

# The President's Desk

A Resource Guide for Teachers: Grades 4-12



Department of Education and Public Programs

**JOHN F. KENNEDY**

PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM



With generous support from:  
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John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Columbia Point, Boston, MA 02125

[www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Overview of The President's Desk Interactive Exhibit</b> .....	2	<b>Lesson Plans and Activities</b> .....	40
<b>History of the HMS Resolute Desk</b> .....	4	List of Lessons and Activities available on the Library's Website...	41
<b>The President's Desk Website Organization</b> .....	8	<i>The Road to the White House</i> .....	44
<b>The President's Desk Primary Sources</b> .....	10	<i>The President at Work</i> .....	53
Telephone.....	11	<i>Sail the Victura Activity Sheet</i> .....	58
White House Diary.....	12	<i>Integrating Ole Miss</i> .....	60
Scrimshaw.....	12	<i>The 1960 Campaign: John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the</i>	
Coconut.....	13	<i>"Blue Bomb"</i> .....	64
Secret Recording Button.....	13	<i>The Cuban Missile Crisis: How to Respond?</i> .....	72
Campaign Button.....	14	<b>Documentary Materials</b> .....	74
Picture Frame.....	15	Documents.....	75
<b>Primary Sources Listed by Topic</b> .....	16	Letter #1 from John F. Kennedy to his family	
1960 Election.....	17	and transcription (Coconut Module).....	75
Civil Rights.....	17	Letter #2 from John F. Kennedy to his family	
Cuba.....	17	and transcription (Coconut Module).....	79
Diplomacy/International Travel.....	17	Letter from Walter T. Apley to Senator John F. Kennedy	
John F. Kennedy's Life.....	18	(Campaign Button).....	82
Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.....	18	Letter from Senator John F. Kennedy to Walter T. Apley	
Peace Corps.....	18	(Campaign Button).....	84
Space.....	18	Certificate from Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron	
Vietnam.....	18	Training Center, Melville, RI.....	85
<b>Suggested Activities and Lesson Plans</b> .....	20	Memo from Clark M. Clifford to Senator John F. Kennedy.....	86
Activities and Lesson Plans Listed by Object.....	20	Secret Taping Button Transcripts.....	89
The President's Desk.....	22	Vietnam.....	89
The President's Phone Calls (Telephone).....	23	Cuban Missile Crisis.....	90
The White House Diary.....	24	Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.....	92
John F. Kennedy's Love of the Sea (Scrimshaw).....	25	Space.....	93
John F. Kennedy and PT-109 (Coconut).....	26	Civil Rights.....	93
The President's Secret Tapes (Secret Recording Button).....	27	Telephone Transcripts.....	95
The 1960 Campaign (Campaign Button).....	28	Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy.....	95
Photograph Albums (Picture Frame).....	29	Senator Edward M. Kennedy.....	97
<b>Suggested Activities and Lesson Plans Listed by Topic</b> .....	30	Director of the Peace Corps, R. Sargent Shriver.....	97
Civil Rights.....	31	Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara.....	99
Cuba.....	32	NASA astronaut, Major Gordon Cooper.....	100
Inaugural Address.....	32	President Harry S. Truman.....	101
JFK in the White House.....	33	Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric.....	101
The Life of John F. Kennedy.....	34	President Dwight D. Eisenhower.....	103
Limited Nuclear Test Ban.....	36	Special Assistant to the President, Arthur M. Schlesinger.....	104
Presidential Campaigns and Elections.....	37	Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett.....	105
Presidential Decision-making.....	38	<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	109
Presidential Roles and Responsibilities.....	39		
Space.....	39		

# Overview of The President's Desk



## OVERVIEW



Did you ever wonder what it was like to sit in the Oval Office at the President's desk? As part of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum's web site, you and your students have a unique opportunity to explore President Kennedy's desk by examining treasured mementos and important presidential records. President Kennedy's desk has been painstakingly recreated in a digital format based on historical photographs of the Oval Office. Newly digitized resources, ranging from recordings of meetings in the Oval Office to family photographs, populate the site and provide an engaging and fascinating look into John F. Kennedy's life and presidency. This interactive experience is presented in conjunction with the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Kennedy Presidency.

The President's Desk interactive exhibit can be used in a variety of ways in the classroom. In this guide, you will find a detailed description of the site's layout and featured artifacts, as well as suggestions for how to use these materials with students in grades 4-12.

# History of the *HMS Resolute* Desk



The desk that President Kennedy used in the Oval Office was a gift from Queen Victoria to President Rutherford B. Hayes in 1879. It was made from the timbers of the British Arctic exploration ship *HMS Resolute*. As the inscription on the front of the desk suggests, the *HMS Resolute* served as an important symbol of the relationship between the United States and Great Britain:

*H.M.S. RESOLUTE* forming part of the expedition sent in search of SIR JOHN FRANKLIN IN 1852, was abandoned in latitude 74 degrees 41 minutes N longitude 101 degrees 22 minutes W on 15th May 1854. She was discovered and extricated in September 1855 in latitude 67 degrees N by Captain Buddington of the United States Whaler GEORGE HENRY.

The ship was purchased, fitted out and sent to England as a gift to HER MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA by the PRESIDENT AND PEOPLE of the UNITED STATES as a token of goodwill & friendship. This table was made from her timbers when she was broken up, and is presented by the QUEEN OF GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND to the PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES as a memorial of the courtesy and loving kindness which dictated the offer of the gift of the *RESOLUTE*.

The desk was used in the White House, but not always in the Oval Office. It had been moved during alterations during the Truman Administration in 1952 and had disappeared from public view for many years. Early in the Kennedy administration, Mrs. Kennedy discovered it in the White House broadcast room. Because of President Kennedy's love of the sea and interest in naval history, she had the desk returned to a place of honor in his Oval Office on February 4, 1961. The desk is ornately carved on the four vertical sides, and has cupboard doors on the front and back sides. President Franklin D. Roosevelt commissioned the ornately carved Presidential Seal panel that may be seen on the front of the desk.

President Kennedy kept a number of items on the desk during his presidency. These objects included:

- Black Alligator Desk Set: (Desk Pad, Holder for Paper Clips and Pencils, Note pad, Rocker Blotter and Blotter holder, cigarette holder, letter sorter) Gift from President Charles de Gaulle of France, on the occasion of President Kennedy's state visit to Paris in June 1961.
- Coconut Shell, Encased in Plastic: This is the coconut shell on which John F. Kennedy inscribed a message following his PT boat's collision with a Japanese destroyer in the Solomon Islands during World War II.
- Book-ends: Replicas of the cannon mounted on the U.S.S. Constitution.
- Plaque Inscribed with the Breton Fishermen's Prayer: "O, God, Thy sea is so great, and my boat is so small." Presented to President Kennedy by Vice Admiral Hyman G. Rickover, "Father of the Nuclear Navy."
- Gold Inaugural Medal: Medal commemorating President Kennedy's inauguration.
- Books: Leather-bound copies of President Kennedy's own publications, *Profiles in Courage* and *Why England Slept*, among others.
- Telephones: One large green telephone and two small black telephones for communicating with staff and the Mansion.
- Diary: The President's official appointment book.
- Picture Frames: Featuring family photographs.



PHOTO CREDIT: STANLEY TRETICK, LOOK MAGAZINE



[ LARGE GREEN TELEPHONE ]



[ COCONUT SHELL ]



[ FAMILY PHOTOS ]

# The President's Desk Website Organization



The President's Desk acts as a gateway to seven different interactive modules featuring a variety of topics related to President Kennedy's life and presidency. Each module is launched by clicking on a particular desk item (Telephone, White House Diary, Scrimshaw, Coconut Paperweight, Secret Recording Button, Picture Frame, and Campaign Button.) The presentation strategy is different for each item, but all offer the chance to explore a number of different primary source materials. Learners of all ages may reveal the stories and decipher the meaning behind the objects President Kennedy chose to keep on his desk.

This is a list of the desk items along with a detailed description of the module contents. By familiarizing yourself with the materials on the site you can direct students' attention to materials that best fit your instructional goals.



# The President's Desk Primary Sources



Desk Item

Module

Telephone



The President's Phone Calls

Secret Recordings

Beginning in 1939 and ending with the Nixon administration in 1974, taping systems have played an intriguing role in U.S. presidential history. John F. Kennedy was the first president to extensively record both his meetings and telephone conversations. In all, President Kennedy selectively recorded over twelve hours of telephone conversations using a Dictaphone system. These recordings capture discussions on many sensitive domestic and foreign policy matters. The system was a closely-held secret. Most of President Kennedy's top aides were unaware of the system until its existence became known during the U.S. Senate hearings on Watergate in 1973.

In this module you can listen to some of these conversations and read a transcript.

1. President Kennedy and Attorney General Robert Kennedy discuss the Stennis Committee's review of the failed Bay of Pigs Invasion. They also discuss the results of a recent Gallup Poll and problems facing Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller of New York. March 2, 1962.
2. President Kennedy and Senator Edward M. Kennedy discuss a meeting with the wool industry about international trade. March 7, 1963.
3. President Kennedy and Director of the Peace Corps R. Sargent Shriver discuss their desire to keep the CIA out of the Peace Corps, and to recruit returning Peace Corps volunteers into the Foreign Service. April 2, 1963.
4. President Kennedy and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara discuss the use of polygraph tests to determine the source of Defense Department leaks. April 2, 1963.
5. President Kennedy congratulates NASA astronaut Major Gordon Cooper on his orbital flight. May 16, 1963.
6. President Kennedy and former President Truman discuss the terms of the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. July 24, 1963.

Desk Item	Module
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>President Kennedy and Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric discuss rules of engagement for a naval blockade or quarantine of Cuba, and the arrangements for a meeting with Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller of New York. October 23, 1962.</li> <li>President Kennedy and former President Eisenhower discuss the end of the Cuban Missile Crisis. October 28, 1962.</li> <li>President Kennedy and Special Assistant to the President Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. discuss a prospective post in Central or Latin America for Samuel H. Beer and Schlesinger's recent trip to a conference in England. March 22, 1963.</li> <li>President Kennedy and Attorney General Robert Kennedy discuss the crisis at the University of Mississippi stemming from James Meredith's efforts to matriculate with Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett. September 28, 1962.</li> </ol>

**Diary**



**The White House Diary**

President Kennedy's appointment book. This interactive module allows visitors to see President Kennedy's schedule for every day of his presidency.

**Scrimshaw**



**John F. Kennedy's Love of the Sea**

This module allows visitors to navigate President Kennedy's boat Victura around Cape Cod to explore his interest in the sea and objects from his maritime collection. It begins with a short video about his love of the sea. Topics include:

1. President Kennedy's scrimshaw collection
2. President Kennedy and the U.S.S. Constitution (quotation about history)
3. President Kennedy's sailing and swimming awards
4. Maritime memorabilia
5. President Kennedy's Tall Ship models
6. Maritime Art
7. Cape Cod National Seashore (established August 7, 1961)
8. President Kennedy at Hyannisport (film footage)

Desk Item	Module
<p><b>Coconut</b></p> 	<p><b>John F. Kennedy and PT-109</b></p> <p>A slideshow recreating the story of John F. Kennedy's experiences in World War II and the destruction of his boat PT-109 through photos, sketches, letters, and artifacts.</p>
<p><b>Secret Recording Button</b></p> 	<p><b>The President's Secret Tapes</b></p> <p>Beginning in 1939 and ending with the Nixon administration in 1974, taping systems have played an intriguing role in U.S. presidential history. John F. Kennedy was the first president to extensively record both his meetings and telephone conversations. The recording system used by Kennedy was designed and installed by Secret Service agent Robert Bouck in July 1962. Located underneath the Oval Office, it was connected to both the Oval Office and the Cabinet Room. The President could manually activate the system by pressing a button.</p> <p>Meetings and Conversations</p> <p>In all, President Kennedy selectively recorded over 238 hours of meetings and conversations that took place in the Oval Office or the Cabinet Room. These recordings capture discussions on many sensitive domestic and foreign policy matters. The system was a closely-held secret. Most of President Kennedy's top aides were unaware of the system until its existence became known during the U.S. Senate hearings on Watergate in 1973.</p> <p><b>Vietnam</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Excerpts of White House Presidential recordings of four meetings between President Kennedy and his highest level Vietnam advisors in late August of 1963.</li> </ol> <p><b>Cuban Missile Crisis</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Excerpt from meeting on Cuban Missile Crisis. This excerpt begins with Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara providing a detailed summary of the possible responses to the missiles that were under construction. October 16, 1962.</li> </ol>

**Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty**

3. On July 9, 1963, President Kennedy met with Vice President Johnson, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Maxwell Taylor about the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.
4. A presidential recording of a meeting between President Kennedy and four high level government scientists that took place in the Cabinet Room of the White House on July 31, 1963 during which President Kennedy expresses optimism that the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty could lead to a détente with the Soviet Union.

**Space**

5. At an off-the-record meeting held on November 21, 1962, President Kennedy stated clearly that his administration's priority was for the United States to land on the Moon before the Soviet Union. The participants heard in this excerpt are: President Kennedy, NASA Administrator James E. Webb and Special Assistant to the President, Jerome Wiesner.

**Civil Rights**

6. Twenty members of the organization, Americans for Democratic Action met with the President on May 4, 1963 for a meet-and-greet/lobbying session about Civil Rights.

**Campaign Button****The 1960 Campaign**

Materials related to the 1960 Presidential campaign.

1. Pins, jewelry, and ties (Democratic donkey, PT-109, slogans)
2. Campaign Trail Photographs
3. Stickers and Placards
4. Ephemera from the Democratic National Convention
5. Documents (Memo on Kennedy's performance in the debate, Letter to Kennedy from 6th grader about campaign, "Blue Bomb" pamphlet related to Kennedy's phone call to Coretta Scott King while Martin Luther King, Jr., was in jail for participating in a sit-in)
6. Debate Footage

7. Interview with JBK by Dr. Benjamin Spock
8. JFK ad jingle
9. Ad with Jacqueline Kennedy speaking Spanish
10. Recording of campaign song – Frank Sinatra's "High Hopes"
11. JFK's speeches (declaring his candidacy, on religion in West Virginia, on American Prestige, Democratic National Convention acceptance speech, president-elect victory speech)
12. "High Hopes" recording by Frank Sinatra
13. Electoral Map

**Picture Frame****The President's Photographs**

1. The Children (family outings, horseback riding)
2. Jacqueline Kennedy (childhood through White House years)
3. The Kennedy Family (childhood through US Senate campaign)



# Primary Sources Listed by Topic



Desk Item	Module
<b>1960 Election</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campaign Materials (Campaign Button)</li> </ul>
<b>Civil Rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phone conversation between John F. Kennedy and Governor Ross Barnett on the integration of the University of Mississippi (Telephone)</li> <li>• Meeting with Americans for Democratic Action regarding Birmingham, AL (Secret Recording Button)</li> <li>• Blue Bomb Pamphlet (Campaign Button)</li> <li>• White House Diary: June 11, 1963 (Address to the nation on Civil Rights) (Diary)</li> </ul>
<b>Cuba</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phone conversation between John F. Kennedy and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy about the Bay of Pigs (Telephone)</li> <li>• Conversation between John F. Kennedy and Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric about the Missile Crisis (Telephone)</li> <li>• Conversation between John F. Kennedy and President Eisenhower about the Missile Crisis (Telephone)</li> <li>• Meeting on Cuban Missile Crisis (Secret Recording Button)</li> <li>• White House Diary: April 17-20, 1961 (Bay of Pigs), October 16-28, 1962 (Cuban Missile Crisis) (Diary)</li> </ul>
<b>Diplomacy/ International Travel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photo album for Mrs. Kennedy (Picture Frames)</li> <li>• Telephone conversation with Special Assistant to the President Arthur Schlesinger discussing a prospective post in Central or Latin America for Samuel H. Beer and Schlesinger's recent trip to a conference in England (Telephone)</li> <li>• White House Diary: May 31-June 2, 1961 (France), June 3-4, 1961 (Vienna), June 5, 1961 (England), December 16, 1961 (Venezuela), June 23-26, 1963 (West Germany), June 26-29, 1963 (Ireland) (Diary)</li> </ul>
<b>International Trade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phone conversation with Senator Edward M. Kennedy discussing a meeting with the wool industry about international trade (Telephone)</li> </ul>





### John F. Kennedy's Life

- John F. Kennedy's Love of the Sea (Scrimshaw)
- John F. Kennedy in World War II and PT-109 (Coconut)
- Photo Albums of his family, Mrs. Kennedy and their children (Picture Frame)
- White House Diary (Diary)

### Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

- Phone conversation between President Kennedy and President Truman (Telephone)
- Conversation between President Kennedy and leading scientists (Secret Recording Button)
- Conversation between President Kennedy, Vice President, Secretary of Defense, and Joint Chiefs (Secret Recording Button)
- White House Diary: June 10, 1963 (Commencement address at American University), October 7, 1963 (signs the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty)(Diary)

### Peace Corps

- White House Diary: March 1, 1961 (signs Executive Order 10924 establishing the Peace Corps)
- Phone conversation between President Kennedy and Peace Corps Director Sargent Shriver, on the Peace Corps and the CIA (Telephone)

### Space

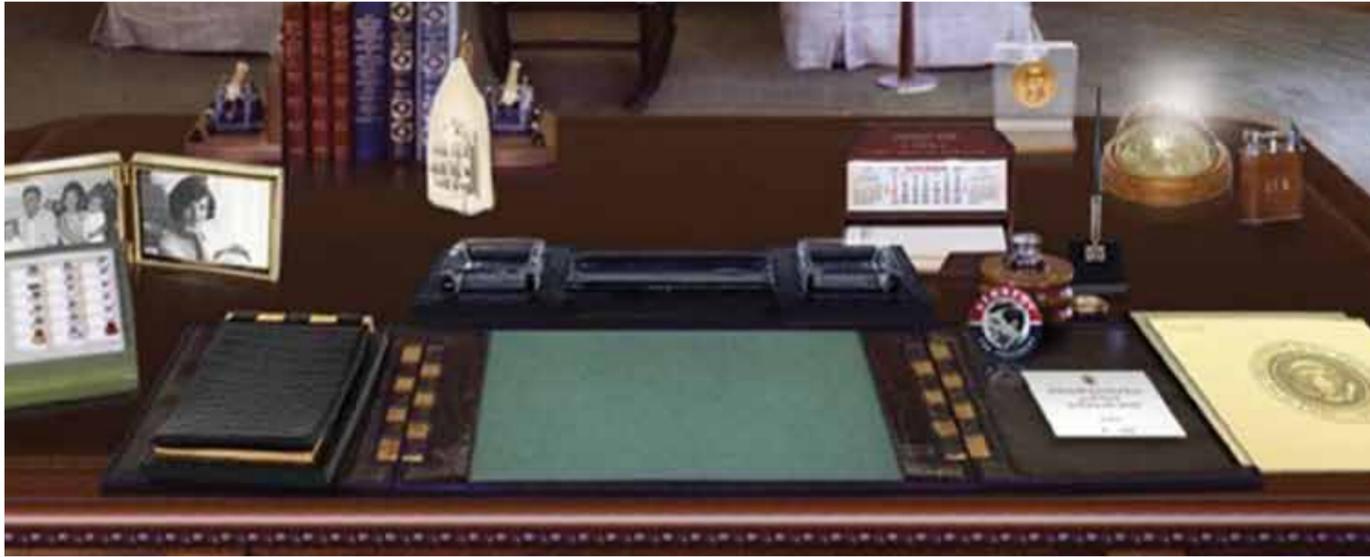
- Meeting between John F. Kennedy and science advisors (Secret Recording Button)
- Conversation with Major Gordon Cooper, Mercury Astronaut (Telephone)
- White House Diary: May 25, 1961 (Special Message to Congress on Urgent National Needs), September 12, 1962 (Rice University Speech) (Diary)

### Vietnam

- Meetings with Advisors in August 1963 regarding President Diem (Secret Recording Button)







### The President's Desk

Elementary/  
Middle School

- **You be the Biographer Activity.** Objects can tell us a lot about a person. Have students explore the President's Desk and think about what the objects tell us about John F. Kennedy's life. Ask students to write a biography of John F. Kennedy based on their findings. Students may illustrate their biographies with images from the "Media Gallery" in the JFK section of the Library's website. In addition to a lesson plan on this topic, teachers may use source material and criteria from the Library's web site that helps students learn how to critique biographies.

- **Analyzing an Object Activity.** Have students choose one object from the President's Desk exhibit. Ask students to draw a picture of the object, describe the object, and determine its purpose and function. Use the National Archives Artifact Analysis worksheet ([http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/artifact\\_analysis\\_worksheet.pdf](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/artifact_analysis_worksheet.pdf)) to support this activity. Ask students to consider the following: Why is this object significant? Why do you think John F. Kennedy found this object valuable? If the President were alive today, what one question would you ask him about this object? What objects would you put on your desk and why?

Middle/  
High School

- **JFK in the White House Activity.** The Oval Office is a symbol of the presidency and is the public office where the President works. Have students explore the President's Desk exhibit and consider the following: What are some of the issues that President Kennedy dealt with as President? What issues were important to the President? How do the objects on President Kennedy's desk reflect the life and presidency of John F. Kennedy? Have students create an exhibit poster or write a 1-2-page essay reflecting their research and analysis. Direct them to the "Media Gallery" of the JFK section of the Library's website and to the "Downloads and Resources" section of the JFK50.org website for additional visual sources. They may create their posters at [glogster.com](http://glogster.com)

### The Presidents Phone Calls



Elementary/  
Middle School

- **Kids as Curators: JFK and the Peace Corps.** Visit the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library's exhibit and lesson activity at the National Archives Presidential Timeline [http://www.presidentialtimeline.org/html/educators/JFK/peacecorps\\_kac/](http://www.presidentialtimeline.org/html/educators/JFK/peacecorps_kac/).

Middle/  
High School



Listening in activities

- One of the benefits to an audio recording of a phone call is that it is possible to hear the tone and inflection of participants' voices to get a better understanding of their emotions and intentions. Have students choose one phone conversation and compare the audio recording to the written transcript. Do the two sources tell the same story? Which has more of an impact? Why? Which source is more credible?

- Although the phone conversations presented in this module all cover a political issue related to the presidency, some of the participants have a more personal connection to the President. Have students listen to the different conversations. Is the tone of all of the conversations the same? Do the participants speak to President Kennedy in the same way? If not, what is a possible explanation for the differences?

- **Integrating Ole Miss Lesson Plan** (see page 60) This lesson plan relates to the taped conversation with Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett. Have students listen to the tape as an introduction to the story and to pique their curiosity about it. Through an examination of primary source materials on the 1962 integration of the University of Mississippi, students will explore the different positions held by prominent figures on the issue and consider the role of the President in enforcing civil rights. The lesson features the online exhibit, Integrating Ole Miss ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), "Interactive Exhibits".)

- **The Cuban Missile Crisis: How to Respond? Lesson Plan** (see page ) This lesson relates to taped conversations with Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric and former President Dwight D. Eisenhower and the recorded meeting with Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara (in the secret taping button module.) In this lesson, students examine primary sources and consider some of the options discussed, what groups and which individuals supported each option, and the pros and cons of each option. This lesson also features the online exhibit World on the Brink: JFK and the Cuban Missile Crisis ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), "Interactive Exhibits".)

- **Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Lesson Plan** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), "For Teachers") This lesson plan relates to the taped conversation with President Harry S. Truman about the criteria for the treaty. In the lesson, students consider the threat of nuclear weapons in the early 1960s and the opportunities and challenges in negotiating an arms control agreement. See Secret Recording Button for taped meeting conversations with Joint Chiefs of staff and top scientists.

## The White House Diary



### Elementary/ Middle School

- **“Ask What You Can Do.” Lesson Plan** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), “For Teachers”) Introduce students to Inauguration Day 1961 by showing the clip of JFK taking the oath of office on January 20th in the White House Diary. In this lesson, students listen to portions of JFK’s inaugural address and analyze a third-grader’s letter written in response to his speech. They then brainstorm ways to respond to JFK’s call to service in their communities and create an action plan for one strategy. Extended learning activities invite analysis of President Obama’s inaugural address.
- **A President’s Day Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), “For Teachers”) If you are elected to the nation’s highest office, what are you actually expected to do? Students spend a day at the White House with John F. Kennedy to learn about some of the president’s most important roles and responsibilities.

### Middle School

- **Recipe for an Inaugural Address Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), “For Teachers”) Introduce students to Inauguration Day 1961 by showing the clip of JFK taking the oath of office on January 20th that is featured in the White House Diary. Students role play advisors to the President and study past inaugural addresses including President Kennedy’s in order to prepare a memo to the “President-Elect” with suggested ingredients for a successful speech.
- **The President at Work Lesson Plan.** (see page 53) In this lesson, students sleuth through the president’s appointment book to find out what he does and how it reflects the varied roles of the presidency.

### High School

- **Analyzing JFK’s Inaugural Address and Analyzing the Rhetoric of JFK’s Inaugural Address Lesson Plans** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), “For Teachers”) Introduce students to Inauguration Day 1961 by showing the clip of JFK taking the oath of office on January 20th that is featured in the White House Diary. In the first lesson, students view JFK’s inaugural address through the perspective of a person from the past. In the second lesson, students examine the effect of rhetoric in the President’s inaugural speech.
- **A Day in the Oval Office Activity.** Have students look through the White House Diary and examine the entries related to a particular topic. Students must first research the dates of their topic. As they explore the President’s schedule on those dates, ask students to consider the following: What other issues or events did President Kennedy have to deal with at this time? Was the President’s attention focused on one particular issue or was it divided among many? How long does the topic remain a focus on the schedule? What can we learn from the President’s schedule?

## John F. Kennedy’s Love of the Sea



### Elementary/ Middle School

- **A Love for the Sea Activity.** Objects can tell us a lot about how people lived in the past and what they were interested in. President Kennedy’s love of the sea is evident by the maritime objects he collected. Have students explore the module and learn about Kennedy and the sea. Ask students to choose one object that they think best represents President Kennedy.

- **You Be the First Mate Activity.** Have students role play being the first mate on President Kennedy’s sailboat the Victura and explore the module. Have them write a story about their experiences sailing from port to port and what they found when they dropped anchor at each location. Students may complete the “Sail the Victura” on page to help focus their exploration of the module.

- **Your Favorite Object Activity.** Historians carefully analyze objects to get a better sense of what people did in the past. Analyzing an object involves carefully observing the artifact, paying close attention to the materials the object is made from, and thinking about the purpose and function of the artifact. Using the National Archives Artifact Analysis Worksheet ([http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/artifact\\_analysis\\_worksheet.pdf](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/artifact_analysis_worksheet.pdf)), have students analyze their favorite artifact in the module. What can we learn from this artifact?

### Middle School

- **Sailing the Victura Activity.** Using a map of Cape Cod, have students plot the ports that the Victura sailed to in the module and calculate the distances between each port. Ask students to calculate distances such as the shortest and the longest routes to connect all ports. The fastest and most accurate mathematician wins the “regatta.”

### High School

- **Preserving a National Treasure Activity.** Presidents often incorporate into their agenda policies that have meaning in their lives. President Kennedy’s interest in the sea and Cape Cod influenced the creation of the Cape Cod National Seashore. Have students conduct research on the history of the Cape Cod National Seashore (or any other National Park Service site) and consider the role of the federal government in land conservation. Have them present their findings in an essay or visual format and share through class discussion or a display.

## John F. Kennedy and PT-109



### Elementary School

- **Telling the Story of the PT-109 Activity.** Have students read the narrative slideshow of John F. Kennedy's experience in World War II individually, in groups, or as a whole class read-aloud. Afterwards, have students retell, write the story in their own words, or create a storyboard to assess reading comprehension and chronological thinking. Ask them to hypothesize about John F. Kennedy's leadership qualities based on this experience.

- **A Letter Home Activity.** Individually, or as a whole group, view the slideshow and read the text. There are two letters that JFK wrote to his family from the Solomon Islands (see "Documentary Materials") for both copies of the letter and transcriptions of each one.) Have students imagine that they are one of the surviving crew members of the *PT-109*. In their role play, have them write a letter home after the rescue. Have students include the following in their letters: the location of the crash; details about the *PT109* – what it was made of, how it moved, and its mission; names of other crew members, including the commander; a description of the crash and its aftermath; and a description of the rescue. For additional information on the story of the *PT-109*, see the essay, "John F. Kennedy and the *PT-109*" in the JFK in History section of the Library's website.

### Middle School

- **JFK and World War II Activity.** John F. Kennedy's experience in World War II was often used throughout his political career to promote his ability to govern. After reading the narrative, ask students to consider and discuss the following: What character traits or abilities did John F. Kennedy demonstrate during World War II? Are these important traits for a President to have? How might his experience impact whether or not people would vote for him in a political election? How do you think Kennedy's experience in World War II influenced him as President? Discuss as a class. Then have students investigate the Campaign Button module to ascertain how JFK's WWII experience was used in the campaign. As assessment, have them create new campaign materials based on this aspect of his experience.

### Middle/ High School

### Middle/ High School

### High School

## The President's Secret Tapes



- **Take a Seat at the Conference Table Activity.** The recordings in this module are excerpts from longer conversations and meetings. Have students choose one recording to listen to and guide them to additional information on the topic in the "JFK in History" section of the Library's website. They may also undertake additional research about the topic addressed, the participants, and events surrounding the conversation. Using their new knowledge of the topic being discussed, ask students to write a script that continues this conversation. Or ask students to write a summary of the conversation where they explain what was going on at the time, the information addressed in the conversation, and the eventual resolution to the issue.

- **Why Choose the Moon Lesson Plan** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), "For Teachers") This lesson plan relates to the recording of JFK's meeting with his top science advisors. In *Why Choose the Moon?*, students study primary source materials and investigate the motivation for President Kennedy's ambitious space program.

- **You Are There: JFK and Decision-making Activity.** As we attempt to understand President Kennedy's decision-making process on significant issues, we are fortunate to have a recording of some important meetings related to these topics. Divide students into groups and assign each group a recording to listen to either as homework or in-class activity. Direct them to the JFK in History section of the Library's website for more information on their topic. Ask them to consider the following as they listen to the tape: What insights do these recordings provide us about President Kennedy and the topic discussed during these meetings? Do these conversations influence your views on President Kennedy's handling of the issue addressed? Why do you think President Kennedy recorded these conversations? Should the President of the United States record conversations? As a whole class, in a jigsaw format, have students report on the selected recordings.

- **The Cuban Missile Crisis: How to Respond? Lesson Plan** (see page 72) This lesson relates to taped conversations with Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and with telephone recordings with Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric and former President Dwight D. Eisenhower (Telephone module. In this lesson, students examine primary sources and consider some of the options discussed, what groups and which individuals supported each option, and the pros and cons of each option. This lesson also features the online exhibit *World on the Brink: JFK and the Cuban Missile Crisis* ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), "Interactive Exhibits").

- **Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Lesson Plan** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), "For Teachers") This lesson plan relates to the taped meetings with members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and top scientists. It also relates to the conversation with President Harry S. Truman about the criteria for the treaty (Telephone module.) In the lesson, students consider the threat of nuclear weapons in the early 1960s and the opportunities and challenges in negotiating an arms control agreement.

## The 1960 Campaign



### Elementary School

- **The Road to the White House Lesson Plan.** (see page 44 ) In this lesson, students explore the module and make the “trip” with JFK from the Democratic National Convention to the November 8, 1961 election. They then answer questions posed on the “Road to the White House” game board.
- **Managing a Presidential Campaign: The 1960 Election Lesson Plan** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), “For Teachers”) Students use materials related to the 1960 presidential election to explore the elements of a successful political campaign. These include a letter from a sixth-grader to John F. Kennedy.
- **Televised Debates: Candidates Take a Stand Lesson Plan** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), “For Teachers”) Students examine primary source material to determine what voters can learn from political debates. They then create a guide book to help voters select a candidate.

### Elementary/ Middle School

- **Red States, Blue State: Mapping the Presidential Election Lesson Plan** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), “For Teachers”) Students use electoral maps to analyze the results of the 1960 election, and collect and analyze data for a recent presidential election. ” for additional analysis of the 1960 presidential election. This lesson also includes a blank electoral map of the United States for use with any presidential election.

### Middle/ High School

- **Staying On Message: Creating Effective Campaign Materials Activity.** As the materials in this module demonstrate, a successful presidential campaign reaches out to voters in a variety of ways. Have students examine the various campaign materials and keep a record of what they thought were successful techniques to promote John F. Kennedy as a presidential candidate. Using these ideas, ask students to create campaign materials for: 1) a candidate in a school, local, state, or national election; 2) John F. Kennedy or another former presidential candidate; or 3) themselves as a candidate in a hypothetical election. If possible, encourage students to use multi- and new-media by creating an ad jingle, a commercial, poster, or PowerPoint or GlogsterEdu presentation.
- **Political Debates: Advising a Candidate Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), “For Teachers”) This lesson focuses on the Clark Clifford memo critiquing Kennedy’s performance in the debate that is featured in this module. Students analyze excerpts from the first Kennedy-Nixon debate (September 26, 1960) and Clifford’s memo. They may apply this historical example to a current political debate as they consider the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate they support.

## Photographs



### Elementary/ Middle/High School

- **Picturing the Past Activity.** Photographs can tell us a lot about people’s lives and the time period in which they lived. Historians carefully analyze photographs to get a better sense of what was going on at the time the photograph was taken. Analyzing a photograph involves carefully observing the photograph, paying close attention to detail, making inferences about what is happening in the photograph, and thinking about what other information is needed to better understand the photograph. Using the National Archives Photo Analysis Worksheet ([http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo\\_analysis\\_worksheet.pdf](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo_analysis_worksheet.pdf)), have students analyze some of the photographs of President Kennedy and his family. What can we learn about John F. Kennedy through these photographs?

See the “JFK in History” section of the Library’s website for biographies of President Kennedy and Jacqueline Kennedy. Additional student biographies for the Kennedys may be found in the “For Teachers” section of the website. Lesson plans for the life and legacy of the Kennedys and the Presidents’ mother, Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, are located there also.

### Elementary School

- **Picture It: JFK in High School Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), “For Teachers”) In this activity, students examine a photograph from JFK’s high school years and write a caption that reflects their knowledge gained through observation, research, and interpretation.

# Suggested Activities and Lesson Plans Listed by Topic



## Civil Rights



### Elementary School

- **They Had a Dream Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), "For Teachers") Students put themselves in the role of a civil rights leader and write a letter to President Kennedy after investigating primary source material on the March on Washington. To complement this lesson, individually, or as a whole class activity, view the film footage of President Kennedy meeting with leaders of the March and moving images from the March on August 28, 1963 in the White House Diary.

### Elementary/ Middle School

- **Integrating Ole Miss Lesson Plan.** (see page 60) This lesson relates to the taped telephone conversation with Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett. Have students listen to the tape as an introduction to the story and to pique their curiosity about it. Through an examination of primary source materials on the 1962 integration of the University of Mississippi, students will then explore the different positions held by prominent figures on the issue and consider the role of the President in enforcing civil rights. The lesson features the online exhibit, Integrating Ole Miss ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), "Interactive Exhibits".)

### Middle/ High School

- **The 1963 March on Washington: A Montage of the Civil Rights Movement. Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), "For Teachers", New Frontiers Issue 11, Winter 2010) Students learn about the diversity of organizations involved in the civil rights movement by analyzing primary source materials on the March on Washington. To compliment this lesson, individually, or as a whole class activity, view the film footage of President Kennedy meeting with leaders of the March and moving images from the March on August 28, 1963 in the White House Diary.
- **The 1960 Campaign: John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and the "Blue Bomb" Lesson Plan.** (see page 64) In this lesson, students analyze a pamphlet featured in the Campaign Button module and consider its impact on the final days of the 1960 campaign and election.

## Cuba



### All

- **The Cuban Missile Crisis: How to Respond? Lesson Plan.** (see page 71) This lesson relates to taped conversations with Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and generally with telephone recordings with Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric and former President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Students examine primary sources and consider some of the options discussed, what groups and which individuals supported each option, and the pros and cons of each option. This lesson also features the online exhibit *World on the Brink: JFK and the Cuban Missile Crisis* ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), “Interactive Exhibits”).

## Inaugural Address



### Elementary/ Middle School

- **“Ask What You Can Do” Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), “For Teachers”) Introduce students to Inauguration Day 1961 by showing the clip of JFK taking the oath of office on January 20th in the *White House Diary*. In this lesson, students listen to portions of JFK’s inaugural address and analyze a third-grader’s letter written in response to his speech. They then brainstorm ways to respond to JFK’s call to service in their communities and create an action plan for one strategy. Extended learning activities invite analysis of President Obama’s inaugural address.

### Middle School

- **Recipe for an Inaugural Address Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), “For Teachers”) Introduce students to Inauguration Day 1961 by showing the clip of JFK taking the oath of office on January 20th that is featured in the *White House Diary*. Students role play advisors to the President and study past inaugural addresses including President Kennedy’s in order to prepare a memo to the “President-Elect” with suggested ingredients for a successful speech.

### High School

- **Analyzing JFK’s Inaugural Address and Analyzing the Rhetoric of JFK’s Inaugural Address Lesson Plans.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), “For Teachers”) Introduce students to Inauguration Day 1961 by showing the clip of JFK taking the oath of office on January 20th that is featured in the *White House Diary*. In the first lesson, students view JFK’s inaugural address through the perspective of a person from the past. In the second lesson, students examine the effect of rhetoric in the President’s inaugural speech

## JFK in the White House



### Middle/High School

- **JFK in the White House Activity.** The Oval Office is a symbol of the presidency and is the public office where the President works. Have students explore the *President’s Desk* exhibit and consider the following: What are some of the issues that President Kennedy dealt with as President? What issues were important to the President? How do the objects on President Kennedy’s desk reflect the life and presidency of John F. Kennedy? Have students create an exhibit poster or write a 1-2-page essay reflecting their research and analysis. Direct them to the “Media Gallery” of the JFK section of the Library’s website and to the “Downloads and Resources” section of the [JFK50.org](http://JFK50.org) website for additional visual sources. They may create their posters at [glogster.com](http://glogster.com)

## The Life of John F. Kennedy



### Elementary School

- **You be the Biographer Activity.** Objects can tell us a lot about a person. Have students explore the President's Desk and think about what the objects tell us about John F. Kennedy's life. Ask students to write a biography of John F. Kennedy based on their findings. Students may illustrate their biographies with images from the "Media Gallery" in the "JFK" section of the Library's website. In addition to a lesson plan on this topic, teachers may use source material and criteria from the Library's "For Teachers" section of the web site that helps students learn how to critique biographies.
- **Picture It: JFK in High School Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), "For Teachers") In this activity, students examine a photograph from JFK's high school years and write a caption. The photographs in the Picture Frame module complement this lesson.
- **Analyzing an Object Activity.** Have students choose one object from the President's Desk exhibit. Ask them to draw a picture of the object, describe the object, and determine its purpose and function. Use the National Archives Artifact Analysis worksheet ([http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/artifact\\_analysis\\_worksheet.pdf](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/artifact_analysis_worksheet.pdf)) to support this activity. Ask students to consider the following: Why is this object significant? Why do you think John F. Kennedy found this object valuable? If the President were alive today, what one question would you ask him about this object? What objects would you put on your desk and why?
- **A Love for the Sea Activity.** Objects can tell us a lot about how people lived in the past and what they were interested in. President Kennedy's love of the sea is evident by the maritime objects he collected. Have students explore the Scrimshaw module and learn about Kennedy and the sea. Ask students to choose one object that they think best represents President Kennedy, and explain why through a picture postcard.
- **You Be the First Mate Activity.** Have students role play being the first mate on President Kennedy's sailboat the *Victura* and explore the Scrimshaw module. Have them write a story about their experiences sailing from port to port and what they found when they dropped anchor at each location. Students may complete the "Sail the Victura" activity on page to help focus their exploration of the module.
- **Your Favorite Object Activity.** Historians carefully analyze objects to get a better sense of what people did in the past. Analyzing an object involves carefully observing the artifact, paying close attention to the materials the object is made from, and thinking about the purpose and function of the artifact. Using the National Archives Artifact Analysis Worksheet ([http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/artifact\\_analysis\\_worksheet.pdf](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/artifact_analysis_worksheet.pdf)), have students analyze their favorite artifact in the Scrimshaw module. What can we learn from this artifact?

- **Telling the Story of the PT-109 Activity.** Have students read the narrative slideshow of John F. Kennedy's experience in World War II in the Coconut module individually, in groups, or as a whole class read-aloud. Afterwards, have students retell, write the story in their own words, or create a storyboard to assess reading comprehension and chronological thinking. Ask them to hypothesize about John F. Kennedy's leadership qualities based on this experience.

- **A Letter Home Activity.** Individually, or as a whole group, view the slideshow in the Coconut module about the PT-109 and read the text. There are two letters that JFK wrote to his family from the Solomon Islands (see "Documentary Materials") for copies and transcriptions of each letter.) Have students imagine that they are one of the surviving crew members of the PT-109. In their role play, have them write a letter home after the rescue. Have students include the following in their letters: the location of the crash; details about the PT109 – what it was made of, how it moved, and its mission; names of other crew members, including the commander; a description of the crash and its aftermath; and a description of the rescue. For additional information on the story of the PT-109, see the essay, "John F. Kennedy and the PT-109" in the "JFK in History" section of the Library's website.

### Middle School

- **JFK and World War II Activity.** John F. Kennedy's experience in World War II was often used throughout his political career to promote his ability to govern. After reading the narrative in the Coconut module, ask students to consider and discuss the following: What character traits or abilities did John F. Kennedy demonstrate during World War II? Are these important traits for a President to have? How might his experience impact whether or not people would vote for him in a political election? How do you think Kennedy's experience in World War II influenced him as President? Discuss as a class. Then have students investigate the Campaign Button module to ascertain how JFK's WWII experience was used in the campaign. As assessment, have them create new campaign materials based on this aspect of his experience.

- **Sailing the Victura Activity.** Using a map of Cape Cod, have students plot the ports that the *Victura* sailed to in the module and calculate the distances between each port. Ask students to calculate distances such as the shortest and the longest routes to connect all ports. The fastest and most accurate mathematician wins the "regatta."

Continued on next page.

## The Life of John F. Kennedy (cont'd)

### High School

- **Preserving a National Treasure Activity.** Presidents often incorporate into their agenda policies that have meaning in their lives. President Kennedy's interest in the sea and Cape Cod influenced the creation of the Cape Cod National Seashore. Have students conduct research on the history of the Cape Cod National Seashore (or any other National Park Service site) and consider the role of the federal government in land conservation. Have them present their findings in an essay or visual format and share through class discussion or a display.

### Elementary/Middle/ High School

- **Picturing the Past Activity.** Photographs can tell us a lot about people's lives and the time period in which they lived. Historians carefully analyze photographs to get a better sense of what was going on at the time the photograph was taken. Analyzing a photograph involves carefully observing the photograph, paying close attention to detail, making inferences about what is happening in the photograph, and thinking about what other information is needed to better understand the photograph. Using the National Archives Photo Analysis Worksheet ([http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo\\_analysis\\_worksheet.pdf](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo_analysis_worksheet.pdf)), have students analyze some of the photographs of President Kennedy and his family. What can we learn about John F. Kennedy through these photographs? Have students present their findings in a "photo album" with new captions based on their analysis.

See the "JFK in History" section of the Library's website for biographies of President Kennedy and Jacqueline Kennedy. Additional student biographies for the Kennedys may be found in the "For Teachers" section of the website. Lesson plans for the life and legacy of the Kennedys and the Presidents' mother, Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, are located there also.

### Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treat



### All

- **Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), "For Teachers") This lesson plan relates to the taped meetings with members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and top scientists. It also relates to the conversation with President Harry S. Truman about the criteria for the treaty (Telephone module.) In the lesson, students consider the threat of nuclear weapons in the early 1960s, and the opportunities and challenges in negotiating an arms control agreement.

## Presidential Campaigns and Elections



### Elementary School

- **The Road to the White House Lesson Plan.** (see page 44) In this lesson, students explore the Campaign Button module and make the "trip" with JFK from the Democratic National Convention to the November 8, 1961 election. They then answer questions posed on the "Road to the White House" game board.

- **Managing a Presidential Campaign: The 1960 Election Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), "For Teachers") Students examine materials related to the 1960 presidential election to explore the elements of a successful political campaign. These include a letter from a sixth-grader to John F. Kennedy featured in the Campaign Button module.

- **Televised Debates: Candidates Take a Stand Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), "For Teachers") Students examine primary source material to determine what voters can learn from political debates. They then create a guide book to help voters select a candidate. Excerpts from the presidential debates complement this lesson.

- **Red States, Blue State: Mapping the Presidential Election Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), "For Teachers") Students use electoral maps, including the one featured in the Campaign Button module, to analyze the results of the 1960 election, and collect and analyze data for a recent presidential election. See the "Campaign of 1960" essay in the "JFK in History" section of the website for additional analysis of the 1960 presidential election. This lesson also includes a blank electoral map of the United States for use with any presidential election.

- **Staying On Message: Creating Effective Campaign Materials Activity.** As the materials in this module demonstrate, a successful presidential campaign reaches out to voters in a variety of ways. Have students examine the various campaign materials and keep a record of what they thought were successful techniques to promote John F. Kennedy as a presidential candidate. Using these ideas, ask students to create campaign materials for: 1) a candidate in a school, local, state, or national election; 2) John F. Kennedy or another former presidential candidate; or 3) themselves as a candidate in a hypothetical election. If possible, encourage students to use multi- and new-media by creating an ad jingle, a commercial, poster, or PowerPoint or GlogsterEdu presentation.

### Elementary/ Middle School

### Middle/ High School

## Presidential Campaigns and Elections (cont'd)

### Middle/High School

- **Political Debates: Advising a Candidate Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), “For Teachers”) This lesson focuses on the Clark Clifford memo critiquing Kennedy’s performance in the presidential debate that is featured in this module. Students analyze excerpts from the first Kennedy-Nixon debate (September 26, 1960) and Clifford’s memo. They may then apply this historical example to a current political debate as they consider the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate they support.

### High School

- **The 1960 Campaign: John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the “Blue Bomb” Lesson Plan.** (see page ) In this lesson, students analyze a pamphlet featured in the Campaign Button module and consider its impact on the final days of the 1960 campaign and election.

### Presidential Decision Making



### Middle/High School

- **Take a Seat at the Conference Table Activity.** The recordings in this Secret Recording Button module are excerpts from longer conversations and meetings. Have students choose one recording to listen to and guide them to additional information on the topic in the “JFK in History” section of the Library’s website. They may also undertake additional research about the topic addressed, the participants, and events surrounding the conversation. Using their new knowledge of the topic being discussed, ask students to write a script that continues this conversation. Alternatively, have students to write a summary of the conversation where they explain what was going on at the time, the information addressed in the conversation, and the eventual resolution to the issue. Topics include Civil Rights, the Cuban Missile Crisis, Space, the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and Vietnam.

### High School

- **You Are There: JFK and Decision-making Activity.** As we attempt to understand President Kennedy’s decision-making process on significant issues, we are fortunate to have a recording of some important meetings related to these topics. Divide students into groups and assign each group a recording to listen to either as homework or in-class activity. Topics include Civil Rights, the Cuban Missile Crisis, Vietnam, the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and Space. Direct them to the “JFK in History” section of the Library’s website for more information on their topic. Ask them to consider the following as they listen to the tape: What insights do these recordings provide us about President Kennedy and the topic discussed during these meetings? Do these conversations influence your views on President Kennedy’s handling of the issue addressed? Why do you think President Kennedy recorded these conversations? Should the President of the United States record conversations? As a whole class, in a jigsaw format, have students report on the selected recordings and their impressions of the President.

## Presidential Roles and Responsibilities



### Elementary/ Middle School

- **A President’s Day Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), “For Teachers”) If you are elected to the nation’s highest office, what are you actually expected to do? Students spend a day at the White House with John F. Kennedy to learn about some of the president’s most important roles and responsibilities. The date featured in the White House Diary for this lesson is September 25, 1962.

### Middle School

- **The President at Work Lesson Plan.** ( see page 53) In this lesson, students sleuth through the president’s appointment book to find out what he does and how it reflects the varied roles of the presidency.

### High School

- **A Day in the Oval Office Activity.** Have students look through the White House Diary and examine the entries related to a particular topic. Students must first research the dates of their topic. As they explore the President’s schedule on those dates, ask students to consider the following: What other issues or events did President Kennedy have to deal with at this time? Was the President’s attention focused on one particular issue or was it divided among many? How long does the topic remain a focus on the schedule? What can we learn from the President’s schedule? Direct students to the “JFK in History” section of the website for more information on their topic. The list of essays is not exhausted, but covers the main content areas included in most history curricula. Have them roleplay the President’s press officer and prepare a briefing on their topic and selected highlights on other potential topics based on their findings in the Diary.

### Space: The Race To The Moon



### Elementary School

- **Race to the Moon! Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), “For Teachers”) Students learn about the “space race” by analyzing a letter of advice from a young student to President Kennedy. The telephone conversation with NASA Astronaut, Major Gordon Cooper complements this lesson.

### Middle/ High School School

- **Why Choose the Moon? Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), “For Teachers”) This lesson plan relates to the recording of JFK’s meeting with his top science advisors. Students study primary source materials and investigate the motivation for President Kennedy’s ambitious space program. Additional primary source materials and classroom activities on exploring space may be found in the “For Teachers” section of the website. The interactive exhibit, “We Choose the Moon” is also accessible in the “JFK in History” section of the website. The “science and technology” sections of the JFK50.org website provide additional complementary source materials.

# Lesson Plans and Activities



Lesson plans that are accessible on the Library's website under the "For Teachers" section are listed below by grade. Selected new lessons presented in conjunction with The President's Desk follow in this section of the Resource Guide.

## Lesson Plans Related to the President's desk on the Library's Website, [www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org)

### Elementary School

- **Picture It: JFK in High School Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), "For Teachers") ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), "For Teachers") Students examine a photograph from JFK's high school years and write a caption. The photographs in the Picture Frame module complement this lesson.
- **"Ask What You Can Do" Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), "For Teachers") Students listen to portions of JFK's inaugural address and analyze a third-grader's letter written in response to his speech.
- **Managing a Presidential Campaign: The 1960 Election Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), "For Teachers") Students examine materials related to the 1960 presidential election to explore the elements of a successful political campaign. These include a letter from a sixth-grader to John F. Kennedy featured in the Campaign Button module.
- **Televised Debates: Candidates Take a Stand Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), "For Teachers") Students examine primary source material to determine what voters can learn from political debates.
- **They Had a Dream Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), "For Teachers") Students put themselves in the role of a civil rights leader and write a letter to President Kennedy after investigating primary source material on the March on Washington.
- **Race to the Moon! Lesson Plan.** ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), "For Teachers") Students learn about the "space race" by analyzing a letter of advice from a young student to President Kennedy. The telephone conversation with NASA Astronaut, Major Gordon Cooper complements this lesson.

Elementary/  
Middle School

- **Red States, Blue State: Mapping the Presidential Election Lesson Plan.** (www.jfklibrary.org, “For Teachers”) Students use electoral maps, including the one featured in the Campaign Button module, to analyze the results of the 1960 election, and collect and analyze data for a recent presidential election.
- **A President’s Day Lesson Plan.** (www.jfklibrary.org, “For Teachers”) If you are elected to the nation’s highest office, what are you actually expected to do? Students spend a day at the White House with John F. Kennedy to learn about some of the president’s most important roles and responsibilities.

Middle School

- **Recipe for an Inaugural Address Lesson Plan.** (www.jfklibrary.org, “For Teachers”) Students role play advisors to the President and study past inaugural addresses including President Kennedy’s in order to prepare a memo to the “President-Elect” with suggested ingredients for a successful speech.

High School

- **Political Debates: Advising a Candidate Lesson Plan.** (www.jfklibrary.org, “For Teachers”) Students analyze excerpts from the first Kennedy-Nixon debate (September 26, 1960) and Clifford’s memo. They may then apply this historical example to a current political debate as they consider the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate they support.
- **Why Choose the Moon Lesson Plan.** (www.jfklibrary.org, “For Teachers”) This lesson plan relates to the recording of JFK’s meeting with his top science advisors. Students study primary source materials and investigate the motivation for President Kennedy’s ambitious space program. The “Science and Technology” sections of the www.JFK50.org website provide additional complementary source materials.

- **Integrating Ole Miss Lesson Plan.** (see page 60) Through an examination of primary source materials on the 1962 integration of the University of Mississippi, students will then explore the different positions held by prominent figures on the issue and consider the role of the President in enforcing civil rights. The lesson features the online exhibit, Integrating Ole Miss (www.jfklibrary.org, “Interactive Exhibits”).

Middle School

- **The 1963 March on Washington: A Montage of the Civil Rights Movement Lesson Plan.** (www.jfklibrary.org, “For Teachers”, New Frontiers Issue 11, Winter 2010) Students learn about the diversity of organizations involved in the civil rights movement by analyzing primary source materials on the March on Washington.

High School

- **Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Lesson Plan.** (www.jfklibrary.org, “For Teachers”) This lesson plan relates to the taped meetings with members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and top scientists. Students consider the threat of nuclear weapons in the early 1960s, and the opportunities and challenges in negotiating an arms control agreement.

www.jfklibrary.org/  
For Teachers



## The Road to the White House

The President's Desk:  
Campaign Button Module  
The Road to the  
White House



Topic:  
Presidential campaigns  
and elections

Grades: 4-6

Time Required:  
1-2 class periods

**Goals/Rationale:** by exploring the primary sources in the Campaign Button module, students will gather information about the key people in the 1960 election and the steps one takes in running for presidential office.

**Essential Question:** How does a presidential candidate campaign for the presidency?

### Objectives

Students will:

- analyze multiple primary sources
- identify the key steps in the presidential campaign process
- identify the candidates in 1960 and describe impressions of their performance in the campaign

### Connections to Curriculum (Standards)

*National History Standards*

*K-4 Historical Analysis and Interpretation; standards 3, 4*

*National Standards for Civics And Government*

*K-4, Standard 5: What are the roles of the citizen in American democracy?*

### Historical Background and Context

The “Kennedy for President” button is one of the iconic symbols of John F. Kennedy’s 1960 presidential campaign. It is one of several primary sources featured in the Campaign Button” module. All are presented within the context of a virtual campaign office. Highlights include television “programs” featuring speeches by JFK, a campaign spot and interview with Mrs. Kennedy, excerpts of televised presidential debates, and the Kennedy jingle. Campaign placards, bumper stickers, posters, buttons and pins, memos, a letter from a sixth-grader to the candidate, and Frank Sinatra’s “High Hopes” 45 rpm record are featured as well. All provide students with a sense of the spirit and energy of the 1960 campaign. For more historical background, refer to the “Campaign of 1960” essay in the “JFK in History” section of the Library’s website. In this activity, students explore the terminology of the campaign for the presidency. They next explore, individually or as a whole class, the primary sources in the campaign office and make the “trip” with JFK from the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, CA to the 1960 presidential election on November 8th. They “travel” around a game board answering questions posed on each square with information gleaned from the primary sources featured in the virtual campaign office.

### Materials

- Campaign Button Module/ Internet Access
- Campaigning for the Presidency: Definition Key
- Word Challenge! JFK’s Path to the Presidency
- Road to the White House Game Board



### Preparation

Print each word below in large letters on its own 8 ½” x 11” piece of paper.

Post these words in your room in sequential order reflecting the path to the presidency.

1. Candidate
2. Primary
3. Convention
4. Nomination
5. Campaign
6. Debate
7. Election
8. Inauguration

Photocopy one “Word Challenge” handout for each student

Photocopy one “Road to the White House” Game Board for each student

### Procedure

1. Begin by asking students to look closely at the “Kennedy for President” campaign button. Why might JFK’s campaign have selected this design? What might they have intended to communicate to American voters? What does the design communicate to the students today?
2. Next introduce students to the terms involved in a presidential campaign and election. Ask students to look at the words around the room: “Can anyone figure out what these posters are about? What are all of these words about?” Prompts if needed: “Are any of these words familiar to you? If you used one of these words in a conversation, what topic might you be talking about?” If students haven’t already done so, point out that these posters all have to do with becoming president of the United States.
3. Web of ideas: The President. Draw a circle on the board and write the word, “President” in the center. Ask students “Tell me anything you know about being the president.” Write student answers on strands of a “web” around the circle. Words and phrases might include: lives in the White House; meets with world leaders; elected every 4 years; commander-in-chief; decides to go to war; gives speeches; decisions affect everyone in the country.
4. Campaign Talk. Ask student to consider the words posted around the room. Adapt these suggestions as necessary for your group. “If you think you know what a word means, or want to take a guess, stand underneath that word - without talking.” Invite students to get out of their seats and quietly stand under a poster. Explain the directions: “Let’s assume each of you is running for President of the United States. These words are key to your becoming president. Let’s see if you can answer two questions: a. What does your word mean? b. What does your word have to do with becoming president?”

Allow students 1 minute to come up with answers. If there is more than one person under a word, invite students to talk to everyone in that “word group” and see if they can come to agreement about the meaning of the word and its relevance to the presidency. Point out that some words may have more than one meaning.

Go around the room, asking a student representative from each group to offer a definition: “You want to be President. What does this word have to do with your getting to the White House?”

Ask students to explain how they came up with their answers. Then discuss the correct answer, drawing from the glossary handout. If any words aren’t chosen, invite students to look the words up in a dictionary or reference book.

5. **Word Challenge: JFK’s Path to the Presidency.** Introduce John F. Kennedy and inform them that learning these words will help them play a board game based on an online exhibit they will see. “Have any of you heard of John F. Kennedy or JFK? He was a Senator from Massachusetts and, in 1960, ran for president and won the election. Students work in pairs. Distribute a copy of the “Word Challenge” handout to each student and review the directions. “First you’ll use the special words on the page to fill in the blank of each stage of JFK’s path to the presidency. Then you’ll figure out the order in which JFK accomplished each of these stages on his way to becoming president. Number the squares 1-8. Debrief Parts I and II. Go around the room and ask students to tell which word square comes next and read the description of JFK’s experience.
6. Introduce students to the JFK campaign office in the Campaign Button module. Show them JFK’s speech announcing his candidacy (program #1 on the television set).
7. Distribute a Game Board to each student. Introduce them to the Game Board and, explain that they will be making the trip to the 1960 Democratic National Convention and on to the November 8th election as they explore the Campaign Button module. Assign either as homework or explore as a whole group activity. Have them record their answers on the game board. The final question may be answered with students’ previous knowledge, or by clicking on January 20, 1961 in the White House Diary.



On a separate piece of paper, have students jot down what evidence helped them answer the question for each square of the Game Board.

8. **Evaluation.** Review students’ answers and have them cite their evidence. Ask them to write a summary of the “trip” and comment on what portion was most memorable for them and why.

## Campaigning for the Presidency: Definition Key

**Candidate** - a person who is formally “in the running” for a particular position or award. You might be a candidate for student council, or a candidate for team captain, or a candidate to win a music award. If you want to run for president, you have to formally announce your candidacy so that people know you are running.

**Primary** - this means “first”. Sometimes elementary school is called primary school because it comes first. Primary colors (red, yellow, blue) are the first colors from which all other colors come. Before the presidential election, mini-elections (first elections) are held in each state to help political parties decide which of their candidates has the best shot at winning the national election. These mini-elections are called “state primaries.” If a candidate wins most of the state primaries, he or she stands a good chance of getting his or her party’s nomination for president.

**Convention** - a big meeting of people who belong to the same group or share a similar interest. There are teachers’ conventions, gardeners’ conventions, dog owners’ conventions. This is the big meeting where the Democrats pick one candidate to run for president and decide on the platform, or ideas, that the party stands for. The Republican party will hold their own national convention to choose the Republican candidate for president.

**Nomination** - the naming of a candidate for election. When someone is running for president, he or she needs to be chosen by his or her party as the best of all candidates: the one they want to name (nominate) as their choice for president. A candidate wins his or her party’s nomination at the national convention.

**Campaign** - a series of organized, planned actions taken by a candidate to help him or her get elected. In a campaign for president, for example, he or she may “hit the campaign trail” and travel to different towns and cities, make speeches, talk to voters, run advertisements on TV, etc. All of this costs a lot of money, so they need to do a lot of fundraising to keep your campaign going!

**Debate** - to debate is to discuss opposing viewpoints. The presidential debates are formal discussions among presidential candidates. Before the presidential election, candidates participate in a series of televised debates and answer a lot of tough questions so that voters can hear how their viewpoints differ from one another on all sorts of issues: education, the military, the environment, taxes, the death penalty, etc.

**Election** - to elect is to choose. You can elect to have chocolate ice cream rather than vanilla, or elect to stay home rather than go out to the movies. American citizens elect a president by voting. Presidential elections happen every four years. Election day is the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

**Popular Vote** - the popular vote is the final number of votes cast for each candidate by the people.

**Electoral Vote** - the electoral vote is the number of votes cast for each candidate for president and vice president by the Electoral College, a group of people chosen by the political party’s candidates for president and vice president. These representatives meet in their respective state capitals to cast their votes.

**Inauguration** - the start of something. The presidential inauguration is a formal ceremony where the president is sworn in and officially starts his or her job. This is held on January 20th, two-and-a-half months after the presidential election. At the inauguration ceremony, held on the steps of the Capitol, the president recites an oath: “I do solemnly swear 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 Road To The White House Game Board

# Sample Game Board answers and evidence for the answer:

CONVENTION

## CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS

DEBATES

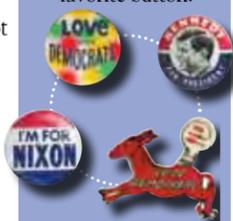
★★★★ BONUS ★★★★★

Listen to the DNC (Democratic National Convention) Acceptance Speech. Complete this sentence to find the theme of JFK's campaign:

"And we stand today on the edge of a \_\_\_\_\_"

What office equipment do you see that is not often used today?

Circle your favorite button.



Make a Button for a campaign. What symbols will you use?

Who were the candidates in the 1960 presidential debates?

Republican

Democrat

Who ran for Vice President with John F. Kennedy?



# ★ ELECTION ★

# 1★9★6★0

Click on the desk to find a file with a memo from Clark Clifford. Circle the candidate he thought won the first televised presidential debate.

Kennedy

Nixon

In what city was the 1960 Democratic National Convention?



**Congratulations!** You (\_\_\_\_\_) and JFK made it to the White House. What was the date of John F. Kennedy's inauguration?

How can you tell it was a close election?



How many votes did each candidate receive?

Kennedy: \_\_\_\_\_

Nixon: \_\_\_\_\_

What do you notice about Nixon?

What do you notice about JFK?

## START

## ← ELECTION →

**Q. In what city was the 1960 Democratic National Convention?**

A. Los Angeles, CA  
Sources: Donkey Coaster, Convention Ticket

**Q. Who ran for Vice President with John F. Kennedy?**

A. Lyndon B. Johnson  
Sources: Leadership for the 60s pin (pin table); Johnson for Vice President poster on the back wall of the office

**Q. Listen to JFK's DNC Acceptance Speech and complete this sentence to find the theme of his campaign.**

A. "And we stand today on the edge of a New Frontier\*" (Television program # 3) Source: JFK's DNC acceptance speech (television program #3)

**Q. What office equipment do you see that is not often used today?**

A. A typewriter  
Source: Campaign Office desktop  
Circle your favorite button.

**Q. Make a campaign button for JFK in this box. What symbol will you use? Why?**

**Q. Who were the candidates in the 1960 presidential debates?**

A. Republican: Richard M. Nixon; Democrat: John F. Kennedy  
Sources: campaign buttons; television - jingle, debates, speeches

**Q. Click on the typewriter to find a file with a memo from Clark Clifford. Circle the candidate he thought won the first televised debate.**

A. John F. Kennedy  
Source: Clark Clifford memo to JFK

**Q. What do you notice about Nixon?**

A. open-ended  
Source: debate excerpts (television program #9, #10)  
Sources: campaign buttons; television - jingle, debates, speeches

**Q. Click on the typewriter to find a file with a memo from Clark Clifford. Circle the candidate he thought won the first televised debate.**

A. John F. Kennedy  
Source: Clark Clifford memo to JFK

**Q. What do you notice about Nixon?**

A. open-ended  
Source: debate excerpts (television program #9, #10)

**Q. What do you notice about Kennedy?**

A. open-ended  
Source: Television programs -- campaign ads, speeches, and debate excerpts #9, #10

**Q. How can you tell it was a close election?**

A. The popular votes were: JFK - 34, 227,096; Nixon -34,108,546  
The Electoral College votes were: JFK -- 303; Nixon -219  
Source: "Election Results: 1960" Map

**Q. What was the date of John F. Kennedy's Inauguration?**

A. January 20, 1961  
Source: student's previous knowledge; White House Diary page 1

## Word Challenge! JFK's Path to the Presidency



Words: campaign, inauguration, debate, candidate, convention, nomination, election, primary

JFK wins this important mini-election in West Virginia on May 10, 1960. Many people there don't want JFK to be president because he is Catholic. He convinces people that they should not vote against him because of his religion.

Word: \_\_\_\_\_

### Part 1: Word Challenge!

Read the information in each square. Fill in the blank with the word that best describes this step on JFK's path to the presidency. Hint: Use the underlined words as your main clue!

### Part 2: Path to the Presidency.

In what order did JFK take each step on the path to the presidency? Number the squares in order: 1-8.

What number? \_\_\_\_\_

John F. Kennedy announces that he is running for president on January 2, 1960 at the Capitol in Washington, D.C. At 42, he is the youngest person to run for president.

Word: \_\_\_\_\_

What number? \_\_\_\_\_

On January 20, 1961, JFK is sworn in as President of the United States. It's a freezing cold day. In his acceptance speech, JFK says these famous words: "Ask not what your country can do for you-ask what you can do for your country."

Word: \_\_\_\_\_

What number? \_\_\_\_\_

On September 26, 1960 JFK and his Republican opponent, Richard Nixon, go on TV to discuss their opposing viewpoints. This is the first time 2 presidential candidates have this kind of discussion on TV.

Word: \_\_\_\_\_

What number? \_\_\_\_\_

During September and October, JFK travels around the country, making speeches and telling people why they should vote for him.

Word: \_\_\_\_\_

What number? \_\_\_\_\_

On July 13, 1960, Democrats name John F. Kennedy as their presidential candidate at the National Convention.

Word: \_\_\_\_\_

## Word Challenge! JFK's Path to the Presidency

(Answer Sheet)



Part 1: Word Challenge! Read the information in each square. Fill in the blank with the word that best describes this step on JFK's path to the presidency. Hint: Use the underlined words as your main clue!

Part 2: Path to the Presidency. In what order did JFK take each step on the path to the presidency? Number the squares in order: 1-8.

Words: campaign, inauguration, debate, candidate, convention, nomination, election, primary

JFK wins this important mini-election in West Virginia on May 10, 1960. Many people there don't want JFK to be president because he is Catholic. He convinces people that they should not vote against him because of his religion.

Word: primary

What number? 2

John F. Kennedy announces that he is running for president on January 2, 1960 at the Capitol in Washington, D.C. At 42, he is the youngest person to run for president.

Word: candidate

What number? 1

On January 11, 1961, JFK is sworn in as President of the United States. It's a freezing cold day. In his acceptance speech, JFK says these famous words: "Ask not what your country can do for you-ask what you can do for your country."

Word: inauguration

What number? 8

On September 26, 1960 JFK and his Republican opponent, Richard Nixon, go on TV to discuss their opposing viewpoints. This is the first time 2 presidential candidates have this kind of discussion on TV.

## Word Challenge! JFK's Path to the Presidency

(Answer Sheet)

Word: debates

What number? 6

During September and October, JFK travels around the country, making speeches and telling people why they should vote for him.

Word: campaign

What number? 5

On July 13, 1960, Democrats name JFK as their presidential candidate at the National Convention.

Word: nomination

What number? 4

In July 1960, thousands of Democrats meet in Los Angeles to choose a candidate for president.

Word: convention

What number? 3

On November 8, 1960, people all over the country turn out to vote for president.

Word: election

What number? 7



## The President at Work

The President's Desk:

White House Diary  
module



The President at Work

**Topic:**

The President's work

Grades: 4 - 6

**Time Required:**

1-2 class periods

### Goals/Rationale

Through an examination of President Kennedy's appointment calendar, students will explore sample days in his presidency and in doing so, consider and identify the roles of the President of the United States.

**Essential Question:** What can we learn about a president's various roles and responsibilities from JFK's official appointment book?

Objectives

Students will:

- conduct internet-based historical research
- analyze a primary source document
- identify the roles of the President

*Connections to Curriculum (Standards)*

*National History Standards*

*Historical Thinking: K-4; #4 and #5*

### Historical Background and Context

The president has an extremely complex and demanding job. Americans place no greater responsibility on any one individual than the president. The Constitution provides only a vague outline of the American presidency. Presidents have defined and extended the powers of office over time. Some presidents thrive at balancing the numerous roles they are expected to play, while others have been less successful doing this. The seven traditional roles of the president are defined in the What Does the President Do? handout.

President Kennedy liked the real and serious challenges that came with being president. According to President Kennedy's speechwriter and counselor, Ted Sorensen, he "thrived on its pressures." He enjoyed a busy day full of continuous action and often liked to fill in the gaps in his appointment schedule.

The White House Diary module provides a day-by-day account of these activities from meetings with advisors and discussions with Congressional representatives to visits from foreign heads of state and speaking engagements. This interactive module allows students to see President Kennedy's schedule for every day of his presidency. It features daily highlights, digital scans of his actual appointment diary (by clicking on "View Appointments"), as well as video, audio, and photographs of the day's events. In this lesson, students gather information about the President's schedule from the

## The President at Work



White House Diary and consider how these activities are representative of the seven traditional roles of the president. With this knowledge, they then match these roles to symbols featured in the Seal of the President of the United States and have the opportunity to create their own interpretation of a seal for the president.

“A President’s Day” lesson plan complements the plan below. The procedure that follows includes the overview reading for “A President’s Day” in order to provide students with explanatory text for a sample day in JFK’s presidency, September 25, 1962.

See [www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), “For Teachers” for “A President’s Day” lesson plan. For students more familiar with the president’s “job”, the lesson below may be abbreviated by skipping this reading and going directly to the assignment in the White House Diary.

### Materials

- White House Diary module/Internet Access
- A Day With President Kennedy handout
- What Does the President Do? handout
- The President’s Seal handout ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), “For Teachers”)
- Image of the President’s Seal
- A President’s Day handout (optional) ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), “For Teachers”)

### Procedure

1. Introduce the term diary. Ask students how they might define a diary. Explain that in this context, diary means an appointment book. Note that the president didn’t record the information into the diary himself; his staff kept this record and made it available to the press.
2. As noted above, as background information, assign students the reading “A President’s Day” or read as a whole class activity. Discuss what President Kennedy did on September 25, 1962 and how these activities reflected the roles and responsibilities of the president’s job. These include: Head of State, Chief Executive, Party Leader, and Commander-in-Chief. (Three roles not specified in the reading are: Chief Diplomat, National Leader, and Manager of the Economy.)
3. As homework have students travel back in time to spend a day with the President. Have each student research one of the following dates in the White House Diary: March 1, 1961 (Executive Order establishes the Peace Corps); February 20, 1962 (John Glenn becomes the first American to orbit the Earth); June 11, 1963 (President Kennedy speaks to the nation and firmly commits his administration to the cause of civil rights);

## The President at Work



June 26, 1963 (President Kennedy on European diplomatic trip speaks in Berlin and travels to his ancestral homeland, Ireland.) Alternatively, ask students to research their birthday for the year 1961, 1962, or 1963. (For students whose birthdays fall between November 23-December 31, they will have two dates to look at - 1961 and 1962 as a result of President Kennedy’s death on November 22, 1963.)

Distribute the handout, A Day with President Kennedy and ask them to record their answers based on the events of that day.

3. As a class or in smaller groups, have students share their findings and list them on the board or in their groups. Ask them to see if there are similarities in the activities. Have them group like activities. What presidential roles or responsibilities might they assign to these activities?
4. Distribute the handout The President’s Job. Ask a student(s) to read the definitions aloud. Have students see how closely designation of roles align with the presidential roles definitions. Have them match the roles to the presidential activities they researched and discussed. Some activities may fit more than one role. Ask students what other roles they identified in addition to the seven traditional roles of the presidency.
5. Assessment. Have students write a summary of their day with the president in the form of an article or journal entry. Have them explain what they understand the president’s job to be based on the White House Diary, citing examples from activities they researched or those of their classmates. They may also research the JFK Timeline on the Library’s website to get an idea of what was going on in the country or around the world that month. And, they may also research speeches or remarks made that day or the individual people or groups with whom the President met.

### Lesson Extension

Begin by introducing the President’s Seal. Show the Seal. Explain its history. The Seal of the President of the United States is used to mark correspondence from the president to the United States Congress and as a symbol of the presidency. The central design is based on the Great Seal of the United States. It is the official coat of arms of the U.S. presidency. Ask where they may have seen the Seal before (presidential flag, vehicles, podiums, and even the carpet in the Oval Office.) Although President Rutherford B. Hayes used a presidential seal in 1877, the design of today’s seal was specified in 1945 by executive order by President Harry S. Truman. Distribute the handout, The President’s Seal. Have students “Discover the Symbols in the Seal” and match the symbols with their meaning. Students may score their work of the matching game with the answer code on the back page of the handout. Then have students create a new seal of their own design based on their understanding of the roles of the president. Students may score their work of the matching game with the answer code on the back page of the handout. Display student seals as an exhibit on the “President’s Job.”



## The President at Work



### What does the President Do? Roles and Responsibilities of the President

**Commander in Chief:**  
The president serves as commander in chief of the armed forces, and has the responsibility for making decisions about sending young men and women in the armed forces to dangerous places around the world.

**Chief Executive:**  
The president serves as the government's chief executive, or head of the Executive Branch of the U.S. government. The Executive Branch carries out laws passed by Congress (the Legislative Branch) and performs other essential services.

It includes departments such as Education, Defense, Treasury, State, Energy, etc. The president also has the authority to approve or veto laws proposed by Congress and to appoint officials, with the advice and the consent of the Senate.

**Chief Diplomat:**  
As chief diplomat, the president has the power to make treaties with foreign governments and to maintain formal relationships with other nations..

**Ceremonial Head of State:**  
The president is in charge of international relations and often meets with foreign heads of state, ambassadors, and government officials.

**Manager of the Economy:**  
The president is expected to maintain the financial health of the nation, and to keep America a prosperous nation.

**Party Leader:**  
The president meets with members of his or her party to discuss important issues and legislative initiatives.

**National Leader:**  
The president articulates the nation's priorities and new challenges, and is expected to comfort and inspire in times of crisis.



## A Day with President Kennedy



Travel back in time to the early 1960s and spend a day with JFK.  
See if you can keep up with him!

Date

Day of the Week

What time does the president begin working?

What does he do?

- Does he make speeches? If so, on what subject(s)? Who is his audience?
- Does he have a news conference?
- Does he sign legislation? If so, what is the purpose of the legislation?
- Does he issue any executive orders? If so, what is the purpose of the order?
- Does he meet with foreign leaders? Who? From what country?
- Does he participate in any ceremonies? What kind and where?
- Does he meet with members of Congress? Who? What is the topic of the meeting?
- What else does he do?

What time is his last appointment for the day?

## Sail the Victura!



Click on the piece of Scrimshaw on the desk.

Scrimshaw is the white triangular piece that has engravings on it.

Once you click on the scrimshaw, watch the video. A scrapbook will appear when the video is finished. Click on the map in the bottom right hand corner. A map will appear and you will be able to sail your boat to different ports on Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

With your cursor click on Plymouth, MA, and sail to this historic port.

- What is Scrimshaw?
- Is it still produced today?

**Get back on your boat and sail to the port near Chatham, MA.**

- What national seashore did President Kennedy authorize on August 7, 1961?
- Why did President Kennedy take this action?
- On November 9, 1620, what famous ship landed on what is now known as Coast Guard Beach?



**Your next port of call is Wellfleet, MA. Sail the Victura into the harbor.**

- Which model ship shows that France helped the American colonies fight the British during the Revolutionary War?

**Now, sail up to Boston, which is the red “x” mark in the top left hand side of the map.**

- What famous American warship is moored in Charlestown, MA?

**Finish your trip by sailing to Hyannisport and watch the short film.**

List two things that President Kennedy liked to do during his leisure time.

- 1.
- 2.



## Integrating Ole Miss: How should President Kennedy Respond?



**Essential Question:** What role should the President take in enforcing civil rights?

Goals: Through an examination of primary source materials on the 1962 integration of the University of Mississippi, students will explore the different positions held by prominent figures on the issue and consider the role of the President in enforcing civil rights.

### Instructional Objectives:

Students will be able to

- conduct internet-based historical research.
- analyze a primary source document and identify the author's position on the integration of the University of Mississippi.
- use primary source evidence to defend an argument.

**Historical Background:** In the fall of 1962 the college town of Oxford, Mississippi, erupted in violence. At the center of the controversy stood James Meredith, an African American who was attempting to register at the all-white University of Mississippi, known as “Ole Miss.” Meredith had the support of the federal government, which insisted that Mississippi honor the rights of all its citizens, regardless of race. Mississippi’s refusal led to a showdown between state and federal authorities and the storming of the campus by a segregationist mob. Two people died and dozens were injured. In the end, Ole Miss, the state of Mississippi, and the nation were forever changed.

**Prior Knowledge and Skills:** Students should be familiar with the term “civil rights” and have a basic understanding of the struggle for civil rights in the United States during the 1960s.

### Materials:

- Internet Access
- Take a Stand Labels
- Graphic Organizer (included)

### Procedure:

In this lesson, students will work in groups to explore the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library’s web site exhibit “Integrating Ole Miss.” Each group of students will need ample access and time to work on a computer with internet access. If this is not possible, print out and distribute copies of the documents to each group.

This lesson is divided into three parts.

### Part I: Historical Research

1. Visit the Kennedy Library’s online exhibit “Integrating Ole Miss” (<http://jfklibrary.org/meredith/index.htm>). With the whole class, read the three documents found in

## Integrating Ole Miss: How should President Kennedy Respond?



the section labeled “The Controversy” to introduce students to the issues involved in the integration of the University of Mississippi.

2. Divide the class into groups and have each group examine the controversy from one of the following perspectives:
  - a. James Meredith and the NAACP
  - b. John F. Kennedy and the federal government
  - c. Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett
  - d. The University of Mississippi
  - e. Residents of Mississippi
  - f. Governors/Senators from southern states
  - g. Civil Rights Leaders
3. Arrange computer access for each group and direct students to visit “Integrating Ole Miss.” Tell students to search the exhibit for primary source materials related to the perspective they were assigned to.
4. Have students analyze their documents and answer the following questions based on the perspective they were assigned. (A graphic organizer is provided.)
  - a. What position does your individual/group take on the integration of the University of Mississippi?
  - b. What arguments do they make and what evidence do they use to support their arguments?
  - c. Critique their argument. Is it compelling? What are its flaws?

### Part II: “Take a Stand”

1. In this activity, students move to different parts of the room, depending upon whether they agree or disagree with a statement. This enables students to see a visual representation of competing ideas.
2. To set up this “Take a Stand” activity, write each of the following terms on a separate sheet of paper:
  - a. Strongly Agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly Disagree

## Integrating Ole Miss: How should President Kennedy Respond?



- Place the “Strongly Agree” and “Strongly Disagree” signs on opposite sides of a wall. Place the other three signs on the wall in between the two outer signs.
- Read each of the following statements out loud to the class. After each statement, ask each group (or a representative from each group) to stand under the sign that best reflects how the individual/group they focused on would respond to the statement. Record how the groups responded to the statement on a chart and ask each group to provide evidence from the documents they looked at to support “their stand.” Repeat this process for each statement.

### Statements:

- James Meredith should be allowed to enter the University of Mississippi.
  - The federal government has the right to intervene in this case.
  - Southern states should determine who goes to a state school.
  - Supreme Court rulings must be enforced.
- Discuss the different positions that the different individuals/groups took on the integration of the University of Mississippi, the evidence they used to support their positions, and the different ways that President Kennedy could respond to the controversy.

### Part III: Assessment

Have students complete one of the following writing prompts:

- Imagine that you are President Kennedy. Write a speech describing the actions you will take in response to James Meredith’s attempt to enter the University of Mississippi and explain the reasons behind your actions.
- Imagine that you are an advisor to President Kennedy. Write a memo to the President where you outline the different options that President Kennedy can take in response to the controversy over James Meredith’s admission to the University of Mississippi. In your memo, describe how key people/groups stand on the issue and then give your advice on how the President should respond.
- Imagine you are one of the individuals/groups that your class discussed. Write a letter to President Kennedy to try to convince the President that your position is the correct one. Use evidence from the primary source documents to support your argument and then tell the President what you think he should do in response to the crisis.

### Lesson Extension:

- Have students compare and contrast the integration of the University of Mississippi with the integration of the University of Alabama or Little Rock Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.

## Integrating Ole Miss: How should President Kennedy Respond?



As you read through the documents, consider the following questions:

- What position does your individual/group take on the integration of the University of Mississippi?
- What arguments do they make and what evidence do they use to support their arguments?
- Critique their argument. Is it compelling? What are its flaws?

(Write your answers in the space provided below)

Individual/Group:

Position on the integration of the University of Mississippi:

Evidence used to support position:

Critique the argument:

Additional research:

## The 1960 Campaign: John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the “Blue Bomb”

### The President’s Desk: Campaign Button module



#### Topic:

Civil rights in the 1960

presidential campaign

Grade: 9-12

#### Time Required:

1-2 class sessions

### Goals/Rationale

During the 1960 presidential election, both candidates sought ways to persuade all Americans to vote for them. In a nation intensely divided over race, this often involved delicate negotiations as the two candidates lobbied for the support of black voters, while attempting to maintain support from white voters. This was the challenge that John F. Kennedy faced at the end of his campaign in October 1960. In this lesson, students will examine one instance where Kennedy made a statement about civil rights that galvanized black voters to support the Democratic Party

### Essential Question:

How did the issue of civil rights factor the 1960 presidential campaign?

### Objectives

Students will:

analyze a primary source and hypothesize about its historical significance.

analyze a map to interpret voting patterns.

identify a significant event related to civil rights in the 1960 presidential campaign.

Connections to Curriculum (Standards)

*National History Standards*

*Standard 2: Historical Comprehension (Historical Thinking)*

*Standard 4: The struggle for racial and gender equality and for the extension of civil liberties. (U.S. History Standards, 5-12)*

*Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Frameworks*

*USH.25 Analyze the origins, goals, and key events of the Civil Rights movement.*

### Historical Background and Context

Although his campaign focused heavily on international issues, presidential hopeful John F. Kennedy was keenly aware of the role that domestic issues such as civil rights would play in the 1960 presidential election. As the Democratic Party’s nominee, Kennedy faced the challenge of promoting policies that white southern Democrats supported while, at the same time, courting black voters away from the Republican Party, the Party that many black voters aligned with after the Civil War because it was the party of Abraham Lincoln and emancipation.

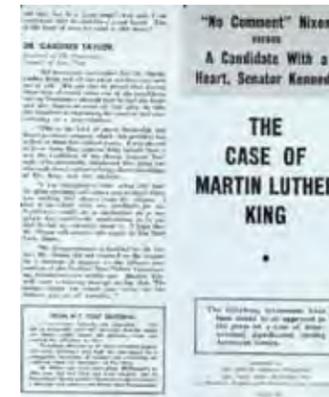
One of the most significant moments where Kennedy faced this challenge occurred towards the end of the campaign. In October 1960, Martin Luther King, Jr. was arrested for the first time after participating in a sit-in with a group of students in Atlanta, Georgia. When King and the students were arrested, they chose to remain in jail instead

## The 1960 Campaign: John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the “Blue Bomb”

of paying bail to be released. King’s arrest was compounded after he was ordered to serve four months at a hard labor prison for a previous minor traffic offense.

Although it was politically risky, John F. Kennedy called Martin Luther King, Jr.’s wife Coretta, to express his sympathy and concern over King’s imprisonment. Shortly thereafter, his brother Robert Kennedy called the judge in charge of the case and King was released the following day. Fearing that news of the phone calls could cost white votes in the South, some Kennedy staffers quickly produced a pamphlet on blue paper (which they called “the blue bomb”) to boost support among African-American voters. The pamphlet highlighted Kennedy’s phone call to Mrs. King and capitalized on Republican opponent Richard Nixon’s silence on the matter. Approximately two million copies of the pamphlet were distributed in the week before the election.

Some believe that the phone call and “the blue bomb” were key factors in Kennedy’s narrow victory. Post-election analysis reveals a noticeable increase in the percentage of African-Americans voting Democratic.



### Materials

Student Handout

Directions and Questions

“blue bomb” pamphlet ([www.jfklibrary.org](http://www.jfklibrary.org), “For Teachers”)

1960 Presidential Electoral map

### Procedure

Have students read the historical background introduction on the student handout either individually or as a whole class.

Have students read “the blue bomb” pamphlet. Have them insert page 2 inside page 1 and fold into a pamphlet. Remind students that the original was a pamphlet and that the copy in the handout shows the front and back side. Therefore, they should start reading the right hand column of the first page, followed by the left and right hand columns on the second page, and finish with the left hand column of the first page. (Page numbers have been added to further clarify page order.)

Have students answer the questions on the handout.

### Assessment

Assess students’ answers to the questions on the handout.

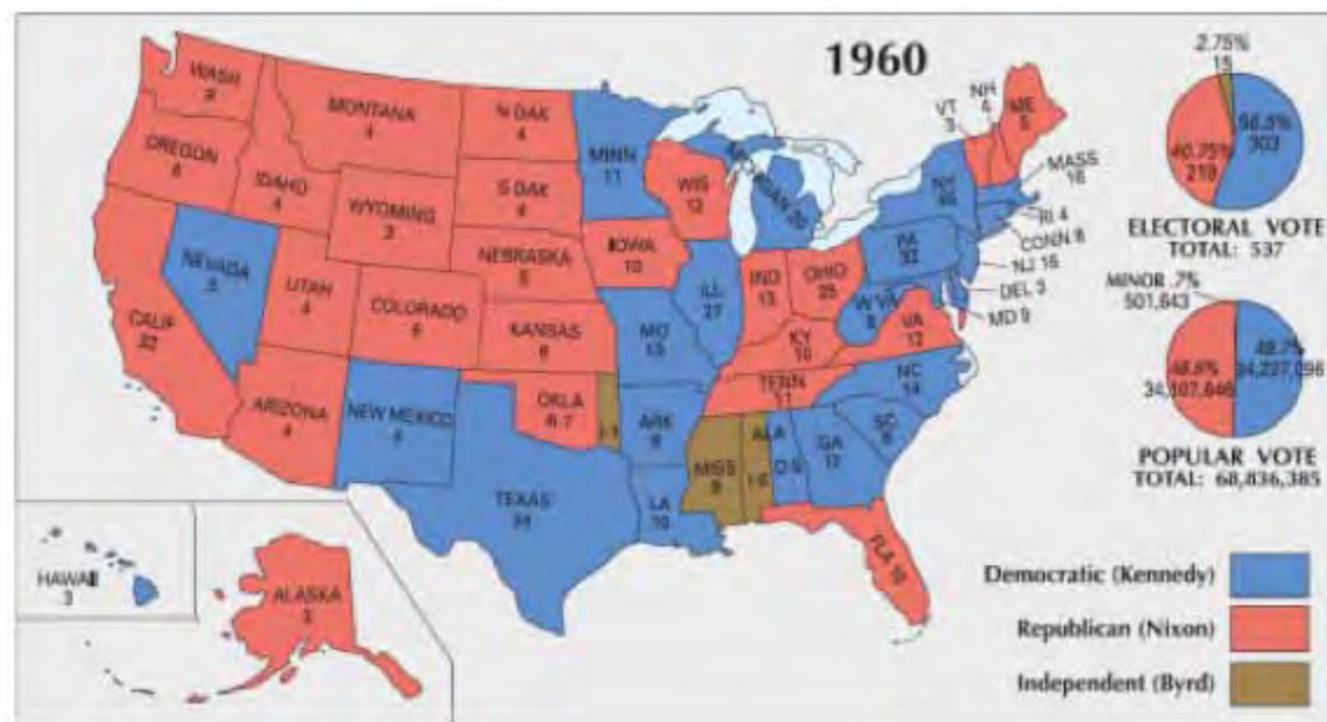
## The 1960 Campaign: John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the “Blue Bomb”

### Lesson Extensions

Have students conduct research on Richard Nixon’s presidential campaign to create a response pamphlet to “the blue bomb” from Nixon’s perspective.

Have students explore the other campaign materials on the President’s Desk web site. Compare and contrast those materials with “the blue bomb.” How did the Kennedy campaign attempt to address and appeal to different constituencies?

Ask them to consider – how did John F. Kennedy do in the Deep South? Show them the map of the results of the 1960 election in the Campaign Button module.



## The 1960 Campaign: John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the “Blue Bomb”

### The 1960 Campaign: John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and the “Blue Bomb”



Although his campaign focused heavily on international issues, presidential hopeful John F. Kennedy was keenly aware of the role that domestic issues such as civil rights would play in the 1960 presidential election. As the Democratic Party’s nominee, Kennedy faced the challenge of promoting policies that white southern Democrats supported, many of whom he needed to pass legislation once in office, while, at the same time, court black voters away from Richard Nixon and the Republican Party, the Party traditionally associated with Abraham Lincoln and emancipation.

One of the most significant moments where Kennedy faced this challenge occurred towards the end of the campaign. In October 1960, Martin Luther King, Jr. was arrested for the first time after participating in a sit-in with a group of students in Atlanta, Georgia. When King and the students were arrested, they chose to remain in jail instead of paying bail. King’s arrest was compounded after he was ordered to serve four months at a hard labor prison for a previous minor traffic offense.

Although it was politically risky, John F. Kennedy called Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s wife Coretta, who was six months pregnant at the time, to express his sympathy and concern over King’s imprisonment. Shortly thereafter, Robert Kennedy called the judge who ordered King’s release the next day. Fearing that news of the phone calls could cost white votes in the South, some Kennedy staffers quickly produced a pamphlet on blue paper (which they called “the blue bomb”) to boost support among African-American voters. The pamphlet quoted Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; King’s father Martin Luther King, Sr.; King’s wife Coretta; and two pastors associated with King, Reverend Ralph Abernathy and Dr. Gardner Taylor. The pamphlet highlighted Kennedy’s phone call to Mrs. King and capitalized on Republican opponent Richard Nixon’s silence on the matter. Approximately two million copies were distributed in the week before the election, mostly through African American churches.

Some people have claimed that the phone call and “the blue bomb” were key factors in Kennedy’s narrow victory in the election. Post-election analysis reveals a noticeable increase in the percentage of African-Americans voting Democratic.

The 1960 Campaign: John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the “Blue Bomb”

not only has he a great mind—but now I am convinced that he also has a great heart. This is the kind of man we need at this hour.”

**DR. GARDNER TAYLOR**  
President of The Protestant Council of New York

“All Americans can rejoice that Dr. Martin Luther King and all the sit-in students are now out of jail. We can also be proud that during these days of moral crisis one of the candidates for the Presidency showed that he had the heart and the American sense of fair play to take the initiative in expressing his concern and contributing to a just solution.

“This is the kind of moral leadership and direct personal concern which this problem has lacked in these last critical years. I was pleased to learn from Mrs. Coretta King herself that it was the candidate of my choice, Senator Kennedy, who personally telephoned Mrs. King and who took direct action to bring about the release of Dr. King and the students.

“I am disappointed that when this time for plain speaking and action was at hand, there was nothing but silence from Mr. Nixon. I find it incredible that any candidate for the Presidency would be so insensitive to a case which has world-wide implications as to say that he has no comment about it. I hope that Mr. Nixon will correct this report in The New York Times.

“My disappointment is doubled by the fact that Mr. Nixon did not respond to the request for a message of support to the Atlanta convention of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee two weeks ago. Senator Kennedy sent a stirring message saying that ‘The human rights for which you strive are the definite goal of all America.’”

**FROM N.Y. POST EDITORIAL**  
It was Senator Kennedy who responded . . . He did so presumably with full awareness that his words and deeds would inflame the Southern racists and multiply his difficulties in Dixie.  
Throughout this interval Mr. Nixon remained passive and silent, ignoring a plea from the sit-in group for a comparable declaration of support and articulating no sentiment about the harassment of Rev. King.  
Mr. Nixon may have some pious afterthoughts to offer now that Rev. King has been released. But in this dramatic human episode Senator Kennedy has looked a lot larger and warmer—and bolder—than his opponent.

“No Comment” Nixon  
versus  
A Candidate With a  
Heart, Senator Kennedy

THE  
CASE OF  
MARTIN LUTHER  
KING

The following statements have been issued to or appeared in the press on a case of international significance testing American justice.

Sponsored by:  
THE FREEDOM CRUSADE COMMITTEE  
5336 Poplar Street, Philadelphia, Pa.  
Rev. Marshall L. Shepard and Dr. William A. Gray, Co-Chairmen

The 1960 Campaign: John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the “Blue Bomb”

American Justice on Trial

**MRS. MARTIN LUTHER KING:**

“It certainly made me feel good that he called me personally and let me know how he felt. Senator Kennedy said he was very much concerned about both of us. He said this must be hard on me. He wanted me to know he was thinking about us and he would do all he could to help.

“I told him I appreciated it and hoped he would help. I had the feeling that if he was that much concerned he would do what he could so that Mr. King would be let out of jail.

“I have heard nothing from the Vice President or anyone on his staff. Mr. Nixon has been very quiet.”

**REV. MARTIN LUTHER KING, SR.:**

“I had expected to vote against Senator Kennedy because of his religion. But now he can be my President, Catholic or whatever he is.

“It took courage to call my daughter-in-law at a time like this. He has the moral courage to stand up for what he knows is right. He has shown his sympathy and concern and his respect for the Constitutional rights of all Americans.

“I’ve got all my votes and I’ve got a suitcase and I’m going to take them up there and dump them in his lap.”

**REV. RALPH ABERNATHY**

President, Montgomery Improvement Association; Secretary-Treasurer, Southern Christian Leadership Conference

“I earnestly and sincerely feel that it is time for all of us to take off our Nixon buttons. I wish to make it crystal clear that I am not hog-tied to any party. My first concern is for the 350-year long struggle of our people.

“Now I have made up my mind to vote for Senator Kennedy because I am convinced he is concerned about our struggle.

“Senator Kennedy did something great and wonderful when he personally called Mrs. Coretta King and helped free Dr. Martin Luther King. This was the kind of act I was waiting for. It was not just Dr. King on trial—America was on trial.

“Mr. Nixon could have helped, but he took no step in this direction. It is my understanding that he refused even to comment on the case.

“I learned a long time ago that one kindness deserves another. Since Mr. Nixon has been silent through all this, I am going to return his silence when I go into the voting booth.

“Senator Kennedy showed his great concern for humanity when he acted first without counting the cost. He risked his political welfare in the South. We must offset whatever loss he may sustain.

“He has my wholehearted support because

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

“I am deeply indebted to Senator Kennedy who served as a great force in making my release possible. It took a lot of courage for Senator Kennedy to do this, especially in Georgia. For him to be that courageous shows that he is really acting upon principle and not expediency. He did it because of his great concern and his humanitarian bent.

“I hold Senator Kennedy in very high esteem. I am convinced he will seek to exercise the power of his office to fully implement the civil rights plank of his party’s platform.

“I never intend to be a religious bigot. I never intend to reject a man running for President of the United States just because he is a Catholic. Religious bigotry is as immoral, un-democratic, un-American and un-Christian as racial bigotry.”

## The 1960 Campaign: John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the “Blue Bomb”



### Directions:

Read “the blue bomb” pamphlet and answer the following questions. (Create the pamphlet by folding each page in half and inserting page 2 inside page 1.)

How does the pamphlet portray John F. Kennedy?

How does the pamphlet portray Richard M. Nixon?

How might you explain Nixon’s position?

Up until October 1960, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the other individuals quoted on the pamphlet, had not given their support to John F. Kennedy. What were some of their reasons for not supporting Kennedy in the past?

What were some of their reasons for voting for Kennedy after Martin Luther King, Jr. was released from jail?

What do you think the impact of this pamphlet might have on voters? Explain your answer.

## The Cuban Missile Crisis: How to Respond?

Secret recording button module



**Topic:**  
The Cuban Missile Crisis  
**Grade Level:** 9-12  
**Subject Area:**  
U.S. and World History after World War II  
**Time Required:**  
1 class period

## The Cuban Missile Crisis: How to Respond?

The Cuban Missile Crisis: How to Respond?

Topic: The Cuban Missile Crisis

Grade Level: 9-12

Subject Area: U.S. and World History after World War II

Time Required: 1 class period

### Goals/Rationale

During the Cuban Missile Crisis, Kennedy’s advisers discussed many options regarding how they might respond to Soviet missiles in Cuba. In this lesson plan, students consider some of the options discussed, what groups and which individuals supported each option, and the pros and cons of each option.

**Essential Question:** Does an individual’s role in government influence his or her view on how to respond to important issues?

Connections to Curriculum (Standards)

*National History Standards*

*U.S. History, Era 9*

*Standard 2: How the Cold War and conflicts in Korea and Vietnam influenced domestic and international politics.*

*Standard 2A: The student understands the international origins and domestic consequences of the Cold War.*

*MA History and Social Science Curriculum Frameworks*

*USII.19 - Analyze the sources and, with a map of the world, locate the areas of Cold War conflict between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. (H, G)*

### Objectives

Students will:

- discuss some of the options considered by Kennedy’s advisers during the Cuban Missile Crisis.
- identify the governmental role of participants involved in decision-making and consider whether or not their role influenced their choice of option(s).
- consider the ramifications of each option.
- evaluate the additional information that might have been helpful as of 10/18/62 for Kennedy and his staff to know in order to make the most effective decision.

## The Cuban Missile Crisis: How to Respond?

### The Cuban Missile Crisis: How to Respond?

Secret recording  
button module



#### Materials

President's Desk Recording - Cuban Missile Crisis Meeting, 10/16/62: (<http://jfk.ibminteractive.com/#/secretTapes>)

Memo written by Ted Sorensen for President Kennedy, dated 10/18/62 (<http://microsites.jfklibrary.org/cmc/oct18/>)

#### Historical Background

At 8:45 AM on October 16, 1962, National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy alerted President Kennedy that a major international crisis was at hand. Two days earlier a United States military surveillance aircraft had taken hundreds of aerial photographs of Cuba. CIA analysts, working around the clock, had deciphered in the pictures conclusive evidence that a Soviet missile base was under construction near San Cristobal, Cuba; just 90 miles from the coast of Florida. The most dangerous encounter in the Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union had begun.

After President Kennedy and principal foreign policy and national defense officials were briefed on the U-2 spy plane findings, discussions began on how to respond to the challenge. Two principal courses were offered: an air strike and invasion, or a naval quarantine with the threat of further military action. To avoid arousing public concern, the president maintained his official schedule, meeting periodically with advisors to discuss the status of events in Cuba and possible strategies.

After many long and difficult meetings, Kennedy decided to place a naval blockade, or a ring of ships, around Cuba. The aim of this "quarantine," as he called it, was to prevent the Soviets from bringing in more military supplies. He demanded the removal of the missiles already there and the destruction of the sites. On October 22, President Kennedy spoke to the nation about the crisis in a televised address.

No one was sure how Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev would respond to the naval blockade and U.S. demands. But the leaders of both superpowers recognized the devastating possibility of a nuclear war and publicly agreed to a deal in which the Soviets would dismantle the weapon sites in exchange for a pledge from the United States not to invade Cuba. In a separate deal, which remained secret for more than twenty-five years, the United States also agreed to remove its nuclear missiles from Turkey. Although the Soviets removed their missiles from Cuba, they escalated the building of their military arsenal; the missile crisis was over, the arms race was not.

## The Cuban Missile Crisis: How to Respond?

### The Cuban Missile Crisis: How to Respond?

Secret recording  
button module



#### Procedure

1. Have students listen to Defense Secretary Robert McNamara's 10/16/62 discussion of possible responses to the missiles in Cuba. McNamara outlines three approaches (1) political (2) "open surveillance" and (3) military action. Have students note McNamara's comments on each approach.

2. Have students read Ted Sorensen's memo as of 10/18/62 (<http://microsites.jfklibrary.org/cmc/oct18/>) in which he spells out the various options and who supports which option. Ask them:

- What were the options that Kennedy's advisers were considering as of October 18th?
- What positions in the government did each of these officials hold? How might those positions relate to their recommendations?
- If you were the President, what information would you want to know to rule out or go forward with each of these options?

#### Assessment

- Have students research the arguments of one of Kennedy's advisers mentioned in Sorensen's memo and/or McNamara's discussion and then have write a 2-3 page essay on the rationales for their adviser's arguments and some follow-up questions that President Kennedy might have asked of their adviser.

A non-Flash version of the Desk will be available in the future.

The primary sources that follow- selected documents and transcriptions of secret presidential recordings -- are included here for easy reference.

# Documentary Materials

## Documents

Letter #1 from John F. Kennedy to his family and transcription

Letter #2 from John F. Kennedy to his family and transcription

Letter from Walter T. Apley to Senator John F. Kennedy

Letter from Senator John F. Kennedy to Walter T. Apley

Certificate from Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron Training Center, Melville, RI

Memo from Clark M. Clifford to Senator John F. Kennedy



Dear Dad, Mother + Brother + Sisters:  
 I'm sorry that I can't  
 write sooner - but I've been  
 extremely occupied with the Sumter  
 Pacific phase of this total-global-  
 war. I have finally seen what I  
 came 10,000 miles to see - and to  
 the question: was it worth coming  
 10,000 miles to see - the answer -  
 with a quick look up into the air -  
 is yes - but I must admit  
 that a 10,000 mile trip ~~to see~~ in  
 the other direction to see peace -  
 would be a heck of a lot more  
 worth while.

I can't tell you in  
 much detail about where I am  
 or what I'm doing - but will try to

a son - and when he grows  
up - he can come out and  
reunite Bobby. Daddy better  
stay home - and join the W.P.B.

Dach has stood up fine  
at the rest of me is O.K. also  
On reading back over the letter  
I may have caused you some  
worry - don't - am in an excellent  
spot - in the best duty I could  
possibly be in the navy - and we  
have the boat going very fast.  
We can always get away.

Love to all  
over Jack.

How about those victrola needles -  
and that small camera  
& film - you can put the  
needles in an air-mail letter.

Have not seen Jerry lately  
but he's around some place -  
Saw Jack Pierrepont yesterday  
He has rotten duty and  
is moaning like the devil.  
Am serving under Kelly.  
(They were splendid) now. He  
does a good job and am  
fortunate

Dear Dad & Mother & Brothers and Sisters:

I'm sorry that I haven't written sooner – but I've been extremely occupied with the South Pacific phase of this total global war. I have finally seen what I came 10,000 miles to see – and to the question was it worth coming 10,000 miles to see – the answer – with a quick look up in the air – is yes – but I must admit that a 10,000 mile trip in the other direction to see peace – would be a heck of a lot more worthwhile.

I can't tell you in much detail about where I am or what doing – but I will try to .....a son – and when he grows up – he can come out and relieve Bobby. Teddy better stay home – and join the W.P.B.

Back has stood up fine – the rest of me is O.K. also. On reading back over the letter I may have caused you some worry – don't – am in an excellent spot—in the best duty I could possibly be in the Navy – and we have the boat going very fast. We can always get away.

Love to all,  
Jack

over  
How about those victrola needles – and that small camera & film – you can put the needles in an air mail letter.

Have not seen Jerry lately but he is around someplace – Saw Jack Pierrepont yesterday. He has rotten duty and is moaning like the devil. Am serving under Kelly (They were expendable) now. He does a good job and am fortunate.

Master list #2  
Aug. 12-1943

Dear Folks:  
This is just  
a short note  
to tell you that  
I am alive – and  
not kicking – in  
spite of any reports  
that you may happen  
to hear. It was  
heaved otherwise for  
a few days – so  
reports or rumors  
may have gotten back

August 12 - 1943

Dear Folks:

This is just a short note to tell you that I am alive and not kicking in spite of any reports that you may happen to hear. It was believed otherwise for a few days - so reports and rumors may have gotten back to you. Fortunately they misjudged the durability of a Kennedy - [and] sp? am back at the base now and am OK. As soon as possible I shall try to give you the whole story.

Much love to you all

Jack

To you. Fortunately  
they misjudged the  
durability of a Kennedy -  
and am back at  
the base now and  
am OK. As soon  
as possible I shall  
try to give you  
the whole story.  
Much love to you all  
Jack

RECEIVED Feb 14 1960

Salem Heights School  
Salem, Oregon  
February 29, 1960

Senator John Kennedy  
% The Senate  
Washington 6, D.C.

Dear Mr. Kennedy: x

In view of the fact that the Presidential elections are being held this November, my sixth grade class decided to elect a President from the list of potential candidates

The class first had a straw vote and the outcome was this:

Nixon	17
Stevenson	8
Kennedy	2
Humphrey	0
Johnson	0
Rockefeller	0
Symington	0

Our teacher, Mrs. Mendelson, asked for volunteers to head each candidate's campaign, and I volunteered to head yours. We all were allowed four posters.

Two weeks later we had the arguments on who was the best man for ~~president~~ President. After the arguments, we voted for a President.

Kennedy	12
Nixon	8
Stevenson	7
Humphrey	0
Johnson	0
Rockefeller	0
Symington	0

As you and Mr. Nixon were fairly close we decided to vote again between you two,

Kennedy	15
Nixon	12

Good luck in the primaries.

Your Salem Heights  
Campaign Manager,  
Walter T. Apley, Jr.

1 - OREGON/Gen. (Apley, Walter, Jr.)  
1 - OREGON/Trip File (4/60)

COPY

April 7, 1960

Mr. Walter T. Apley, Jr.  
Salem Heights School  
Salem, Oregon

Dear Walt:

I want to thank you for your letter. I was pleased to see the results of your class's election, and I am grateful to you for your outstanding efforts in my behalf. Certainly my victory in the second vote demonstrated what an effective campaign manager you are, and I am both proud and fortunate to have had you representing me.

I tentatively plan to be in Salem on Sunday, April 24, for a Young Democrats reception. Should this materialize, I hope that I will have an opportunity to thank you personally for your impressive work.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

John F. Kennedy

JFK/jms

Certificate from Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron Training Center



9/27/60

MEMORANDUM ON TELEVISION DEBATE  
WITH VICE PRESIDENT NIXON, SEPTEMBER 26TH

To: Senator John F. Kennedy  
From: Clark M. Clifford

Your time is so limited, I shall make my comments as brief as possible.

- 1) You clearly came out the winner. You were clear, concise and very convincing.
- 2) You kept Nixon on the defensive. This kept him off balance and was a great plus for you.
- 3) Unquestionably this appearance made you votes. I feel sure the other three will do the same.

Suggestions.

- 1) Nixon is making a determined effort to convince the American people that your and his goals are the same. That the only difference lies in the means to attain those goals.

This is false. The goals are very different, and he must not be permitted to create the illusion that you and he are working toward the same end.

Be prepared the next time to point out specifically the positive differences that exist in goals, i. e., minimum wage, housing, etc.

If Nixon can convince the people that his and your philosophies are the same, then he will rob you of one of your greatest strengths.

- 2) Attention must be given to adding greater warmth to your image. If you can retain the technical brilliance and obvious ability, but also project the element of warm, human understanding, you will possess an unbeatable combination.

Give illustrations based upon contacts with service personnel when you were in the Navy. Also conversations you have had with ordinary

people who have discussed their problems with you during the campaign.

- 3) Take advantage of every opportunity to appear with Nixon. You are better than he is.

C. M. C.

September 27, 1960

A non-Flash version of the Desk will be available in the future.  
The primary sources that follow- selected documents and transcriptions of secret presidential recordings -- are included here for easy reference.

# Documentary Materials

## Secret Taping Button Transcripts

Vietnam

Cuban Missile Crisis

Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

Space

Civil Rights



## Secret Taping Button Transcripts



### 1. Vietnam:

#### 1. Vietnam:

Excerpt compilation file; clips 1-6 for 8/26/63-8/28/63 with transcription

#### Description:

The following are excerpts of White House Presidential recordings of four meetings between President Kennedy and his highest level Vietnam advisors in late August of 1963.

These meetings are the first ones to take place after Cable 243, described by some historians as the "single most controversial cable of the Vietnam War," was drafted on Saturday August 24, 1963 when President Kennedy, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, and CIA Director John McCone were all out of town. The telegram set a course for the eventual coup in Vietnam on November 1, 1963 leading to the fall of President Diem and his death on November 2, 1963.

After the cable was sent and during the course of four days of meetings, President Kennedy met with his advisors to discuss the evolving situation in Vietnam and what steps should be taken. There was considerable disagreement between the State Department advisors, who had drafted Cable 243 and the President's military and intelligence advisors on whether the coup was advisable and what support it would have in Vietnam with the Vietnamese military.

#### Details

The following are excerpts of White House Presidential recordings of four meetings between President Kennedy and his highest level Vietnam advisors in late August of 1963.

These meetings are the first ones to take place after Cable 243, described by some historians as the "single most controversial cable of the Vietnam War," was drafted on Saturday August 24, 1963 when President Kennedy, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, and CIA Director John McCone were all out of town. The telegram set a course for the eventual coup in Vietnam on November 1, 1963 leading to the fall of President Diem and his death on November 2, 1963.

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#### Transcript

#### Vietnam Excerpt Compilation file:

**Clip 1: 8/26/63**  
107 Reel 1 at 59:16  
8/26/63 CD at 6:53  
Excerpt CD at :04

President Kennedy: Diem and his brother with all of their defects have (just reached) in the situation there which permit the - Harkins, based on his report to us a week ago, to feel that this thing is really moving to a positive, successful conclusion. So when we move to eliminate a government, we want to be sure we're not doing it just because the New York Times is excited about it.

**Clip 2: 8/27/63**  
107 Reel 3 at 18:56  
8/27/63 CD at 56:26  
Excerpt CD at :35

President Kennedy: What about - in the wire that went Saturday, what's the degree of - My impression was that based on the wire that went out Saturday, asked General Harkins and Ambassador Lodge recommending a course of action unless they disagreed. (General Taylor then states that Harkins concurred). That's right, so I think we ought to find out whether Harkins doesn't agree with this - then I think we ought to get off this pretty quick.

**Clip 3: 8/27/63**  
107 Reel 3 at 20:36  
8/27/63 CD at 58:00  
Excerpt CD at 1:07

President Kennedy: Let's get out a cable - shall we now - and - in which we would ask them, based on what they know as of now, what they feel their prospects are for success and do they recommend continuing it or do they recommend now waiting on the grounds as suggested by the Ambassador? We might wait and see whether the situation begins to disintegrate and then the United States would use its maximum influence and how far we've gone and so on and so forth. And if we've decided not to, whether what action should be taken to insure the safety of those - All these questions seem to me ought to go right down to the people involved.

**Clip 4: 8/27/63**  
107 Reel 3 at 24:01  
8/27/63 CD at 1:01:17  
Excerpt CD at 1:58

President Kennedy: Ah, do we cut our losses in such a way where we don't endanger those who've we've been in contact.

McGeorge Bundy: Do we want to ask the question - I'm not sure that we do, I think it's a hard one to put to a new Ambassador. If I understand Ambassador Nolting correctly, one of the things that he would be tempted to do or to recommend to people on the scene is one more try at Diem as to the political liquidation of his brother and sister-in-law, is that right? You would like to try that once more?

## Secret Taping Button Transcripts

### 1. Vietnam:



Frederick Nolting: I think I would put it this way, the political liquidation of his sister-in-law and the - putting the curbs on his brother. (break)

President Kennedy: The response that we've gotten on the coup at this point does not give assurances that it's going to be successful based on it...or maybe that's impossible to get those assurances. Wasn't that - I would certainly think we would indicate, based on what Ambassador Nolting says, that what they're talking about in the way of [Vietnamese] Generals now, isn't good enough.

### 2. Cuba:



**Clip 5: 8/28/63**  
107 Reel 3 at 1:07:00  
8/28/63 CD at 25:45  
Excerpt CD at 3:19

President Kennedy: I don't think we ought to take the view here that this has gone beyond our control 'cause I think that would be the worst reason to do it.

McGeorge Bundy: I have to (say to) ask whether you and Harkins in light of developing situations presently favor operation as currently planned by Generals and their answer is just as simple as this - 'on the basis of what we now know, both General Harkins and I favor operation'.

President Kennedy: I think we ought not - I don't know where it's going but I mean, I don't think these things are ever gone until they happen, and I think if we decided that it wasn't in the cards then I think we could unload it because the Generals don't (worry about this much public trust). Well I don't think we ought to just do it because we feel we have to now do it. I think we want to make it our best (sitting) judgment (is to date) because I don't think we do have to do it. At least I'd be prepared to take up the argument with lawyers, well let's not do it. So I think we ought to try to make it without feeling that it's forced on us.

**Clip 6: 8/28/63**  
108 Reel 1 at 21:30  
8/28/63 CD at 50:28  
Excerpt CD at 4:18

I don't think we ought to let the coup...maybe they know about it, maybe the Generals are going to have to run out of the country, maybe we're going to have to help them get out. But still it's not a good enough reason to go ahead if we don't think the prospects are good enough. I don't think we're in that deep. I am not sure the Generals are - they've been probably bellyaching for months. So I don't know whether their - how many of them are really up to here. I don't see any reason to go ahead unless we think we have a good chance of success.

### 2. Cuban Missile Crisis

5 minutes

Description:

The thirteen days marking the most dangerous period of the Cuban missile crisis began on October 16, 1962. President Kennedy and principal foreign policy and national defense officials were briefed on the American U2 spy plane photographs of nuclear missile sites being built by the Soviet Union on the island of Cuba. Discussions began on how to respond to the challenge. Two principal courses were offered: an air strike and invasion, or a naval quarantine with the threat of further military action.

President Kennedy met with his advisers in the Cabinet Room first at 11:50 am, then again at 6:30 pm. This excerpt, from the second meeting, begins with Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara providing a detailed summary of the possible responses to the missiles that were under consideration.

Transcript:

McNamara: Mr. President, could I outline three courses . . .

JFK?: [Yes?].

McNamara: . . . of action we have considered and speak very briefly on each one? The first is what I would call the political course of action, in which we, uh, follow some of the possibilities that Secretary Rusk mentioned this morning by approaching Castro, by approaching Khrushchev, by discussing with our allies. An overt and open approach politically to the problem [attempting, or in order?] to solve it. This seemed to me likely to lead to no satisfactory result, and it almost stops subsequent military action. Because the danger of starting military action after they acquire a nuclear capability is so great I believe we would decide against it, particularly if that nuclear capability included aircraft as well as, as, uh, uh, missiles, as it well might at that point.

A second course of action we haven't discussed but lies in between the military course we began discussing a moment ago and the political course of action is a course of action that would involve declaration of open surveillance; a statement that we would immediately impose an, uh, a blockade against offensive weapons entering Cuba in the future; and an indication that with our open-surveillance reconnaissance, which we would plan to maintain indefinitely for the future, we would be prepared to immediately attack the Soviet Union in the event that Cuba made any offensive move against this country . . .

### 2. Cuba:



Bundy: Attack who?

McNamara: The Soviet Union. In the event that Cuba made any offensive move against this country. Now this lies short of military action against Cuba, direct military action against Cuba. It has some, some major defects.

But the third course of action is any one of these variants of military action directed against Cuba, starting with an air attack against the missiles. The Chiefs are strongly opposed to so limited an air attack. But even so limited an air attack is a very extensive air attack. It's not twenty sorties or fifty sorties or a hundred sorties, but probably several hundred sorties. Uh, we haven't worked out the details. It's very difficult to do so when we lack certain intelligence that we hope to have tomorrow or the next day. But it's a substantial air attack. And to move from that into the more extensive air attacks against the MIGs, against the airfields, against the potential nuclear storage sites, against the radar installations, against the SAM sites means, as, as Max suggested, possibly seven hundred to a thousand sorties per day for five days. This is the very, very rough plan that the Chiefs have outlined, and it is their judgment that that is the type of air attack that should be carried out. To move beyond that into an invasion following the air attack means the application of tens of thousands, between ninety and, and, uh, over a hundred and fifty thousand men to the invasion forces. It seems to me almost certain that any one of these forms of direct military action will lead to a Soviet military response of some type some place in the world. It may well be worth the price. Perhaps we should pay that. But I think we should recognize that possibility, and, moreover, we must recognize it in a variety of ways. We must recognize it by trying to deter it, which means we probably should alert SAC, probably put on an airborne alert, perhaps take other s-, alert measures. These bring risks of their own, associated with them. It means we should recognize that by mobilization. Almost certainly, we should accompany the initial air strike with at least a partial mobilization. We should accompany an, an invasion following an air strike with a large-scale mobilization, a very large-scale mobilization, certainly exceeding the limits of the authority we have from Congress requiring a declaration therefore of a national emergency. We should be prepared, in the event of even a small air strike and certainly in the event of a larger air strike, for the possibility of a Cuban uprising, which would force our hand in some way. Either force us, us to accept a, a, uh, an unsatisfactory uprising, with all of the adverse comment that result; or would, would force an invasion to support the uprising.

### 3. Nuclear Test Ban Treaty:



### 3. Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

First Excerpt: July 9, 1963

1:04 minutes

Description:

On July 9, 1963, President Kennedy met with Vice President Johnson, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Maxwell Taylor about the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. In this excerpt, General Taylor expresses his concern to the President the opinion of several members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who were privately critiquing the idea of a test ban, and about the possibility that they may state these opinions publicly to Congress. The President, although open to debate on the subject, expresses concern about the timing of any formal, public evaluation by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the test ban issue.

Transcript

"I don't care who comes up and testifies - it ought to be wide open. That's the time you gotta say it and we haven't presented our case - then I can say this is why I am for it and that's the way - then the Chiefs can speak about the military disadvantages and advantages. Proliferation is certainly a danger to us..."

"I am afraid that if the Chiefs ever met that there are (risks) having position against even an atmospheric test ban, at a very time, which would will leak out, at a very time when Harriman (is in Moscow) ...So even though they've all taken a separate position, which seems to me somewhat better off than we are that 'the Joint Chiefs of Staff have met and said this is a threat' - God we would be in a terrible shape."

Second Excerpt: July 31, 1963

4 minutes

Description

A presidential recording of a meeting between President Kennedy and four high level government scientists that took place in the Cabinet Room of the White House on July 31, 1963 during which President Kennedy expresses optimism that the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty could lead to a détente with the Soviet Union. Though the President is clearly interested in signing the treaty, he also expresses concern that other nations, like China, will conduct their own tests thus forcing the United States to return to testing.

Meeting participants included President Kennedy, Dr. John Foster, Director of Livermore Laboratories, Dr. Norris Bradbury, Director of Los Alamos Laboratory, Dr. Glenn Seaborg, Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and John Palfrey, Commissioner of Atomic Energy Commission, to discuss the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

## Secret Taping Button Transcripts

### 3. Nuclear Test Ban Treaty:



Transcript

Well I want to, just want to, say a word or two about this treaty and about how we ought to function under it and what we expect from it and what we don't expect from it. There are a good many theories as to why the Soviet Union is willing to try this. I don't think anybody can say with any precision but there isn't any doubt that the dispute with China is certainly a factor, I think their domestic, internal economic problems are a factor. I think that they may feel that (events) in the world are moving in their direction and over a period of time they - there are enough contradictions in the free world that they would be successful and they don't want to - they want to avoid a nuclear struggle or that they want to lessen the chances of conflict with us. (Whatever) the arguments are, we have felt that we ought to try to - if it does represent a possibility of avoiding the kind of collision that we had last fall in Cuba, which was quite close - and Berlin in 1961 - we should seize the chance. We felt that we've minimized the risks - our detection system is pretty good and in addition to doing underground testing which we will continue, therefore—and we have a withdrawal clause.

And it may be that the Chinese test in the next year, 18 months, 2 years and we would then make the judgment to see if we should go back to testing. As I understood it, we're not going to test 'til 1964 anyway, in the atmosphere, so this gives us a year to, at least a year and a half, to explore the possibility of a détente with the Soviet Union - which may not come to anything but which quite possibly could come to something.

Obviously if we could understand the Soviet Union and the Chinese to a degree, it would be in our interest. But I don't think we - I don't think that we - knowing all the concern that a good many scientists have felt with the comprehensive test ban that the detection system is not good enough and that we - which would make our laboratories sterile, it seems to me that we've avoided most of that. I know there's some problem about outer space - maybe some problem about other detection, but I think generally we can keep the laboratories, I would think, growing at a pretty good force, underground testing which we will pursue as scheduled. And we will see what our situation looks like as the Chinese come close to developing a bomb. In addition, our detection systems will make it possible for us to determine if the Soviet Union has made any particular breakthroughs which result in their deploying anti missile systems - which we gotta expect we can or will do and there's no evidence that they (have) - which might change the strategic balance, and therefore might cause us to test again. We can prepare Johnson Island so that we can move ahead in a relatively short time. So I don't think - I'm not sure we're taking - I think we're - the risks are well in hand and I would think in the next 12 months, 18 months, 2 years a lot of things may happen in the world and we may decide to start to test again, but if we do, at least we made this effort.

That's the reason - those are the reasons - I want to do this. I know Dr.

Teller and others are concerned and feel we ought to be going ahead - and (that said) time may prove that's the wisest course, but I don't think in the summer of 1963 given the kind of agreement we've got, given the withdrawal features we have, given the underground testing program we're going to carry out - it seems to me that this is the thing for us to do.

### 4. Space

4:04 minutes

Description:

At an off-the-record meeting held on November 21, 1962, President Kennedy stated clearly that his administration's priority was for the United States to land on the Moon before the Soviet Union. The participants heard in this excerpt are: President Kennedy, NASA Administrator James E. Webb and Special Assistant to the President, Jerome Wiesner. The meeting took place in the Cabinet Room.

Transcript

Excerpt of 11/21/62 White House meeting on space program- White House Tape #63

PRESIDENT KENNEDY: ...Do you put this program... Do you think this program is the top priority program of the agency?

JAMES WEBB (Administrator of NASA): No sir, I do not. I think it is one of the top priority programs, but I think it's very important to recognize here that as you have found what you could do with the rocket, as you found how you could get out beyond the Earth's atmosphere and into space and make measurements, several scientific disciplines that are very powerful have - begin to converge on this area...

PRESIDENT KENNEDY: Jim, I think it is a top priority. I think we ought to have that very clear. You... Some of these other programs can slip six months or nine months and nothing (unintelligible) going to happen that's going to make it... But this is important for political reasons, international political reasons, and for... This is -- whether we like it or not an intense a race. If we get second to the moon, it's nice, but it's like being second anytime. So, that ... if you're second by six months because you didn't give it the kind of priority then, of course, that would be very serious. So I think we have to take the view this is the top priority of NASA ...

....

WEBB: Number one, there are real unknowns as to whether man can live under the weightless condition and you'd ever make the lunar landing. This is one kind of political vulnerability I'd like to avoid such a flat commitment to ...

PRESIDENT KENNEDY: I agree that we're interested in this, but we can wait six months (unintelligible)

WEBB: But you have to use that information to do these things...

### 4. Space:



### 5. Civil Rights



## Secret Taping Button Transcripts

PRESIDENT KENNEDY: I see what you're saying, yeah, but only when that information directly applies to the program... Jim, I think we've got to have that...

WIESNER: May I say one word, Mr. President? We don't know a damn thing about the surface of the moon and we're making the wildest guesses about how we're going to land on the moon and we could get a terrible disaster from putting something down on the surface of the moon that's very different than we think it is and the scientific programs that find us that information have to have the highest priority. But they are associated with the lunar program. The scientific programs that aren't associated with the lunar program can then be any priority we please to give 'em.

PRESIDENT KENNEDY: Yeah. The only thing is I would certainly not favor spending six or seven billion dollars to find out about space... Why are we spending seven million dollars on getting fresh water from salt water when we're spending seven billion dollars finding out about space? So obviously, you wouldn't put it on that priority because, except for the defense implications behind that and the second point is the, the, the fact that the Soviet Union has made this a test of the system. So that's why we're doing it. So I think we've got to take the view that this is the key program, the rest of it we can find out about but there's a lot of things we want to find out about...cancer and everything else...

WEBB: When you talk about this, it's very hard to draw a line with what, between what...

PRESIDENT KENNEDY: Everything that we do ought to really be tied in to getting onto the moon ahead of the Russians.

WEBB: Why can't it be tied to preeminence in space, which are your own words...

PRESIDENT KENNEDY: Because, by God, we've been telling everyone we're preeminent in space for five years and nobody believes it because they have the booster and the satellite. (edit pause) ...But I do think we ought to get it, you know, really clear that the policy ought to be that this is the top priority program of the agency and one of the two, except for defense, the top priority of the United States government. I think that that's the position we ought to take. Now, this may not change anything about that schedule, but at least we ought to be clear, otherwise we shouldn't be spending this kind of money because I'm not that interested in space. I think it's good. I think we ought to know about it. We're ready to spend reasonable amounts of money, but we're talking about fantastic expenditures which wreck our budget and all these other domestic programs and the only justification for it, in my opinion, is to do it (unintelligible) is because we hope to beat them and demonstrate that starting behind as we did by a couple of years, by God, we passed 'em.

### 5. Civil Rights

Background:

Description/Partial Transcription

3:29 minutes

5/4/63 Americans for Democratic Action:

Twenty members of the organization, Americans for Democratic Action met with the President on May 4, 1963 for a meet-and-greet/lobbying session. The President took the opportunity to discuss the successes of his administration's legislative agenda to the liberal action group who on occasion had been critical of some of the actions of his administration.

Earlier that day the NY Times ran a front page, now infamous, Associated Press photograph by Bill Hudson of a police dog lunging at a civil rights protestor in Birmingham, Alabama.

The President comments on the shock of the photograph at several points during the meeting and states with frustration, "I mean what law can you pass to do anything about police power in the community of Birmingham? There is nothing we can do... The fact of the matter is that Birmingham is in worse shape than any other city in the United States and it's been that way for a year and a half... I think it's terrible the picture in the paper. The fact of the matter that's just what (Bull) Connor wants. And ah, as I say, Birmingham is the worst city in the south. They have done nothing for the Negroes in that community, so it is an intolerable situation, that there is no argument about."

The President goes on to pointedly comment that in a recent meeting with a newspaperman, the reporter commented on how me 'isn't it outrageous in Birmingham' and I said, 'why are you over there eating at the Metropolitan Club every day? You talk about Birmingham and you're up there at the Metropolitan Club ... they wouldn't even let Negro ambassadors in.' So now he (the reporter) said, 'well we want to work from the inside', and I said 'well your one contribution is that now they won't let white ambassadors in.' (laughter) Most of your novelists that you read every day ...they're all over there at the Metropolitan Club...so I think that we have worked hard on civil rights. I think it is a national crisis."

*A non-Flash version of the Desk will be available in the future.*

*The primary sources that follow- selected documents and transcriptions of secret presidential recordings -- are included here for easy reference.*

# Documentary Materials

## Telephone Transcripts

Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy

Senator Edward M. Kennedy

Director of the Peace Corps, R. Sargent Shriver

Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara

NASA astronaut, Major Gordon Cooper

President Harry S. Truman

Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric

President Dwight D. Eisenhower

Special Assistant to the President, Arthur M. Schlesinger

Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett



**President Kennedy and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, March 2, 1963, 10:32 PM**

RFK: Hello. Jack?

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: The thing, of course, to remember on this . . . I don't know how much you're gonna get into it, but the thing to remember on this . . . is this, uh, what you did on that day, Tuesday, for Wednesday, was something that was added to the plan.

JFK: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

RFK: And not something that was taken away or was in . . . a plan that was made inadequate by some deficiency in . . . in, uh, withdrawal of something . . .

JFK: Yeah. That's right.

RFK: That you added that on Tuesday . . .

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: And it's never been planned before and this . . . plan specifically said this wouldn't be done.

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: It was something that you added in order to help.

JFK: You heard about, uh . . .

RFK: But I, you know, if somebody's gonna say something in the Senate about it . . .

JFK: Yeah. Well, you know how they are. Make everything look lousy these days. You know, Rowland Evans said that he talked to Dirksen. Dirksen said, "I don't quite get this." He said." [2 words?] . . . What? [laughing] What,

you know, just say I don't know, they . . . I think the Kennedys are planning something to trap us into this thing [laughter] 'cause they're pretty smart down there."

RFK: Well, that's what we have . . . We haven't figured how to close the trap yet.

JFK: Yeah. That's right. We haven't quite figured out . . .

RFK: Uh, well, we'll learn it.

JFK: It just shows you, boy, what that press is, doesn't it?

RFK: But, God. Still, the poll.

JFK: What?

RFK: What . . . you're down to seventy percent?

JFK: When?

RFK: Huh?

JFK: When was this?

RFK: The Gallup Poll.

JFK: When was that?

RFK: Oh, about two days ago?

JFK: No. I didn't see it.

RFK: Yeah. It went seventy-six percent to seventy.

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: But, with your popularity seventy percent now, . . .

JFK: Yeah.

## Telephone Transcripts



RFK: . . . you'd break fifty-fifty with a Republican.

JFK: What?

RFK: Seventy percent . . . Eighteen percent are against you.

JFK: Yeah?

RFK: Well, I mean, I don't get what the . . . the press must be doing you some good.

JFK: Then what, you'd break fifty-fifty?

RFK: Do fifty-fifty with a Republican.

JFK: Oh, you mean on approval/disapproval?

RFK: Yeah. And then the, uh, independents.

JFK: I didn't see that poll. Was this in the Post?

RFK: I don't know what paper. I read it going up in the plane Wednesday or Thursday.

JFK: I see.

RFK: You think you got troubles, you ought to see what's happening to Nelson Rockefeller.

JFK: Why? What?

RFK: Well, you know, all the bars . . . They call every drink a Nelson cocktail . . . a Rockefeller cocktail. Everything's the same except it's fifteen percent more.

JFK: Do they really?

RFK: Oh, and all . . . You walk along the streets, and out in the front . . .

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: . . . it says, "Come in and buy a Nelson . . . a Rockefeller cocktail." Everything costs fifteen percent more. In every bar. How would you like that following you around?

JFK: Yeah, but . . . and have . . . He's lucky those papers aren't publishing. . . .

RFK: Well, then, did you see the story about him in, uh . . .

JFK: Wall Street Journal?

RFK: Wall Street Journal. That's not a complete plus.

JFK: Yeah. Yeah.

RFK: I think he's really having his problems . . .

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: . . . troubles. You're not. I've seen you on television.

JFK: We've dropped six percent in a month, have we?

RFK: Since January.

JFK: Oh, since that Congress has been back.

RFK: Yeah, and to get a little bit more partisan, but imagine seventy percent?

JFK: [words missing]

RFK: Better than you were in 'sixty.

JFK: OK.

RFK: Righto.

[phone hangs up]

## Telephone Transcripts



### President Kennedy and Senator Edward M. Kennedy, March 7, 1963

EMK: . . . [two words indistinct]. You know the thing that sort of got this, uh, the one thing like yesterday that they had the big horse laugh about is they said here's a guy -- you know one of the wool people said -- here's a guy who's talking about keeping out foreign imports, he says, and what's he do but pulls up in a Mercedes Benz.

JFK: Who's that?

EMK: Herter.

JFK: Oh, is that right?

EMK: Yeah, and he -- he evidently drives around here and he's got that, uh, Massachusetts governor's license plate on it, or something, so . . .

JFK: [laughs]

EMK: . . . everyone turns around and takes a look . . .

JFK: [laughs]

EMK: . . . he drove up to that wool meeting. He said that really let the balloon -- air out of every balloon in there.

JFK: Right.

EMK: But, uh, . . .

JFK: But, of course, it's tough -- I tell you, boy, we went through that yesterday for two hours . . .

EMK: Yeah.

JFK: . . . about what we could do on wool. You see, those guys don't want to give up that market.

EMK: Yeah.

JFK: And, uh, . . . You know, it's just a . . .

EMK: Well, he's got a, you know . . .

JFK: But anyway, Christian, he's a great free-trader, but we're anyway -- we're gonna -- we're meeting with Pastore tomorrow and we'll discuss it then.

EMK: He's, uh, Mike's got, uh, -- He's really got a, uh, awfully good grasp, and he made a hell of a good presentation . . .

JFK: Right.

EMK: . . . of the problem,

JFK: O.K., good. Fine.

EMK: Good enough.

JFK: See you later.

EMK: Bye.

[disconnect]

### President Kennedy and Director of the Peace Corps Sargent Shriver, April 2, 1963<sup>1</sup>

JFK: Hello.

Shriver:<sup>2</sup> Hello, Jack?

JFK: Yeah, Sarge.

Shriver: Hi, how are you?

<sup>1</sup> Date is as given on material received, but it is not confirmed.  
<sup>2</sup> R. Sargent Shriver.

# Telephone Transcripts



JFK: Good. Fine. Fine.

Shriver: I'm sorry to bother you . . .

JFK: Not a bit.

Shriver: . . . but I'm getting rather suspicious over here that, uh, despite your instructions that, uh, some of our friends over in the Central Intelligence Agency might think that they're smarter than anybody else and that they are trying to stick fellows into the Peace Corps.

JFK: Yeah. Yeah.

Shriver: And, John McCone has told me on two or three occasions, and Dulles<sup>3</sup> of course did, that they never would do that.

JFK: Right. Right.

Shriver: They sent out messages and the rest of it.

JFK: Right.

Shriver: But, uh, we've got a group in training now that looks suspicious, and I'd like, uh, . . .<sup>4</sup>

JFK: Right.

Shriver: But, uh, we've got a group in training now that looks suspicious, and I'd like, uh, to follow whatever you recommend, but I sure in hell want those guys, uh, . . .

JFK: Well, would you call Dick Helms?<sup>5</sup>

Shriver: Dick Helms?

JFK: Yeah. He's the operations officer over there under . . . And just say to him that you've

talked to me and that I don't want anybody in there.

Shriver: Okay.

JFK: And if they are there, let's get them out now before we have it. And if there is any problem about it that Dick Helms ought to call the President about it. That . . .

Shriver: Okay.

JFK: . . . this is very . . . We are very, very anxious that there be no, uh, we don't want to discredit this whole idea.

Shriver: Okay. Fine.

JFK: And, uh, they . . . Christ, they're not gonna find out that much intelligence!

Shriver: That's right.

JFK: Now, the other thing is, I notice with these people coming back, can we do anything about seeing if we can get some of them to go into the Foreign Service?

Shriver: Yes. The Foreign Service has already changed their, uh, examination schedules, and the kind of exams they give, and the, uh, places that they are going to be given, uh, and done everything that they can this year to facilitate Peace Corps guys getting into the Foreign Service, and . . .

JFK: Yeah.

Shriver: . . . USIA<sup>6</sup> has done the same thing, and AID<sup>7</sup> is trying to do something.

JFK: Yeah. Yeah.

<sup>3</sup> Allen W. Dulles.  
<sup>4</sup> Dictabelt 17A ends. Last part of conversation is repeated on the beginning of Dictabelt 17B, item 1, and continues on that belt.  
<sup>5</sup> Richard Helms.

<sup>6</sup> United States Information Agency.  
<sup>7</sup> Agency for International Development.

# Telephone Transcripts



Shriver: Uh, I think we'll have to find out by one trial run to see whether it's successful.

JFK: Okay. Well, I just wanted to be sure. Uh, let me know if there's anything we can do, but these are the guys I'd like to get into the Foreign Service.

Shriver: Okay. Fine.

JFK: Okay.

Shriver: Thanks.

JFK: 'bye, Sarge.

## President Kennedy and Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara April 3, 1963

President: Hello.

Sec. McNamara: Bob McNamara, sir.

President: Good morning. How are you?

Sec. McNamara: Fine, sir.

President: Did you talk to Gene Zuckert?

Sec. McNamara: I talked to him last night, after you.

President: Oh, fine. Well, I talked to, uh, I had Pierre [Salinger] call [Arthur] Sylvester because I was concerned about the stories. What is your judgment about what we ought to do now, because it may come up in my press conference this afternoon.

Sec. McNamara: I think that it ought to be said that the Committee, uh, the pressed us to determine the source of the leak and the Air Force was seeking to answer the Committee's interest

in it.

President: Right.

Sec. McNamara: And drop it at that if you can. Now, if they say, is it customary to request people to take polygraph tests, I think the answer to that is that no such request has been made here. The specific . . . no such request has been made. The specific request, as I understand it, made by the Air Force Inspector General of the individuals he talked to was, "would you voluntarily take such a test if it was indicated that, uh . . . it was desirable."

President: Was that part of the routine?

Sec. McNamara: I am checking on that. And I am told that it is. As a matter of fact, I have had underway for about three or four weeks here an investigation of polygraphs. Bob [Robert] Lovett in 1952 investigated this and it hasn't been looked into since that time. And just as a normal routine here about four weeks ago, I had a general counsel's office start. And I have a partial report of their work to date and it has been quite customary, not only here but elsewhere in the government. To both apply the test, but more particularly to ask the individual . . .

President: I see.

Sec. McNamara: . . . if they would be willing to volunteer for the test.

President: I tell you what I wonder if Sylvester or who would you suggest that we could get some details. Pierre thought that the Air Force ought to put out some statement this morning so that the story would be ended so that I wouldn't have to be the one to end it.

Sec. McNamara: I think that's wise. I'll work with Sylvester and we will get it out.

## Telephone Transcripts



President: Perhaps Sylvester and Pierre could talk, uh.

Sec. McNamara: I will do that and I will get a copy of it over to you.

President: The other thing was whether, uh, do you think that this was an effort by the Air Force to embarrass everybody. That is why they put . . . a pushed it this hard, because, after all, uh.

Sec. McNamara: I don't think so, Mr. President.

President: You think they just . . . he's presses the button were pressed and they conducted what they consider the routine.

Sec. McNamara: That is right. I think also there has been so many claims and counter claims by the Committee and others on this question they honestly wanted to get at the bottom of it. And they went about it with an excessive zeal. If they would apply that much zeal to some of the others [laughter], they would solve them damn fast.

President: You mean the Air Force did an excessive zeal.

Sec. McNamara: Yea. This chap, you don't know the Inspector General, but I happened to serve with him during the war, he is a wonderful individual, but he is a combat pilot. He is a three star general now. He looks like a thug. He just went about it that way.

President: Ok, well, perhaps Pierre and Sylvester can work out something.

Sec. McNamara: And I will see that it is handled before your press conference that you have a note of what we have done.

President: Ok. Good. Thanks a lot, Bob.

### President Kennedy and Major Gordon Cooper May 16, 1963

[There is a great deal of background noise and static during the conversation. This is due to the fact that the President's call was put through to Astronaut Cooper just after he was taken aboard the recovery ship]

President: Major! Oh Major! Oh...uh...can you hear me? Hello. Major Cooper; hello, can you hear me? Hello, Major Cooper!

Cooper: Yes sir.

President: Can you hear the President?

Cooper: Yes sir.

President: Alright. Oh major, I just want to congratulate you. That was a great flight.

Cooper: Thank you very much sir.

President: We talked to your wife and she seemed to stand it very well.

Cooper: Oh very good

President: And we hope...we are looking forward to seeing you up here Monday but we are very proud of you major.

Cooper: Thank you sir. It was a good flight and I enjoyed it.

President: Oh good...fine. Well, I look forward to seeing you Monday. Good luck.

Cooper: Thank you sir.

President: Thanks major.

## Telephone Transcripts



### President Kennedy and President Harry S. Truman July 24, 1963

Operator: [Waiting?]

JFK: . . . [try to!] talk to you about our test, uh, where we're going with Harriman out there in Moscow. I've got a, we've more or less come to some, uh, agreement it looks like on the language. Uh, it covers tests in the atmosphere and space and in underwater, which we can, of course, detect.

Truman<sup>8</sup>: I see.

Kennedy: We can and will under this agreement continue underground testing. I don't know what the significance of this may be. It may be s-, have some importance because of the Chinese business and is, therefore, uh, seemed to me that we ought to explore how far we can go with the Russians in relaxing the trouble.

Truman: It couldn't possibly hurt anything.

JFK: That's what I didn't think. And, uh, but I thought I'd send you overnight a copy of this and then I'd be glad to have somebody come out and to talk to you if you had any questions.

Truman: All right, all right, I'll have it in the morning then.

JFK: I will send it to you, uh, right now.

Truman: All right.

JFK: And then you could look at it and then perhaps we could talk again.

Truman: All right.

<sup>8</sup> Harry S. Truman, former president.

JFK: How're you doing otherwise?

Truman: Oh, I haven't got anything to complain about.

JFK: [Laughs] Well, you are very fortuna-, you're very fortunate.

Truman: I appreciate your, uh, taking the time out to tell me about this because I am very much interested.

JFK: Right, good, fine, Mr. President. Well, I'll send it to you right now.

Truman: All right.

JFK: Thank you very much.

### President Kennedy and Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric October 23, 1962

JFK: But as I understood there was some report that the Russian ships were not going to stop. That we were going to have to sink them in order to stop them. I thought that -- or we were going to have to fire on them. I was wondering whether the instructions on how that's to be done, or where there to be shot at and so on to cause the minimum of damage. And in addition if they're boarded, it's very possible the Russians will fire at them as they board and we'll have to fire back and have quite a slaughter. I would think we'd want two or three things. First, I think we'd want to have some control over cameras aboard these boats so we don't have a lot of people shooting a lot of pictures, which in the press might be --

Gilpatric<sup>9</sup>: Yeah we're gonna control all the picture taking.

<sup>9</sup> Roswell L. Gilpatric.

# Telephone Transcripts



JFK: On the boats?

Gilpatric: Yeah.

JFK: They all turn in their cameras. Secondly, I don't know enough about the ships, but where they ought to fire and whether they ought to go through three or four steps, such as ask them to stop. If they don't stop asking them to have their crew above deck so that they don't be damaged, and three, so that we have this record made. Maybe you could talk to somebody about this.

Gilpatric: Yeah. We've got instructions at CINCLANT which start with those steps. Shot across the bow, shot through the rudder.

JFK: Shot through the rudder.

Gilpatric: Then a boarding party and then order the crews to come on deck. And the minimum amount of force at each stage. Now maybe we haven't thought of everything but we'll take another look at it.

JFK: Okay fine. How'd those photographic expeditions go this morning? Do you know?

Gilpatric: No incidents. They were back a couple of hours ago. We'll see the pictures later.

JFK: I see. You're getting that one from me, aren't you? Of those Florida bases?

Gilpatric: That's right!

JFK: Okay. Have you taken a look at West Palm Beach?

Gilpatric: Yeah. The Air Force is doing that. We can look all of the dispersal possibilities down there.

JFK: Okay good.

Gilpatric: Did you decide anything about Nelson Rockefeller or are you going to leave that --

JFK: Wait a minute now. What about --

[Background conversation:

JFK: Do we know anything more about Nelson Rockefeller?

RFK: We sent him a telegram.]

JFK: We sent him a telegram saying that I'd be in touch with him later. I thought we'd meet at six but what my thought was is that we'd bring down the Civil Defense Committee. If we bring down every governor then it seems to me we're kind of in the obligation to bring every congressman down to brief.

Gilpatric: No, he just wanted to have the Civil Defense Committee.

JFK: Well then that's what we'll be in touch with him about, because I'm hoping Pitman and Ed McDermott(?) will come today anyway --

Gilpatric: They will.

JFK: Then we'll send a wire from them to him and arrange that meeting.

Gilpatric: Do everything right.

JFK: Okay, Ros.

[Background conversation]

JFK: Hello? Taz has it.

Gilpatric: Ros Gilpatric --

JFK: Taz has it. It's alright there Ros, thank you.

Gilpatric: All right.

# Telephone Transcripts



## President Kennedy and President Dwight D. Eisenhower October 28, 1962

JFK: Hello?

Operator: Yes, please.

JFK: Oh is the General on --

Operator: I'll put it on, yes sir. Ready?

JFK: Hello?

Eisenhower<sup>10</sup>: General Eisenhower, Mr. President.

JFK: General, how are you?

Eisenhower: Pretty good, thank you.

JFK: Oh fine. General, I just wanted to bring you up to date on this matter, because I know of your concern about it. We got -- Friday night got a message from Khrushchev which said that he would withdraw these missiles and technicians and so on providing we did not plan to invade Cuba. We then got a message, that public one, the next morning in which he said he would do that if we withdrew our missiles from Turkey. We then, as you know, issued a statement that we couldn't get into that deal. So we then got this message this morning. So we now have to wait to see how it unfolds, and there's a good deal of complexities to it. If the withdrawal of these missiles, technicians, and the cessation of subversive activity by them, well we just have to set up satisfactory procedures to determine whether these actions will be carried out. So I would think that if we can do that we'll be -- find our interest advanced, even though it may be only one more chapter in a rather long story as far as Cuba is concerned.

Eisenhower: Of course, but Mr. President, did he, does he put any conditions in whatsoever in this?

JFK: No, except that we're not going to invade Cuba. That's the only one we've got now. But we don't plan to invade Cuba under these conditions anyway. So if we can get them out, we're better off by far.

Eisenhower: That's great. I quite agree. I just wondered whether he was trying to, knowing we would keep our word, whether he would try to engage us in any kind of statements or commitments that would finally one day could be very embarrassing. [This is], suppose they got in -- they started to bombard Guantanamo.

JFK: Right.

Eisenhower: What I'm getting at, I quite agree this is a very, I think, conciliatory move he's made. Provided that he doesn't say that --

JFK: Right. Oh well I agree. Oh yeah that's right. I think what we've got to do is keep -- that's why I don't think the Cuban story can be over yet. I think we will retain sufficient freedom to protect our interests if he

Eisenhower: That's all I want--

JFK: -- if he, if they engage in subversion, if they attempt to do any aggressive acts and so on then all bets are off. In addition my guess is by the end of next month we're going to be toe-to-toe on Berlin anyway. So that I think this is important for the time being because it requires quite a step down really for Khrushchev. On the other hand, I think that as we all know they're - they just probe and their word's unreliable so we just have to stay busy on it.

Eisenhower: As I've [unintelligible] before, Mr. President, one thing about -- they, these people do not equate, and I think it's been a mistake to equate, Berlin with Cuba or anything else. They take any spot in the world, they don't care where it is,

JFK: That's right.

<sup>10</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, former president.

## Telephone Transcripts



Eisenhower: And it's just a question is, are you in such a place where you either can't or won't resist?

JFK: That's right, yeah.

Eisenhower: Yeah but we got them into Tibet. It has nothing to do with Tibet, up them mountains . . . [unintelligible]. We couldn't reach them. And so what we can do then is [unintelligible]. So they get to and they probe when you can't do anything. Then if they get another place where they think that you just won't for some reason or other, why then they go ahead. I think you're doing exactly right and go ahead, but just let them know that you won't be the aggressor. But if the others proceed, then you've always got the right to determine whether the other guys would be the aggressor.

JFK: Well we'll stay right at them and I'll keep in touch with you, General.

Eisenhower: Thank you very much, Mr. President.

JFK: Okay, thank you.

Operator: I'll put it right through. Waiting.

**President Kennedy  
and Special Assistant to the President  
Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.  
March 22, 1963**

President: Hello Arthur

Schlesinger: Mr. President

President: Hi. I read this letter of Sam Beer's.

Schlesinger: Yeah.

President: I think that's fine. Now the only uh . . . I think in fact we could tell him if he would go to work on his Spanish that we could get him a uh . . . assure him of a country in Latin America or Central America.

Schlesinger: Oh really.

President: So that I . . . we'll just work it out so that he gets uh . . . he goes some place.

Schlesinger: Okay.

President: And then he could go along and he could study Spanish then between now and December. The only caveat I have is that will mean he'll be gone from December 'til the next November during the election. I don't know if we need him for a . . . I don't suppose it is that important for the A.D.A. [Americans for Democratic Action]

Schlesinger: I think if we don't carry Massachusetts . . .

President: Well I wasn't thinking of Massachusetts so much as the A.D.A.

Schlesinger: Well he could come back you know quiet and do backstairs stuff.

President: Which is really all that is needed. Just to keep them from going off the deep end. Well why don't you tell him that I think it is very good. I would be glad to have him go there and I will work out our arrangements so that we send him some place in Central or Latin America. And if he would just go ahead and study Spanish on that expectation.

Schlesinger: Okay. Fine.

President: Good.

Schlesinger: He will be very pleased.

President: We had a good conference in San Jose.

## Telephone Transcripts



Schlesinger: Sounds great.

President: It was really good. You would have loved it.

Schlesinger: Dick [Richard Goodwin] gave me a full great report of it.

President: You would have loved it. Who did you see over in England?

Schlesinger: I saw everybody.

President: You didn't see Boofy Gore did you? [laughing]

Schlesinger: That was a great \_\_\_\_\_. Did you see that interview in the Sunday Express?

President: No.

Schlesinger: Hell, I should have brought it back. The Sunday Express got him on a Trans-Atlantic steamer. He was very irritated at David [Ormsby-Gore].

President: And then he apologized?

Schlesinger: He said that my nephew or cousin or whatever he is has been apologizing behind my back.

President: Oh did he. He's really . . . What about the uh . . . the uh . . . looks like the conservatives are in real trouble doesn't it, that by-election.

Schlesinger: They are in very bad shape and the whole party is falling apart.

**President Kennedy  
and Governor Ross Barnett  
September 1962**

RFK: Yeah. I think, uh, Governor, that, uh, the president had some, uh, questions that he, uh, wanted some answers to, uh, to . . .

Barnett: Well . . .

RFK: . . . make his own determination.

Barnett: . . . that's right. He wanted to know if I would, uh, obey the orders of the court, and I told him I, I'd have to do some, [study?] that over. That's a serious thing. I've taken an oath to abide by the laws of this state and our state constitution and the Constitution of the United States. [Clears his throat.] And, General, how can I violate my oath of office? How can I do that and live with the people of Mississippi? You know, they expecting me to keep my word. That's what I'm up against, and I don't . . .

JFK: Uh, oh, Governor, this . . .

Barnett: . . . understand why the court, why the court wouldn't understand that.

JFK: Governor, this is the president speaking.

Barnett: Yes, sir, Mr. President.

JFK: Uh, now, it's, I know that your feeling about the, uh, law of Mississippi and the fact that ya, you don't want to carry out that court order. What we really want to, uh, have from you, though, is some understanding about whether the state police will maintain law and order. We understand your feeling about the court order . . .

Barnett: Yes.

JFK: . . . and your disagreement with it. But what we're concerned about is, uh, how much violence is going to be and what kind of, uh, action we'll have to take to prevent it. And I'd like to get assurances from you about, that the state police down there will take positive action to maintain law and order.

Barnett: Oh, they'll do that.

## Telephone Transcripts



JFK: Then we'll know what we have to do.

Barnett: They'll, they'll take positive action, Mr. President, to maintain law and order as best we can.

JFK: And now, how good is . . .

Barnett: We'll have two hundred and twenty highway patrolmen . . .

JFK: Right.

Barnett: . . . and they'll absolutely be unarmed.

JFK: I understand . . .

Barnett: Not a one of 'em'll be armed.

JFK: Well, no, but the problem is, well, what can they do to maintain law and order and prevent the gathering of a mob and, uh, action taken by the mob? What can they do?

Barnett: [Well?] . . .

JFK: Can they stop that?

Barnett: Well, they'll do their best to. They'll do everything in their power to stop it.

JFK: Now, what about the suggestions made by the attorney general in regard to, uh, not permitting people to congregate and start a mob?

Barnett: Well, we'll do our best to, to keep 'em from congregating, but that's hard to do, you know.

JFK: Well, they just tell them to move along.

Barnett: When they start moving up on the sidewalks and . . .

JFK: [Well?] . . .

Barnett: . . . uh, different sides of the, uh, streets, what are you gonna do about it?

JFK: Well, now, as I understand it, uh, Governor, you would do everything you can to main-  
tain, uh, law and order.

Barnett: I, I, I'll do everything in my power to maintain order . . .

JFK: Right. Now . . .

Barnett: . . . and peace. We don't want any shooting down here.

JFK: I understand. Now, Governor, what about . . .

Barnett: [Yes?].

JFK: . . . can you maintain this order?

Barnett: Well, I don't know.

JFK: Yeah.

Barnett: I, I, that's what I'm worried about . . .

JFK: That's . . .

Barnett: . . . you see. I don't know whether I can or not.

JFK: Right.

Barnett: I couldn't have the other afternoon.

JFK: You couldn't have?

Barnett: There was such a mob there, it would have been impossible.

JFK: I see.

Barnett: There were men in there with trucks and

## Telephone Transcripts



shotguns, and all such as that. Not, not a lot of 'em, but some we saw, and, uh, uh certain people were just, uh, they were just enraged.

JFK: Well, now, will you talk . . .

Barnett: You just don't understand the situation down here.

JFK: Well, the only thing is I got my responsibility.

Barnett: I know you do.

JFK: This is not my order, I just have to carry it out. So I want to get together and try to do it with you in a way which is the most satisfactory and causes the least chance of, uh, damage to, uh, people in, uh, Mississippi. That's my interest.

Barnett: That's right. Would you be willing to wait awhile and let the people cool off on the whole thing?

JFK: 'Til how long?

Barnett: Couldn't you make a statement to the effect, Mr. President, uh, Mr. General, that under the circumstances existing in Mississippi, that, uh, there'll be bloodshed; you want to protect the life of, of, of James Meredith and all other people? And under the circumstances at this time, it just wouldn't be fair to him or others, uh, to try to register him at this [time?].

JFK: Well, then at what time would it be fair?

Barnett: Well, we, we could wait a, I don't know.

JFK: Yeah.

Barnett: It might be in, uh, two or three weeks, it might cool off a [little?].

JFK: Well, would you undertake to register him in two weeks?

Barnett: Well, I, you know I can't undertake to register him myself . . .

JFK: I see.

Barnett: . . . but you all might make some progress that way, you know.

[JFK laughs]

JFK: Yeah. Well, we'd be faced with, uh. . . I'm, I, unless we had your support . . .

Barnett: You see . . .

JFK: . . . and assurance, we'd be . . .

Barnett: . . . I say I'm going to, I'm going to cooperate. Uh, I might not know, uh, when you're going to register him, you know.

JFK: I see. Well, now, Governor, why don't, uh. . . Do you want to talk to Mr. Watkins?

Barnett: I might not know that, what, what your plans were, you see.

JFK: Do you want to, uh, do you want to talk to Mr. Watkins then . . .

Barnett: I'll be delighted to talk to him . . .

JFK: . . . the- . . .

Barnett: . . . and, uh, we'll call you back.

JFK: Okay, good.

Barnett: Uh, uh, Mr., uh, call the general back?

JFK: Yeah, call the general, and then I'll be around.

Barnett: All right.

## Telephone Transcripts



JFK: Tha . . .

Barnett: I appreciate it so much . . .

JFK: Thanks, Governor.

Barnett: . . . and I, I thank you for this call.

JFK: Thank you, Governor.

Barnett: All right.

JFK: Right.

Barnett: Bye.

[Phone hangs up.]

## THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

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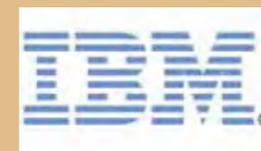
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