

American Presidents

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Goal: Help students understand how the political geography of the country has changed.

Objectives: Students will be able to:
Identify the 1st, 7th, 16th, 31st, 39nd, and 44th presidents of the United States and the geographic significance of their home state with respect to presidential elections.

Describe the pattern of the home states of presidents who began their terms in each of the following eras; 1789-1860, 1861-1929, 1929-2009.

Explain how historical, political, economic and geographic factors have influenced the patterns over the past 220 years.

Michigan High School Content Expectations

United States History:

U6.2 Investigation Topics and Issue Analysis (P2)

Use the historical perspective to investigate a significant historical topic from United States History Eras 3-6 that also has significance as an issue or topic in the United States today.

Subject/Grade Level: HS U.S. History

Activities:

Introduction

Hand out the list of Presidents and US maps. Students will map the presidents in three eras, each approximately 70 years, describing the differences among the three patterns, and try to explain why the patterns are the way they are. Map the presidents with respect to the state with which they are most associated, which is most often (but not always) the state of their birth.

Note: F = Federalist R = Republican D= Democratic DR = Democratic Republican (but the start of the Democratic Party) W = Whig (arguably the forerunner of the Republican Party.)

Have students review the list and identify the 1st (*Washington*), 7th (*Jackson*), 16th (*Lincoln*), 31st (*Hoover*), 39th (*Carter*), and 44th (*Obama*) Presidents. As we go through the exercise have students try to figure out the geographic significance of each president's home state.

Activity 1: Map the Presidents from 1789 to 1860: the Constitution to just before the Civil War

Outline on your map all the states which had joined the Union by 1861. (*All states bordering Mississippi and to the east of it, as well as Texas, California and Oregon*) Use the first of three colors to mark an **x** in the home state of each president elected in the first era.

What are some ways the pattern could be described? (*The presidents came from the states on the coast, the original 13 colonies, largely between Massachusetts and Virginia*)

Of the 15 presidents in this era, how many were elected from outside the original 13 states? (*two, Jackson and Harrison*)

How many were born outside the original thirteen states? (*none*) Which state elected the most presidents in the first era? (*Virginia, with 6*)

What are some of the geographic, political or economic reasons this might be? (*geographic - Virginia was in the center of a long, narrow United States; economic - land was the basic source of wealth in the colonies, and the rich Virginia farmland was that basis of the wealth of many people; political - the early influence of four of the first five presidents.*)

In this era, new states were largely from which major added territories? (*the Northwest Territories, the Louisiana Purchase, and the Mississippi Territories*) By 1861, 31 states had been admitted; how could you describe where the states are? (*Every state east of the Mississippi or bordering it as well as Texas, California, and Oregon.*)

Activity 2: Map the Presidents from 1861 through 1930: the Civil War to the Great Depression

Using a second color, put an **x** in the home state of each of the Presidents born in era 2.

Who was the first President to be born outside of the original 13 colonies? (*Lincoln*)

What are some of the ways you could describe the pattern? (*Largely in the northeast or north central United States but east of the Mississippi river*)

What are some of the reasons for this pattern? (*geographic - westward migration, and an influx of immigrants especially through the Great Lakes States; political- the defeat and economic destruction of the South in the Civil War; economic - the rapid industrialization of the north during and after the Civil war*)

Which state has the most presidents? (*Ohio, with 7*) Why might this be? (*With the south effectively disempowered, Ohio is close to the center of the remaining political and economic power of the country, and well connected through the Great Lakes*) The rapid industrialization of the country led to major concentrations of wealth and power with railroads, steel and oil companies, many of which located in or close to Ohio.

Activity 3: Summarize the geographic factors that influenced the distribution of Presidents in the first two eras.

Present the information in the table with respect to size and shape, transportation, communication, immigration, internal migration, economic population, and political power for 1789-1861. As a large group, have students complete the table for 1861-1929.

Activity 4: Map the Presidents from the Great Depression to Present (1929-2009)

Using the third color put an **x** in the home state of each of the Presidents born in era 3.

Who was the first President to be born west of the Mississippi? (*Hoover*) Who was the first president after the Civil War to be elected from a state in the Deep South? (*Jimmy Carter, although Lyndon Johnson was from Texas which sided with the Confederacy. Andrew Johnson was not elected.*)

What are some of the ways you could describe the pattern? (*Much more widespread, more toward the south and west*)

Activity 5: Complete the comparison table and discuss possible causes

Why?

- geographic - substantial westward migration continues, reduced European immigration in the depression and WWII, but substantially increased post-war immigration from Latin American and Asia to the southwest, Sunbelt migration particularly of older Americans;
- economic - recovery of the south and the post-WWII economic boom in the west;
- politically - the advent of mass communication and air transportation has made location of the home state less important.

Assessment:

Agree or disagree with the following statement and support your position with information from the history United States Presidents.

The home state of a candidate is no longer of much importance in the election of a President

Group 1: 1789-1860 Constitution to Civil War

1. George Washington (1789-97) Virginia (F)
 2. John Adams (1797-1801) Massachusetts (F)
 3. Thomas Jefferson (1801-09) Virginia (DR)
 4. James Madison (1809-17) Virginia (DR)
 5. James Monroe (1817-25) Virginia (DR)
 6. John Quincy Adams (1825-29) Massachusetts (DR)
 7. Andrew Jackson (1829-37) Tennessee (but born in South Carolina) (D)
 8. Martin Van Buren (1837-41) New York (D)
 9. William Henry Harrison (1841) Indiana (but born in Virginia)(W)
 10. John Tyler (1841-45) Virginia (W)
 11. James K. Polk (1845-49) Tennessee (but born in North Carolina) (D)
 12. Zachary Taylor (1849-50) Virginia (W)
 13. Millard Fillmore (1850-53) New York (W)
 14. Franklin Pierce (1853-57) New Hampshire (D)
 15. James Buchanan (1857-61) Pennsylvania (D)
- ### **Group 2: 1861-1929 From the Civil War to the Great Depression**
16. Abraham Lincoln (1861-65) Illinois (but born in Kentucky) (R)
 17. Andrew Johnson (1865-69) Tennessee (but born in North Carolina) (D)
 18. Ulysses S. Grant (1869-77) Ohio (R)
 19. Rutherford B. Hayes (1877-81) Ohio (R)
 20. James A. Garfield (1881) Ohio (R)
 21. Chester A. Arthur (1881-85) Vermont (R)
 22. Grover Cleveland (1885-89) New York (but born in New Jersey) (D)

23. Benjamin Harrison (1889-93) Ohio (R)
24. Grover Cleveland (1893-97) New York (born in New Jersey) (D)
25. William McKinley (1897-1901) Ohio (R)
26. Theodore Roosevelt (1901-09) New York (R)
27. William H. Taft (1909-13) Ohio (R)
28. Woodrow Wilson (1913-21) New Jersey (born in Virginia) (D)
29. Warren G. Harding (1921-23) Ohio (R)
30. Calvin Coolidge (1923-29) Vermont (R)

Group 3: 1929 - 2014 Great Depression to the Present

31. Herbert Hoover (1929-33) Iowa (R)
32. Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933-45) New York (D)
33. Harry S. Truman (1945-53) Missouri (D)
34. Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-61) Kansas (born in Texas) (R)
35. John F. Kennedy (1961-63) Massachusetts (D)
36. Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-69) Texas (D)
37. Richard M. Nixon (1969-74) California (R)
38. Gerald R. Ford (1974-77) Michigan (born in Nebraska) (R)
39. Jimmy Carter (1977-81) Georgia (D)
40. Ronald Reagan (1981-89) California (but born in Illinois) (R)
41. George Bush (1989-93) Texas (but born in Massachusetts) (R)
42. William J. Clinton (1993-2001) Arkansas (D)
43. George W. Bush (2001- 2009) Texas (R)
44. Barack Obama (2009- 2016) Illinois (born in Hawaii) (D)
45. Donald J. Trump (2017 -) New York

	1789-1861 Constitution to Civil War	1861-1929 Civil War to Great Depression	1929-2009 Great Depression to Present
What was the Shape and Size of the US?			
What were the major forms of transportation?			
How did people communicate?			
Who were the major groups of immigrants and where did they settle?			
What was the general pattern of internal migration?			
What was the economy based on?			
Where were the major population centers?			
Which groups of people held political power?			

	1789-1861 Constitution to Civil War	1861-1929 Civil War to Great Depression	1929-2009 Great Depression to Present
What was the Shape and Size of the US?	Long and narrow for the original colonies. states added to border of Mississippi, plus Texas, California, Oregon	Continental U. S.	All 50 states, including Hawaii and Alaska
What were the major forms of transportation?	Poor roads, especially through mountains, water transportation, canals, horse and buggy	Railroad, steam power, Improved roads, beginning of motorized vehicles,	Interstate highways, air travel
How did people communicate?	Printed materials, mail (variable) travel town crier	telegraph, better mail system, beginning of telephone system	radio, television, internet, fax, computer
Who were the major groups of immigrants and where did they settle?	Generally from Western Europe, and slaves from Africa to the east coast	Increasingly from Eastern and Southern Europe, (to the north) and Chinese laborers (to the west coast)	Increasingly from Latin America and Asia
What was the general pattern of internal migration?	From east coast westward	From rural areas to cities, south to north.	Generally from Northeast to South and West
What was the economy based on?	Agrarian, highly tied to Western Europe, export/import trade	Industrial Revolution	Technology and Service Industries
Where were the major population centers?	Centered along the East Coast (port cities)	Manufacturing centers developing around resources and trade routes. Midwest, East coast	Stable, but following population south and west
Which groups of people held political power?	White male landowners	Male citizens (with significant discrimination) (Until 1920)	All citizens over the age of 18