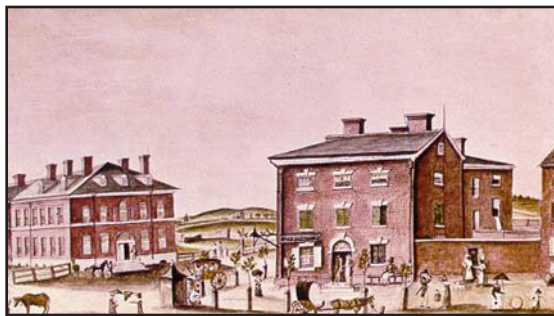


THE WHITE HOUSE  
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

## CLASSROOM | 4-8 Activities : “White House Welcome”

### Consider This ...

During the presidency of James Monroe (1817-1825), American author James Fenimore Cooper (The Last of the Mohicans) wrote about a visit to the White House by a member of the working class, a man who drove a horse-drawn cart for a living: “I have known a cartman leave his horse in the street and go into a reception room to shake hands with the President. He offended the good taste of all present, because it was not thought decent that a laborer should come in dirty dress on such an occasion; but while he made a trifling mistake . . . he proved how well he understood the difference between government and society. He knew the levee [presidential reception] was a sort of homage paid to political equality in the person of [the president], but he would not have presumed to enter the house of the same person as a private individual without being invited.”



A Washington street scene near the White House in 1817. Watercolor by Madame de Neuville, New York Public Library

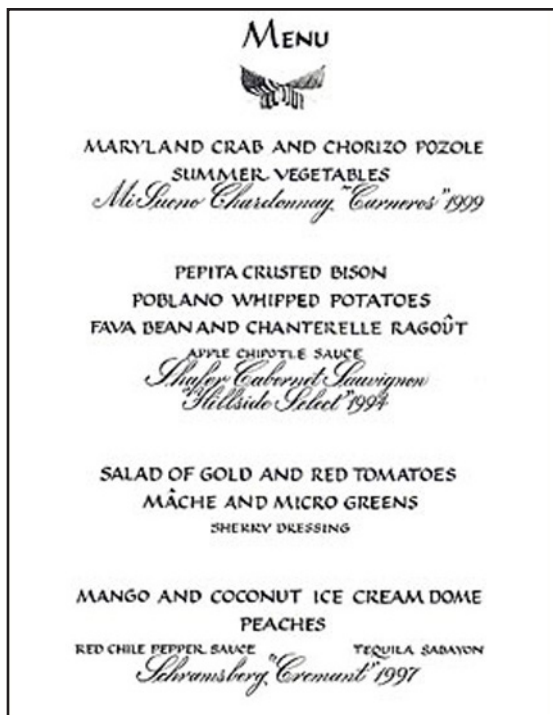
The cartman was allowed to enter the White House and meet the president, and yet those in the room were uncomfortable with this. Why do you think they were embarrassed? What does the writer mean that the cartman understood the difference between “government and society”? Cooper also told a French friend that “the poorer and laboring classes stay away” from the White House, but he does not say they were told they could not enter the President’s House. The president wanted citizens to know they were welcome at the White House, that they would not be turned away like they might have been at a king or emperor’s court. But in a new, democratic nation, it was often difficult to know what place you held in society. Is this still true today? Why or why not?



## Who's Coming to Dinner?

Today, when the president and first lady host a state dinner with a foreign leader, they send invitations to American citizens and representatives from other nations, such as ambassadors, to join them. The invited guests are not selected at random; they usually represent a group or have something in common with the foreign leader. For example, if the president of Ireland is invited to the White House, the president of the United States might invite prominent Irish-Americans. He might invite a poet, a business leader, a sports star, or other celebrity. Or he might invite an ambassador from a nation that is friendly with Ireland.

Working as a group, review current newspapers, television news, or the Internet to select an international leader as a White House guest of honor. After your group selects a head of state, design a formal invitation and prepare a guest list. Newspaper articles and television newscasts should give you ideas for possible guests. Who would you invite to your state dinner? Why? Who would you NOT invite? Why? Prepare for a meeting with the president and first lady. Include the list of guests you propose inviting, and add a short note that identifies each guest and the reason you selected them. Then plan a menu for your dinner.



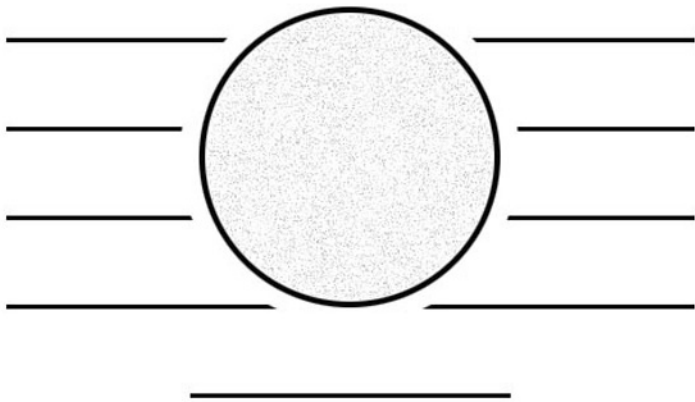
White House dinner invitation, 2001



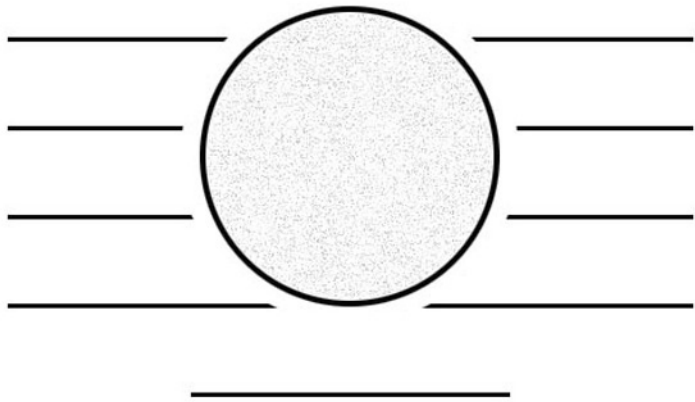
***Please Be Seated***

After you have completed the activity “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?”, you need to seat your guests at dinner. Use the seating charts supplied here. Only ten can sit at each table (in the White House State Dining Room, a total of 140 guests can be served dinner). The president and first lady are seated for you. Fill in the seating chart based on your guest list. Remember that the head of state sits to the right of the first lady while the head of state’s spouse sits to the right of the president. Plan for who will sit next to whom, and think about what topics they might discuss during dinner. You might want to research in depth the guest of honor or invited guests. Play the role of the president, first lady, and guests at your invented dinner and create an imagined conversation for your classmates. Dig into history and do the same exercise in 1800, 1900, 1950, or some other date of your choice.

**FIRST LADY**



**PRESIDENT**



## Quiz : Famous Visitors

Below you will see a photo gallery of famous people who have visited the White House over the years. Try to guess who they are, using the hints provided.



*Hint: In 1928, this famous American aviator became the first woman to fly an airplane across the Atlantic Ocean. In 1932, she set the record for the quickest flight across that ocean.*



*Hint: He is known as the “King of Rock and Roll.”*



*Hint: This German scientist came to America in 1921 to speak about his new theory of relativity. He later came to live in the United States in 1933 as the Nazis spread their reign of terror on German Jews.*



*Hint: If you look closely you can find the civil rights leader who came to march on Washington D.C. in August 1963. He spoke eloquently of his “dream” of equality for all Americans.*



*Hint: This British author is famous for introducing that stingy character, Ebenezer Scrooge.*



*Hint: This overgrown fowl lives on Sesame Street.*



*Hint: This Polish-French scientist made remarkable discoveries in her experiments with radium. Her success led her to be honored as the first woman to win a Nobel Prize.*

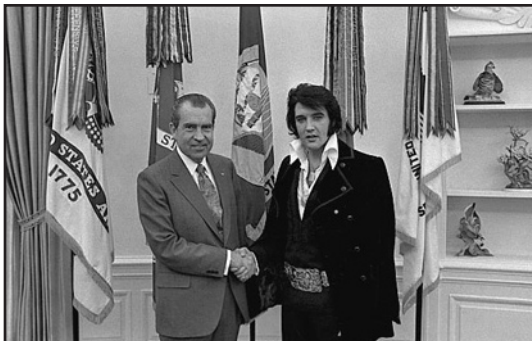


*Hint: Babe Ruth met this young baseball player in 1948. The captain of the Yale University baseball team would later spend his days not on the diamond, but in the Oval Office.*





Answer: Amelia Earhart came to the White House to receive the National Geographic Society's Gold Medal from President Herbert Hoover in 1932. Library of Congress



Answer: Elvis Presley showed up unexpectedly at the White House gates on December 21, 1970. He asked to see President Richard Nixon. President Nixon met with him in the Oval Office and accepted Presley's offer to help fight the war on drugs. National Archives



Answer: Albert Einstein met with President Warren Harding in April 1921. Library of Congress



Answer: Martin Luther King (third from left) meets with leaders of the March on Washington in President John F. Kennedy's Oval Office. John F. Kennedy Library





Answer: Charles Dickens, author of *A Christmas Carol* and *Oliver Twist* toured America in 1842. He visited the White House, which he compared to an “English club-house.” He met President John Tyler and went to a White House reception where he saw his good friend, Washington Irving, the author of *Rip Van Winkle* and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.



Answer: “Big Bird” sang at the White House, performing with the Marine Band Orchestra in 1978. The White House



Answer: Marie Curie visited America in 1921, trying to raise money to build a hospital and laboratory devoted to radiology, the branch of medicine that uses X rays to discover and treat diseases. Madame Curie met at the White House with President Warren Harding in May 1921. Library of Congress



Answer: When Babe Ruth donated his autobiography to Yale, George Bush accepted it for the college. George Bush Library

