

Three Branches of Government

A Program for 4th – 5th Grade Students

Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation & Museum

Pre- and Post- Visit Activities



Pre-Visit Preparation

Prior to your museum visit, it will be helpful to familiarize your students with several key vocabulary words as well as build some background knowledge.

- Familiarize students with key vocabulary words and concepts
- Activity 1: Read and summarize a biography of Gerald Ford
- Activity 2: Watch an online video about the three branches of government and answer questions

Day-of-Visit Agenda

- Students will learn about the three branches of the U.S. government during a classroom session
- Students will participate in a guided tour of the Museum, highlighting how Gerald Ford was involved in different branches of government, and how the three branches and the system of checks and balances continuously played a role in our history during his life and administration
- Students will work with partners as they complete a “photo rally”, capturing examples of the three branches of government as found in the Museum’s exhibits

Post-Visit Activity

- Teachers may access a lesson plan to review information from the program in which students will identify the key participants and duties of each branch of government

Key Vocabulary & Concepts

The following terms will be used both in pre-visit activities and during the program at the Museum:

Executive Branch	Representative
Legislative Branch	Senator
Judicial Branch	Separation of Powers
President	Checks and Balances
Vice President	Cabinet
Cabinet	Congress

Activity 1: Gerald R. Ford Biography

Directions: Prior to your museum visit, have students read the biography of Gerald R. Ford and then complete the Concept Map to summarize the main ideas.

Gerald R. Ford Biography



Many people have heard of Gerald Ford, the 38th President of the United States, but few know that he was born with a different name! He was born Leslie Lynch King, Jr., named after his father, Leslie Lynch King, on July 14, 1913, in Omaha, Nebraska. Shortly after his birth, his parents separated and his mother, Dorothy, took him to Grand Rapids, Michigan. On February 1, 1916, Dorothy King married Gerald R. Ford, a paint salesman. They decided that “Junior” should be named after his stepfather and they began calling him Gerald R. Ford, Jr., although his name was not legally changed until he was older. The future president grew up in a close family which included three younger half-brothers, Thomas, Richard, and James.

Ford attended South High School in Grand Rapids, where he did well both in class and in sports. He was also active in scouting, achieving the rank of Eagle Scout in November 1927.

From 1931 to 1935 Ford attended the University of Michigan. He graduated in June 1935. A gifted athlete, Ford played on the University's national championship football teams in 1932 and 1933. He received offers from professional football teams, but chose instead to continue his education and work toward a law degree. He was admitted to Yale in the spring of 1938. He earned his degree in 1941, graduating in the top of his class.

After returning to Michigan, Ford and Philip A. Buchen (who later served on his White House staff), opened a law office in Grand Rapids.

During World War II, Ford joined the U.S. Naval Reserve and in the spring of 1943 he began service on the ship, USS *MONTEREY*. His most dangerous encounter came during a typhoon in the Philippine Sea in December 1944. He came within inches of being swept overboard while the storm raged. Ford spent the remainder of the war on land and was discharged in February 1946.

When he returned to Grand Rapids, Ford decided to run for office. He campaigned to become a U. S. Representative and won the 1948 election.

During the height of the campaign, Gerald Ford married Elizabeth Anne Bloomer. They had four children: Michael, Jack, Steve, and Susan.

Gerald Ford served in the House of Representatives from January 3, 1949 to December 6, 1973, being reelected twelve times. Ford's goal was to become Speaker of the House.

When Spiro Agnew resigned the office of Vice President of the United States late in 1973, President Nixon appointed a new vice president. He chose Gerald R. Ford. Ford was confirmed and sworn in on December 6, 1973.

Only a few months later, President Nixon became the first president in U.S. history to resign. During Nixon's campaign to become president, burglars were caught stealing information from his opponent's office. As the investigation into the

break-in evolved, it became evident that President Nixon would be impeached for his suspected cover-up of the incident. Before he could be impeached by Congress, he resigned the office and Gerald R. Ford became President of the United States on August 9, 1974.

One of the most difficult decisions of Ford's presidency was made just a month after he took office. Ford decided to grant a pardon to Richard Nixon, meaning that no criminal charges would be filed against him. He felt it was more important to focus on the needs of the country instead of focusing on putting one person in jail. While many supported his decision, many also disagreed with it.

As president, Gerald Ford worked hard with his cabinet members and leaders of foreign countries to establish peace between nations. He made trips to

Japan, China, and Europe, and hosted world leaders, many of whom came in observance of the country's 200th birthday in 1976.

Gerald Ford decided to run for his own term as president in the 1976 campaign. In one of the closest elections in history, Ford lost the campaign to Jimmy Carter.

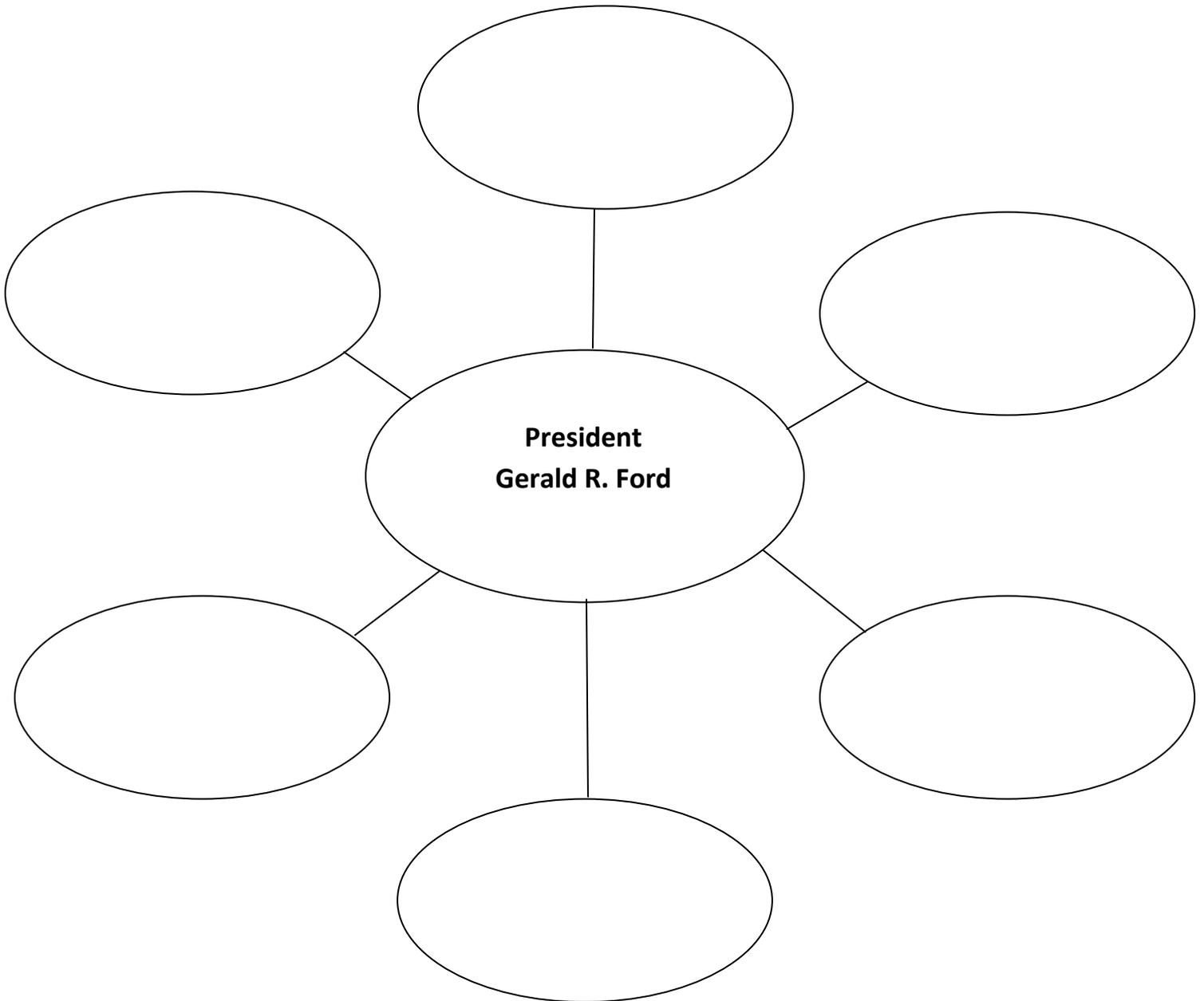
After leaving office, President and Mrs. Ford moved to California. The former president was the recipient of numerous awards and honors by many organizations.

President Ford died on December 26, 2006. After ceremonies in California, Washington, and Grand Rapids, he was interred on the grounds of the Gerald R. Ford Museum in Grand Rapids.



Gerald R. Ford Concept Mapping Activity

Directions: What's the main idea? After reading the biography of Gerald R. Ford, complete the Concept Map to summarize the most important points.

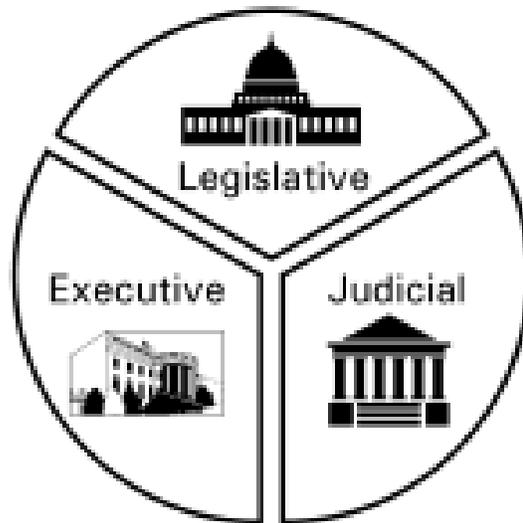


Activity 2: Three Branches Video

Directions:

1. Watch this “Kids Academy” video, either individually, or as a class:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvwIRTYvU8o>
2. Either individually, or as a class, answer the quiz questions at the end of the video.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvwIRTYvU8o>



Post-Visit Activity

Credit: <https://www.usa.gov/branches-of-government-lesson-plan> (To view lesson online and access additional resources, visit website)

Three Branches of Government Lesson Plan

Objectives

Teach students about the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the U.S. government.

- Explain how the jobs in a school work together to make the school run efficiently.
- Identify the key people, groups, and jobs for each branch of government.
- Identify the checks and balances for the three branches of government.

Time Required: 60 minutes

Activities

Different Jobs Working Together

1. Have students brainstorm a list of the different people in a school and their primary job duties (ex. Teacher, Principal, Cafeteria Worker, Custodian)
2. Describe how the different jobs work together to make the school successful. Explain that our government works the same way. The government is divided into three branches. Each branch has a specific job.

Separation of Powers

1. Before the activity, create cards for the students to sort.
 - Legislative Branch
 - Executive Branch
 - Judicial Branch
 - Congress
 - Legislator
 - House of Representatives
 - Senate
 - President
 - Vice President
 - Cabinet
 - Supreme Court
 - Justice
 - Enforces Laws
 - Makes Laws
 - Interprets Laws
2. Put students in pairs or small groups. Instruct them to sort the cards. Match each branch of government with the people who work for that branch. Then match the branch with its primary responsibility.
3. Review the people and job for each branch. Ask students why it is beneficial to have each branch of government have a different job?
4. **Extension Activity:** Teachers can create cards with additional job descriptions as outlined in the Constitution.