



Gerald Ford | Lesson Plan

How did Gerald Ford help heal the nation after a time of crisis, and what challenges did he face during his presidency?

Students will understand how Gerald Ford's presidency was crucial in restoring trust and stability in the United States after the Watergate scandal and the Vietnam War. They will explore his rise to the presidency, his key decisions, and how he dealt with political and economic challenges during his time in office.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify the key life events of Gerald Ford.
- Explain how Gerald Ford's leadership helped the United States recover from the Watergate scandal and other national crises.
- Compare the key hardships and key achievements of Gerald Ford that shaped his presidency.
- Evaluate Gerald Ford's leadership skills and decisions, which have impacted the United States' trust in its leaders.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Watergate:** A major political scandal involving President Nixon that led to his resignation.
- **Pardon:** The act of forgiving someone for a crime, which Ford famously did for Nixon.
- **Inflation:** A rise in prices, leading to the reduced purchasing power of money.
- **Resign:** To voluntarily leave a job or position, as Nixon did from the presidency.
- **Vietnam War:** A conflict in Vietnam where the U.S. was involved, which ended during Ford's presidency.
- **Scandal:** A publicized incident involving wrongdoing or misbehavior by someone in authority.

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, Government and Politics, U.S. History

What You'll Need

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

Scan to watch episode:



Lesson Plan: Read and Discuss (60 minutes)

Introduction to Gerald Ford: (5 minutes)

1. Begin with a brief discussion about U.S. presidents who led the country during difficult times. Ask students if they know any presidents who helped heal the nation after a crisis.
2. Display the *Gerald Ford* digital book using an electronic device. Briefly highlight Ford's significance as the 38th president, his role in the aftermath of Watergate, and how he sought to restore trust in the government. Show images from the digital book to give a visual overview of his life and presidency.

Ford History Huddle: (25 minutes)

1. Read the "Meet Gerald Ford" 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 Ford'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:
 - Group 1: *Young Gerald, Interesting Facts* (page 3)
 - Group 2: *Rise to Power, Vice President* (pages 4-5)
 - Group 3: *President, Retirement* (pages 5-6)
 - Group 4: *Legacy, Football Star* (pages 7-8)
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:
 - **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:
 - 1913 - Birth of Gerald Ford
 - 1941 - Graduates from Yale Law School
 - 1973 - Becomes Vice President of the United States
 - 1974 - Becomes President after Nixon's resignation
 - 1976 - Loses the presidential election to Jimmy Carter

- 2006 - Death of Gerald Ford
- **Interesting Quote:** Have students choose a meaningful quote from the book to fill in the quote section on their worksheet.
- **Interesting Fact:** Ask students to select an interesting fact about Gerald Ford that stood out to them and write it in the space provided.
- **Vocabulary Builder:** Instruct students to choose a word from the Glossary on page 9 that they find interesting and use it in a sentence that conveys its meaning.
- **Multiple Choice:** Explain that students should complete the multiple-choice section of the worksheet individually. (Note: The multiple-choice section corresponds to the *Guess or Mess* episode about Gerald Ford 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 Gerald Ford, focusing on his life, presidency, and legacy.
2. **Think-Pair-Share:** Ask students to recall one fact about Gerald Ford 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 Gerald Ford?
 - How do you think his leadership influenced the United States?
 - Can you think of a modern issue that relates to something Ford 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 Gerald Ford—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.

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

Read the *Gerald Ford* 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.