

# Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Museum

Lesson or Unit Plan for "Authority and Power"

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Hannibal, Missouri

## "Authority and Power with the Media and President"

### LESSON or UNIT PLAN for "Authority and Power"

**Concept or Topic:**

Authority and Power with the Media and the President

**Suggested Grade Level(s)/Course:**

Resource or Modified: Government 11th Grade (Special Education Setting)

**Subject:**

U.S. Government: Resource

**Suggested Time Frame:**

3 days (50 minutes each day)

**Objective(s):**

- 1) Students will create a fake news story and then explain and list why it is a fake story, giving supporting details of what makes theirs a fake news story, scoring at least 7 out of 10 possible points on the scoring guide.
- 2) Students will create a list of at least 5 characteristics/skills or abilities in a Presidential Candidate and explain why each is important to being President.
- 3) Students will be able to explain and give detailed examples of what makes a person an Authority. Students will create a statement explaining in what area they are an expert, and then give 3 supporting details going into depth specifically explaining those 3 details and showing their mastery.

**Common Core State Standards:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2.D

Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic

Social Studies Missouri Learning Standard: MLS Code: 9-12 G.V.3 G.S. Grade 9-12, Course GV, Course: Government, Theme 3, Strand GS (number 372)

-Analyze the unique roles and responsibilities of the three branches of government to determine how they function and interact.

Social Studies Missouri Learning Standard: MLS Code 9-12.GV.4.GS.C, Grade 9-12, Course, GV Course: Government, Theme 4, Strand GS (number 378)

-Compare the various processes pertaining to the selection of political leaders at the federal, state, and local level.

**Assessments (at least two):**

Each day of the unit, students will be expected to create an artifact/written piece that will be turned in the next day.

Day 1: Students will create their own fake news story, explaining what makes the story a hoax with supporting details to let us know.

Day 2: Students will create a list of characteristics they want to see in their President.

Day 3: Students will explain what an Authority of a subject is, giving details of why they are an authority.

**Vocabulary (Tiers 2 & 3): Vocabulary will be built and worked on during the whole unit. I will review previous words and introduce words that I feel are important and words with which the students struggle.**

Tier 2:

Hoax

Limb

Century

Rheumatic

Subterfuge

Exceedingly

nominate

Tier 3:

Petrified

Profound

Verdict

Invariable

Depravity

Benevolent

Negligence

**Subject Area Integration:**

Resource: Language Arts: Writing

Resource: History/Social Studies: Government

**Background Information Required for Lesson:**

Day 1 Activity will be done during the Legislative Branch Unit, after students have learned the roles of the Branch and How a Bill becomes a Law.

Day 2 Activity will be done during the Executive Branch Unit, after students have learned the requirements to be President.

Day 3 Activity will be done during the Judicial Branch Unit, after students have learned the requirements to be a Supreme Court Judge.

**Materials:**

-Copies of "Petrified Man," "The Presidential Candidate" and "Cannibalism in the Cars."

-Background knowledge of Three Branches of Government

-Post-it notes

**Technology:**

-laptops or smart devices if using on-line readings or allowing students to look up challenging words

**Related Twain Quotes/Passages:**

"Suppose you were an idiot. And suppose you were a member of Congress. But I repeat myself."

- Mark Twain, a Biography

"All Congresses and Parliaments have a kindly feeling for idiots, and a compassion for them, on account of personal experience and heredity."

- Mark Twain's Autobiography; also in Mark Twain in Eruption

"I am personally acquainted with hundreds of journalists, and the opinion of the majority of them would not be worth tuppence in private, but when they speak in print it is the newspaper that is talking (the pygmy scribe is not visible) and then their utterances shake the community like the thunders of prophecy."

- "License of the Press," speech, 31 March 1873

“Truth is the most valuable thing we have. Let us economize it.”  
- Following the Equator, Pudd'nhead Wilson's New Calendar

### **Lesson Sequence:**

#### **Day 1: News**

Hook/Intro:

Opening Question--Put the following questions on the board, write out, or give as a handout. The student has to write an answer.

- What is News? Either explain or give examples of what it is.
- Where do you get your news/Information?

#### **Teaching of the Concept(s):**

1. News vs Fake News: Should we always take information that we read as truthful? Being mindful of the information that we consume is a very useful skill/method to make use of in life.
2. Review/Teach Vocab of the readings

#### **Suggested Questions:**

- 1) What is fake news?
- 2) Why is fake news harmful?
- 3) Can fake news be entertaining?
- 4) What is the point of fake news?

#### **Learning Activity:**

- a. Frontload the students with vocabulary they might find challenging (petrified, century, sensation, etc.). Write the meaning on the board so each student can see it and have it open to them as they read. While reading, any student can write a word on a post-it and put it on the front of the desk. The teacher will pick up post-it notes add them to the word wall, then give a meaning.
- b. All questions are to be either asked orally and then responses written out or you can have the questions written on the board.
- c. After reading the story of the “Petrified Man” (you might read it aloud), ask what type of story is it? How do you know? What clues let you know it is a News Story? Does the story seem real? Do a quick search for “Territorial Enterprise” and see what you find.
- d. [Territorial Enterprise page](#)
- e. Ask “Does this web page change anyone’s thoughts on if this is a good News Story?” One 30-second search may help you avoid passing along fake news.
- f. If anyone is having trouble seeing this is a hoax, have the students act out where their hands are and what it looks like.
- g. Have students change material to review. Have them begin looking at “How Fake

News Breaks your Brain.”

- h. [Fake News](#)
- i. Why do people believe fake news? What dangers or problems might happen? What is “low flow of information”? What suggestions does the article give to help people determine if it is “fake news”?

**Review/Closure:**

Students are to create a fake news story.

Prompt: “The new year is upon us, Jan 1, 20\_\_\_. What wild or crazy story can you create that someone might believe?”

Take the next 5 minutes to think of an idea: What type of details should you include or how are you going to make people believe the story? Your ideas have to be based on reality, but need to stretch. Hoaxes are believable, but need clues to them being fake.

Use the “Petrified Man” as your guide...no longer than that story, but it should at least be that long. (1 page at most)

Once you have your short fake news story complete...print a second copy of the story and please highlight (one color) or mark (circle) the details that you think sell it as a fake story. Also, highlight (one color) or mark (underline) clues or hints you give to let people know it is fake.

Finally, your story will be for the Virginia City, Nevada Territorial Enterprise.

**Day 2: President**

Hook/Intro: Put on the following questions on the board, write out, or give as a handout. The student has to write an answer.

Who can be President? Recreate the list of requirements to be President.

**Teaching of the Concept(s):**

- 1. Review the basic requirements to be President.
- 2. There are more than the basic 4 requirements to be President. Do we just want anyone doing this job?

**Suggested Questions:**

- 1) Do the basic requirements cut it?
- 2) Why do we want more from a President?
- 3) Should just anyone be President? The Rock????

**Learning Activity:**

- a. Frontload the students with vocabulary they might find challenging (candidate,

rheumatic, invariable, depravity). Write the meaning on the board so each student can see it and have it open to them as they read. While reading, any student can write a word on a post-it and put it on the front of the desk. The teacher will pick up post-it notes, add them to the word wall, then give a meaning.

- b. Have the students read Twain's "A Presidential Candidate."
- c. Have students respond to the reading. Does this sound like a qualified candidate for President? (Why or why not?) Does anything listed in this reading disqualify a person to be President? Share. Create a mind map on the board to allow students to see all the reasons why or why not! Should some people just not be trusted or placed in positions of authority? Students should be writing these responses on paper.
- d. [CBS Ousts 4 for Bush Service Record Reporting](#)
- e. Why is news important? What function does the news media serve in dealing with the President and our government? Share this again on the board, so students see how the role of news is to keep government honest! Would any candidate with the kind of background we say in "The Presidential Candidate" ever really run? If the news does not keep a government honest, then who should? (Open ending question: Want to see what they can do)

### **Review/Closure:**

You are creating your ideal wish list for President of the United States...assuming they already met the 4 basic requirements. I want you to create your own take on a Presidential (positive/good) Candidate. Create a list of at least 10 characteristics/skills or personal traits. Pick 5 characteristics/skills or personal traits you feel are the "must haves" for any President. Using those 5 chosen characteristics/skills or personal traits, create a short response of why those things would make a person good at the job. Remember, in the reading Twain explains all of the bad and horrible things he has done. Your creation is to say why your chosen characteristics or skills would make you a great person for the job.

Length: it should not be longer than Twain's "Presidential Candidate."

### **Day 3: Authority**

Put the following questions on the board, write out, or give as a handout. The student has to write an answer.

Why do you believe people?

What makes a person believable?

### **Teaching of the Concept(s):**

1. What is an authority/expert?
2. What is the purpose of an authority?
3. Elected officials as Authorities

**Suggested Questions:**

1. Why do we believe some people and not others?
2. Do people who have a position of authority have more believability?

**Learning Activity:**

- a) Let's create a short list of jobs people hold who we think are experts or should be believed. Students need to do this on paper, and then use students' lists to create a composite list on the board.
- b) [What makes an Expert?](#)
- c) Should we add or take any job off the list?
- d) Frontload the students with vocabulary they might find challenging (benevolent, vaguest, cadaverous, desolate and so on...). Write the meaning of each word on the board so each student can see it and have it open to them as they read. As the reading is happening, any student can write a word on a post-it and put it on the front of the desk. Circulate to pick it up, add it to the word wall and give a meaning.
- d) Read Twain's "Cannibalism in the Cars," but stop before the reveal. Ask if it is a believable story. Why? What details might make this story believable? Does the fact that the speaker is a Congressman affect you? Why or why not?  
Youtube [Cannibalism in the Cars- Reading](#) at 24:46 he says "member of Congress" if you want to pause it before the reveal.
- e) How do you feel after reading the reveal?
- f) [Trump Rally Size Claim](#) A person of Authority making a claim. What is the claim? Why do you believe him?
- g) [CNN Comparing Trump to Obama](#) Does this change your view of the claims? Why or why not?

**Review/Closure:**

Students will be asked to describe an area/subject in which they are an expert. Explain what that area is, then give at least 3 reason/facts that make you an expert. Details, details, details. Give as much information about yourself and the area in which you are an expert. Then for each reason, give a supporting fact that shows you are an expert and that you know what you are talking about.

Length--Each fact should be about a paragraph in length, so this should be about 3 or 5 paragraphs. One paragraph describes the kind of expert you are and the next 3 paragraphs contain reasons with supporting details that show you know your stuff.

**Homework:**

The questions answered during each day's lesson will be turned in the following day with the produced material/artifact.

### **Strategies for Exceptional Students:**

My lesson plan is designed for the Resource classroom and has supports that might not be necessary for a General Education setting. You might find it necessary to add an additional activity or a third resource to work with, if you feel your students need more rigor.

#### [The True History of Fake News](#) Day 1

\* Allow students to make a video of their fake news story and to be as creative as they wish.

#### [Rather News Report on Bush](#) video Day 2

\*Allow the students to explore Presidential history, creating pro and con lists of real Presidents and what they felt were good and bad qualities or skills.

#### [NPR-Wiretapping Story](#) Day 3

\* Allow students to search out more examples of people in authority creating their own issues. Scandals in politics!

Here are three separate articles or videos that can be used for students who need more enrichment. They will add depth and strength to the students' writing and allow them to explore more on their own.

### **Suggested Follow-Up Activities:**

\*Note please check your school's policy on movies and ratings, some simply require parents consent to watch. I thought some of these might be good for students to explore on their own and build some knowledge in a content they find interesting.

- If any students do the enrichment activities, have them share what they have discovered.
- Subject matter to explore--"Watergate," either the book *All the President's Men* or the movie rated "R" with lots of profanity.
- Direct the students to Twain's "Bloody Massacre," "Luck vs Science," "Journalism in Tennessee," or "How I edited an Agricultural Paper."
- Also, possibly watch the movie "Truth" with Robert Redford. Rated "R."
- Have the students be mindful of the news and give them opportunities to share news they have read, seen or heard that would relate these subject. I often bring in news reports related to the subject that we are talking about or have covered. Ex: State of the Union Address, Confirmation Hearings and so on...



