

LESSON 1 - THE HOME OF THE PRESIDENT: WASHINGTON, D. C.

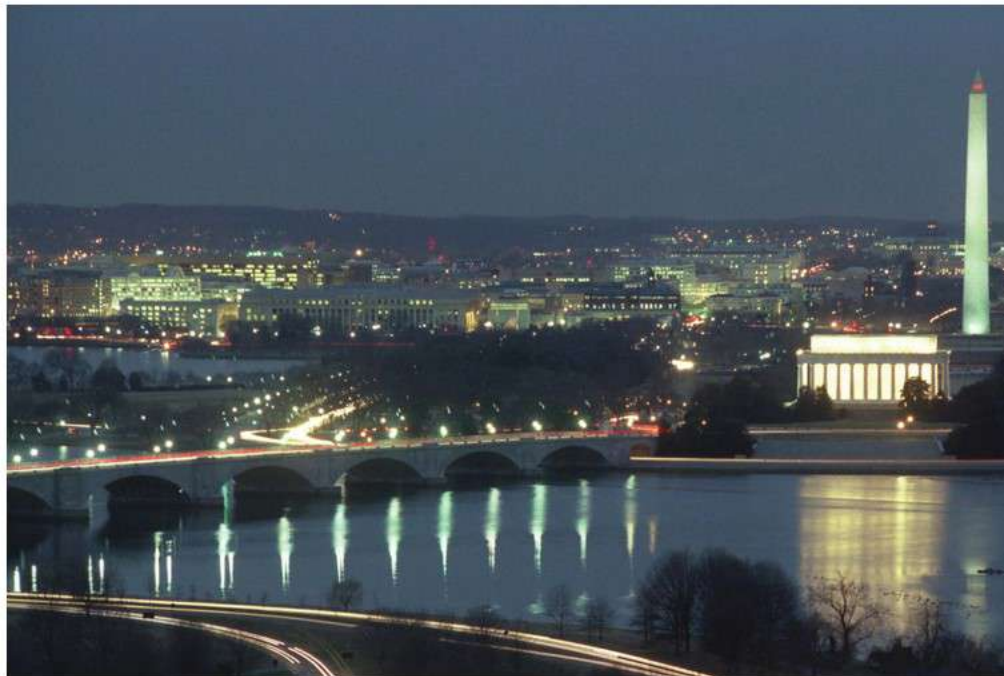
THE HOME OF THE PRESIDENT: WASHINGTON, D. C.

The American flag is a symbol of our nation, the United States of America. *A symbol is a picture or object that represents a word or idea. A nation is a country.* You can see that the flag is red, white, and blue. You can see that it has red and white stripes. It also has fifty stars, and each star is a symbol for one of the states in the United States of America. *[Ask students to name the state in which they live and other states they have heard of.]*



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There is one very important city in the United States that is not in any of the fifty states. In fact, it is the nation's capital. It's the city where most of the decisions that affect the country are made and where the government is located. *[Show D.C. on a U.S. map.]* Our nation's capital city is the part of the United States where the president of the United States lives: Washington, D.C. *The president is the elected leader of our country. This means that the president was chosen by the people of our nation.*



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Men from each of the original colonies helped write the Constitution, a plan for how the new country should be run. We call these men the "Founding Fathers." The Founding Fathers decided they wanted the country to be run by a president instead of a king. Once a person is king or queen, he or she remains in that position for the rest of his or her life. He or she is not elected by the people and might not represent the interests of the people. The Founding Fathers didn't want one person to tell everyone what to do, as a king does.



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Instead, they wanted a leader who would listen to what the people wanted and work hard to get them what they needed. To make sure the president didn't become like a king, they decided to write the Constitution, a set of rules for the president to follow. They also decided that the president would have to be elected by the people. The president would not be born into the position like a king is, and he could only be a president for four years before the people would vote for a president again.



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What do you see in this picture? [Explain to students that this picture shows what the White House looked like long ago.]

When the Founding Fathers started to think about where the president would live, they started to worry. If the president lived in the state he was from, it would make that state feel more important than all the others. The Founding Fathers were afraid that one of the states would try to take over and be in charge of the others.



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They decided to write into the Constitution that a special city should be built, no bigger than ten miles wide, which would serve as the nation's capital.

This capital city would not be in any state, so no one state could say that it was in charge of the country. This city was to be called Washington, in honor of George Washington, our first president. Eventually, Washington grew into the area we now call the District of Columbia, or Washington, D.C. *Who was Washington, D.C., named for?*



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If you visited Washington, D.C., today, you would be able to see the White House, the house where the president lives. The president moves into this house when he or she becomes president and then moves out when the next president is elected. But not just presidents live there. Their families, and even their pets, come with them to live in the White House.



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Have you ever seen a picture of this dog? His name is Bo, and he lives with President Barack Obama and his family. *You will hear more about President Obama in a later read-aloud.* When President Obama was first chosen to be our president in 2008, he promised his daughters they could get a dog to live with them in the White House. Bo moved into the White House about three months after President Obama and his family moved there, and one of his favorite activities is playing outside with President Obama's daughters.



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The president doesn't just live in the White House; he or she works there, too. The part of the White House where the president works is called the West Wing. The president's office has a special name, too: the Oval Office. Sometimes the president signs laws or gives speeches from the Oval Office. *[Draw an oval on the board/chart paper. Tell students that the shape of the president's office is an oval like the one you just drew.]*



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One of the president's most important jobs is to enforce the rules of the Constitution. *To enforce the rules means to make sure the rules are followed.* The president doesn't run the government alone as a king would.



1A-8

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[As you name each of the three groups in the next sentence, point to the corresponding building.]

The government is made up of a team of three groups: the president, Congress, and the Supreme Court. The Founding Fathers made sure that all three—the president, the Congress, and the Supreme Court—had equally important jobs so that the president didn't hold all the power like a king, and so that people's liberties would be protected. *Liberties are freedoms. Remember, the Pilgrims left England because they didn't have an important liberty. Which liberty, or freedom, did the Pilgrims not have? (the liberty to choose which church to attend)*



1A-8

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Because so many of our past presidents have lived in Washington, D.C., it is also a place where people often build statues and other buildings to honor them. *These statues and other buildings are called monuments.* If you visited Washington, D.C., you would find many monuments to past presidents. One famous monument is called the Lincoln Memorial. *[Point to the monument on the left side of the image.]* Another famous monument is the Jefferson Memorial. *[Point to the monument on the right side of the image.]* These monuments are symbols to remind us how important these past presidents were in our nation's history.



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The Washington Monument is one of many people's favorite monuments to visit in Washington, D.C. It is the world's tallest stone building. When you go to the top of the tower, you can see all of Washington, D.C. But you don't have to go to Washington, D.C., to appreciate our country and its leaders. Every time you say the Pledge of Allegiance or sing the National Anthem, you can let everyone around you know that you are proud to be a part of our country.



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If you would like, join in saying the Pledge of Allegiance together:

[Ask students to stand and face a flag in your classroom. If no flag is available, show image 1A-1.]

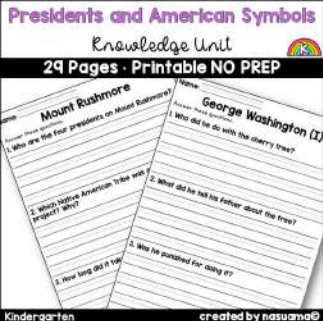
"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."



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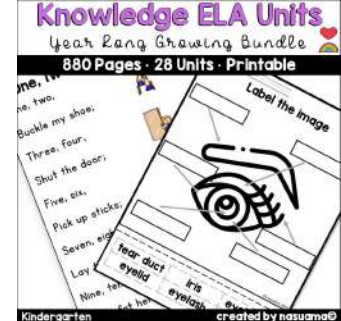
The next time you see the American flag, remember that our fifty states all share a belief in liberty and justice *or freedom and fairness* for everyone. And remember that these United States of America all share the same government, which is led by the president, the Congress, and the Supreme Court in Washington, D.C.





PRESIDENTS AND AMERICAN SYMBOLS

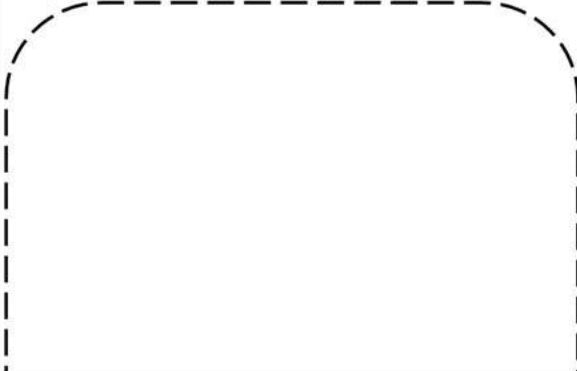
BUNDLE



Name: _____

The White House

Imagine you are the new president. Draw all the family you will have with you at the White House. Don't forget your pets!



DO YOU NEED EXTRA ACTIVITIES?



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