

## ***THE WHITE HOUSE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION***

### ***Classroom: Grades 9-12***

#### ***Presidential Transitions: "The Torch is Passed"***

#### ***Activity - Transitional Trivia: Just For Fun***

The President's House, a two-volume history by William Seale, reveals fascinating insights into presidential transitions. The information Mr. Seale provides in the book forms the basis of the questions below. You probably won't know all of the answers, but you may be able to figure some out from context clues. Try it. If you get stuck, you can check out the answers. Enjoy!

1. This president "went on foot to the Capitol at noon, read his inaugural address in the crowded Senate chamber, and returned to the tavern" where he would continue living for another fifteen days before moving into the White House. Though a man who loved houses and their planning, "he wasn't so concerned about how it [the White House] looked, but rather what it symbolized about his political views."
2. When this couple moved into the White House, they couldn't have realized they would be the only president and first lady driven from the house by enemies of the republic. He was short, "shriveled and pale"—no bigger than "a half a piece of soap" someone had said. She was "tall, buxom, and rosy" and had distinguished herself as a wonderful White House hostess.
3. Viewing himself as a people's president, this recently widowed war hero insisted that the people be invited to an inaugural "levee." The people came, crowding into the White House to partake of "lemonade and orange punch . . . flavored heavily with whiskey." One eyewitness noticed that the crowd turned into a mob, "scrambling, fighting, romping." The crowd was too much for the president. Gasping for air, he had to retreat, escaping through a window back to the hotel where he was temporarily staying.
4. This president had auspicious beginnings: "On March 4, astride a magnificent white charger, he rode to his inauguration at the Capitol, amid marching militias, floats laden with log cabins, maidens in white carrying garlands and signs with slogans, and a crowd estimated to be second only to that which had attended the inauguration of Washington." Exactly one month later, this president would be dead.

5. This man was the idol of the nation, yet just ten years previous he had been an obscure citizen of a small town, and a failure at almost every business enterprise he had tried. He was forty-six, and rather small in stature, yet he had a "cocky, self-confident stance a million young men found worthy of imitation." He was an elected president of a "reborn nation."
6. It was the one-hundredth anniversary of American independence, but "it was darkened with controversy." Election day had come and gone and no one agreed on whether the Republican or Democrat had won. The disputed count had to be decided by an Electoral Commission. The new president heard the news on March 2. However, he had an extra day to get to Washington. Since March 4 fell on Sunday, the inauguration didn't take place until Monday!
7. He was the last veteran of the Civil War to hold the office of president. Described as "tall, gentle, patient, and courtly," he was twice elected by the people. Once he had been governor of Ohio and had won his first term in part measure because of an unusually able manager, Mark Hannah. The president's wife was frail, tiny, and she had epilepsy. If at a social gathering, she had a seizure, he simply covered her face with a handkerchief until she recovered. When she moved from the White House, it was in a widow's veil.
8. This scholarly and intellectual president had been the governor of an eastern, pivotal state. At the podium on Inauguration Day, he looked out to see the people who had come to hear him being held behind a police barricade. "Let the people come forward," he had exclaimed dramatically. His wife left her seat on the platform and walked down to join the crowd at the base of the steps, the better to see her husband as he gave his inaugural address. Though he would be elected to another term, it would be his second wife who would hold the Bible at the second swearing-in.
9. Ike Hoover, the chief usher at the White House, had said, "Republicans dropped out of sight overnight. Those who were left seemed to have changed into Democrats." It was to be that way for quite awhile. The president inaugurated that March 4, would be back to take the oath of office more than once. But the next time, the date would be January 20. When he moved into the White House, he had a pool built, and it wasn't just for recreation.
10. Many Americans thought this man would not be elected president in his own right, and he had a dramatic headline to prove it. Despite the victory, he would not spend much of his "elected" term in the White House. Even though he savored the unexpected victory, he and his family would live most of those four years in Blair House across the street. When the leg of

his daughter's grand piano sank into the floor, causing the ceiling of the private dining room below to fall, all agreed the White House needed a major renovation.

## *QUIZ ANSWERS*

- 1. Thomas Jefferson*
- 2. James and Dolley Madison*
- 3. Andrew Jackson*
- 4. William Henry Harrison*
- 5. Ulysses S. Grant*
- 6. Rutherford B. Hayes*
- 7. William McKinley*
- 8. Woodrow Wilson*
- 9. Franklin Roosevelt*
- 10. Harry Truman*