



This content package contains a variety of content resources related to January's theme of State of the Union. Topics include democracy, presidents, U.S. Constitution, U.S. History, economics, speeches, and more. We have split the content by the type of media or usage: Activities and Lesson Plans; Online Exhibitions; Videos; Articles and Blog Posts. We also provide ideas for ways to use the content in an American Spaces program. Please send any feedback to Lauren Appelbaum (AppelbaumL@si.edu).

Activities and Lesson Plans

Preparing for the Oath (U.S. history and values)

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/>

Use the videos, brief texts, vocabulary sheet, and practice quizzes to explore American history and values. As a tool specifically for non-native English speakers, this is an excellent resource for American Spaces audiences. This digital resource is great for self-directed learning and continuation at home. *Encourage participants to explore the themes of Writing the Constitution, The Presidency, and Government basics to inspire a broader understanding of democratic values. Additional lesson plans for facilitators can be found under the Resources tab.*

Dear Mr. President (U.S. history, democracy, and skill building)

http://amhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/lincoln/dear_president.pdf

Fundamental to democracy in the United States is an individuals' right to express personal beliefs or opinions. Encourage participants to find that voice while strengthening their persuasive writing skills through this activity that guides participants through the process of composing an argument after analyzing a letter written to President Lincoln. *Consider encouraging participants to research current issues to voice to the president of the United States, or if the political climate allows, a local politician. Use the Suggested Resources to incorporate contemporary letters to the president or biographical information on the current U.S. president.*

Winning the Vote: How Americans Elect Their President (democracy)

http://smithsonianeducation.org/educators/lesson_plans/elections/ATZ_Elections_2012_Supplement.pdf

Use this teacher resource with games and information on the history of U.S. elections and campaigns with a video on political comic books to plan programming. *Have participants create their own comic books, slogans, or speeches. Host mock campaigns and elections to practice English and learn about voting. Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVsQThQp2Rk>*

The Constitution Lives! How it Protects Your Rights Today (U.S. Constitution, democracy, and civil rights)

http://smithsonianeducation.org/educators/lesson_plans/constitution/ATZ_Constitution_Sep1987.pdf

During the State of the Union Address, the president of the United States typically reports to a joint session of Congress on the condition of the nation as well as outlines a legislative agenda, fulfilling Article II of the U.S. Constitution. *Using this teacher's guide, encourage participants to gain a better understanding of the Constitution through the discussion of familiar concepts of fairness, rights, limits, and rules. Encourage participants to find other examples of constitutional rights being exercised or debated today in the U.S. or locally to continue the discussion of the importance of democratic rights in modern society.*

Online Exhibitions



Herblock's Presidency: "Puncturing Pomposity" (freedom of speech, democracy, and presidents)

<http://www.npg.si.edu/exhibit/herblock/intro.html>

Use this online exhibition of presidential political cartoons to talk about freedom of press, an important element of U.S. democracy. *Encourage participants to create their own political cartoons of an American President or, if the political climate allows, a local politician.*

A More Perfect Union: Japanese Americans and the U.S. Constitution (U.S. Constitution, U.S. history, war)

<http://amhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/experience/index.html>

Experience the story of the Japanese Americans who were placed in detention camps during World War II with this online exhibition from the National Museum of American History through images, music, text, and first-person accounts. *Consider incorporating this online exhibition into a lesson to stress the importance of the rights and freedoms of individuals under the U.S. Constitution. Encourage participants to explore the Reflections page to contribute their own thoughts about American citizenship or civil liberties. The exhibition is available in both rich-media and printable versions to accommodate spaces with limited bandwidth capabilities.*

Presidents in Waiting (U.S. history, vice presidents, presidents, and democracy)

<http://www.npg.si.edu/exhibit/vicepres/>

Examine the lesser-known role of the vice president and the 14 VPs who eventually became president with this online exhibition. *Using the interactive timeline and video interviews with former vice presidents encourage participants to create their own interview questions. What are some of the unique leadership qualities necessary to be the vice president or president of the United States?*

Mr. President (U.S. History, presidents, and democracy)

<http://smithsonianeducation.org/president/gallerymain.aspx>

Use this online exhibition to find profiles on every American president and learn about each presidency through text and images. *Encourage participants to create a profile for a future imaginary president and encourage thoughtful discussion of what qualities are necessary to be a leader, or the president of the United States. Consider asking participants to pick a particular president for further research to present to a group and promote English language conversation and learning.*

The American Presidency: A Glorious Burden (U.S. History and presidents)

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/presidency/home.html>

Bring the U.S. presidency to life by learning about the responsibilities of the president or learning real-life stories of these individuals. *The activities or teacher guides provide helpful guidance for engaging and interactive programs to help participants better understand the presidency and its importance in American and world history. Recommended activities include: What Does the President Do? (Grades 4-6), Communicating the Presidency (Grades 10-12), and Roles and Responsibilities (Grades 10-12)*

The Gettysburg Address (Civil War, U.S. History, presidents, speeches, and democracy)

<http://historyexplorer.si.edu/resource/?key=1409&lp=resource&resource=1410>

January: State of the Union



President Abraham Lincoln's short address at the Gettysburg, Pennsylvania battlefield is one of the most eloquent political speeches in American history. Its inspiring message remains as meaningful today as when it was first delivered in 1863. This website allows participants to explore a virtual copy of the last handwritten copy of the Gettysburg Address and listen to a modern recording of the speech. *Consider using this website in conjunction with programming about U.S. History, the Civil War, the Declaration of Independence, or President Lincoln. Why was this speech so important? Participants can closely examine the language of this speech to draw comparisons or references to the Declaration of Independence and the tenets of American democracy. Printable versions of the speech are available as well as transcripts and an audio version to facilitate English language learning.*

Videos

See Rare Footage of FDR Speaking at the National Institute of Health (speeches and presidents)

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/see-rare-footage-fdr-speaking-national-institute-health-180952664/>

Right before being elected to a third term, Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke at National Institute of Health about preparedness for war and the need to research deadly diseases. *Use this article and short video as part of a program about the importance of the president as a public figure and presidential speeches as a means of communication to the American public.*

Blog Posts and Articles

Frozen in Place: December 1861 (U.S. history, Civil War, and democracy)

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/frozen-in-place-december-1861-49441/?no-ist>

"A disloyal portion of the American people have, during the whole year been engaged in an attempt to divide and destroy the Union," Abraham Lincoln told Congress on December 3, 1861, in his first State of the Union message. *Use this article facilitate a discussion about Lincoln's historic first State of the Union address during the Civil War. Consider pairing this article with a transcript or excerpts of the original speech to help participants better understand the issues highlighted in this 1861 speech. You may also wish to use the blog entry "From Time to Time: The State of the Union Address...January 27, 2010" from the National Postal Museum to provide participants with additional historical background of the annual speech.*

Additional reading: <http://postalmuseumblog.si.edu/2010/01/from-time-to-time-the-state-of-the-union-addressjanuary-27-2010.html>

Science fair contestants gird for battle (science, economics, and democracy)

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/blog/2011/03/science-fair-contestants-gird-for-battle.html>

In his 2011 State of the Union address, President Obama called for a new generation of American innovators and scientists and a recommitment to a long American tradition of innovation as a means of maintaining economically competitive with countries around the world. *Use this blog post to facilitate a discussion about the topics that are included in the State of the Union address and why these topics are chosen for inclusion. Why would science, education, and innovation be important themes for this address? A link to the complete 2011 State of the Union address is included in the blog post.*

Behind Inaugural Speeches, Meaningful Words (inauguration, speeches, and presidents)

January: State of the Union



<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/behind-inaugural-speeches-meaningful-words-43415442/>

What words do presidents focus on most in their inaugural addresses? With this article, participants can explore a sampling of Inaugural Addresses from President Washington to President Obama and find the complete texts via additional links in the article. *Introduce participants to the “wordle” or word collage that equates emphasis and frequency of a word with the size or boldness of the text. After providing participants with the complete text of an Inaugural Address, encourage them to create their own word collage, by hand or digitally, and facilitate a discussion of their findings. Consider comparing two different speeches – are there common themes or points of emphasis between both?*

A Brief History of the Teleprompter (speeches, presidents, U.S. history, and innovation)

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/a-brief-history-of-the-teleprompter-88039053/>

By the end of the 1952 election season, both democrats and republicans had grasped the importance of the teleprompter. Use the article to explore how a make shift show business memory aid became the centerpiece of modern political campaigning. *Encourage participants to write their own speech and explore different memorization techniques. What are the benefits to memorizing a speech? The drawbacks? How has television impacted the use of the teleprompter for important presidential speeches such as the State of the Union or an Inaugural Address? Use the embedded links within the article for additional reading and a short video.*

When Republicans Were Blue and Democrats Were Red (voting, politics, and media)

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/when-republicans-were-blue-and-democrats-were-red-104176297/>

Learn about the interesting history of the way in which the colors red and blue became associated with Democrats and Republicans with this article from Smithsonian.com. *Consider incorporating this article, the photo gallery, and the article’s embedded links into programming about voting rights and practices as well as the structures of political parties in the United States. Facilitators may also wish to incorporate the history and significance of other symbols associated with political parties in the United States, such as the donkey and the elephant. Are there locally significant political symbols or colors similar to the ones associated with republicans and democrats in the U.S.? Where and how did they originate?*

Articles on President Lincoln (presidents, U.S. history, and speeches)

The sage, the father figure, the military genius, the great orator, and the brilliant political tactician are just some of the words used to describe President Abraham Lincoln. These two articles from Smithsonian Magazine examine Abraham Lincoln as a public figure and his talent for speechwriting. *Consider using these articles in conjunction with **The Gettysburg Address** (found in Online Exhibitions) for a complete picture of Abraham Lincoln and how this 16th president of the United States has become one of the most memorialized individuals in the United States. What qualities make for an inspirational and motivational leader?*

- <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/ted-sorensen-on-abraham-lincoln-a-man-of-his-words-12048177/>
- <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/history-how-we-came-to-revere-abraham-lincoln-180949447/>