

Resolving Kennedy's Legacy

Teacher's Guide

Grade Level: 9-12

Curriculum Focus: U.S. History

Lesson Duration: Three class periods

Program Description

Top Secret: The President's Health (24 min.) – Investigates the medical conditions that plagued John F. Kennedy throughout his life. *A Secret Truce: Kennedy and Castro* (24 min.) – Examines newly uncovered documents, which reveal that the leaders of the U.S. and Cuba were secretly reaching out to each other.

Onscreen Questions

- Why would a presidential candidate hide a medical condition?
 - Would Kennedy have become president if he had been honest with the public about his health?
 - Is it good for the American people to know everything that goes on in the government?
 - Why would a president secretly meet with someone considered an enemy?
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Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

- Consider the ramifications of key events in history.
- Speculate what would have happened if different choices had been made.
- Write a report explaining their ideas.

Materials

- *Resolving Kennedy's Legacy* video and VCR, or DVD and DVD player
- Computer with Internet access
- Newsprint and markers

Procedures

1. Ask students what they know about President John F. Kennedy. If students need help getting started, suggest the following:
 - The youngest president ever elected
 - The first Roman Catholic president
 - A charismatic leader who inspired the people
 - Initiated the space program
 - Presided over difficult times with Cuba and the Soviet Union during the Cold War
2. Discuss with students the "mystique" of John Kennedy. Tell students that most people thought he was young and healthy, a breath of fresh air after the preceding president, Dwight Eisenhower.
3. After showing the video, point out that it raises some important questions that have relevance to our own time:
 - Should Kennedy have told the public about his various illnesses? If he had, do you think he would have been elected president of the United States?
 - Do you think Kennedy was moving in the right direction by trying to look past the Cuban Missile Crisis and improve America's relationship with Cuba? Would things have turned out differently if Kennedy had lived?
4. Ask each student to pick one of these two questions to consider. Then ask students to write an essay explaining their position on the question. The following Web sites have useful information:
 - Kennedy and Addison's Disease
 - <http://www.cnn.com/2004/HEALTH/09/23/overview/index.html>
 - <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/character/essays/kennedy.html>
 - <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/character/glossaries/kennedy.html#JAMA>
 - <http://slate.msn.com/id/2074526/>
 - <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/11/17/national/main529661.shtml>
 - <http://hnn.us/articles/1117.html>
 - The Cuban Missile Crisis
 - <http://www.hpol.org/jfk/cuban/>
 - <http://www.hpol.org/jfk/cuban/>
 - http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/state/monarchs_leaders/kennedy_cuban_missile_01.shtml
 - http://www.jfklibrary.org/cmc_exhibit_2002.html
 - http://www.jfkin61.com/presidency/cuban_missile_crisis.html

- Kennedy and Castro
http://www2.gol.com/users/coynerhm/castro_offered_lbj_help.htm
<http://www.hfni.gsehd.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/CWIHP/BULLETINS/b5a9.htm>
http://www.history-matters.com/pds/DP3_Chapter5.htm
- 5. Give students time in class to complete their research and work on their essays. Remind students to provide documentation to support their ideas.
- 6. During the next class period, ask for volunteers to share their essays. Is there a consensus among students about the answers to these questions?

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Students were highly engaged in class discussions; researched their question thoroughly; produced a complete report, with sufficient documentation to support their ideas.
- 2 points: Students participated in class discussions; researched their question adequately; produced a satisfactory report, with some documentation to support their ideas.
- 1 point: Students participated minimally in class discussions; did not research their report adequately; produced an incomplete report, with little documentation.

Vocabulary

Addison's disease

Definition: A disease of the adrenal glands in which insufficient amounts of certain hormones are produced; individuals must be treated with drugs such as hydrocortisone to compensate for the problem

Context: Even in the 1960s, many people were aware that John F. Kennedy suffered from Addison's disease.

Cold War

Definition: A period of time during which the United States and the Soviet Union were engaged in a power struggle that stopped short of a full-blown military conflict

Context: During the Cold War, government officials were afraid that a nuclear war could erupt at any time.

Nikita S. Khrushchev

Definition: The premier of the Soviet Union and leader of the Soviet Union's Communist party between 1958 and 1964

Context: Khrushchev's decision to remove nuclear missiles from Cuba was condemned by other Communist governments and many believe it was partly responsible for his removal from power in 1964.

quarantine

Definition: a state of enforced isolation

Context: President Kennedy chose to place a naval quarantine around Cuba to prevent additional shipments of nuclear weapons.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- U.S. History: Era 9—Understands how the Cold War and conflicts in Korea and Vietnam influenced domestic and international politics
- Language Arts: Viewing—Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/>

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- Power, Authority, and Governance
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Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the Discoveryschool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>