

MADAM PRESIDENT

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By Lane Smith

Ages: 6-10

Themes: Feelings, People-at-Work, Leadership, Government, Presidency

Running Time: 9 minutes

SUMMARY

As she studies about presidents, a little girl imagines herself as the President of the United States. She focuses on the important responsibilities of the President such as giving executive orders (more waffles!), kissing babies, attending state funerals, and appointing a solid cabinet. She delights in her veto power, especially when the cafeteria is serving tuna casserole. However, she does not take her responsibilities too lightly, even cleaning her room in an effort to lead by example. Students will relate to this young character and her dream to become the most important person in the land.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will identify and describe the responsibilities of the President.
- Students will identify, research, and describe the jobs of the different members of the cabinet.
- Students will make an illustrated timeline of the steps to the White House taken by various former U.S. Presidents.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Elicit students' background knowledge about the current and former U.S. Presidents. Guiding questions:

- Who is our President right now?
- How long has he been President?
- Do you know anything about this President that makes him unusual or different from other Presidents?
- What other U.S. Presidents can you name?
- Who was the first President of the U.S.?
- What are some of the jobs that U.S. Presidents do?
- Is there anything that all of the Presidents have in common?

Discuss the idea of a woman president with the students. Ask:

- Has there been a woman president in the U.S. yet?
- Why do you think that there hasn't been one?

Then, briefly review the history of the Women's Suffrage Movement. Make a list of things that students think are "boy things" and things that students think are "girl things." Ask students to explain why they have these views. Ask students if boys can ever do any of the "girl things" or vice versa. Explain that stereotypes are categories that groups, people or things are placed into, that are based on one characteristic or idea. However, a stereotype does not accurately reflect all of the characteristics of those people or things. Ask students why it would be important for everyone to have a chance to both vote and run for office.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Ask students what kinds of things they would do if they were President. Encourage them to support their answers with reasoning. Point out to students that U.S. Presidents are not responsible for making the laws, but are responsible for *making* sure that laws are carried out. Then, use a graphic organizer to guide students through identifying and describing the major responsibilities of the President. Suggested format:

Job	What it means	Example
Veto a bill	Refuse to sign a bill from Congress, so that it won't become a law	The president vetoed the bill proposing that the school week only be 4 days long. The school week remained 5 days long.

Review the part of the movie, or the book *Madam President*, where the little girl appoints her cabinet. Use a T-chart to organize her cabinet members into "real" and "made up." Challenge students to guess which ones are real or not. Then, using the real cabinet positions, have students consider what the responsibilities are for each position. Search for clues within each position to help students remember what jobs that person has. For example, the Secretary of the Treasury has the word "treasure" inside of it. This base word gives a clue that this person is in charge of the nation's treasure, or

money. As an extension, assign students to research and report upon the current cabinet. Working in pairs, students can use the internet or school library to research the names and responsibilities of each cabinet member. Using the information they find, students can create small posters that display the person's name, picture, title, and responsibilities. Use a tall cardboard box to represent a "cabinet" and glue the students' posters inside for a classroom display.

Discuss with students how people become the President. What types of qualities do they need? Education? Experience? Training? Use the Weston Woods movie, *So You Want to be President?* to help guide the discussion. Then, have students work in groups of 3-5 to research the paths that various Presidents have taken to the White House. Encourage groups to all choose a different President, with one group focusing on the current President. As the groups collect information about their President, have them write important and relevant events or facts on individual index cards. On a separate card, have students illustrate the event. Then, students can use a piece of butcher paper or large construction paper to draw a timeline depicting the President's path to the White House. Provide students with a picture of the White House that they can affix to the end of their timeline.

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