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**Dear Presidential Diary**

**Subjects:** Language Arts/Social Studies

**I. Summary**

Students will use a series of Web sites and other sources to experience a day in the life of a president. Students will discuss and become familiar with the President's surroundings and tasks during a typical day. This lesson will challenge students to participate in presidential tasks such as writing letters, meeting with foreign leaders, working on a budget and giving a speech. This lesson will culminate with the sharing of information learned about a president's life.

**II. Objectives**

* Students will practice sequencing skills.
* Students will improve map-reading skills.
* Students will discuss and write about the president's daily life and activities.
* Students will learn about keeping journals and/or diaries
* Students will improve their creative writing skills.

**III. Materials Needed**

* Computers with Internet access
* Writing supplies or computers with word processors for completing diary entries
* Optional: overhead projector and transparencies of diary entry examples and/or maps to use in explanation of lesson

**IV. Procedure**

1. Student shall come up and role play what he or she did that morning while other students guess. (Examples: got out of bed, ate breakfast, talked on the phone, brushed teeth, rode in the car to school, walked dog, etc.)
2. Examine a page from President Ford's diary at the [Gerald R. Ford Library and Museum](http://pbskids.org/cgi-registry/kidsbridge.cgi?context=democracy_ford) Web site. A simplified version is presented below:

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**A Page from the Daily Diary of President Gerald R. Ford**

(edited for educational purposes from <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/ford/library/exhibits/daylife/dailydia.htm>)

Place Day Began: The White House, Washington, D.C.

Date: Monday, April 28, 1975, 6:50 a.m.

6:50        The President had breakfast.

7:34        The President went to the Oval Office.

7:45-7:57   The President met with:

              David A. Peterson, Chief, Central Intelligence

                Agency/Office of Current Intelligence (CIA/OCI)

                White House Support Staff

              Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant for

                National Security Affairs

8:00-8:35   The President met with his Counsellor, Robert T. Hartmann.

8:35-9:02   The President met with his Assistant, Donald H. Rumsfeld.

9:45-9:50   The President met with Mr. Hartmann.

10:13       The President went to the South Grounds of the White House.

10:13-10:16 The President motored from the South Grounds to the Daughter's

              of the American Revolution (DAR) Constitution Hall,

              18th and D Streets.

10:16-10:54 The President attended the 63rd Annual meeting of the U.S.

              Chamber of Commerce.

               Members of the press

10:16       The President was greeted by:

              Charles Smith, Jr., Chairman of the Board of the U.S.

                Chamber of Commerce

              Arch N. Booth, President of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce

              Clinton Morrison, Vice Chairman of the Board of the U.S.

                Chamber of Commerce

              Glenn E. Nielson, Invocater, President of the Washington,

                D.C. Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of

                Latter-day Saints

10:19     The President went to the President-General's Room. He was

              escorted by:

              Mr. Smith, Mr. Morrison

              Mr. Booth, and Mr. Nielson

10:20       The President, escorted by Mr. Smith, went to an offstage to announcement area.

10:21       The President, escorted by Mr. Smith, went to the platform.

10:23-     The President addressed approximately 3,000 members of affiliated

 10:40       Chambers of Commerce attending the meeting.

10:54       The President, escorted by Mr. Smith, returned to his motorcade.

10:54-10:55 The President motored from the DAR Constitution Hall to the South

              Grounds of the White House.

10:57       The President returned to the Oval Office.

11:00-11:40 The President met with:

              Mr. Hartmann

              John O. Marsh, Jr., Counsellor

              Mr. Rumsfeld

              Max L. Friedersdorf, Assistant for Legislative Affairs

              Ronald H. Nessen, Press Secretary

            The President met with:

11:43-12:45   Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State

11:50-12:45   Lt. Gen. Scowcroft

12:45-1:05  The President met with Mr. Marsh.

1:05-1:20   The President met to discuss federal aid to parochial schools with:

              Monsignor Herman H. Zerfas, Superintendent of Education,

                Diocese of Grand Rapids, Michigan

              Ival E. Zylstra, Administrator, School and Governmental

                Relations, National Union of Christian Schools,

                Grand Rapids, Michigan

              James M. Cannon III, Executive Director of the Domestic

                Council and Assistant for Domestic Affairs

2:03-2:26   The President met with Secretary of Health, Education, and

              Welfare (HEW) Caspar W. Weinberger.

2:30-3:16   The President met with:

                Mr. Rumsfeld

                Richard B. Cheney, Deputy Assistant

3:50-3:56   The President participated in the swearing-in

              ceremony of John Dellenback as Associate Director of

              International Operations, ACTION.

4:05-4:35   The President met with:

              Mr. Rumsfeld and Mr. Cheney

4:40-5:19   The President met with:

              Governor James E. Holshouser (R-North Carolina)

              Mr. Hartmann and  Mr. Rumsfeld

5:20-5:25   The President met with:

              Congressman Richard Kelly (R-Florida)

              Lisa Lyon, 1974-75 Miss National Teenager

              Mrs. E.G. Shaeffer, Miss National Teenager Pageant Director

              Charles Leppert, Jr., Special Assistant for Legislative Affairs

5:26-5:27   The President talked with Secretary Kissinger.

              [phone call received]

5:27-5:43   The President met with:

              William T. Coleman, Jr., Secretary of Transportation

              Mr. Cheney

              William N. Walker, Director of the Presidential

                Personnel Office and Deputy Special Representa-

                tive-designate for Trade Negotiations

5:47        The President went to the Cabinet Room.

5:47-7:12   The President attended a meeting to discuss

              the economy and energy.

7:12        The President, accompanied by Vice President Nelson A.

              Rockefeller, returned to the Oval Office.

The President met with:

7:12-7:23     Vice President Rockefeller

7:15-7:23     Secretary Kissinger

7:23        The President went to the Roosevelt Room. He was accompanied by:

              Vice President Rockefeller

              Secretary Kissinger

7:23-8:08   The President participated in a National Security Council

8:08        The President returned to the Oval Office.

8:19        The President returned to the second floor Residence.

            The President met with:

8:30-8:43     Secretary Kissinger

8:34-8:43     Lt. Gen. Scowcroft

9:06-9:11   The President talked with Mr. Rumsfeld.

              [phone call received]

9:15        The President and the First Lady had dinner.

10:24-10:32 The President talked with Secretary Kissinger

              [phone call received]

10:33-10:37 The President talked with Secretary of Defense James R.

              Schlesinger.

              [phone call received]

10:47-10:50 The President talked with Secretary Kissinger.

              [phone call received]

11:22-11:23 The President talked with the U.S. Secret Service Agent

              stationed at the Residence stairway.

              [phone call placed]

11:28       The President returned to the Oval Office.

11:28-12:05 A record of the President's meetings during this time

              period was not available for inclusion in the President's

              diary.

11:28       The President was telephoned by Secretary Kissinger. The

              call was not completed.

              [phone call received]

11:31       The President went to the Situation Room.

12:05       The President returned to the second floor Residence.

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1. Next, visit the PBS site to play "[President For A Day](http://pbskids.org/democracy/presforaday/index.html)" at http://pbskids.org/democracy/presforaday/index.html. When visiting this site, students will have the opportunity to role play a virtual day in the life of a United States president.
2. Students will be keeping a fictional diary for one day of being president, and students will record their creative and original presidential activities.
3. Gather data and ideas about how a president spends the day. Students should examine several sources of media for glimpses into the President's life. The President's meetings, speeches and appearances are catalogued at the [White House Web site](http://pbskids.org/cgi-registry/kidsbridge.cgi?context=democracy_whitehousesite) at http://www.whitehouse.gov/ The evening news offers some explanation about the life of the President. The newspaper also offers insights into the President's life.
4. Once students have been exposed to some possibilities for a presidential day, students will create a presidential calendar page and five diary entries (described below) about specific events in that day.
5. The student will use the current date for recording the day's entries. The students will then account for the entire day. Example: Oct. 1, 2005, would be a heading on the paper with times listed down the margin. A student might take a look at the time the president might begin the day and continue until a president's bedtime.
6. Students must choose and complete five items from the following list of possible presidential activities and attach the written evidence of their participation in that activity to their calendar page.
	* **Suggest a Law** : According to the Constitution, Congress makes the country's laws. However, most Presidents often suggest laws to Congress. Think of a topic for a law that you would suggest. It might have to do with pollution, animal welfare, education, health, poverty or another issue.
	* **Hire Personnel**: The U.S. government is the nation's largest employer. Presidents manage these workers with the help of department heads. They form a group of advisors called the "Cabinet." Use an almanac and research to learn about current Cabinet members and their posts. Hire classmates for Cabinet posts such as foreign relations, military, parks, business, travel, education, money, agriculture, labor, energy and veterans' affairs. Write a paragraph to identify the classmate chosen for a specific post, and explain why he/she would make a good Cabinet member. The [White House Cabinet](http://pbskids.org/cgi-registry/kidsbridge.cgi?context=democracy_cabinet) site will be helpful at http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/cabinet.html.
	* **Work on the Budget**: Practice creating a budget by making a pie graph. The pie graph will be divided four sections: national defense, social security, environmental protection and education. Decide which of the four should receive the highest percentage or slice of the pie. Divide your pie graph according to the priority you assign to each item, and explain your reasoning.
	* **Suggest a New Idea for the Future**: One of the president's jobs is to help create a vision for the country's future—like a big wish. History books often remember presidents by their contributions to society. Kennedy's was space travel, Johnson's was the "Great Society" without poverty, etc. What is your one "big wish" for the country in 50 years? It might be to explore the ocean depths, establish communication with other planets, travel in time machines, or build robots to help people. Write a paragraph and describe your big idea.
	* **Handle Crisis**: If a crisis develops, the president has to help solve it. A president must be a problem solver and a quick thinker. Imagine a crisis (it can be a war, a stock market crash, a natural disaster such as an earthquake or a computer virus that crashes all computers). Write a speech that the president would make explaining the crisis to the American people and motivating them to continue cooperating in a spirit of togetherness.
	* **Entertain Guests**: The White House is not only home to the president, but a museum visited by Americans and others from around the world. The president's job may include showing visitors the White House, famous monuments, or famous museums. If you were president, what would you show out-of-town visitors? Create a tour for guests to visit the White House, a famous monument or a famous museum. Some suggestions: the White House, the Lincoln Memorial, the Jefferson Memorial, the Library of Congress, the United States Capitol, the Smithsonian Institution or the Washington Monument. Who would be your favorite guest either from the United States or from a foreign country? What foreign country would you like to visit as president?
7. Students will share their favorite diary entry with the class.
8. Students will discuss if they would like to be president for the day. Why or why not? What is the best part of the president's day? The worst?

**IV. Classroom Assessment**

* **Excellent:** Students have enthusiastically participated in all activities, including discussions. Students visited the appropriate Web sites, properly researched the activities of a president and wrote a fantastic, original diary entry demonstrating knowledge of the lives of presidents. Paragraphs are well-written and accurate information is clearly presented.
* **Good**: Students have participated in all activities and discussions. Students visited the appropriate Web sites, properly researched activities of a president and wrote a creative, original diary entry demonstrating knowledge of the lives of presidents. Paragraphs are fairly well-written and information is presented with some elaboration.
* **Fair**: Students have participated in most activities and discussions. Students visited the appropriate Web sites, adequately researched the activities of a president and wrote an acceptable diary entry demonstrating some knowledge of the lives of presidents. Paragraphs lack details and information is presented with little elaboration.
* **Poor**: Students participated in few classroom activities and discussions. Students visited some Web sites, did little research on the activities of a president and wrote little or none of the diary assignments.

**V. Extensions and Adaptations**

* Once students learn about the daily duties of the president, students can write letters to the president with comments about how he/she spends the day. They can elaborate on the best parts, the hardest parts and what could be done to do a better job as president.
* Encourage students to read biographies of past presidents and give book talks on the presidents.
* Encourage other writing activities. What would you change about the community or school if you were president for a day? Write a campaign speech for the president. How do you think the president feels when he has to leave the White House? What is the best part of being president? What is the worst thing about being president?
* Role-play events, situations or activities of the president.