

# Lesson Plan:

## Ceremonial Head of State

Class: U.S. Government

Unit: Executive Branch

### Unit Essential Question:

What is the role of the Executive Branch in the Government of the United States of America?

### Guiding Question(s):

- What duties and responsibilities are tied to the President's role as Ceremonial Head of State?

### Objective(s):

- Students will create a digital presentation using internet sources.
- Students will discuss the significance of the President's actions while acting as Ceremonial Head of State.
- Students will describe the duties and responsibilities tied to the President's role as Ceremonial Head of State.

### Teacher Background information:

The President of the United States is tasked with attending state events and receiving foreign dignitaries in Article II of the Constitution. This capacity is referred to as the President's role of Ceremonial Head of State. The President engages in this role through hosting state dinners, conducting state visits at home and abroad, and receiving state gifts.

### Materials needed:

- [Google Slides presentation](#)
- Computer, Chromebook, or tablet for each student
- Projector
- Device capable of casting slideshow to projector
- Timer

**“Do Now”/ Hook/ Opening activity:**

- Ask students “what happens in your household when someone comes to visit? Does your family do anything special?”
  - Write answers on the board
    - If answers are slow, prompt further (cleaning up, cooking special food, nicer dishes, best behavior, dressed up, etc.)
- Ask students “how do we dress when we have an important meeting or go out to a nice restaurant with our families? Is that different from how we act when we are in private?”
  - Write answers on the board
- Ask students “why is it that we do these things that we wouldn’t normally do?”
  - Take some answers, work students towards understanding that they represent their families or themselves to the public when they engage in these activities.
- Direct students to consider the President of the United States, “do we think that they would also do these types of activities when other world leaders come to visit?”
  
- “The President of the United States serves as the Ceremonial Head of State for our nation and thereby reflects the prestige of the nation when they receive foreign guests.”
  - Using the primary sources on the Powers of the Presidency, show students the exhibits on hosting state dinners and receiving state gifts. Discuss the primary sources on screen as an example of the President acting as Ceremonial Head of State.

**Activities:**

1. Divide students into groups of four or five.
  - a. Challenge students to research one of the following examples of Presidential visits or visits by another world leader to the United States:
    - i. President Jimmy Carter: Visit to West Germany, July 14-17, 1978
    - ii. President Ronald Reagan: Visit to the Soviet Union, May 29-June 3, 1988
    - iii. President George H.W. Bush: Visit to Czechoslovakia, November 17, 1990
    - iv. President Bill Clinton: Visit to South Africa, March 25-29, 1998
    - v. President George W. Bush: Visit to France, June 5-6, 2004
    - vi. President Barack Obama: Visit to Japan, May 25-27, 2017
    - vii. President Donald Trump: Visit to China, November 8-10, 2017
  - b. Students, working in groups, should create a presentation for the class using the electronic medium of their choice ensuring that the following elements are included:
    - i. A map of the nation visited, which also shows the United States
    - ii. A map of places the delegation visited (city by city)
    - iii. Who attended the meeting (which world leaders)?
    - iv. Why did the meeting happen?
    - v. In what way(s) did the president show himself to be the Ceremonial Head of State? Why was this significant to the event?
  - c. Use the work time to ensure that students are on task. Assist when needed (**40 Minutes**)
2. Each group presents their findings to the class (5 minutes each).

**Adjustment:** For shorter class periods, this activity can be divided into two sessions. The first session can focus on research and starting the presentation creation. The second session can focus on finishing presentations and presenting them to the class.

**Closing:**

- Return to the guiding question. Ask students to recall the types of activities President Clinton engaged in as the nation's Ceremonial Head of State. Briefly discuss why this role is important and what is gained through it.
- Discuss the way that the Ceremonial Head of State role closely relates to the President's role as Chief Diplomat.
- Look forward to the next lesson- the Presidential Cabinet.

**Assessment:**

Score student presentations for participation and completeness.

**Modifications:**

- Ensure that each student has access to a computer or Chromebook while working on the digital activity.
- Strategically group students heterogeneously. Allow students some choice about which state visit to research.

**Resources:**

[Powers of the Presidency from the Clinton Presidential Library](#)

[Google Maps](#)

[President Clinton's Trips Abroad](#)

[List of Foreign Dignitary Visits to the United States](#)