



John F. Kennedy | Lesson Plan

What made John F. Kennedy an inspiring and influential leader during his time as president?

Students will understand how John F. Kennedy's leadership, vision, and legacy shaped America during a time of significant challenges, including the Cold War, civil rights struggles, and the Space Race, and why his story continues to inspire future generations.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify key life events in John F. Kennedy's journey from childhood to becoming the 35th President of the United States.
- Explain how John F. Kennedy inspired Americans to unite during challenging times, including the Cold War and the civil rights movement.
- Compare the key hardships and accomplishments of John F. Kennedy, including his successes like the Cuban Missile Crisis resolution and his setbacks like the Bay of Pigs Invasion, to understand what shaped his leadership.
- Evaluate John F. Kennedy's leadership qualities, vision, and decisions that have secured his place as one of America's most remembered and admired presidents.

Key Vocabulary:

- **President:** The elected leader of a country.
- **Civil Rights Movement:** A social movement to achieve equal rights for all citizens.
- **Cold War:** A period of political tension and competition between the United States and the Soviet Union after World War II.
- **Space Race:** The competition between countries to achieve space exploration firsts.
- **Assassination:** The deliberate killing of a prominent or political figure.
- **Leadership:** The act of guiding or directing a group.

Educational Standards: CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.7, CCRA.W.2, CCRA.W.4, CCRA.W.9, CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2

Academic Subject Areas: Biography, U.S. Presidents, U.S. History (20th Century), Cold War

What You'll Need

- Video: *Guess or Mess: John F. Kennedy* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Guess or Mess: John F. Kennedy* (Click [Here](#))
- PragerU Kids biographical book: *John F. Kennedy* (Download [Here](#))
- Large paper or poster board for each group, along with markers



Lesson Plan: Read and Discuss (60 minutes)

Introduction to Kennedy: (5 minutes)

1. Begin with a brief discussion about U.S. presidents and the qualities that make a great leader. Ask students if they can name any presidents who inspired people or led during challenging times.
 - Prompt responses by asking: *What do you think makes a leader memorable? or Why do we learn about presidents in history?*
2. Display the John F. Kennedy digital book on an electronic device. Share that Kennedy was the 35th president and highlight his role in inspiring Americans during critical moments in history, such as the Cold War and the civil rights movement.
3. Show key images from the digital book, such as Kennedy as a young man, his family, his time in the Navy, and as president. Use the visuals to briefly touch on highlights, including his leadership during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Space Race, and his support for civil rights.

Kennedy History Huddle: (25 minutes)

1. Read the “Meet John F. Kennedy” section on page 2 together as a class, with the teacher leading this page to model fluent reading and set the tone for the lesson.
2. After completing the teacher-led reading, explain that students will now explore other key aspects of Kennedy’s life in small groups.
3. Split the class into small groups and assign each group a different section of the digital book to explore. The following are recommendations:
 - Group 1: *Young Jack, World War II* (pages 3-4)
 - Group 2: *Rise to Power, The Cold War* (page 5)
 - Group 3: *The 1960 Presidential Election, President* (pages 6-7)
 - Group 4: *The Space Race, Assassination* (pages 8-9)
 - Group 5: *A Widow’s Grief and a Son’s Salute, Conspiracy?* (page 10)
 - Group 6: *American Royalty, Controversies, Legacy* (pages 12-13)
4. Allow time for each group to read their assigned section, taking turns reading aloud. As students read, they should discuss the main ideas.
5. Provide each group with a large piece of paper or a poster board and markers to write down key points and any interesting facts or quotes they find.
6. Allow each group one to two minutes to present their findings to the class. After each presentation, provide time for classmates to ask questions and discuss the content.

Worksheet Workshop: (15 minutes)

1. Hand out individual copies of the worksheet to each student. Explain how to fill out each section of the worksheet with these instructions:
2. **Timeline:** Students should select key dates and events mentioned throughout the digital book. The following are recommendations, but the teacher and students can use many other dates mentioned in the book:

- May 29, 1917 – John F. Kennedy is born in Brookline, Massachusetts.
 - August 1943 – Kennedy’s PT-109 boat is destroyed, and he leads his crew to safety during World War II.
 - January 20, 1961 – Kennedy is inaugurated as the 35th President of the United States and delivers his famous inaugural address.
 - November 22, 1963 – Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas, Texas.
3. **Interesting Quote:** Have students choose a meaningful quote from the book to fill in the quote section on their worksheet.
 4. **Interesting Fact:** Ask students to select an interesting fact about John F. Kennedy that stood out to them and write it in the space provided.
 5. **Vocabulary Builder:** Instruct students to choose a word from the Glossary on page 14 that they find interesting and use it in a sentence that conveys its meaning.
 6. **Multiple Choice:** Students may complete the multiple-choice section before or after watching the Guess or Mess episode. If completing before, they can check their answers while watching.. (Note: The multiple-choice section corresponds to the *Guess or Mess* episode about John F. Kennedy and can also be used to play along while watching. See “Extension Activity” below.)

Reflection Round-Up: (10 minutes)

1. Briefly summarize the key points covered about John F. Kennedy, focusing on his life, presidency, and legacy.
2. **Think-Pair-Share:** Ask students to recall one fact about John F. Kennedy and share it with a partner. Encourage them to discuss why that fact was significant.
3. Give each student a sticky note or index card and ask them to answer one of these three sample reflection questions:
 - What did you find most interesting about John F. Kennedy?
 - How do you think his presidency impacted the United States?
 - Can you think of a modern issue that relates to something Kennedy dealt with?
4. **Bonus Activities:** If time allows, allow students to complete the puzzle on page 2 by finding hidden letters throughout the book. They can also explore and engage with the other interactive activities included in the book.

Extension Activity: (20 minutes)

Guess or Mess Trivia Show: After the lesson, students can participate in the *Guess or Mess* trivia show for John F. Kennedy—direct students to the multiple-choice section of the worksheet. Students can play along with the contestants to see if they can answer the trivia questions correctly.

PragerU 5-Minute Videos:

Did you know that PragerU has a comprehensive video catalog of U.S. Presidents in an easy-to-watch 5-minute format? Enhance this lesson plan with one of our insightful, engaging,

and educational videos that provide students with a deep dive into the lives and legacies of America's leaders.

- To view *John F. Kennedy: A Star is Born*, click [here](#).
- To explore *John F. Kennedy: Young President in Crisis*, click [here](#).

Don't have time for a full lesson? Quick Activity (30 minutes)

Read the *John F. Kennedy* book together as a class, with students taking turns reading aloud. Then, watch the *Guess or Mess* video and play along with the trivia questions.