“Inauguration and Transition” Classroom Activity

Activity Summary:
In this activity, students blog and/or tweet about the inauguration process, research past inauguration speeches and write the speech for the next president, and examine the transition that takes place both in power and in place.

Primary Audience: High School Students
Secondary Audience: Middle School Students

Activity Duration: Three class periods (45-60 minutes each)
(May require additional time for research and presentation)

Overarching Question:
• How does the President use his or her inaugural address to set the tone for their presidency and promote a unifying message to help smooth the transition of power in the United States?

Essential Questions:
• How does the new president set the tone of his or her presidency with the inaugural speech?
• Why is a smooth transition of power important?
• What are some potential threats to peaceful transition of presidential power?
• How is peaceful transition of power ensured?
• Should the Inaugural address speak to supporters, dissenters, or both?

Objectives:
Students will:
• Analyze inauguration speeches by two previous presidents
• Compare inaugural speeches to determine how they are different from administration to administration
• Synthesize information in order to write an inaugural speech
• Examine various aspects of the transition of presidential powers
• Analyze potential threats to the peaceful transition of power
• Discuss how the transition takes place and what supports are in place to make sure that the transition is smooth

Standards:
C3 Framework Standards for Social Studies¹:
• D2.Civ.7.9-12. Apply civic virtues and democratic principles when working with others.
• D2.Civ.8.9-12. Evaluate social and political systems in different contexts, times, and places, that promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles.
• D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.

¹ College, Career, and Civic Life Framework for Social Studies State Standards:
The result of a three year state-led collaborative effort, the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards was developed to serve two audiences: for states to upgrade their state social studies standards and for practitioners — local school districts, schools, teachers and curriculum writers — to strengthen their social studies programs. Its objectives are to: a) enhance the rigor of the social studies disciplines; b) build critical thinking, problem solving, and participatory skills to become engaged citizens; and c) align academic programs to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies.
Source: http://www.socialstudies.org/c3
• D2.His.2.9-12. Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.
• D4.2.9-12. Construct explanations using sound reasoning, correct sequence (linear or non-linear), examples, and details with significant and pertinent information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanation given its purpose (e.g., cause and effect, chronological, procedural, technical).

Materials:
• Inaugural Address Note-Taking Sheet
• Inauguration Quiz
  o Source: Truman Library
• Website: Inauguration Day Events
  o Source: Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies

Informational websites (addresses listed in Lesson Procedures)

Procedure:
1. Start the lesson with the Inauguration Quiz to informally assess what your students already know about the inaugural process and to share some interesting facts with them.
2. Have your students visit the Inauguration Day Events website to examine a typical inauguration day schedule. Discuss how each of the events in the schedule started. Ask students to identify the purpose of each event.
3. Explain that the new president is going to use the inaugural address to try to set the tone for the presidency and begin to unite the country following the election. Pair students and assign them each two presidents to research. Ask students to review their assigned presidents’ inaugural addresses and create a chart comparing and contrasting the two speeches. A note-taking sheet is included with this lesson.
4. Have students post and share their charts and review each pair’s findings. Ask students to describe how the inaugural speeches have evolved over time, using evidence from their classmates’ charts.
5. Using what they have just learned about inaugural speeches, have students work in small groups to write an inaugural speech for the current election cycle. To prepare, they may research two of the issues discovered in the previous activity to see what the current thinking is on those. Alternatively, they may research current issues to address those in their speech.
6. For weeks prior to the inauguration, a transition team steps in to allow the new president to step into work prepared and ready for most any event. Have students examine how this transition takes place. The following are suggested, optional resources that your students may find helpful:
   o Presidential Transitions Come Into the Open
     ▪ Source: Politico.com
   o Presidential Inaugurations: Traditions & Transitions
     ▪ Source: White House Historical Association
   o New Presidents: How to Make a Smooth Transition into the White House
     ▪ Source: The Washington Post
   o First Impressions: A Look Back at Five Presidential Transitions
     ▪ Source: Brookings
7. Ask students to discuss why it is important for this transition to occur smoothly. What are some situations that might occur that could impact this transition and create problems?
8. Have students summarize what they have learned about the inauguration and the events surrounding it in a blog post or a series of tweets. Ask them to focus on what they feel are the most important details as a blog post or tweet series should be concise. Following the writing of the blogs or tweets, ask students to “comment” on at least two other students’ postings. Consider using a closed class website to post the messages. If not, students could post on the wall or pass around papers for the other students to “comment” on.
Optional Extensions:
1. Besides the official transition of power evident during the inauguration ceremony, there are many other changes that take place every four years. In just five or six hours, the White House is emptied of the belongings of the outgoing president, and the new president is then moved in. Have your students conduct research to learn about how this takes place. The following resources are optional:
   - White House Staffers Will Have Only 5 Hours To Move In The New First Family
     - Source: The Huffington Post
   - First Movers
     - Source: Slate.com

2. Being president includes a great many perks. Ask your students what some of those perks might be and then share some of those perks with your students. Engage students in a pros/cons discussion about presidential perks.

3. Life for the president and his or her family changes greatly after election and inauguration. Being president is not a 9-5 job. Being the first lady (or gentleman) also holds some responsibilities. Have your students choose one (president or first person) and create a day in the life news feature story about that person.

Additional Optional Resources:

- The 58th Presidential Inauguration
  - Source: Senate.gov
- Presidential Inauguration Dates, Washington to Obama
  - Source: History in Pieces
- A Brief History of the U.S. Inauguration
  - Source: Presidential-Inauguration.com
- Inaugural Words: 1789 to the Present
  - Source: The New York Times
- Interesting Facts about Inauguration
  - Source: The New York Times
- 'The Most Important Takeover of Any Organization in History'
  - Source: The Atlantic
- Moving Day at the White House: "A Well Organized Ballet Choreography"
  - Source: ABC News
- Hints of Agenda and Tone for New First Lady
  - Source: The New York Times
- 25 Fun Facts from Presidential Inaugurations Past
  - Source: The Daily Beast
- Inaugural Addresses (including length in words) from Washington - Obama
  - Source: The American Presidency Project, UCSB
Inaugural Address Note-Taking Sheet

Use this sheet to take notes while reading or watching the presidents’ inaugural addresses. Add any additional topics to the chart as appropriate.

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<tr>
<th>President</th>
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<td>Issues Addressed</td>
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