

PRESIDENTS
— in —

FLORIDA



DISCUSSION GUIDE



The goal of this guide is to help you facilitate meaningful conversations around *Presidents in Florida*. WUCF is pleased to provide support and resources to all educators planning to use our documentary to spark your students’ imagination.

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About the Show

The State of Florida has had a far-reaching effect on the Presidency dating all the way back to George Washington. **Presidents in Florida** looks to uncover the little-known stories that have created a long-standing bond between Florida and the White House.

Watch Online

View **Presidents in Florida** anytime at: www.wucf.org/PresidentsInFlorida

Website & Social Media

wucf.org/PresidentsInFlorida

[@WUCFTV](https://twitter.com/WUCFTV)

Production Credits

Produced & Written by James C. Clark and Buddy Pittman

Narrated by Peter King

Show Producers

James C. Clark

James Clark is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Central Florida. He earned a doctorate in Florida history at the University of Florida and a master's degree at Stetson University. He is the author of eight books on Florida history and the editor of a three-volume anthology of Florida writing. One of his books is *Presidents in Florida*, which served as the basis for this documentary.

Buddy Pittman

Buddy Pittman has worked in the television industry for more than four decades starting with WESH-NBC TV in Orlando. He then went on to work for WLWT-NBC TV in Cincinnati and Orlando's WCPX-CBS TV. Buddy returned to WESH-NBC TV in Orlando as Sports Director, anchor and reporter for 21 years. Buddy is currently a Content Producer for WUCF TV, PBS in Central Florida. Part of his duties include producing Central Florida Roadtrip, which won a Southeast Regional Emmy Award in 2020. Buddy recently produced a one-hour documentary on Presidents in Florida for WUCF TV.

Break Down of Show Segments

- **Becoming Florida**
 - A look at the early history of Florida, from the start of the American Revolution to its transition to a US territory and the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and finally the establishment of the state of Florida in 1845.
 - Presidents included: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, Zachary Taylor, John Tyler, and Abraham Lincoln.
- **Abraham Lincoln**
 - Abraham Lincoln's efforts to bring Florida back into the Union and the Battle of Olustee.
 - Presidents included: Abraham Lincoln.
- **Presidential Tourists**
 - Only sixty years after Florida became a US territory, did a president make their first visit, kicking off a long history of presidential tourism in the Sunshine State.
 - Presidents included: Chester A. Arthur, Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, George H.W. Bush, and George W. Bush.
- **John F. Kennedy Jr.**
 - John F. Kennedy's time in Florida, including the final week he spent there before his assassination.
 - Presidents included: John F. Kennedy, Jr.
- **Presidents and the Space Program**
 - A history of the space program in Florida.
 - Presidents included: from Harry S. Truman to Donald Trump.
- **Going Green**
 - Florida has felt the environmental touch presidents going all the way back to John Quincy Adams and the first federal tree farm in the Panhandle to Richard Nixon and the creation of the Big Cypress National Preserve.
 - Presidents included: John Quincy Adams, Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt Jr., Herbert Hoover, Harry S. Truman, Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard Nixon.

- Presidents and Sports
 - From tossing the coin at the Orange Bowl to presiding over NASCAR races, presidents have long recognized the value of being associated with sports.
 - Presidents included: John F. Kennedy Jr., Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Ronald Reagan.

- Presidents and Politics
 - Through the years, many presidents have had landmark political moments in Florida, including Richard Nixon’s “I’m not a crook” speech, George W. Bush’s first address to the nation about 9/11, and Barack Obama speaking about the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.
 - Presidents included: Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and Barack Obama, and Donald Trump.

Suggested Classroom Questions

Question 1:

We celebrate George Washington's birthday, but he had nothing but problems with the territory. What were the problems Washington encountered?

- A. Florida was a British colony during the American Revolution and remained loyal to the king. Florida was used as a base for British troops and three signers of the Declaration of Independence were imprisoned at St. Augustine. After the American Revolution, Spain took possession of Florida. As president, Washington had to deal with a Spanish territory causing constant problems. Slaves from the United States fled into Spanish Florida, Native-American tribes frequently attacked into Georgia, and pirates based in Florida attacked United States shipping.

Question 2:

How many votes did Abraham Lincoln get in Florida in the 1860 election?

- A. This is a trick question! State leaders refused to even put Lincoln's name on the Florida ballot. He received zero votes.

Question 3:

From the Panhandle to Key West, there are many things named for former presidents. Name five of them.

- A. There are a number of possibilities, but could include Fort Jefferson, Fort Taylor, Kennedy Space Center, Madison County, Polk County, Jacksonville, Taylor County, Washington County, and Monroe County.

Question 4:

President Herbert Hoover was a frequent Florida visitor. On one visit, he learned about the crimes of a Chicago gangster and vowed to put him in prison. Who was the famous gangster?

- A. Al Capone.

Question 5:

Richard Nixon is remembered primarily for his involvement in the Watergate scandal and for resigning. But he did two things to protect the Florida economy. What were they and what would have happened if he had did taken the steps?

- A. The two things he did were canceling the Cross Florida Barge Canal, and the Miami Jetport. The Cross Florida Barge Canal could have damaged the state's aquifer and the Jetport would have damaged the fragile ecosystem of the Everglades.

Question 6:

Which president picked Florida's east coast as the site for America's missile launches.

- A. Harry Truman.

Question 7:

President Franklin Roosevelt turned to a pioneering Floridian who statue is now in the United States capitol. Who was she, and discuss her role in Florida and Washington?

- A. Mary Bethune, the founder of Bethune-Cookman University, served as an advisor to Roosevelt and the first lady, Eleanor Roosevelt. She belonged to what became known as the Negro Cabinet.

Question 8:

Four presidents have had homes in Florida. Can you name them?

- A. John Kennedy had a home in Palm Beach, Donald Trump has a home in Palm Beach, George W. Bush has a home in Boca Grande, and Richard Nixon in Key Biscayne.

Question 9:

Herbert Hoover was an engineer before he became president and was vitally interested in Florida's problems with hurricanes. What did he do to help?

- A. He pushed the construction of what became the Hoover Dike in South Florida to help control flooding from Lake Okeechobee.

Question 10:

A Floridian was involved in the conspiracy to assassinate President Abraham Lincoln. Who was he, and what was his assignment?

- A. Lewis Powell was assigned to kill Secretary of State Seward but botched the assignment and was captured and executed.

Question 11:

A Florida amusement park has proven to be a draw for a number of presidents. Name the attraction and see if you can name some of the presidents who have gone there.

- A. It is Disneyworld/Epcot and those who have made appearances there include Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter, Barack Obama, and George H. W. Bush. Several presidents have visited the Disney property in Orlando without entering the parks. George W. Bush, Richard Nixon, and Donald Trump visited Disney hotels and Bill Clinton spoke at the Disney Institute.

Question 12:

One president used his Florida home to write a book that won the Pulitzer Prize and one of the most famous presidential lines. Who was he, and what did he write?

- A. John Kennedy wrote *Profiles in Courage* while recuperating from back surgery. It won the Pulitzer Prize. After he was elected president, he worked on his inaugural address which contained the famous line, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."

Question 13:

A number of presidents have found that Daytona International Speedway is a great place to seek votes. Who are the presidents who have been to the home of NASCAR?

- A. Ronald Reagan was the first, followed by George H. W. Bush. George W. Bush and Donald Trump attended races while Bill Clinton addressed firefighters at an event at the track.

Question 14:

Future presidents have come to Florida as members of the military before going on to the White House. Discuss the involvement of five presidents who saw service in Florida.

- A. George H. W. Bush and John Kennedy underwent training for the Navy in Florida during World War II. General Andrew Jackson came to Florida to fight Native Americans, Teddy Roosevelt came to Florida on his way to fame in the Spanish-American War, and Zachary Taylor fought in the Seminole War.

Question 15:

To honor John F. Kennedy, President Lyndon Johnson ordered the name of a Florida town changed. Unhappy residents pushed to undo the change. Name the town.

- A. Cape Canaveral.

Question 16:

One of Florida's earliest attractions was the beautiful Bok Tower in Lake Wales. It was so important that it attracted a president to dedicate it. Name the president.

- A. Calvin Coolidge.

Question 17:

After they were elected, but before they were inaugurated, two presidents faced assassination attempts in Florida. Who were the presidents?

- A. John Kennedy and Franklin Roosevelt.

Question 18:

Discuss the involvement of various presidents in the space program beginning with John Kennedy. What happened under their presidencies?

- A. Kennedy committed to landing a man on the moon in the 1960s. Lyndon B. Johnson was an early champion of the space program and after Kennedy's death pushed for the moon-landing program. It was Richard Nixon who was president when the United States landed on the moon in 1969. During Nixon's term, the Space Shuttle was approved, and the shuttle continued through the George W. Bush administration and ended in the Obama administration. He wanted more partnerships and the shuttle program ended during President Obama's administration. Obama also pushed partnerships with private companies. In 2020, Donald Trump came to Cape Canaveral to watch America's return to space. During his administration he pushed for a return to manned exploration to the moon and beyond.

Question 19:

Three presidents stand out for their involvement with Florida's environment. Who are they, and what did they do?

- A. John Quincy Adams established the nation's first and only tree farm in North Florida. Teddy Roosevelt created the Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge, the first bird refuge in the nation. Harry S. Truman established the Everglades National Park.

Question 20:

During the Civil War, President Lincoln tried to bring Florida back into the Union, but failed when Union soldiers were routed at what battle?

- A. Battle of Olustee.

Open-Ended Discussion Questions

Question 21:

If you had lived in Florida in 1820, would you have wanted to join the United States or remain part of the Spanish empire?

Question 22:

More than half of Floridians came from another state and know little about the state's rich history. What state history did you take when you were in school and did anything in the program come as a surprise to you?

Question 23:

With its 29 electoral votes, Florida has become vital for presidential candidates. It seems as if presidential candidates are here all the time. Have you had any brushes with presidential candidates--whether it was a rally, a meeting, or being caught in a traffic jam caused by a presidential motorcade?

Additional Reading

Presidents in Florida: How the Presidents Have Shaped Florida and How Florida Has Influenced the Presidents

Written by James C. Clark

U.S. Presidents have played a major role in shaping Florida, whether waging wars, protecting the environment, seeking votes, or just drawing media attention to the state's attractions.

Some little-known facts from the book include:

- Thomas Jefferson set out to buy Florida but ended up making the Louisiana Purchase instead.
- Andrew Jackson came to fight Indians when La Florida was still a Spanish colony and then became the first territorial governor.
- Abraham Lincoln came up with the plan to get Florida back into the Union in 1864 to help his reelection chances.
- Warren G. Harding played golf with an elephant as a caddie, and Chester Arthur went fishing in Orlando.
- Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders sailed to glory from Tampa, but nearly missed the boat.
- Herbert Hoover came to Florida to spend time with his friends, Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, and Harvey Firestone, and held the Florida record for catching the largest bonefish.
- Days before his inauguration, an assassination attempt was made on Franklin Roosevelt as he spoke in a Miami park.
- Roosevelt's yacht was anchored at Fort Lauderdale when a massive hurricane swept it inland. Roosevelt tried to sell it as a hunting lodge.
- Nixon killed the Cross Florida Barge Canal, becoming a hero to environmentalists. After winning election, he purchased a home in Florida and was there during the Watergate burglary.
- George W. Bush launched his political career in Florida, working for a successful Senate candidate. And of course, it was the contested Florida vote, with its "hanging-chad" ballots, that gave him reelection in 2000.

Learn about all of these former Presidents and more in this unique take on Florida history.