

**Title:** First Ladies, Vice Presidents, and Presidential Advisors - The real Influence on the Presidency

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**Course:** US History

**Time Frame:** 1-2 class periods

**Grade Levels:**

9, 10, 11, 12

**Classroom/Homework Activity to be performed:**

- Activity can be either individual or small group, up to 4. Groups of 2 or 3 would be ideal.
- Internet access, with access to YouTube, Library of Congress, and Presidential Libraries is needed.
- Background information about presidents is a must, specifically what presidents “achieved” while serving and president.

**Rationale:**

- Students will understand the massive amount of influence that those with consistent and direct contact to the President of the United States have over policies and programs of the United States of America.

**Lesson objectives - the student will:**

- Select 1 president of the United States and research the influence of those with close contact with that president. (A list of presidents that should be chosen from may be appropriate for better and guided instruction).
- Identify the 1 or 2 most influential people that worked with the president that was selected by the students
- Recognize the topic(s) or program(s) that were modified and changed by the President of the United States because of the influence that these individuals held with the president.

**District, state, or national performance and knowledge standards/goals/skills met:**

- Wisconsin Social Studies State Standards – (by 11th grade)

**Secondary materials (book, article, video documentary, etc.) needed:**

- America’s Most Influential First Ladies, Carl Anthony
- Presidential Library websites of selected presidents
- First Ladies, Susan Swain and C-SPAN
- Potential videos from the History Channel, Smithsonian

**Primary materials (book, article, video documentary, etc.) needed:**

- Copies of actual policies and laws that were passed by the president and Congress – available from Library of Congress
- Video clips of sound bites about specific topics

**Full description of activity or assignment:**

- Students will be paired or grouped into 3 students. The students are instructed that they will select a president of the United States and have to research who had a great deal of influence on the policy that was supported and put into place by that president.
- Students are provided with examples of recent presidents and the influence that was passed onto them:
  - Barack Obama – Michelle Obama, healthy foods and exercise movement
  - George W. Bush – Dick Cheney, Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan
  - Bill Clinton – Hillary Clinton, humanities and the arts
  - Ronald Regan – Nancy Regan, Just Say No
- Students are provided with examples and information explaining how the president, as either a candidate for the presidency, governor, representative, or in first term as president either stated or preformed actions that were opposite of what was later accomplished.
- Students should create some type of compare and contrast chart or graphic organizer that can easily show the opinion and stance of specific topic(s) before and after legislation or programs were passed or created.
- Students should present their information to the class in a group setting, taking 3-8 minutes to explain information to all involved.
- After the presentation, students should engage in a guided discussion about the information presented. The discussion should include a back and forth about which stance the group supports more – the original position of the president, or the position that the president took up after the influential parties changed the mind of the president.
- Optional additional activity: After activity, students should write a small reflection paper about whether or not influence from other people on the President of the United States is a good or bad thing for politics and the American Public. Have the students explain their position using at least 1 example that was presented by the class during their presentations.

### **Full explanation of the assessment method and/or scoring guide:**

- Evaluation of student grade is based on:
  - Accurate information presented
  - Work ethic
  - Involvement in discussion