took one hour to pass any one point along the parade route.
- A reproduction of the *U.S.S. Constitution* was crafted as a float for James Buchanan's 1857 inaugural parade.
- In 1861 the parade for Abraham Lincoln's first inauguration included a number of floats, including one decorated in red, white, and blue that transported thirty-four young girls who represented each of the current states. All thirty-four of the girls attended a reception later that day and surrounded Lincoln, who picked up and kissed every single one of them!
- Native Americans and African Americans participated in the inaugural parade for the first time in 1865 for Lincoln's second inauguration. The African Americans who marched represented civilian organizations, as well as a military battalion.
- In 1869 the inaugural parade for Ulysses S. Grant included eight military divisions.
- Prior to 1873 the inaugural parade and the president-elect's procession to the Capitol were the same event. However, that changed for Grant's second inauguration when the official inaugural parade became a new event that followed the inaugural ceremony.
- The year 1877 witnessed the country's first hotly disputed election. Rutherford Hayes was declared the presidential winner just two days before the scheduled inauguration. Hayes was sworn in as president in a secret ceremony held in the White House that evening, just two days before the official inauguration at the Capitol. Because there was no time for advance planning, Hayes was escorted to the White House in a last-minute torchlight parade.
- The first parade reviewing stand in front of the White House was built for James Garfield's inaugural parade in 1881.
- In 1897 William McKinley sat in the first glass-enclosed reviewing stand.



- Theodore Roosevelt set a new standard for inaugural parades in 1905. Nearly 35,000 people marched, including cowboys, Pennsylvania coal miners, and his Rough Riders (members of Roosevelt's cavalry unit during the Spanish-American War) on horseback.
- William Taft was the first president whose wife rode with him from the Capitol to the White House.
- Women participated in the inaugural parade for the first time at Woodrow Wilson's inauguration in 1917.
- Warren Harding was the first president to ride to and from the Capitol in a car.
- Airplanes first made a parade appearance in Herbert Hoover's 1929 inaugural parade.
- The 1953 inaugural parade for Dwight Eisenhower was the longest parade ever held. The procession went on for ten miles, and the approximately 750,000 bystanders who witnessed the whole parade had to stand four hours and thirty-nine minutes to see its entirety. The parade featured numerous floats portraying scenes from Eisenhower's life and a live turtle waving the American flag with its front legs. Eisenhower had even agreed to be lassoed by the television cowboy Monte Montana, a stunt which did not endear him to the Secret Service.
- Because snow blanketed the ground for John F. Kennedy's inauguration in 1961, army flame throwers were used to melt the snow off Pennsylvania Avenue so the parade could be held. Over 32,000 people marched in this parade. The parade included a PT (patrol torpedo) boat in honor of Kennedy's war service, as well as nuclear missiles transported atop trucks.
- Protestors first appeared at an inaugural parade in 1969. Hundreds of citizens who condemned the Vietnam War burned small American flags and chanted protests such as "Four more years of death" at Richard Nixon's inaugural parade.
- Following the inaugural luncheon in 1977, Jimmy Carter and his wife entered the limousine for the parade, but then decided they would walk instead. Carter and his wife thus became the only president and first lady to walk the entire one and a half miles from the Capitol to the White House. However, in subsequent years George and Barbara Bush, Bill and Hillary Clinton, George W. and Laura Bush, Barack and Michelle Obama, and Donald and Melania Trump all chose to walk part of the parade route from the Capitol.
- Protestors were granted permits and allocated space along the parade route for the first time during George W. Bush's 2001 inaugural parade. Bush had won the Electoral College but not the popular vote in a hotly contested election, leaving many Americans furious over the election results. Thousands chose to assert their displeasure by hoisting posters at the parade proclaiming "Hail to the Thief" and "Supreme Injustice." History repeated itself in 2016 when Hillary Clinton won the popular vote, but lost the Electoral College to Donald Trump. Again thousands of protestors took to the streets on Inauguration Day near the parade route to voice their outrage. Most protestors demonstrated peacefully with signs and chants, but some resorted to vandalism, resulting in over two hundred arrests.

## Read More

- Read an expanded list of precedents and historic inaugural events at: [lcweb2.loc.gov](http://lcweb2.loc.gov).
- Read a history of the inaugural parade and other inaugural events on the [U.S. Senate website](http://www.senate.gov).

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## United by Voice and Vision: Thomas Jefferson's First Inauguration, March 4, 1801

by Renee' Critcher Lyons

### Inauguration Day Starts with a Bang

Thomas Jefferson's inaugural address was delivered in "so low a tone that few heard it," but the volume of the day proved explosive otherwise. On an early spring morning described as "mild and beautiful," the city of Washington's artillery cannon boomed and banged in celebration of the inauguration, scheduled for noon. Parading down the muddy, swamp grass-lined streets of a capital city still under construction, and joined by an Alexandria, Virginia group of militiamen, the unit fired again at 10:00 a.m. in front of Mr. Jefferson's boarding house, Conrad and McMunn. Another volley bellowed after Jefferson entered the Capitol building at midday to take his oath. The Marine Band, which Jefferson affectionately nicknamed "The President's Own," performed for the first time at a presidential inauguration and played a new composition for the occasion entitled "Jefferson's March." Sixteen rounds were fired by the Alexandria unit upon Jefferson *finishing* the oath of office to represent the number of states comprising the Union that day, March 4, 1801. A final display of firepower ended the evening, the din of the day subsiding only as the Alexandria Company crossed the Potomac to return home.

### Jefferson Models "Republican Simplicity"

Jefferson abhorred pomp and spectacle, as it intimated the arrogance of monarchy, and he believed the American president should not distinguish himself from the people. Though he could not stop the noise of the cannons, the 6'2"

Jefferson did in fact wish to stand firm in his depiction of the political principles and philosophies of the American Revolution. Breaking the precedent of George Washington and John Adams, he refused to take a carriage ride to his swearing-in, instead choosing to walk up Capitol Hill via what is today known as Pennsylvania Avenue. In fact, Jefferson became the only president in U.S. history who walked both to and from his own inauguration. He also refused to wear suit or ceremonial sword, as had Washington and Adams, and instead dressed as "a plain citizen, without any distinctive badge of office." Five or six of his fellow boarders, most of whom were congressmen, joined Jefferson on his walk. In striking contrast, the Alexandria militia detachment reveled in the pageantry and chose to walk before Jefferson with swords drawn, held high in the air.



Thomas Jefferson as President of the United States, holding and pointing to the Declaration of Independence. 1801.

(c) Library of Congress

## Throng Visits the Capitol to Hear Jefferson's Address

The turnout for Jefferson's inauguration was described as "immense, the largest concourse of citizens ever assembled here" according to Philadelphia's *Aurora*, which estimated a crowd of 1,140, including 154 ladies. The lady Margaret Bayard Smith, the author who penned *The First Forty Years of Washington Society*, later described the Senate chamber as "so crowded that I believe not another creature could enter." Bystanders on the Capitol steps applauded as Jefferson entered the building, and despite tight quarters, members of the Senate and House rose to their feet as Jefferson entered the room to deliver his speech.

## Jefferson Asks the Nation to Unite

Chosen by Congress to write the Declaration of Independence due to his elegant writing style, not his oratorical skills, Jefferson's call within the Inaugural Address for a "wise and frugal Government which shall restrain men from injuring one another" resounded fervently after this particular election, which was described as "one of the ugliest in American history." Jefferson needed to repair a fractured electorate and mend the division between the political parties of the time: the Federalists, the party of George Washington and John Adams, and the Democrat-Republicans, headed by Jefferson. During the election, Federalists had referred to Jefferson and his supporters as "dangerous radicals," "mad men," who, if elected, would usher in a "reign of terror." Democrat-Republicans accused Adams of wishing to restore the monarchy and make himself king, his followers as those "plotting to subvert human liberty and impose slavery on the people." Unequivocally, Jefferson was charged with unifying the nation, as he became the first president to be sworn into office upon a change in party.

Jefferson asked the nation to be "united with one heart and one mind." He noted, "Every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle," as in truth Americans were all "brethren of the same principle. We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists." He asserted that America's future depended upon "the preservation of the Central Government in its whole constitutional vigor, as the sheet anchor of our peace at home and safety abroad."

Despite the rift in political opinion of the time, and the uncertainty as to whether the nation could withstand a change in party at so young an age, Jefferson's first inaugural address moved both the audience and voters nationwide. Applause erupted throughout the Senate chamber as Jefferson finished, and one spectator commented that "tears bedewed many manly cheeks." The address also touched the general citizenry, for it became the first inaugural address published in a newspaper, printed that same day in the pages of the Washington D.C. *National Intelligencer*. Margaret Bayard Smith described the elation: "I have this morning witnessed one of the most interesting scenes a free people can ever witness. The change of administrations, which in every government and in every age have most generally been epochs of confusion, villainy and bloodshed, in this our happy country take place without any species of distraction, or disorder. This day one of the most amiable and worthy men has taken that seat to which he was called by the voice of his country."

## Inauguration Day Ends...With the People

Jefferson did not end his day at an elaborate inaugural ball, a tradition begun by James Madison in 1809. Instead, Jefferson returned to his boarding house for dinner, taking the lowest seat at the long table, far from the fire. Offered a more distinguished seat by one Mrs. Brown, Jefferson declined with a smile. When a gentleman from Baltimore asked Jefferson's permission to wish him joy, Jefferson replied, "I would advise you to follow my example on nuptial occasions, when I always tell the bridegroom I will wait until the end of the year before offering my congratulations." Clearly, Jefferson's deliberate reliance on modesty and restraint, in an attempt to reunite America's voters, indeed her people, set the tone for our nation's first transition of political parties, ensuring the preservation of our Union.



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## Read More

- Learn more about Thomas Jefferson in the NCBLA's "**Presidential Fact Files.**"
- Read Milton Meltzer's explanation as to the factor which "helped raise Jefferson to the presidency," in "Thomas Jefferson, 1743-1826," found in *Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out*.
- Discover Jefferson's fascination with fossils within the pages of Barbara Kerley's "Jefferson's Monstrous Bones," an article in *Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out*. Marvel at Brian Selznick's accompanying illustration, "Bones on the Floor."
- View Mike Reagan's illustration of the initial layout of Washington, D.C., entitled "The Capital City in 1800," within *Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out*.
- Find out more about the rise of party politics in "**Choosing Sides: The Rise of Party Politics**" on OurWhiteHouse.org.
- Read about the dirty tactics used in the early presidential campaigns of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson in "**Persuading the People: Presidential Campaigns.**"
- Read Jefferson's ideas for the planning of the new capital city of Washington, D.C. in "**Primary Sources: The New Federal City.**"

## Discussion Questions for Young People at Home and in the Classroom

- Differing opinions as to the degree of power our Constitution granted to what Jefferson described as the "Central Government" led to the rise of political parties in the United States. Have you ever differed in opinion from a close family member or friend? How did the difference affect your relationship? How did you remain close despite differences?
- Jefferson earned a great degree of respect from the populace, much needed after a contentious election, as he deliberately portrayed a modest demeanor. How do you believe 21st century leaders should balance the need to both display modesty and earn respect? How do you personally balance giving and receiving within your own life?
- Jefferson broke with the inaugural traditions of two great leaders, Washington and Adams, for a specific purpose. Discuss a time when you broke with tradition. Did it work for the better? Did others follow your lead?
- The viewpoints of both the Federalists and the Democrat-Republicans contributed to the growth of our early nation. Discuss how the sacrifices of both Jefferson and Adams ensured the perpetuation of democracy.

## Activities for Young People at Home and in the Classroom

- Today's students may use digital software for the purpose of reading and interpreting maps. Visiting the Library of Congress' "I Do Solemnly Swear..." website, specifically the page titled "**Presidential Oaths of Office**," create a map which plots the settings for the oath of office since 1789. Follow the instructions for plotting Google maps on [Google.com](https://www.google.com).
- Complete a **K-W-L graphic organizer** to show how Jefferson contributed to the establishment of our Federal Republic. Use the Library of Congress' article "**Establishing a Federal Republic**" to learn about his contributions to "the strongest government on earth." (The K-W-L organizer allows the student to discover what he or she already knows (K), what they need or want to learn (W), and what they actually learn (L) during the unit or lesson.)
- Jefferson once said his passion was science, but his duty was politics. Using an **interactive poster**, discover some of Jefferson's inventions that meet the credo: Necessity is the mother of invention. Next, look about your home and discover objects/items/mechanics which could be invented or improved upon. Create a **VENN diagram** that compares and contrasts Jefferson's scientific inquiry with your own! (Within a Venn Diagram, the convergence of two circles, the student lists variable similarities within the point of convergence, and what is unique to each variable in the outside, non-converging circles).
- Today's media devotes an incredible amount of airtime to the fiscal concerns of our federal government. Visit the **Monticello Classroom website** to review resources about letter writing. Then ask the following: In your opinion, if today's governmental leaders could ask President Jefferson just one question about running a "wise and frugal government," what should it be and why? Write the actual letter that should be sent to President Jefferson, using correct grammar and punctuation, of course!

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## **Come One, Come All!**

### **How Technology Transformed Inauguration Day**

*by Heather Lang*

On April 16, 1789, George Washington waved goodbye to Martha and began the long journey by horse and carriage from his home in Mount Vernon, Virginia to New York City, where he would be inaugurated. Our country was about to introduce its first president, but there were no telephones, no television broadcasts, and no email blasts to spread news about this momentous occasion.

From New York and Philadelphia and Baltimore, people spread word about the inauguration by letters that were delivered on horseback. But delivery could take days, weeks, or months depending on the distance, weather, and terrain. People also read news about the inauguration in newspapers; about 100 papers existed at that time. Sometimes mail carriers delivered newspapers by horseback to more remote villages, but most newspapers were primarily available in cities. Still the most common way to share important news was by word of mouth, especially in community settings like churches.

Even though our country only extended to the Mississippi River, without technology, word of George Washington's Inauguration did not reach many of its four million citizens until well after the event. Communication was especially difficult to those settlers who had moved west of the Appalachian Mountains into unexplored lands.

### **Early Public Participation in Inauguration Day**

On April 30, 1789, a large crowd gathered to witness George Washington being sworn into office on the balcony of Federal Hall, but only those who were within earshot heard him take his oath. And only the members of Congress had the privilege of hearing his address, which was held inside the building.

Without technology, Americans found other ways to participate in Inauguration Day. During General Washington's seven-day journey, he made stops in Alexandria, Georgetown, Washington, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. Word had spread to these cities in time for the public to celebrate their new leader. In each city, the public greeted him with tremendous applause, banners, banquets, and receiving lines. Washington took this opportunity to connect with thousands of Americans, building excitement around his inauguration.

In 1801 President Thomas Jefferson began the tradition of inaugural open houses at the executive mansion. This gave the public an opportunity to meet and welcome the new president. But when Andrew Jackson became president, this civilized tradition sent the president fleeing for safety. A rowdy crowd of more than 20,000 descended on the executive mansion, trampling on the furniture, and breaking dishes in their celebration. Despite the obvious hazards, this tradition remained intact until 1885 when Grover Cleveland decided it was safer to greet the public outside the White House from a grandstand.

### **Read All About It!**

Progress in technology was slow at first, but each improvement allowed Americans who could not be present at a presidential inauguration to gain a glimpse into the event. For Thomas Jefferson, Inauguration Day was not just a celebration. Jefferson viewed it as an opportunity to bring a divided nation together. He knew that his audience was not limited to the crowd of nearly a thousand that crammed in the Senate Chamber. On the morning of March 4, 1801, Jefferson gave an advance copy of his address to *The National Intelligencer*. The newspaper made it available to the public right after Jefferson delivered the address.



## Far and Wide

On March 4, 1845, inventor Samuel Morse magically transmitted James Polk’s inaugural address from Washington, D.C. to Baltimore using his new invention: the telegraph. Unfortunately Polk delivered his thirty-minute speech from the Capitol steps through rain and umbrellas. Morse, sitting on a platform nearby, was one of the few to hear the speech. As Polk spoke, Morse tap-tap-tapped away on his telegraph. Using electrical pulses, the device transmitted his code through a wire all the way to Baltimore, where it was instantly received and then decoded. This was the beginning of live broadcasting.

The development of photography further transformed the public’s ability to participate in presidential inaugurations. It was one thing to read about or look at illustrations of an inaugural event, but seeing a photo made the inauguration even more tangible. Photography also allowed the public to see what the Capitol looked like. In 1857, John Wood took the first photograph at an inaugural ceremony when James Buchanan became president.

Another forty years passed before the motion picture camera emerged and captured some footage of William McKinley’s inauguration for the world to see. In 1925 Americans crowded around radios and listened to Calvin Coolidge taking his oath of office. Approximately twenty radio stations broadcast the ceremony to 23 million listeners, including children who listened in at their school auditoriums.

## Keeping Up with Technology

Originally, the Constitution provided that Inauguration Day would be held on March 4th, four months after the election. In the late eighteenth century, it took this amount of time to gather election returns and for the new president to get his affairs in order and make the long journey to the Capitol. This transition became known as “the lame duck” period—when the old president became inactive and the president-elect had no power to act. The lame duck period sometimes caused serious problems for the country in times of crisis. For example, in 1861 after Lincoln was elected, southern states began to secede from the Union and President Buchanan failed to take action against them. Lincoln could not take any steps until he took office in March.

As technology and transportation improved, the long period of time between the election and taking office was not necessary. Finally in 1933, Congress ratified the Twentieth Amendment to the Constitution making January 20th the date when the new president would take office.

## Television and the Internet

Until television the world could not both watch and listen to a president’s inaugural ceremony. Television had a way of transporting the public to the event like no other technology could. In 1949 approximately ten million Americans watched and listened to Harry Truman’s inauguration ceremony on television.

Technology has developed so rapidly in the last sixty years that now almost anyone in the world can watch an inauguration live on television or on the Internet. Friends who are attending the inaugural events can send instant reports and photos. Thanks to technology, everyone is invited to join in the celebration!

## Activities and Discussion Questions for Young People

### Be a Reporter for the Day

Reporters play a critical role in educating the public by sharing facts and news with the world. Some reporters try to report in an unbiased manner. Many intentionally share their own perspectives. And some unintentionally reveal their viewpoints by the information they select to share.

When George Washington became our first president, it was difficult for the public to participate in his inauguration. Transportation was limited to horses and feet. Microphones, radios, and televisions had not been invented. As technology improved, so did the public's access to Inauguration Day. Today we all are invited to the party!

Students can work alone or with a partner to produce a newspaper article, voice recording, or video recording that reports on an Inauguration Day event in history.

- Write a newspaper article reporting on a current or historical Inauguration Day event. Remember to bring flavor to your article by including rich historical details, such as information about the setting or clothing. Be sure to include quotes. Visit your local library to do your research.
- Pretend you are a radio broadcaster reporting live on an interesting inaugural event. Remember: you want to make your audience feel like they are there experiencing the event with you. You could include brief interviews with spectators or historical figures. Write your script first, and then record it.
- Prepare a short video reporting on an interesting inaugural event. Perhaps it will be an interview with a historical figure, or maybe it will include part of an inaugural address. Remember to dress the part!

### Illustrate a Futuristic Inauguration Day

Imagine what Inauguration Day might look like in the year 2050? How about 2222? How will technology have changed and shaped the event? What will people be wearing? What will the Capitol look like? Choose a date in the future and illustrate a specific event from Inauguration Day.

*Heather Lang loves to write about real women who overcame extraordinary obstacles and never gave up on their dreams. To research her books she has explored the skies, the treetops of the Amazon, and the depths of the ocean. Her award-winning picture book biographies include Fearless Flyer: Ruth Law and Her Flying Machine, Swimming with Sharks: The Daring Discoveries of Eugenie Clark, and Queen of the Track: Alice Coachman, Olympic High-Jump Champion. When Heather is not writing at her home in Lexington, Massachusetts, she loves to go on adventures with her husband and four children. Visit her at [www.heatherlangbooks.com](http://www.heatherlangbooks.com).*

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## Inaugural Activities and Discussion Questions for Young People

by Mary Brigid Barrett, Geri Zabela Eddins, and Heather Lang

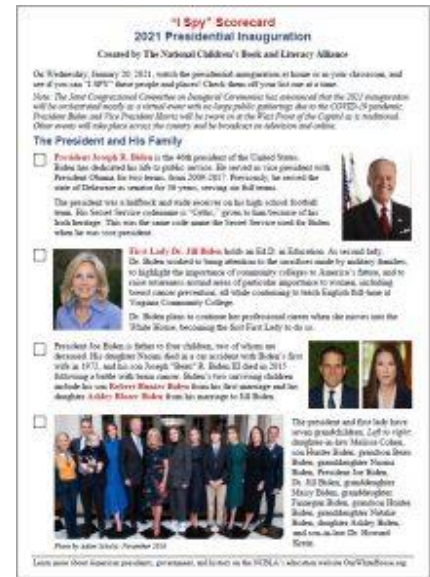
### Play “Inaugural I Spy”

The *2021 I Spy Presidential Inauguration Scorecard* provides a great nonpartisan opportunity to explore American history, civic education, and current events with your kids!

The 2021 scorecard includes four pages of pictures and short biographies of the incoming president and vice president and their families, as well as the outgoing president and vice president and the leaders of the Supreme Court and Congress.

Watch the inauguration, live on TV or the Internet, and have your kids identify, then check, the important “players” taking part in this year’s inaugural ceremonies. Be sure to have young people look for and check off the historical sites, too! If you are unable to watch the inaugural ceremonies live, then watch what you can later that evening on the news or on YouTube.

The *2021 I Spy Presidential Inauguration Scorecard* continues on the following four pages.



## **“I Spy” Scorecard**

### **2021 Presidential Inauguration**

**Created by The National Children’s Book and Literacy Alliance**

On Wednesday, January 20, 2021, watch the presidential inauguration at home or in your classroom, and see if you can “I SPY” these people and places! Check them off your list one at a time.

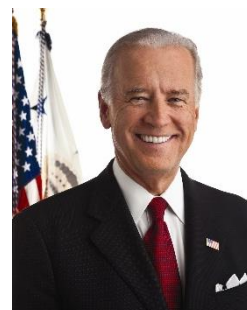
*Note: The Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies has announced that the 2021 inauguration will be orchestrated mostly as a virtual event with no large public gatherings due to the COVID-19 pandemic. President Biden and Vice President Harris will be sworn in at the West Front of the Capitol as is traditional. Other events will take place across the country and be broadcast on television and online.*

### **The President and His Family**



**President Joseph R. Biden** is the 46th president of the United States. Biden has dedicated his life to public service. He served as vice president with President Obama for two terms, from 2009-2017. Previously, he served the state of Delaware as senator for 36 years, serving six full terms.

The president was a halfback and wide receiver on his high school football team. His Secret Service codename is “Celtic,” given to him because of his Irish heritage. This was the same code name the Secret Service used for Biden when he was vice president.



**First Lady Dr. Jill Biden** holds an Ed.D. in Education. As second lady, Dr. Biden worked to bring attention to the sacrifices made by military families, to highlight the importance of community colleges to America’s future, and to raise awareness around areas of particular importance to women, including breast cancer prevention, all while continuing to teach English full-time at Virginia Community College.

Dr. Biden plans to continue her professional career when she moves into the White House, becoming the first First Lady to do so.



President Joe Biden is father to four children, two of whom are deceased. His daughter Naomi died in a car accident with Biden’s first wife in 1972, and his son Joseph “Beau” R. Biden III died in 2015 following a battle with brain cancer. Biden’s two surviving children include his son **Robert Hunter Biden** from his first marriage and his daughter **Ashley Blazer Biden** from his marriage to Jill Biden.



*Photo by Adam Schultz; November 2020*

The president and first lady have seven grandchildren. *Left to right:* daughter-in-law Melissa Cohen, son Hunter Biden, grandson Beau Biden, granddaughter Naomi Biden, President Joe Biden, Dr. Jill Biden, granddaughter Maisy Biden, granddaughter Finnegan Biden, grandson Hunter Biden, granddaughter Natalie Biden, daughter Ashley Biden, and son-in-law Dr. Howard Krein.



## The Vice President and Second Gentleman

- ☐ **Vice President Kamala Harris** is the 49th vice president of the United States. As an attorney and politician, she served California as senator for four years and previously as attorney general. The vice president is married to Douglas Emhoff and is stepmother to his two children from his previous marriage. Her stepchildren Cole and Ella call her “Momala.” Harris is the daughter of two immigrant parents. Her mother was born in India, and her father was born in Jamaica. Her Secret Service code name is “Pioneer,” which she chose because she is the first female vice president, as well as the first woman of color.



- ☐ **Douglas Emhoff** is an entertainment and media lawyer, who most recently practiced at the multi-national law firm DLA Piper. Emhoff chose to resign his position and put his career on hold to support his wife as she campaigned with Joe Biden. As second gentleman, he plans to teach at Georgetown Law’s Institute for Technology Law and Policy as a distinguished fellow. Emhoff was born in Brooklyn and moved to California with his family when he was in high school. He is the first Jewish spouse of a vice president.



## The Outgoing President and First Lady

- ☐ Former **President Donald J. Trump** served one term as president of the United States. The presidency was his first role in public office. Before being elected, Trump earned a degree in Economics from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and worked with his father in real estate, eventually developing properties in New York City and across the world. He also worked as a reality TV personality on *The Apprentice* and authored many books, including the bestseller *The Art of the Deal*. Trump enjoys playing golf.



- ☐ Former **First Lady Melania Trump** was born in Slovenia and became an American citizen in 2006. She was the second foreign-born first lady of the United States. As her primary initiative as first lady, Mrs. Trump created the BE BEST awareness campaign for young people, which concentrates on well-being, online safety, and opioid abuse. She also redesigned the White House Rose Garden and added a tennis pavilion. Mrs. Trump has one child with husband Donald, a son named Barron Trump.



## The Outgoing Vice President and Second Lady

- ☐ Former **Vice President Michael R. Pence** served one term as vice president of the United States. Before being elected as vice president, he served the public in many roles, including as governor of Indiana, for which he served from 2013 to 2017. Pence also served six terms as a member of the United States House of Representatives. Before entering public service, Mr. Pence practiced law and worked as a radio talk show host.



- ☐ Former **Second Lady Karen Pence**, like her husband, grew up in Indiana. She taught elementary school for 25 years before becoming First Lady of Indiana. As second lady of the United States, Mrs. Pence advocated for the benefits of art therapy and launched Healing with HeART in 2017. She also worked to support military service members and their families. Mr. and Mrs. Pence are the parents of three children: Michael, Charlotte, and Audrey.




## The Supreme Court

- ☐ **John G. Roberts, Jr.** is the 17th and current Chief Justice of the United States. He has served in the Supreme Court since 2005, having been nominated by President George W. Bush after the death of Chief Justice William Rehnquist.




## The United States Congress

- ☐  **Nancy D'Alesandro Pelosi** is the current Speaker of the United States House of Representatives. A member of the Democratic party, she is the U.S. Representative from California's 12<sup>th</sup> congressional district, serving since 1987.


- ☐ **Mitchell "Mitch" McConnell, Jr.** is the senior United States Senator from Kentucky. A member of the Republican party, he has been the Majority Leader of the Senate since 2015.



- ☐  **Charles E. Schumer** is the senior United States Senator from New York and has served in the Senate since 1999. A member of the Democratic party, he has served as Minority Leader since 2019.

- ☐ **Charles E. Grassley** is President Pro Tempore of the Senate. A Republican, Grassley has served as a senator from Iowa since 1981. The President Pro Tempore is the second highest-ranking leadership position in the Senate.



- ☐  **Steny H. Hoyer** is the U.S. Representative for Maryland's 5th congressional district. A member of the Democratic party, he became House Majority Leader 2019. He has served in the House of Representatives since 1981.

- ☐ **Kevin D. McCarthy**, a member of the Republican party, has served as Minority Leader of the House of Representatives since 2019. He was first elected to the House of Representatives in 2007 and serves California's 23<sup>rd</sup> district.



## Washington, D.C. Landmarks



- ☐ **The White House** is both the home and office of the president of the United States and his or her family.



- ☐ **The United States Capitol** is where Congress—the Senate and House of Representatives—convene to do their work in the legislative branch of our government.



- ☐ **The National Mall** is a national park in downtown Washington, D.C. that stretches from the Capitol building to the Lincoln Memorial.

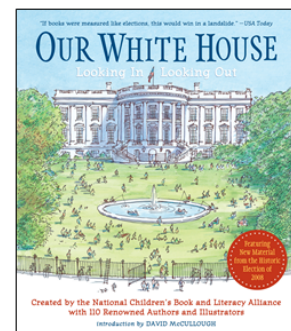


- ☐ **The Washington Monument** is an obelisk on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. built to commemorate the first American president, General George Washington.

Look for the complete contents of the ***Our White House Inauguration Celebration Kit for Kids*** on **OurWhiteHouse.org**, the companion website for the anthology ***Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out***, created by the National Children's Book and Literacy Alliance. An incomparable collection of essays, personal accounts, historical fiction, poetry, and a stunning array of original art, *Our White House* offers a multifaceted look at America's history through the prism of the White House.

***Our White House*** is available in both hardcover and paperback from Candlewick Press. Ask for it at a library or bookstore near you!

Learn more about the NCBLA on our websites [thencbla.org](http://thencbla.org) and [OurWhiteHouse.org](http://OurWhiteHouse.org) and our Facebook page ([facebook.com/TheNCBLA](https://facebook.com/TheNCBLA)).





## Design a Parade Float

Months of design planning and hard labor go into the construction of the elaborate floats we see during the inaugural parade. Some floats reflect the theme of the inauguration, others show off the industries and resources of a particular state, and then there's the president's float—a float designed to celebrate the newly inaugurated president's life. The float created for Eisenhower was a golf course putting green. For George Bush the president's float was an aircraft carrier that hauled one of the planes Bush had flown during WWII. For President Obama's first inauguration in 2009, floats representing his home states of Hawaii and Illinois were created. Whatever is being fashioned for the next inaugural parade will be a surprise until it glides down Pennsylvania Avenue on Inauguration Day!



Eagle float in the inaugural parade for President H.W. Bush taken by photographer Carol Highsmith on January 20, 1989. (Source: <https://catalog.loc.gov/vwebv/search?searchCode=LCCN&searchArg=2011632685&searchType=1&permalink=y>)

Pose this question to your kids: If you could design a float for the new president, what would it look like? Draw a picture of your design.

Your class or family might want to create your own inaugural parade of floats. Each person can choose a theme for his or her float. A larger class might consider having each student create a float for a certain state. Or, you might want to show off your school or community in your float design!

Young people can also find inspiration for parade and float themes from the articles and illustrations in *Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out*. For example, “Presidential Pets” might be a great theme for elementary and middle school students who will find inspiration in Steven Kellogg’s article and double-page illustration of White House pets in *Our White House*.

There are many ways kids can create their own parade of floats. One way is to draw pictures on paper and then tape them in a long parade line on a classroom or hall wall. Or, they can make their floats using shoe boxes or tissue boxes. Cut pictures from magazines. Puff balls and pipe cleaners make great animals. Brightly colored construction paper, foam sheets, and even popsicle sticks can be used to create and build just about anything they might want to add to their floats. They may also want to make floats from wagons, or other wheeled toys or objects, and form a mini-inaugural parade in a neighborhood playground or recreation center or school hallway.

Read all about inaugural parades on OurWhiteHouse.org in the article “**Americans Love a Parade.**”

You can find pictures of past parades and floats at your local library. You can also find photographs online on the Library of Congress website **LOC.gov**.

## Inaugural Themes and Art

The inaugural luncheon is held in National Statuary Hall within the Capitol. A new tradition was started in 1985 for one or two paintings to be selected to serve as a backdrop for the head table. The painting is chosen to reflect the official theme of the inaugural ceremony. In 1997 portraits of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were selected to highlight the 200th anniversaries of their inauguration as president and vice president in 1797. In 2005 a gleaming portrait of Wyoming titled *Wind River, Wyoming* and painted by Albert Bierstadt in 1870 was borrowed from a collection in Colorado to commemorate the 1905 inauguration of Theodore Roosevelt, as well as the 1803-1806 Lewis and Clark expedition.

The theme for President Obama's first inauguration was "A New Birth of Freedom," which was selected to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth. The committee selected a landscape titled *View of the Yosemite Valley* by Thomas Hill, having noted that "the painting reflects the majestic landscape of the American West and the dawn of a new era. The subject of the painting, Yosemite Valley, represents an important but often overlooked event from Lincoln's presidency—his signing of the 1864 Yosemite Grant, which set aside Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias as a public reserve."



*View of Yosemite Valley* by Thomas Hill (1885) was hung at the luncheon for President Obama's first inauguration.

(Source: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/11101>)

The theme for President Trump's inauguration in 2017 was "Uniquely American." To highlight that theme, the painting *The Verdict of the People* by George Caleb Bingham was borrowed to hang at the inaugural luncheon. (photo on next page) The painting features citizens in a Missouri town celebrating and mourning the results of an election.

For the inauguration of President Joseph R. Biden, the theme is "Our Determined Democracy: Forging a More Perfect Union."



Have your kids consider paintings that reflect this year's inaugural theme. Together, look at art books and catalogs of museum collections at your library. Also, most major museums provide pictures of their collections on their websites. A good place to start a search might be the **online collection** of the National Gallery of Art.

Your kids might want to paint their own piece of art for the inaugural. For example, young people who are inspired by Abraham Lincoln might choose to paint a portrait of Lincoln or a landscape featuring the log cabin in which he was born. For

links to homes and historic sites associated with Lincoln, check out “**Abraham Lincoln**” in the “**The Presidential Fact Files**” on OurWhiteHouse.org.

And, ask your kids: If you were elected president what would *you* choose for your inaugural theme? Draw and/or paint a picture that symbolizes that theme. This is a wonderful opportunity to discuss the concept of theme and symbols. There are many incredible illustrations in *Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out* that you can show to your students to inspire them.



*The Verdict of the People* by George Caleb Bingham (1854) was the featured painting at the inauguration of President Trump. (Source: <https://news.stlpublicradio.org/arts/2016-12-16/binghams-verdict-of-the-people-to-take-center-stage-at-trumps-inauguration>)

## Host an Inauguration Poetry Reading

Poet Elizabeth Alexander read a poem she wrote to celebrate President Obama's first administration at the inaugural ceremony in 2009. And in 2013, Cuban-American poet Richard Blanco delivered the inaugural poem. But poetry reading has not been standard tradition at presidential inaugurations. In fact, prior to President Obama, only two previous presidents included a poetry reading. Robert Frost recited a poem for the inauguration of John F. Kennedy in 1961, and Bill Clinton included poets on the schedule for both of his inaugurations. Maya Angelou read a piece for the 1993 inauguration, and Miller Williams read a poem he wrote for the 1997 inauguration.

Read and share with your kids one or all of the previous inaugural poems. Read them aloud or have the young people in your life read them aloud. Poems are meant to be heard!

- **"The Gift Outright,"** the poem that Frost recited from memory at Kennedy's inauguration.
- **"Dedication,"** the poem Frost wrote for Kennedy's inauguration, but was not able to read due to the glare on his paper from the sun reflecting off the snow.
- **"On the Pulse of Morning,"** written by Maya Angelou for Bill Clinton's first inauguration.
- **"Of History and Hope,"** written by Miller Williams for Clinton's second inauguration.
- **"Praise Song for the Day,"** written by Elizabeth Alexander for Obama's first inauguration.
- **"One Today,"** written by Richard Blanco for Obama's second inauguration.

A poem was not recited at the inauguration of Donald Trump.

Ask young people: Is it important to include a poetry reading at the presidential inauguration? If so, then why? And what poet would they invite to their own presidential inauguration?



Poet Robert Frost delivered the poem "A Gift Outright" at the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy in 1961. (Source: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/after-an-inauguration-the-stars-come-out-to-play-45735308/>).

## Write Poems Celebrating the Presidential Inauguration

*Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out* is full of original poetry about presidents and the White House. The poems in *Our White House* range from poignant to humorous; read them aloud and share them with young people, for it will give them an idea of the wide emotional range that their own poetry can encompass.

In the paperback edition of *Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out* is a poem written by Nikki Grimes titled “Inaugural Morning,” which commemorates President Obama’s first inauguration. Find a copy of the book at your local library or bookstore, then share this remarkably moving poem with the young people in your life.

Encourage your kids at home and in the classroom to write a poem for this year’s inauguration. You may want to have them read Nikki Grimes’ poem for inspiration! The poem young people decide to write can rhyme or not rhyme. You can introduce kids to specific types and forms of poetry like haiku, sonnets, limericks, and free verse, or leave them to their own devices. They can create a poem inspired by their own hopes for our nation, inspired by the president and the president’s family, inspired by the day itself, or by an issue that is important to them. You can guide them in any direction you choose, in a more formal manner if you are a teacher, and informally if you are a parent or youth group leader. What is most important is that kids have an opportunity to hear a variety of poems read aloud and have an opportunity to write poems themselves. They may also find inspiration in visuals, so if you can provide some historic and/or contemporary photographs and works of art as inspiration, that, too, could be useful. And a great place to start finding great visuals is to share the wonderful illustrations and photographs in *Our White House* with your kids.

To find websites and books with more visual references that you can use, check out our “[Research Resources](#).”

You can check out a lesson plan related to inaugural poetry on the [TeacherVision website](#).

## Bibles and Relics: Connecting with Past Presidents

For his first inauguration, President Barack Obama swore the oath of office on the same Bible used by Abraham Lincoln. The president used the Lincoln Bible for his second inauguration as well, but was also sworn in using a second Bible—a Bible owned by Martin Luther King, Jr., a gesture recognizing that that year's inauguration fell on the federal holiday that honors the civil rights leader. Journalist Nedra Pickler wrote that the selection of the two Bibles, “is richly symbolic of the struggle for equality in America, beginning with Lincoln’s emancipation of slaves 150 years ago this month, through King’s leadership of the civil rights movement, and ultimately to Obama becoming the nation’s first black president.”

In 2017 President Donald Trump also chose to use the Lincoln Bible. In addition, he swore the oath on a second Bible, his own personal Bible that had been a gift from his mother in 1955. First Lady Melania Trump held both Bibles, following the tradition established in 1965 when First Lady Claudia Taylor (Lady Bird) Johnson became the first First Lady to hold a Bible for the presidential oath of office.

President George W. Bush had wanted to swear his oath in 2001 on the same Bible used by George Washington, but poor weather thwarted his plan. Four other presidents did swear their oaths on Washington’s Bible: Warren G. Harding in 1921, Dwight Eisenhower in 1953, Jimmy Carter in 1977, and George Bush in 1989. Most presidents choose to swear on a family Bible, but Carter chose to swear on both the Washington Bible and a family Bible.

John Quincy Adams actually chose to swear his oath using a book of constitutional law that had been given to him by Chief Justice John Marshall. Although Ulysses S. Grant and James Garfield did not swear on Washington’s Bible, they both chose to sit in the same chair Washington had used during his inauguration. Theodore Roosevelt chose one of the more unusual relics of a predecessor—he wore a ring that contained a lock of Lincoln’s hair!

Ask young people:

- If you were being sworn in as president, would you choose to be sworn in using a Bible? If so, would you choose a family Bible or one used by a past president? Why?
- Would you choose to honor a previous president by swearing on his Bible or using an object connected to him? Which president would you like to honor and remember during your own inauguration? What object of that president’s would you like to use?

Read more about the presidential oath of office in “[The Presidential Oath of Office](#)” on [OurWhiteHouse.org](#).



President Donald Trump being sworn in on January 20, 2017 at the U.S. Capitol building in Washington, D.C. He holds his left hand on two versions of the Bible, both held by First Lady Melania Trump. (Source: <https://www.facebook.com/WhiteHouse/photos/a.11>)

## **In His or Her Words: Listening to the Inaugural Speech**

Almost every president has made a speech to the nation following the inauguration ceremony. Some presidents' speeches have inspired generations. Franklin Roosevelt assured us that "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself." John F. Kennedy proclaimed, "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country."

If young people cannot watch this year's inaugural ceremony and speech live, try to record it or watch it on YouTube. Tell young people that as they listen to the president's speech, they should take note of any promises and plans he or she makes. Have them write these things down. They should think about what the president said and consider what plans seem reasonable. Have them discuss what plans they think the president can accomplish. Which plans or promises do they think are too "pie in the sky?"

Have kids focus on an idea or issue expressed in the speech that reflects their own interest—maybe it's something they believe is very important to their family and interests, or maybe it's something they believe should not be a priority right now. Encourage them to write a letter to the new president and vice president expressing their feelings.

Encourage kids to read the editorial pages in the next few days after the inauguration. Have them compare their thoughts on the inaugural speech with the editorialists' opinions. Who agrees with them and who does not? Did any editorial or column cause them to reconsider their thoughts? Also encourage kids to write a letter to the editor expressing their thoughts. They should include their age with their signatures because if their letter is well written and their opinions are expressed cogently, their age may be a positive factor in getting published either in traditional print or on the newspaper's website.



## Design the Oval Office

Each new president has a budget and staff to redecorate the Oval Office—the president’s main working space—to reflect personal tastes and interests. The Oval Office as designed for George W. Bush included ecru walls, antique gold draperies, light gold damask sofas, and several paintings of Texas by Texas artists. The Bush oval office also featured busts of three leaders he admired: Winston Churchill, Abraham Lincoln, and Dwight Eisenhower. In 2010, President Obama remodeled the oval office to include new striped wallpaper, new and reupholstered furniture, and a new rug. The oval-shaped rug was designed in wheat, cream, and blue and includes these five quotes around its perimeter:

- “The Only Thing We Have to Fear is Fear Itself,” President Franklin D. Roosevelt
- “The Arc of the Moral Universe is Long, But it Bends Towards Justice,” Martin Luther King Jr.
- “Government of the People, By the People, For the People,” President Abraham Lincoln “No Problem of Human Destiny is Beyond Human Beings,” President John F. Kennedy
- “The Welfare of Each of Us is Dependent Fundamentally Upon the Welfare of All of Us,” President Theodore Roosevelt

President Obama’s oval office also featured an eclectic mixture of decorative objects and artwork. China that had previously adorned the Oval Office shelves was replaced with technological models and patents (including Samuel Morse’s 1849 patent for the first telegraph), Native American pottery, a framed program from the 1963 March on Washington, and many family portraits. Featured artwork includes Childe Hassam’s “The Avenue in the Rain,” Norman Rockwell’s “Statue of Liberty,” and a bust of Martin Luther King, Jr.

After completing an overhaul of the Oval Office that included not simply hanging new wallpaper, but also replacing the decades-old heating and cooling system, President Donald Trump chose to keep the Resolute desk, which had been used by every president since Jimmy Carter, except for President George H.W. Bush. Trump also opted to re-use many of his predecessors’ furnishings, such as the rug designed by First Lady Nancy Reagan for President Ronald Reagan and the gold drapery created for President Bill Clinton. (Read more about the Resolute desk in “[The Resolute Desk: A Gift of Peace](#)” on OurWhiteHouse.org.) Trump also included portraits of Presidents Washington, Lincoln, Jefferson, and Jackson; busts of Churchill, King, and Lincoln; photos of his parents; a collection of law enforcement badges; and a letter President Nixon wrote Trump in 1987.

Ask young people: What do you think the artwork and objects the president selects for his or her office say about him or her? If you were president, how would you redesign the Oval Office?

Encourage kids to use crayons, colored pencils, markers, and/or watercolors to sketch their designs for the oval office. Would they like a patriotic scheme of red and blue like the colors used by Bill Clinton? Have them design the rug, which always includes the presidential seal in the middle. Would they like to change the furniture, perhaps adding more chairs? Also, have them think about the art they would like hung on the walls of the office and the sculpture they would like to include. Presidents have access to the entire Smithsonian and National Gallery of Art collections! Would they like to include paintings and sculptures that they love or pieces that symbolize their ideas, or both?

Show your students [photos](#) of different presidents’ oval offices.

View samples of the art and sculpture in the Smithsonian’s many collections on the [Smithsonian website](#).

View samples of the art and sculpture in the [National Gallery of Art](#).

Discover the history of the Resolute desk in the article, “[The Resolute Desk: A Gift of Peace](#)” on OurWhiteHouse.org.

## Host a Kids' Inaugural Ball! Ideas and Activities

Host your own Kids' Inaugural Ball at home, in school, at your local library or bookstore, or at your local community center!

- Have kids arrive in costume dressed as their favorite president or first lady—or dressed as a former presidential kid! Each young person can share a few facts about the person he or she is pretending to be and then have the rest of the kids guess who he or she is! The NCBLA's book, *Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out*, can inspire costume ideas and provide facts. And for more links and information about the presidents and first ladies check out the articles on the “**Presidents**” and “**First Ladies**” pages on [OurWhiteHouse.org](http://OurWhiteHouse.org).
- You can always serve punch and cookies at the ball, but you might want to check out historic White House menus and food ideas in “**A Taste of the Past: White House Kitchens, Menus, and Recipes**” on [OurWhiteHouse.org](http://OurWhiteHouse.org). This article contains some samples of recipes and past inaugural menus, as well as White House cookbook references. You may want to print some historic White House menus and recipes to share with the kids, and even try out some of the recipes yourself! Pick a recipe from our web article or one of the White House cook books—which you can find at your local library—and with help from your kids, create one of the recipes to share at your inaugural ball!
- Using paper, cardboard, string, glue, tape, markers, crayons, and sticks create White House Pet stick-puppets and masks! Show kids the illustration of White House pets done by Steven Kellogg (pages 167 – 169) and the illustration of Teddy Roosevelt's children and pets by Chris van Dusen (pages 96 – 97) in *Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out*. Use these great illustrations to inspire kids to create their own White House pet stick-puppets and masks. Have the kids sketch out their ideas—they can draw a historical White House pet or a new pet to keep the president company. Then using their sketch as a reference, have them draw their pet or pet's head—if they are creating a mask—onto larger paper and/or cardboard. They can leave them black and white or fill their drawings in with color. Let them figure out how to construct their masks or stick-puppets! You give them all the supplies they need, and a bit of visual inspiration with the illustrations from the book—and let them do their thing!
- Plan your ball to have busy activity moments as well as quiet moments. Sharing stories and poetry work well for those for quiet times! *Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out* can provide all the stories you need! Read the poetry, articles, and stories from the book aloud with the kids and invite them to discuss what you have read. And encourage kids to share their own stories—stories about meeting presidents or presidential candidates, stories of visiting Washington, D.C. and/or the White House or Capitol, stories of their own families coming to America. For example, ask if anyone has a relative serving in the military now or a relative who served in a past war; ask if anyone has visited a site such as Plymouth Plantation, Williamsburg, or Gettysburg; ask if anyone has ever met presidential candidates on the campaign trail; and ask the kids to share a little of their experiences with everyone.
- Have the kids draw what they might wear if they were invited to one of the “grown-up” inaugural balls held in Washington. Have them decide what kind of ball it would be and let them decide the theme—a cowboy ball, a rock and roll ball, or maybe a “Cinderella” ball with gowned ladies and men in formal attire. Then have the boys draw their costume or uniform, or tuxedo with black tie and tails—something that would be suitable for their chosen ball theme. Have the girls do the same thing.
- Provide a dance floor and play great music—as loud as you can! And encourage them to dance!!! Include good ole American rock and roll, waltzes, polka music, the hokey-pokey, country and western, and square dance music. Have fun teaching the kids different kinds of dances or just let them explode on the floor in their own style.

For more ball activities, take a look at all the activities already suggested above and incorporate them with other traditional kids' party activities and games!

## Create a Political Cartoon

Illustrators create different types of cartoons to share their viewpoint with the public or simply to make people laugh. For example, political cartoons provide commentary on political subjects, often using humor, exaggeration, caricature, distortion, symbolism, and irony to make a point.

Have students look through current or past newspapers and magazines for a cartoon about our government, politics, or a president. If you have a computer with an Internet connection, students can look for political cartoons online too. Spend time discussing and analyzing each cartoon. Are the cartoons simply designed to make people laugh or is there another message? What techniques did each cartoonist use to share his or her viewpoint?

After spending time looking at different types of political cartoons, ask students to create their own Inauguration Day cartoons. Another idea is to ask students to dig into history to find some fun subjects to illustrate. Students can choose to draw their political cartoons using pencils, pens, colored pencils, crayons, or even a computer graphics program. Be sure to have each student share his or her cartoon with the class.

## Visit a Presidential Historic Site, Library, or Website

More than twenty states are host to presidential birthplaces, historic homes, libraries, and museums. Many of these very special places include extensive exhibits profiling events from past inaugurations and include not only samples of menus and other memorabilia, but also audio and video exhibits that enable you to hear or watch inaugural events, such as swearing-in ceremonies and parades.

Before visiting a presidential museum or library, be sure to check out the special activities calendar by calling ahead or reviewing the website because many libraries offer child-friendly and family-oriented activities to engage young people throughout the year. For a comprehensive guide to finding presidential sites and museums, listed by state, check out the NCBLA's **"Field Trip Guide! Presidential Birthplaces, Houses, and Libraries."**

If visiting a presidential museum or library in person is not possible, you can visit one virtually by checking out content on the library's website. Many presidential museums and libraries offer articles, curricula, and other multimedia resources you can download and use free. For example, the **Jimmy Carter Library website** offers a multi-disciplinary educational curriculum titled "The President's Travels" with content for students in grades 2 through 12. And the research section of the **George Bush Library's website** offers online access to millions of pages of records, millions of photographs, video recordings, artifacts, and audio.

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## Learn More About the Presidents and Inaugurations

For more information about presidents and inaugurations, check out the following books and resources:

### Books

Bendat, Jim. *Democracy's Big Day: The Inauguration of our President 1789-2009*. New York: iUniverse Star, 2008.

Grimes, Nikki. *Barack Obama: Son of Promise, Child of Hope*. New York: Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 2008.

The National Children's Book and Literacy Alliance. *Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Candlewick Press, 2008.

Santella, Andrew. *U.S. Presidential Inaugurations*. New York: Children's Press, 2002.

### Online Resources

"From George Washington to George Bush, Speeches and Parades, Dances and Tradition."

<http://www.nytimes.com/1989/01/21/politics/1989inaug-history.html>

"George Washington, First Inauguration, April 30, 1789."

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/pihtml/piwi01.html>

"George Washington gives first presidential inaugural address."

<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history.do?action=Article&id=511>

"Inaugural History."

[www.pbs.org/newshour/inauguration/history.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/inauguration/history.html)

"Inaugural Luncheon."

<http://inaugural.senate.gov/index.cfm>

"Inaugurals of Presidents of the United States: Some Precedents and Notable Events."

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/pihtml/pinotable.html>

"The Inauguration of George Washington, 1789."

[www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/washingtoninaug.htm](http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/washingtoninaug.htm)

"Laura Bush on Michelle Obama's WH Visit."

<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/President44/Story?id=6307674&page=1>

"Malia Obama Calls Dibs on Lincoln's Desk: Obama Talks to Barbara Walters About Homework, History and Happy Family."

<http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/President44/story?id=6339711&page=1>

"Obama To Use MLK, Lincoln Bibles During Oath At Presidential Inauguration."

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/10/obama-using-mlk-lincoln-b\\_n\\_2447174.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/10/obama-using-mlk-lincoln-b_n_2447174.html)

"Oval Office Makeover."

<http://content.usatoday.com/communities/theoval/post/2010/08/obamas-oval-office-has-new-look/1>

"Oval Office Makeover."

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/08/31/oval-office-makeover\\_n\\_700495.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/08/31/oval-office-makeover_n_700495.html)

"The White House Historical Association: Traditions and Transitions."

[http://www.whitehousehistory.org/whha\\_press/press\\_feature-transitions.html](http://www.whitehousehistory.org/whha_press/press_feature-transitions.html)

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