Jacqueline Kennedy’s White House Restoration: Discover Symbols of American Democracy in the White House

When First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy was eleven years old she toured the White House during a family trip to Washington, DC. In 1961, she told Life magazine, “From the outside I remember the feeling of the place. But inside all I remember is shuffling through. There wasn’t even a booklet you could buy.”

As First Lady, Jacqueline Kennedy reinvigorated the rich history of the White House. She researched its residents, searched for furniture and antiques that had become buried in storage, and made a wish list of items that had belonged to previous presidents which she hoped would be donated to the “White House Restoration Project.” Mrs. Kennedy spearheaded the planning and execution as a hands-on manager. She could often be seen digging through boxes and cataloging her

1968, A Seismic Year

2018 marks the 50th anniversary of one of the most tumultuous years in the nation’s history – 1968. From the Tet Offensive and President Johnson’s decision not to seek re-election to the Poor People’s March and the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy, it was a year brimming with crises and epic change.

In this issue, the featured lesson plan explores President Kennedy’s dilemma over Vietnam through interviews he granted with Walter Cronkite of CBS News, and Chet Huntley and David Brinkley of NBC News just five years earlier in September of 1963. Historians continue to debate the “what ifs” about JFK’s Vietnam strategy had he lived and these interviews are often referenced in those discussions. Also highlighted are resources from the Library’s archival collections and website, curated for classroom application to the study of Dr. King and Robert F. Kennedy. They include primary sources, interactive microsites, lesson plans and video of both eyewitnesses and historians discussing MLK’s and RFK’s work and legacies. Lastly, the Library marks some of these anniversaries with special Kennedy Library Forums. See pages 2, 7 and 12, and visit www.jfklibrary.org/Forums.


Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in Washington, DC, August 28, 1963.

Robert F. Kennedy campaigns for the presidency in South Boston, Massachusetts, March 17, 1968.

HIGHLIGHTS

4 Remembering Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. 6 Remembering Robert F. Kennedy 11 Professional Development Opportunities 12 Upcoming Forums
In August and September 1963, the Kennedy Administration was conflicted about how to respond to the South Vietnamese government’s repression of the Buddhist majority. On one hand, President Kennedy was committed to stopping the spread of Communism in Southeast Asia. On the other hand, it appeared that the government of President Ngo Dinh Diem was growing more unpopular and might be unable to successfully battle the communist insurgents. Many Americans had begun to wonder why we were lending financial and military support to a repressive regime.

Against this background, President Kennedy granted interviews to reporters from two major networks, CBS and NBC, providing the American public and foreign audiences with the US position vis-à-vis South Vietnam. Excerpts from these interviews provide the basis for this lesson plan. As students consider the messages President Kennedy is sending to his many audiences, they role play newspaper reporters writing analyses of his statements.

LESSON PLAN ★ Grade Levels: 9th-12th

Objectives

Students will:

• analyze primary sources.
• evaluate the “domino theory” from the perspective of Americans living in 1963.
• consider how President Kennedy addressed multiple audiences, both foreign and domestic, when discussing the difficult situation in South Vietnam in September 1963.

Materials

Visit jfklibrary.org/JFKandVietnamLesson for:

• Historical Briefings: JFK, the Cold War, and Vietnam
• excerpt of transcript from the September 2, 1963 interview with Walter Cronkite, CBS News
• excerpt of transcript from the September 9, 1963 interview with David Brinkley and Chet Huntley, NBC News
• Note-taking Handout

In Case You Missed It!
Visit www.youtube.com/jfklibrary, to view this recent Kennedy Library Forum.

Vietnam 1968: The War, the Turmoil, and the Presidential Election ★ Tuesday, March 20, 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.


This forum was featured in the National Archives’ Remembering Vietnam initiative. Remembering Vietnam is presented in part by the Lawrence F. O’Brien Family, Pritzker Military Museum & Library, AARP, and the National Archives Foundation. ★
So we are faced with the problem of wanting to protect the area against the Communists. On the other hand, we have to deal with the government there. That produces a kind of ambivalence in our efforts which exposes us to some criticism.

—President Kennedy, Huntley-Brinkley Interview, 1963

Procedure

1. Have students read Historical Briefings: JFK, the Cold War, and Vietnam and discuss the following questions:
   - What was the Cold War? When did it begin and what forms did it take?
   - How and when did the Korean War begin? What forces were fighting?
   - How did the conflict in Vietnam become part of the Cold War?
   - Why did Eisenhower send military personnel to South Vietnam beginning in 1955?
   - What was the Buddhist Crisis in South Vietnam and how did the Kennedy Administration respond to it?

2. Provide students with excerpts from President Kennedy’s televised September 2, 1963 interview with Walter Cronkite (CBS) and his September 9, 1963 interview with David Brinkley and Chet Huntley (NBC) regarding South Vietnam.

3. Divide students into groups. Assign them the role of newspaper reporters writing analyses of these TV interviews for their publications. They should consider the following questions, and they must support their analyses with specific quotes. Provide them with the Note-taking Handout to help them take notes.
   - How might these interviews be interpreted by:
     a. the American public?
     b. President Diem?
     c. South Vietnamese generals?
   - Based on these interpretations, what three main points would you make about US policy towards South Vietnam as of September 9, 1963?
   - What is the headline for your newspaper column? Why?

4. Once each group has finished, as a class have students compare their headlines and analyses.

Assessment

For homework, have students write out their newspaper columns.

Extension

Provide students with the US State Department’s American Opinion Summary dated September 10, 1963 which summarized opinions from various American publications on US policy in Vietnam. How did news outlets respond to President Kennedy’s interviews? Remember to cite your evidence.

Please visit jfklibrary.org/JFKandVietnamLesson for more online resources related to Vietnam. Lesson plans and primary sources—videos, audio, and documents—are included.
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. died on April 4, 1968 at the age of thirty-nine in Memphis, Tennessee. During his short life, he and thousands of others courageously challenged racial inequality through non-violent protests. As a principle leader of the civil rights movement, King called on President Kennedy to use the power of the federal government to address racial discrimination and widespread acts of violence against African Americans, and to take a public stand against segregation and inequality.

Students may explore the Library’s archival materials and get a sense for themselves of the urgent nature of the civil rights crises of the early 1960s, and of Dr. King’s interactions with the Kennedy administration. These resources provide classroom-friendly material related to Dr. King and the Kennedy administration. Use the lesson plans and online exhibits or create your own activities with the documents, photographs, video, and audio provided. A complete list of resources with web links can be accessed at jfklibrary.org/CivilRightsStruggle/MLK-Jr.

Letters and Telegrams

www.jfklibrary.org/CivilRightsStruggle/MLK-Jr

This collection includes this April 13, 1963 telegram from Wyatt Tee Walker, executive assistant to Martin Luther King Jr., informing President Kennedy about the plight of Dr. King and Reverend Ralph Abernathy, who had been placed in solitary confinement in the Birmingham City Jail after being arrested with other demonstrators. King penned “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” during his imprisonment.

We must move past indecision to action. We must find new ways to speak for peace in Vietnam and justice throughout the developing world, a world that borders on our doors."

—Dr. King, Riverside Church Speech, 1968
**LESSON PLANS**  *Elementary (E), Middle School (M), High School (H)*

**The 1960 Campaign: John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., and the “Blue Bomb” (H)**
Students analyze and reflect on the “Blue Bomb”, a pamphlet that was printed after presidential candidate John F. Kennedy made a telephone call to Coretta Scott King to express concern that her husband was in jail. See *The President’s Desk: A Resource Guide for Teachers*, p. 64 – 70. [www.jfklibrary.org/PresidentsDeskGuide](http://www.jfklibrary.org/PresidentsDeskGuide)

**What If Laws Are Unjust? (M)**
Students read and analyze segregation ordinances, and learn how Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights activists challenged these unjust laws through peaceful protest and civil disobedience during the 1963 civil rights campaign in Birmingham, Alabama. The lesson highlights the vital role that young people played in the campaign. [civilrights.jfklibrary.org](http://civilrights.jfklibrary.org)

**Youth in Action: The Role of Young People in the Civil Rights Movement (E, M)**
Students examine primary source material to identify ways in which young people made an impact on the struggle against racial injustice. [civilrights.jfklibrary.org](http://civilrights.jfklibrary.org)

**They Had a Dream (E, M)**
Students analyze a photograph of civil rights leaders then they each role play a leader as they write a letter to the president requesting a meeting with him on the day of the March on Washington. [jfklibrary.org/Curricular](http://jfklibrary.org/Curricular)

**Marching for Equal Rights: Evaluating the Success of the 1963 March on Washington (H)**
Students consider what makes a non-violent protest march successful. They evaluate the success of the August 28, 1963 March on Washington based on evidence from primary sources. They then discuss and write about their conclusions. [civilrights.jfklibrary.org](http://civilrights.jfklibrary.org)

**Interactive Exhibit**

1963: *The Struggle for Civil Rights*
http://civilrights.jfklibrary.org/

An interactive online exhibit of more than 200 documents, images, video and audio, brings to life one of the most tumultuous years in civil rights history. It includes introductory essays, bibliographies, and lesson plans for elementary, middle, and high school grades.

**Highlights:**
- Correspondence from civil rights leaders to President Kennedy
- Audiotaped meetings between Dr. King and other civil rights leaders with President Kennedy
- Audiotaped meetings between President Kennedy with congressional leaders regarding civil rights issues
- Photographs of President Kennedy and civil rights leaders, Attorney General Robert Kennedy and civil rights leaders, and selected images from the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom

**Topics:**
- Voting Rights in Mississippi
- Project C, Birmingham
- Integration of the University of Alabama
- Report to the American People on Civil Rights
- Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church *

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*President Kennedy and Vice President Johnson in the Oval Office with MLK and other leaders of the March on Washington, August 28, 1963.*
Robert F. Kennedy served as attorney general in his brother’s administration after having successfully managed JFK’s senatorial and presidential campaigns. While leading the Department of Justice, he vastly expanded the size of the staff, including a field operation of lawyers who investigated civil right complaints. He resigned as attorney general in September 1964 after having served in the Johnson administration following the assassination of President Kennedy, and went on to become a US Senator from the state of New York. He continued to champion civil rights campaigns and the War on Poverty. On June 5, 1968, while campaigning for the presidency, Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles, California. Marking the 50th anniversary of his death, the Kennedy Library provides these classroom resources that can be accessed online.

Classroom Resource

Integrating Ole Miss: A Civil Rights Milestone
http://microsites.jfklibrary.org/olemiss

As attorney general, Robert F. Kennedy became increasingly committed to helping African Americans win the right to vote, attend integrated schools and use public accommodations. Learn more about James Meredith’s efforts to enroll in Ole Miss and the challenges of integrating higher education through this interactive digital resource featuring primary source documents, photographs, and audio.

Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy expressed his commitment to civil rights, “We will not stand by or be aloof. We will move. I happen to believe that the 1954 [Supreme Court school desegregation] decision was right. But my belief does not matter. It is the law. Some of you may believe the decision was wrong. That does not matter. It is the law.”
– Speech at the University of Georgia Law School, 1961

“We know that it is law which enables men to live together, that creates order out of chaos. We know that law is the glue that holds civilization together. And we know that if one man’s rights are denied, the rights of all others are endangered”
— Robert F. Kennedy, 1961


“The escalation policy in Vietnam, far from strengthening and consolidating international resistance to aggression, is injuring our country through the world, reducing the faith of other peoples in our wisdom and purpose and weakening the world’s resolve to stand together for freedom and peace.”

— Robert F. Kennedy, 1968
finds. As the Fine Arts Committee appeal letter to potential donors stated, with the success of the Project, the White House would become “a mecca for sightseers, a place where distinguished guests are entertained, [and] will be all our founding fathers hoped it would be.”

As a student of history like her husband, Mrs. Kennedy understood and valued the many changes to the White House that had transpired since the cornerstone was laid in 1792. Designed by Irish-American architect James Hoban in the late eighteenth century, the White House features numerous elements of later periods. For instance, after British troops burned the White House during the War of 1812, it became President James Monroe’s task to refurnish the house with “articles of the best kind, and on the best terms,” as he put it.

Having served as US Minister to France under George Washington, President Monroe possessed a particular fondness for France and French style. Monroe’s refurnishing of the White House reflected the popularity of “French Empire Style,” named for French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte (1804-1814) which featured expensive silk upholstery and ancient Greek, Roman, and Egyptian motifs. Napoleon promoted the success of French military victories, including his Egyptian campaign, by equating his power with that of Egyptian pharaohs, Roman emperors and Greek gods. A close look at the furnishings in the White House State Rooms reveals ancient symbols as well. However, in the context of the White House, they refer to the classical origins of the United States government: Greek democracy and the Roman Republic.

The Blue Room is an example of President Monroe’s interest in French style and of the treasure hunt that was part of the Restoration Project. Through her research, Mrs. Kennedy learned that in 1817 President Monroe purchased a thirty-eight-piece set of chairs and sofas from French cabinetmaker Pierre-Antoine Bellangé. While searching through the White House, she found a table in a storage room and a bust of George Washington in the men’s restroom, both of which had been in President Monroe’s Blue Room. Mrs. Kennedy brought them upstairs and placed them in the room as they appeared in an old engraving. After the discovery of the table was made public, one of the original chairs was donated to the project and Charles Francis Adams, a descendant of John Adams and a member of Mrs. Kennedy’s acquisitions committee, paid for the reproduction of thirteen chairs.

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**LESSON PLAN ★ Grade Levels: 5th-8th**

**Goal**

Introduce students to the origins of common symbols which represent the United States and its values.

**Objective**

Students will:

- Learn about ancient symbols and ornamental and architectural elements and identify some symbols of American democracy in the White House.
- Design their own piece of furniture for the White House using ancient symbols.

**Classroom Activity**

**Materials:**

- Introductory slideshow
- Color copies of five pieces of White House furniture
- Paper, markers, scissors, tissue paper, ribbon, and other art materials to design a piece of furniture for the Red Room
### Background:

In the White House, the president and first lady receive heads of state and host dinners in the state rooms. The Red and Green Rooms are “parlors” or living rooms with comfortable chairs and fireplaces. The Blue Room and the State Dining Room are used for hosting dinners for heads of state from other countries. While Mrs. Kennedy used French furniture in the Blue Room to restore the room to President Monroe’s taste, in the Red Room she used American-made furniture with a French influence. Many of the Red Room pieces were made by Charles Honoré Lannuier, a French emigrant who settled in New York in 1803. He was one of the first furniture makers to use the “American Empire” style. Like “French Empire,” his furniture incorporated decorative elements inspired by the architecture and furnishings of ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome.

### Procedure:

1. Define “French Empire Style” for students. *This architectural and decorative style was named for Emperor Napoleon in the early 1800s and incorporated Egyptian, Greek, and Roman symbols. After the 1820s, French furniture makers who immigrated to the United States began producing “American Empire” furniture. This style was characterized by exaggerated plant and animal motifs from ancient times.*

2. Present and review with students the following glossary of symbols below:

#### Glossary of Symbols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ancient Symbols</th>
<th>Ancient Symbols</th>
<th>Ancient Ornamental and Architectural Forms</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lyre:</strong> Stringed instrument, similar to a small harp, commonly used in ancient Greece and later periods.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dolphin:</strong> Symbol of love, curiosity, and vivaciousness in ancient Greece.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Laurel wreath:</strong> Symbol of victory, power, and eternity. In Egypt, a wreath was placed on the head of the deceased to symbolize victory over death in the afterlife and in Greece to crown Olympic champions.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Swan:</strong> Ancient symbol of beauty and parental care and protection.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Eagle:</strong> Symbol of power and strength in ancient Rome.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Arrows:</strong> Ancient symbol of war.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Olive branch:</strong> Ancient symbol of peace.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Urn:</strong> Ancient symbol of mortality. Used for funerary purposes in ancient Greece and Rome.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Caryatid:</strong> A sculpted female figure serving as an architectural support taking the place of a column or a pillar supporting an entablature on her head. An entablature is a horizontal, continuous lintel on a classical building supported by columns or a wall. Commonly found in Greek architecture such as the Parthenon.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Animal paw:</strong> This element is usually found at the base of the furniture leg. Common in ancient Egypt and Rome.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Acanthus leaf:</strong> Mediterranean plant with jagged leaves. It was first used by the Greeks in the 5th century BC on temple roof ornaments, wall friezes, and the capital of the Corinthian column.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*continued on page 10*
White House Restoration, continued

Discover Symbols of American Democracy in the White House

3. Share the introductory slideshow with students.

4. Have students examine this chair (included in the slideshow and pictured below) that President James Monroe purchased for the White House and Mrs. Kennedy received as a donation from Catherine Bohlen from Villanova, Pennsylvania. As a class, use the glossary to identify the symbols represented in the chair (glossary of symbols on page 9).

5. Divide students into groups of five. Give each group color copies of five pieces of furniture from the Red Room in the White House. Optional: Give each group a magnifying glass to examine the photographs in detail.

6. Ask students to work together to identify and circle the ancient symbols and forms represented in the furniture design. Challenge students to circle as many symbols as they can in five minutes. Using the glossary, ask them to record the meaning of each symbol on their color copies. See the Red Room Answer Key (included with the full lesson plan at jfklibrary.org/WhiteHouseRestorationLesson) for images of the five pieces of furniture with the symbols marked. Teachers are encouraged to use the key for their own reference and/or to reveal the answers to students after the five-minute group work.

Chronology of Events Related to the White House

1775-1783
American Revolution

1789-1799
French Revolution

1792
Cornerstone was laid for the White House.

1799
Napoleon Bonaparte returned from his Egyptian campaign.

1814
British troops burned the White House during the War of 1812 and destroyed most of the interior. President James Monroe refurnished with popular “Empire Style” furniture imported from France.

1902
President Theodore Roosevelt hired an architectural firm to restore the mansion to the Federal style.

1948-1949
When President Truman discovered that the White House was structurally unsound, he moved his family across the street to Blair House and gutted the interior.

1961-1963
First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy’s White House Restoration Project focused on restoring the state rooms to the 18th- and 19th-centuries.

The eagle clutches arrows (symbolizing war) and an olive branch (symbolizing peace) in its claws. The eagle is an ancient Roman symbol for strength. This symbolism is also found on the Presidential Seal!

Laurel branches and acanthus leaves frame the eagle on the back of the chair. The laurel wreath was an ancient Greek symbol for victory and as such was often used to crown Olympic champions.

7. Ask students to work in groups, pairs or on their own to design a piece of furniture for the Red Room using the symbols they’ve identified. *For example: “We found a lyre in our table design, so we drew a lamp with a lyre for the base.” “We found claw feet in our table design so we drew a chair with claw feet.”*

8. Optional: Have students create a digital slideshow of their designs or posters for a classroom display, and explain their choices.

Access the full lesson plan with slideshow and related handouts at jfklibrary.org/WhiteHouseRestorationLesson.

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**Professional Development**

**Join us for professional development opportunities at the Kennedy Library.**

**Spring Conference for Teachers of Grades 3 - 8 and School Librarians**

**The Nonfiction Writer’s Toolbox for Exploring History and Other Subjects**

**Wednesday, May 9, 2018**

High-quality nonfiction has the power to engage young readers with subjects across the curriculum. Introducing your students to the tools used in creating a nonfiction book can have great benefits as well. Experienced authors know how to work their way into understanding a subject through the process of writing and research.

Learn about the Nonfiction Writer’s Toolbox with Tonya Bolden, Steve Sheinkin, Tanya Lee Stone, and Melissa Sweet, four of today’s most outstanding authors of nonfiction for children and young adults. The program also features Judith C. Hochman, a pioneering educator whose approach to the teaching of writing in all subjects and grades has gained national attention.

Visit jfklibrary.org/NonfictionToolbox for more information and to download a registration form.

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**American Studies Summer Institute at the JFK Library**

**Memory Matters: Constructing America’s Past**

**July 9-20, 2018 (weekdays) ★ 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM**

Join us for an intensive two-week program of thought-provoking lectures and discussions led by distinguished scholars and guests. The American Studies Summer Institute, an annual program co-sponsored by the University of Massachusetts Boston American Studies Department and the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, offers educators and graduate students the opportunity to explore a rich topic with contemporary resonance, drawn from American social, cultural and political history.

This year’s program will explore how America’s past has been defined and redefined by a range of agents—from memorials, museums, monuments, and other tourist sites, to textbooks, family stories, communal observances, and popular culture. We will investigate how contests over the primacy of one or more of these narratives have had far-reaching consequences for the structuring of American social and civic society, including delineation of “we, the people,” and for the development of American historical consciousness.

The deadline for registration is May 25, 2018. Registration preference will be given to middle and high school teachers.

Visit jfklibrary.org/SummerInstitute for more information and to download a registration form.
The Kennedy Library Department of Education and Public Programs offers free museum passes to teachers considering a field trip to the Library. Please call 617.514.1600.

Museum Hours
Daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day

UPCOMING FORUMS

PEN/Hemingway Award Ceremony
Sunday, April 8, 2:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.

Seán Hemingway, Ernest Hemingway’s grandson, presents the 2018 PEN/Hemingway Award at this ceremony. Author and host of NPR’s Weekend Edition Saturday Scott Simon (pictured) delivers the keynote address.

The Kennedy Library is the major repository of Ernest Hemingway’s personal papers. This program is presented in partnership with PEN/New England and PEN/America.

The Heart of America
Tuesday, May 29, 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Panelists including James and Deborah Fallows, authors of Our Towns: A 100,000 Mile Journey into the Heart of America, shed light on contemporary issues facing the heart of America.

Kennedy Library Forums are webcast live and recorded whenever possible. Visit www.youtube.com/jfklf to view past forums.

With generous support from:

Additional support for the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum’s history and civic education programs is provided by Kenneth R. Feinberg & Camille S. Biros, of The Law Offices of Kenneth R. Feinberg, PC and: