

A Teaching Guide

The President Has Been Shot!
True Stories of the Attacks on Ten U.S. Presidents

By Rebecca C. Jones

Some suggestions for using this book across the curriculum:

Social Studies

- How did each of the assassinations change the United States?
- Read page 86 about the conditions of African-Americans in 1960. How does this compare to the conditions of 1860? What do you think the conditions will be in 2060?

Language Arts

- During the Civil War, newspaper reporters began to use the inverted pyramid style of writing; that is, they put the most important information first and put the least important information at the end. (Before then, reporters usually told stories chronologically – in the order that events happened.) Based on the information in the book, write two stories about President Lincoln’s death – one telling the story chronologically and the other using the inverted-pyramid style. Remember that reporters usually write short paragraphs and identify the source of their information.
- Most of the information in this book came from newspapers of the day. Where do we get most of our news today? Take one story off the radio or the Internet, then notice how other media report the same story. Which one tells the most? The least? Are there differences in facts? If so, which one do you think is most accurate?
- Write a radio script reporting the attack on President Reagan. Deliver it to the class.

Math

- Abraham Lincoln was sworn in as president on March 4, 1861; he died on April 15, 1865. For how many days was he president?

- About 500,000 Americans died during the years of the Civil War. On average, how many died each year? Each month? How often, on average, did someone die?
- How many U.S. presidents have died in office? What percentage of U.S. presidents does that represent? How many U.S. presidents have been killed? What percentage of U.S. presidents does that represent?
- President Kennedy's motorcade traveled at 11.2 miles per hour. At that rate, how far would the motorcade travel in two hours? How long would it take the motorcade to travel 56 miles?

Science

- A bullet from Charles Guitea's gun lodged in President Garfield's pancreas. What is the purpose of the pancreas?
- In the weeks after his shooting, doctors worried that President Garfield might catch malaria. What is malaria? What causes it, and why was it so common in the 1800s? Why isn't it common today?
- Doctors did not X-ray President McKinley, even though an X-ray machine was available. Why do you think they didn't use it? How does an X-ray machine work?
- President McKinley eventually died of gangrene. What is gangrene?
- President Reagan survived injuries that were probably more serious than those suffered by President Garfield or President McKinley. One reason is that President Reagan received antibiotics. What are antibiotics, and how do they work?

Thought-provokers

- Why do you think people leave pennies in the grave of John Wilkes Booth?
- Why do you think conspiracy theories have surrounded every presidential assassination?