



Bridges Together

Celebrating Presidents' Day

Presidents' Day is a day to celebrate all US Presidents past and present.

Any time during the month of February is a good time to plan a Presidents' Day activity. We offer two options for a Presidents' Day gathering – one focused on the presidents and the other, focused on President Obama's letter to his daughter highlighting groundbreaking Americans. In both cases, we use a picture book as a starting point for a rich discussion and engaging activities that unite all ages. Picture books are a great way to introduce information to people of all ages.

Option 1: Our Presidents

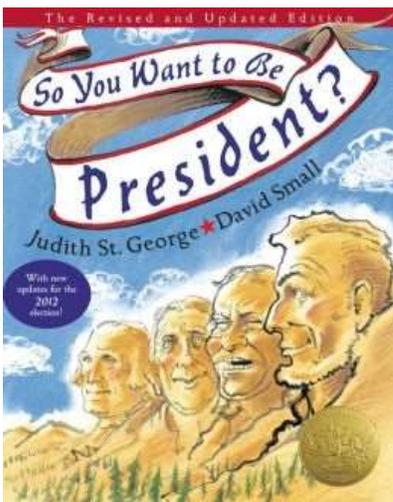
1. It is necessary to start your program with an ice breaker, giving people permission and the tools to engage with one another. In doing so, we create community.

Pair people off and have them share who the President was when they were born. This is also a great way to use technology as a tool: Students and older adults can work together to look up information about who the President was when they were born.

or

They can answer a question: If they could meet any US President who would it be and why.

2. Main Activity



Read *So You Want to Be President* by Judith George and David Small, a great book with many interesting facts about the Presidency, the White House and our country's history.

In small groups, have students and older adults discuss what they think are the three biggest issues that are making an impact on their lives

OR ideas that they believe are important and would make our country a better place to live.

Then, write a letter to the President including:

- The three issues of importance they came up with in their small groups
- Information on your intergenerational program
- Things that they feel are great about our country.

3. Summary Discussion

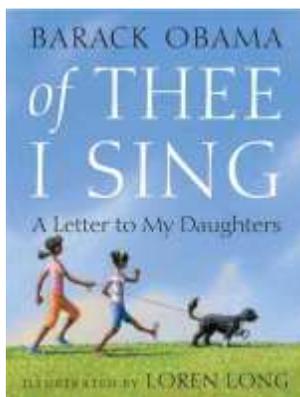
Have each group read their letter to the entire gathering.

4. If possible, share a snack.

Concluding with a snack, gives participants a chance to talk informally and enjoy one and others company. Some favorite presidential snacks:

- George Washington: Cherry Pie
- George Bush: Pretzels
- Ronald Reagan: Jelly beans
- Barack Obama: Chocolate caramels
- John F. Kennedy: Ice cream with hot fudge
- Abe Lincoln: Ginger Bread

Option 2: One President's Tribute to Ground-Breaking Americans



Another Book that would be a great book to read and full of rich activities is *Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters* by President Barack Obama.

It is described by the publisher as "a moving tribute to thirteen groundbreaking Americans and the ideals that have shaped our nation." The Americans mentioned include: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Neil Armstrong, Sitting

Bull, Cesar Chavez, Billie Holiday, Maya Lin, Albert Einstein (who was a naturalized citizen born in Germany), Georgia O'Keeffe, Jackie Robinson, Helen Keller and Jane Addams.

1. Ice Breaker Activity

In pairs, have each person share who their hero is and what quality that person has that makes them a hero. OR Have people share about their favorite president and why.

2. Main Activities

Read the book out loud. Then have a discussion introducing the multiple intelligence or smarts. See Bridges Together's article on the multiple intelligences on our website. Discuss how each individual President Obama recognized use used their smarts to change the world. For example, the artist Georgia O'Keefe used picture smarts as well as nature smarts. Jackie Robinson used body smarts. Billie Holiday used music smarts.



Elementary School: Learning more about the ground-breaking Americans.

Split the group into small groups with both older adults and younger people. Give each group four index cards PLUS an index card with the name of one of the people in the book. Also give them the wheel of multiple intelligences. Have each group determine which of the smarts the person used to make the world a better place. On each index card, have them put an additional fact about the person. If need be, they may use technology or books to find their answers.

For a summary discussion:

Have each group present what they learned to the large group. At the end of the activity, give each participant an index card and have them vote for

which of the thirteen people made the biggest impact OR whom would make the best president.

Middle School: Learning more about the multiple intelligences.

- Identify what smarts each participant has. There are many online assessments for multiple intelligences. This is another opportunity to use technology as a tool.
- Discuss how they use their smarts to help others and/or make the world a better place.
- Think back to their favorite heroes. Review who they are and decide what intelligences they used.
- Who was their favorite President and how did he use his smarts to make our country a better place?

Summary Discussion:

Put the multiple intelligences wheel on the board. On post-its, write the name of each groundbreaking American in the most prominent section, i.e. Georgia O'Keefe in picture smarts. Then, invite each participant to put her or his name in the correct section. What do you notice?

Like the people that President Obama identified, we all have different intelligences or smarts and we are called to use them to make the world a better place.

High School: Character Traits

Have each group discuss one or two of the ground-breaking Americans. If necessary, do some research on the person. This is a great time to use technology as a tool.

What words are used to describe the person?

What character traits did the person have?

What were the challenges the person faced and how did they overcome them?

Who supported the person?

Summary Discussion

Wrap up the activity with a discussion. Invite someone to be a scribe and write key words on the board.

- Have each group share a couple of the character traits the groundbreaking person had.
- From there, launch into what makes a hero or a person of influence? What do all of these people have in common?
- What qualities do you need to possess to influence others in a positive way?
- Do you have to be a certain age to do great things?
- Do you have to be good at one certain thing to be groundbreaking?
- What ground breaking American would you add to the list?
- If you could meet any of the people on the list who would it be and why?

3. If possible, share a snack. See snack section in previous lesson above.

4. At home:

With all of this new knowledge, invite the older adults to write a note to a grandchild or a young person in their circle of love and share what they learned in the activity. The young person could write to their grandparent of an older person in their circle and share the same information.

