

BUT *i* READ IT ON THE INTERNET!

LIBRARY LESSONS

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BUT I READ IT ON THE INTERNET

In this fourth Mrs. Skorupski story, Mr. Dickinson and Mrs. Skorupski launch a unit on the presidents of the United States with a K-W-L activity in which Carmen Rosa Peña, an inveterate Internet user, insists that George Washington had wooden teeth. But Hunter Harris, a books-only guy, knows he didn't. These two continue to carry on an often-antagonistic relationship as the fourth graders learn to evaluate online information using Mrs. Skorupski's *Website Evaluation Gizmo*. As the website evaluation portion of the project draws to a close, Carmen and Hunter each choose to answer the same research question. Hunter does so with the help of the public library children's librarian, while Carmen works on her own. Not surprisingly, with the help of the *Gizmo*, they both come to school with the correct answer.



UNITED STATES PRESIDENTS WEBSITE EVALUATION PROJECT

The primary goal of this project is to teach students how to assess the effectiveness, usefulness, and accuracy of websites by challenging them to prove or disprove a list of "facts" about the United States Presidents. [Note: You may adapt this project for use with any subject matter that includes both facts and myths.] In doing so, they will be meeting requirements of Standard 1 of the *AASL Standards for the 21st Century Learner* and Common Core Writing Standards 7 and 8 under the Research to Build and Present Knowledge College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard.

- Begin by constructing a K-W-L chart (on your computer or on paper).
- Brainstorm a list of "facts" that students KNOW about any of the U.S. Presidents.
- Combine their brainstormed list with any quirky presidential "facts" they have not listed. (See Presidential Facts and Presidential Myths below.)
- Ask students to challenge any items on the list that they know to be false (highlight these in red) or suspect might be false (highlight these in yellow).
- Assign students to choose one red, one yellow, and one un-highlighted item. Ask them to try to verify each of these three items—or prove them

false—using books or websites. Ask them to cite their sources. (See book and website citation forms below. Decide whether you prefer to have students e-mail you the links to the websites they use.)

- Discuss the results of their further investigations. Challenge the value of their sources and encourage them to do the same.
- Introduce *Mrs. Skorupski's Website Evaluation Gizmo* (see below) and apply it as a group to one of the less reliable websites that your students used or one of your own choosing.
- Assign each student to choose one still-questionable item from the list (more than one student may choose each item), and determine its veracity using a website. Also ask them to evaluate the website they use with the *Website Evaluation Gizmo*.
- Invite each student to report his or her findings and to discuss why the website he or she chose was informative, easy to use, and accurate.

SOURCES FOR PRESIDENTIAL TRUTHS AND MYTHS

Like the myth surrounding George Washington's teeth, much of the information we all know—or think we know—about the presidents come from quirky tidbits. Online sites as well as books are good sources for these presidential "facts."

Books

- Davis, Todd, and Marc Frey. *The New Big Book of U.S. Presidents: Fascinating Facts about Each and Every President, Including an American History Timeline*. Philadelphia: Running Press Kids, 2008.
- Price, Sean Stewart. *U.S. Presidents: Truth and Rumors*. Mankato, Minnesota: Capstone Press, 2010.
- Seuling, Barbara. *One President Was Born on Independence Day: And Other Freaky Facts about the 26th through 43rd Presidents*. Minneapolis: Picture Window Books, 2008.
- Seuling, Barbara. *Three Presidents Died on the Fourth of July: And Other Freaky Facts about the First 25 Presidents*. Minneapolis: Picture Window Books, 2008.

Websites

- About American Presidents: Life Portraits
<http://www.americanpresidents.org>
- Presidential Trivia
<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/prestrivia1.html>
- Sites devoted to individual presidents such as:
Theodore Roosevelt Association
<http://www.theodoreroosevelt.org/>
Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Association
http://www.hooverassociation.org/hoover/did_you_know.php
Quiz: Lincoln Myths and Misconceptions
<http://www.pbs.org/teachers/connect/resources/6868/preview/>
- Sites devoted to the U.S. presidency or government such as:
Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out
<http://www.ourwhitehouse.org/>

Presidential Facts and Reliable Online Sources

George Washington was the only president inaugurated in two cities (New York and Philadelphia).
<http://www.americanpresidents.org/presidents/gwashington.asp>

George Washington's second inaugural address was the shortest address ever, at only 135 words. <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/inaugural8.html>

Thomas Jefferson received a pair of grizzly bears from Captain Zebulon Pike and kept them in an enclosure on the White House lawn for two months. <http://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/grizzly-bears>

John Quincy Adams's wife Louisa raised silkworms at the White House. <http://www.firstladies.org/Facinating-Facts.aspx>

Andrew Jackson killed a man in a duel. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/andrewjackson>

James Buchanan was the only president never to marry. <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/prestrivia1.html>

Andrew Johnson never attended school. <http://ncpedia.org/biography/johnson-andrew>

Grover Cleveland dodged the draft by paying someone else to serve for him. <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1994/winter/civil-war-draft-records.html>

The teddy bear was named after Theodore Roosevelt. http://www.theodoreroosevelt.org/kidscorner/tr_teddy.htm

William Howard Taft was so large that a special bathtub had to be built for him. <http://clinton4.nara.gov/WH/glimpse/presidents/html/wt27.html>

Woodrow Wilson's personal flock of sheep grazed on the White House lawn. <http://www.ourwhitehouse.org/lionsandtigers.html>

Calvin Coolidge had a mechanical horse in his White House dressing room that he rode for exercise. <http://www.forbeslibrary.org/news/CoolidgeHorse.shtml>

Calvin Coolidge had a raccoon named Rebecca, who walked on a leash. <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/stories/animalsnature/uspresidentialpets/>

PRESIDENTIAL MYTHS DEBUNKED BY RELIABLE ONLINE SOURCES

Herbert Hoover and his wife occasionally spoke Mandarin Chinese in the White House when they wanted others not to understand them. http://www.hooverassociation.org/hoover/did_you_know.php

Herbert Hoover's son Allan had two pet alligators that sometimes wandered around the White House. <http://www.ourwhitehouse.org/lionsandtigers.html>

Harry Truman's middle name was "S"—with no period after it because that was his full middle name. <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/speriod.htm>

John F. Kennedy's children had a pony named Macaroni at the White House. <http://m.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/photos/macaroni-pony-president-kennedy>

Lyndon B. Johnson bought Lady Bird Johnson's wedding ring for \$2.50 at Sears. <http://www.firstladies.org/biographies/firstladies.aspx?biography=37>

George H. W. Bush's family calls him "Forty-One" and his son, George W. Bush, "Forty-Three." <http://millercenter.org/president/gwbush/essays/biography/1>

George W. Bush was one of the owners of the Texas Rangers baseball team. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/georgewbush/>

Thomas Jefferson "invented macaroni and cheese." [Note: He only drew plans for a pasta maker.] <http://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/macaroni>

George Washington had wooden teeth. [Note: He had many sets of dentures made out of unusual materials, but none were wood.] <http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/project/faq/index.html>

George Washington threw a silver dollar across the Potomac River. [Note: Silver dollars were not minted until 1794.] <http://www.mountvernon.org/visit/plan/index.cfm/pid/808/>

Abraham Lincoln wrote the Gettysburg Address on the back of an envelope. [Note: Lincoln left Washington, D.C., for Gettysburg with his first draft mostly complete.] <http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/lincoln/exhibition/gettysburg/index.html>

Zachary Taylor was poisoned to death with arsenic. [Note: Scientists exhumed his body in 1991 and disapproved it.] <http://www.history.com/topics/zachary-taylor>

CITATION FORMAT SHEET

BOOK

For a book with one author, follow this format.

Price, Sean Stewart. U.S. Presidents: Truth and Rumors. Mankato, Minnesota: Capstone Press, 2010.

Note: If you use a second line, indent five spaces.

Book:

_____. _____.
Author's last name, first name. Title of book (underlined).

_____: _____, _____.
City of publication: Publisher, Date of publication.

WEBSITE

For a website, follow this format.

“First Lady Biography: Martha Washington.” *First Ladies*. 13 February 2013.
<<http://www.firstladies.org/biographies/firstladies.aspx?biography=1>>.

Note: If you use a second line, indent five spaces.

Website:

_____. “_____.”
Author's last name, first name (if available). Title of page (in quotation marks).

_____. _____.
Title of website (Italicized). Today's date.

<_____>.
<URL (web address)>.

Mrs. Skorupski's Website Evaluation Gizmo

INFORMATIVE?

Can you read and understand the information on the website?	yes	no
Does the website have information that answers your questions?	yes	no
Do the illustrations help you to understand the information?	yes	no
Are there links to other sources you can also use?	yes	no

EASY TO USE?

Is the font easy to read, and is the layout uncrowded and simple?	yes	no
Are the headings clear?	yes	no
Can you navigate (move about) the website easily?	yes	no
Is it clear which section of the website has the information you need?	yes	no
Is the website searchable?	yes	no

ACCURATE?

Who owns the website?		
What does the URL end with (.com, .edu, .gov, etc.)? What can you tell about the website from the URL?		
Is the website owner an organization or person with knowledge on your topic?	yes	no
Is the website selling you anything?	yes	no
Has the website been updated recently?	yes	no