

The Inauguration of a President: What is an *Inauguration*?

Grade Level: High School (10-12)

Time Required: 15 minutes (expandable as needed)

Rationale:

The 2008 Presidential Election marked a series of milestones. First, the campaign seemed interminable to many Americans. Starting after the 2006 mid-term elections, it was the longest, most expensive, most expansive, and biggest political fund-raising event ever in the history of the United States. At the conclusion, American voters elected the nation's first minority chief executive and substantially altered the composition of the legislative bodies. How these two branches of government respond to the weighty issues before them is the subject of much hope, cynicism, and speculation. In the meantime, the country is preparing a most historic inauguration. The District of Columbia and the Maryland suburbs have been told to expect 1.5 to 4 MILLION visitors. That single logistical statistic and the services necessary to support such a throng are mind-numbing in themselves. So, the big questions remain: What exactly is an *inauguration* and why is it so important to the nation and its people? The ceremony, its origins, and its meaning are the subjects of a series of lesson plans.

There are four 15-minute lessons included here for teachers who wish to take advantage of this timely historic opportunity. While together they constitute an interesting scope of the ceremony surrounding the inauguration of a President of the United States, they are also sufficient to stand independently and to serve as springboards for further study and discovery. In any case, these lessons are completely expandable to meet the needs of students in the classroom. The materials section provides links and resources that can be employed for different directions or more intense study. The lesson plans, entitled *The Inauguration of a President*, are organized thusly:

- 1) What is an *Inauguration*?" (Roots, Traditions. Practices)
- 2) The Inaugural Address
- 3) Supreme Security
- 4) A National Celebration

Pennsylvania Academic Standards:

Civics and Government

5.1.12.E Evaluate the principles and ideals that shape the United States and compare them to documents of government.

5.2.12.B Evaluate citizens' participation in government and civic life.

History

8.1.12.B Synthesize and evaluate historical sources.

8.1.12.C Evaluate historical interpretation of events.

Big Ideas:

Citizens understand their rights and practice their responsibilities in a vibrant society.

Engaged citizens understand the workings of government and use historic precedents in shaping thought and action.

Essential Questions:

How are holidays and local, state and national celebrations symbolic of our national identity?

How are nationalism and patriotism important to national identity?

How can nationalism and patriotism be used responsibly?

Materials

There are a number of materials and sites dedicated to the inauguration, some including specious and misleading information. The listings here are not all-inclusive nor are they intended to be. At the least, they are offered here to provide a basis for each of the lessons and to stimulate further discovery by students.

Primary Documents:

- [***The Constitution of the United States.***](#) This copy of the Constitution and Amendments is posted courtesy of the **U.S. House of Representatives**. There are many sites that feature the U.S. Constitution, but this one is particularly good because of the associated primary documents and educational materials surrounding the central document.
- Teachers familiar with **National History Day** are also familiar with [**Our Documents**](#), 100 documents critical to the development of America. Washington's First Inaugural Address is included in the collection.

Other Primary Sources:

- The transcripts of ALL inaugural addresses have been compiled by the [Avalon Project](#) at the **Yale University Law School**.
- The **National Archives** also offers transcripts of a number of inaugural addresses, but includes images of the originals as well. See, for example, [George Washington's First Inaugural Address](#).
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[Inaugural Address](#) precisely 20 years after JFK's. [The University of Arkansas Little Rock](#) has also amassed a number of good presidential resources. There are also some interesting curiosities out there, with one of my favorites being the late [Charlton Heston adding his sonorous voice to George Washington's First Inaugural Address](#) for PBS.

- Many of you are already familiar with the **American Memory Project of the Library of Congress**. For the Inauguration, the LOC has compiled an excellent collection of digital files in [I Do Solemnly Swear...](#)
- **Springfield High School** (Springfield Township School District, Springfield, Delaware County) is providing the schools of the Commonwealth with an unparalleled opportunity in regard to the inauguration. Springfield is undertaking an ambitious project that combines 21st century skills with advanced student involvement in learning. One team of students will be in place in Washington, D.C. (Jan. 17-23) while another is at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia on Inauguration Day. At the same time, the broadcast journalism students at Springfield High School will be streaming informational video through the district website. Schools will be able to interact with these correspondents and view their contributions through a [dedicated blog](#).

Useful Secondary Sources:

- The [Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies \(JCCIC\)](#) offers one of the best overarching sites, with appropriate historical perspective, customs, traditions, weekly photos of the platform construction at the inaugural site, an overview of the 2009 inauguration, advisories for travelers to the event, and the ability to subscribe to e-mail updates.
- [Inauguration Day Central](#), from the *Washington Post*. What should a traveler to what is prospectively the largest crowd ever assembled in Washington, D.C. know in advance? The respected *Washington Post* tries its hand at attempting to prepare visitors while providing a webcam view of preparations and RSS feed capability. A similar site is posted by the [District of Columbia](#). [About.com](#) offers many of the same caveats for the inauguration, but has a decidedly tourist twist to some of its travel notes.
- [The Intercollegiate Studies Institute](#) recently released an alarming report on the status of civic literacy, noting the peril in which we are placing our society and nation. How do you and your students fare on the civic literacy quiz?
- [FREE \(Federal Resources for Educational Excellence\)](#) offers several lesson plans concerning the inauguration that may be of interest.
- [The Smithsonian Institution](#) has developed an excellent site to help bring the inauguration into classrooms.

- [EdSitement](#), in cooperation with the **National Endowment for the Humanities**, also offers several alternative lesson plans designed in 2002 that may be useful to you. These plans were originally designed to accompany the **Library of Congress** materials for “I Do Solemnly Swear.” They are not aligned to Pennsylvania Standards, but they are adaptable.

Assessment

Items for Consideration

Write an editorial or a letter to the editor justifying the public expense for the ceremony and security of the presidential inauguration.

Write an editorial or a letter to the editor decrying the vast public expense for the ceremony and security of the presidential inauguration.

Suggest to the JCCIC a new practice or tradition to be implemented in future inaugurations.

Debate what aspects of the inauguration should be changed or deleted.

Write a letter to the editor or to your U.S. Representative or U.S. Senator advocating another Constitutional amendment that would end the term of office for the President and the Vice President four weeks following the election. Please provide evidence to support the amendment (*NOTE: the Twentieth Amendment to the Constitution that changed Inauguration Day from March 4 to January 20 was adopted because of improvements in transportation and communication. Have there been substantive improvements in these fields in the last 75 years?*)

Instruction

Setting/Anticipatory Set

The Latin roots of the word “inauguration” derive from *in* (meaning “in”) and *augur*, a soothsayer or visionary who interpreted the divine favorability of events and actions in the flight of birds or the signs within their entrails. In the time of the Roman Republic, *augurs* were institutionalized in the fabric of government and society. More often than not, we see the root *augur* used as a verb and often in a news headline such as “Poll Augurs Well for Prospective Economic Plan.” While the current American ceremony of the inauguration has nothing to do with determining the course of government through the flight of birds, it is an event steeped in tradition and signifying a change, a new direction, a new beginning. Most remarkably, it is a ceremony that marks a peaceful and orderly transfer of power, a tremendous hallmark of our government and society. Are there ceremonies/events/parties that mark a “new beginning,” or “fresh start?” (i.e., religious confirmation, graduation from HS, retirement celebrations) What customs or traditions surround these fresh starts? How have these practices changed over time?

How do other nations transfer power?

Procedures/Activities:

NOTE: *There are a variety of strategies that can be employed depending upon the needs of your students and your time budget. Collaboration is an essential Flat World skill that can serve as a focal point for this and the other lessons, and there are good strategies (e.g., Think-Pair-Share, Cooperative Learning) that encourage its practice and proficiency.*

Read the pertinent documents behind the inauguration.

Constitutional Basis for the Inauguration:

- Article II, Section 1 sets forth the Oath of Affirmation.
- Amendment XX establishes January 20 at noon as the close of the terms of the President and the Vice President, changing it from the previously established March 4.

A link to these documents is included in the materials list above

The Inaugural Day Schedule:

- Morning Worship Service
- Procession to the Capitol
- Vice-President's Swearing-In
- President's Swearing-In
- Inaugural Address
- Departure of the Outgoing President
- Inaugural Luncheon
- Inaugural Parade
- Inaugural Ball

Source: *Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies, in materials list above*

How did the limited Constitutional basis listed above become the extensive and overwhelming schedule that follows? Assign small groups to conduct research to determine how these additional events were established. Report back to the whole group and include some "nice to know" items.

Discuss how these segments of inauguration day represent America.

See the "Assessments" section for possible wrap-up or as a means to move into another lesson plan associated with the inaugural ceremonies.

The Inauguration of a President: The Inaugural Address

Grade Level: High School

Time Required: 15 minutes (expandable as needed)

Rationale:

A general rationale for the series of lessons was offered in Lesson 1. This lesson plan deals specifically with the Inaugural Address, considered by many scholars to be the cornerstone event of the inauguration. In the span of about fifteen minutes (it may seem like more), the newly installed President and informal leader of the free nations offers an address to the people of the United States and the world that outlines the priorities and challenges that are to be met by the administration. Will a challenge be issued to America's foes? Will the American people be asked to ACT? What are the major challenges to be faced? Clues to the answers of these questions and other issues will be brought to light in the address itself and the seemingly endless analysis of political pundits following its delivery.

Pennsylvania Standards:

Civics and Government

5.1.12.E Evaluate the principles and ideals that shape the United States and compare them to documents of government.

5.1.12.M Evaluate and analyze the importance of significant political speeches and writings in civic life.

5.2.12.B Evaluate citizens' participation in government and civic life.

5.3.12.J Evaluate the role of media in political life in the United States and explain the role of the media in setting the public agenda.

History

8.1.12.A Evaluate chronological thinking.

8.1.12.B Synthesize and evaluate historical sources.

8.1.12.C Evaluate historical interpretation of events.

Big Ideas:

Citizens understand their rights and practice their responsibilities in a vibrant society.

Engaged citizens understand the workings of government and use historic precedents in shaping thought and action.

A thoughtful citizen evaluates the accuracy of communications and analyzes media sources attempting to influence the public agenda.

Political and economic ideas motivate societies to new behaviors.

Essential Questions:

How are holidays and local, state and national celebrations symbolic of our national identity?

How are nationalism and patriotism important to national identity?

How can nationalism and patriotism be used responsibly?

In what ways does the U.S. political scene impact international society?

How do ideas impact nations AND international society?

What are the greatest challenges facing United States foreign policy over the next decade?

Materials:

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PBS.

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- **Springfield High School** (Springfield Township School District, Springfield, Delaware County) is providing the schools of the Commonwealth with an unparalleled opportunity in regard to the inauguration. Springfield is undertaking an ambitious project that combines 21st century skills with advanced student involvement in learning. One team of students will be in place in Washington, D.C. (Jan. 17-23) while another is at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia on Inauguration Day. At the same time, the broadcast journalism students at Springfield High School will be streaming informational video through the district website. Schools will be able to interact with these correspondents and view their contributions through a [dedicated blog](#).

Useful Secondary Sources:

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- [The Intercollegiate Studies Institute](#) recently released an alarming report on the status of civic literacy, noting the peril in which we are placing our society and nation. How do you and your students fare on the civic literacy quiz?
- **The National Constitution Center** offers an intriguing lesson plan on the [Six Words to Inspire America](#), challenging students to develop a six-word inaugural speech. While it is not aligned to Pennsylvania Standards, it is easily adaptable.
- [FREE \(Federal Resources for Educational Excellence\)](#) offers several lesson plans concerning the inauguration that may be of interest.
- [The Smithsonian Institution](#) has developed an excellent site to help bring the inauguration into classrooms.

- [EdSitement](#), in cooperation with the **National Endowment for the Humanities**, also offers several alternative lesson plans designed in 2002 that may be useful to you. These plans were originally designed to accompany the **Library of Congress** materials for “I Do Solemnly Swear.” They are not aligned to Pennsylvania Standards, but they are adaptable.

Assessments:

The Inaugural Address offers a grand opportunity to help students consider what is important in a society fraught with distractions. The following samples are meant for writing and/or discussion. Please feel free to adapt to your needs.

You are a member of the team of speechwriters for President-elect Obama. How will you address (pick one)

- infrastructure improvement
- getting America back to work
- restoring faith in the American financial institution
- educating young Americans for global interdependence
- providing equitable health care
- achieving national energy independence
- reduction of carbon dioxide levels produced by Americans

As an advisor to the President-elect, what major tasks or missions would you include for the nation to address over the course of the next decade (i.e., what major accomplishment do you expect America to conclude by 2020?)

Having watched the President’s inaugural address, what are the major challenges facing the nation as outlined by the President? What is your role to be in meeting those challenges? What do you need before you can address the challenges?

The theme for this inauguration is to be “A New Birth of Freedom,” and is to tie into the legacy of that phrase from Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. Were there any connections between the new President’s inaugural address and Lincoln’s legacy? If so, what were they?

Instruction

Anticipatory Set

Can a fifteen-minute speech make you change your behavior? For what causes are you willing to fight and sacrifice? For what causes are you willing to risk your life? Make a list of these issues now.

The Inaugural Address foreshadows the course of the new Administration and its priorities. Some of those priorities may require Americans to think and act differently, and the current issues faced by many of us may require true sacrifice in the uncertain days ahead. For these very reasons, paying close attention to a short speech is vital. As you watch the TV or streaming video of the address, keep in mind these elements:

The Inaugural Addresses over the years tend to--

- Foreshadow policy (economic, military, foreign)
- Include a sense of optimism
- Present the challenges facing the nation from the perspective of the president-elect
- Contain words of unification
- Outline what citizens can or may be able to do

Procedures/Activities

Watch the coverage of the inaugural address. If time permits, view some of the “expert” analysis in which media outlets may engage after the address. For a completely different perspective, view the analysis of a foreign news service.

It would be quite easy to discuss the salient points of the address and what it might mean for the young people in the class. A follow-up assessment (see sample Assessments above) may help class members clarify their own views.

The Inauguration of a President: Supreme Security

Grade Level: High School

Time Required: 15 minutes (expandable as needed)

Rationale:

A blanket rationale for this set of lessons is included in the first lesson. The second lesson plan focused on the inaugural address. This lesson concerns the issue of security surrounding such an immense public celebration. *Fifty-eight agencies* have been charged with providing complete security to the assembled leadership of the United States Government and to the guests of other nations as well as the estimated two to four million visitors to Washington, D.C. Repeatedly, critics have asked why we bother with such risky public spectacles. Why not hold the ceremony in a large public building and stream the proceedings to anyone who wishes to see them? Any reader of Tom Clancy's understands the risks involved. Do we stage this celebration in defiance of those who would gladly destroy it? Is it a manifestation of American jingoism or foolhardiness?

Pennsylvania Standards:

Civics and Government

5.1.12.C Evaluate the importance of the principles and ideals of civic life.

5.1.12.K Analyze the roles of symbols and holidays in society.

5.3.12.B Analyze the responsibilities and powers of the national government.

5.3.12.J Evaluate the role of media in political life in the United States and explain the role of the media in setting the public agenda.

Big Ideas:

Citizens understand their rights and practice their responsibilities in a vibrant society.

A thoughtful citizen evaluates the accuracy of communications and analyzes media sources attempting to influence the public agenda.

Essential Questions:

How are holidays and local, state and national celebrations symbolic of our national identity?

How are nationalism and patriotism important to national identity?

How can nationalism and patriotism be used responsibly?

Materials:

There are a number of materials and sites dedicated to the inauguration, some including specious and misleading information. The listings here are not all-inclusive nor are they intended to be. At the least, they are offered here to provide a basis for each of the lessons and to stimulate further discovery by students.

Primary Sources:

- [Miller Center at the University of Virginia](#). Documents, audio files, photos, video clips are included in the holdings. There may be some interesting clues on security issues from inaugurations past.
- [The University of Arkansas Little Rock](#) has also amassed a number of good presidential resources.
- Many of you are already familiar with the **American Memory Project of the Library of Congress**. For the Inauguration, the LOC has compiled an excellent collection of digital files in [I Do Solemnly Swear...](#)
- **Springfield High School** (Springfield Township School District, Springfield, Delaware County) is providing the schools of the Commonwealth with an unparalleled opportunity in regard to the inauguration. Springfield is undertaking an ambitious project that combines 21st century skills with advanced student involvement in learning. One team of students will be in place in Washington, D.C. (Jan. 17-23) while another is at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia on Inauguration Day. At the same time, the broadcast journalism students at Springfield High School will be streaming informational video through the district website. Schools will be able to interact with these correspondents and view their contributions through a [dedicated blog](#).

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- [“Big Brother to Watch Inaugural Crowd,”](#) from WAVY-TV
- An [extraordinary piece on security issues](#) from **Ari Shapiro at National Public**

Radio (just under five minutes) outlines the astonishing tasks anticipated. Is this responsible journalism or does it merely give desperate people ideas?

- [**Inauguration Day Central**](#), from the *Washington Post*. What should a traveler to what is prospectively the largest crowd ever assembled in Washington, D.C. know in advance? The respected *Washington Post* tries its hand at attempting to prepare visitors while providing a webcam view of preparations and RSS feed capability. A similar site is posted by the [**District of Columbia**](#).
- [**The U.S. Secret Service**](#) is charged with the security of the President during the 55th Inaugural.
- A [**WAVY-TV report**](#) on security issues is representative of a number of national concerns.

Assessment

As a security specialist, write a brief for the Office of the President-elect outlining why you think the ceremony should be moved indoors and conveyed to the rest of the world by television and streaming video.

Write an editorial defending a large public inaugural that entails significant public expenditure and security risks. Address the powerful symbols conveyed by the ceremony.

The President-Elect and his family are thinking of alighting from the armored limousine a few blocks from the White House and walking to the reviewing stand. As the Secret Service sector chief around the White House, put in writing your concerns for that course of action, no matter what sort of “symbolic gesture” the President-elect plans to make.

Instruction

Anticipatory Set

At one point on January 20, the ENTIRE White House will be in transport between the Capitol and 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. At that point, it will be probably the most vulnerable it will ever be. So what could possibly go wrong?

Security experts are attempting to answer that question, as well as a thousand others. During the swearing-in before millions of people, there may be five Presidents of the United States in a very confined space. With them will be Congressional leaders, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, several other justices, and much of the new Cabinet. Where would a threat come from and in what form? The Secret Service and the other agencies charged with superior security measures are attempting to play out these and other “improbable” scenarios.

Procedures/Activities

Consult the warnings for visitors posted on the [Inauguration Central](#) site. Is there anything you'd think it wise to ban? Is there anything that does not seem to make sense?

With a fine internet connection, bring up *Google Earth* and navigate to Washington, D.C. and the National Mall. Tilt the angle and move slowly from the Lincoln Memorial to the U.S. Capitol. If the bandwidth is too constricted or your computer is laboring, you may wish to use the *Washington Post's* [Inauguration Day Central](#) webcam. This is the space in which most of the visitors numbering between 1.5 and 4 million will be STANDING. The magnitude of the task in watching this gathering while monitoring the skies, underground accesses, surrounding areas, even detecting what may be in the very air seems overwhelming. What is so important that we take such risks?

Small group or whole class discussion on what important symbols and messages are conveyed by the inauguration could ensue. If the risk is going to be taken, it should be for a worthwhile message or purpose. What does the inauguration say that can't be said *any other way*? In another slant, it would be possible to make this an issue surrounding free speech. The openness of free speech means that the media have the right to address the shortcomings of security preparations. Is this news or irresponsible journalism that could be harmful to many?

Of course, you may choose to move to the "Assessments" section and make the issue more personal.

The Inauguration of a President: A National Celebration

Grade Level: High School

Time Required: 15 minutes (expandable as needed)

Rationale:

A blanket rationale for this set of lessons is included in the first lesson. The second lesson focused on the inaugural address, the third on security measures, and this, the final lesson, turns to the scope of this public national celebration of the transfer of power. Inaugurations have come a long way since the Washington presidency and that of Thomas Jefferson, when the President-elect, unable to obtain a carriage, walked to the ceremony. Under the auspices of airtight security, the President-elect and members of his prospective Cabinet and entourage will move from one venue to another in a massive celebration of American constitutional government. Millions of people will mix into the celebration featuring most notably a mammoth parade and a number of glitzy inaugural balls. Is it all worth it? Are these traditions and practices worth keeping, or is it time to move to something more practical?

Pennsylvania Standards:

Civics and Government

5.1.12.K Analyze the roles of symbols and holidays in society.

5.2.12.B Evaluate citizens' participation in government and civic life.

5.3.12.B Analyze the responsibilities and powers of the national government.

History

8.1.12.B Synthesize and evaluate historical sources.

8.1.12.C Evaluate historical interpretation of events.

Big Ideas:

Citizens understand their rights and practice their responsibilities in a vibrant society.

Engaged citizens understand the workings of government and use historic precedents in shaping thought and action.

A thoughtful citizen evaluates the accuracy of communications and analyzes media sources attempting to influence the public agenda.

The choices we make, whether as consumers or as citizens active in politics, impact people around the globe.

The rapid pace of technological change has established unprecedented economic, political, and cultural interdependence among nations and individuals.

Essential Questions:

Why is the American flag such a powerful symbol of patriotism and of protest?

How are holidays and local, state and national celebrations symbolic of our national identity?

How are nationalism and patriotism important to national identity?

How can nationalism and patriotism be used responsibly?

In what ways does the U.S. political scene impact international society?

How do ideas impact nations AND international society?

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- [The Smithsonian Institution](#) has developed an excellent site to help bring the inauguration into classrooms.

Assessments

Questions/Activities for Further Study/Discussion/Reflection/Writing:

You've been asked to create an inaugural parade float that will represent the new President's desire for national energy independence and "greener" living. What elements will your design include?

As a highly innovative entrepreneur, what sort of memento would you design and produce for this historic inaugural? How does it represent the spirit of the times and capture the essence of the new administration?

Should a presidential inaugural ball be inclusive or exclusive? What are the purposes of

inaugural balls? Are such events now anachronistic? Why or why not?

Watch the coverage of the Inauguration and the subsequent parade with a small group of colleagues. Discuss and summarize from a personal perspective the following:

- Most memorable segment of the proceedings
- Most surprising segment of the proceedings
- Was there substantial interpretation of the inaugural ceremonies by the covering news organization? Who was the chief correspondent? Who provided analysis? Was there a detectable bias or slant to the reporting?
- Were “patriotism” or “patriotic symbols” employed to support and/or protest the inauguration? How were they employed and by whom?

Instruction

Anticipatory Set

Imagine for a moment that the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies has given you oversight of the inaugural parade. Your overall objective, according to the JCCIS, is to project to the rest of the world the image of the United States through this parade, which could conceivably last up to three hours.

Procedures/Activities

Divide the class into groups, with no group numbering more than six. The groups represent a planning committee that is going to design an inaugural parade that meets the JCCIS objective. You will want to consider the following issues:

- 1) What is the image that you want to present? Strength? Liberty? Diversity?
- 2) What kinds of entries in the parade will help you with this image? How will the states be represented?
- 3) Can celebrities help? If so, who and how?
- 4) Upon which American symbols will you rely heavily in this parade to convey the image?

Allow sufficient time for collaboration. 15 minutes may be adequate, but students may be heavily engaged, so be flexible.

Bring the committees back to the whole group and report out on parade schemes. Were there noticeable themes running through the committees? What was the most difficult part of the assignment?

Wrap-up with some manner of assessment. Turn this task into a more detailed project. Share it with the JCCIC! Of course, you may wish to turn to other aspects of the inaugural ceremonies (see “Assessments” section in this document).

