

## Assignment Discovery Lesson Plan Watergate

### Subject

Contemporary History

### Grade level

8-12

### Duration:

One or two class periods

### Objectives

Students will

- discuss the primary events of the Watergate crisis;
- conduct an interview with a Watergate-era adult; and
- present a summary of their interview.

### Materials

- Computer with Internet access
- Print resources about Watergate
- Audio or video recorder
- Paper, pens

### Procedures

1. Review the information about Watergate featured in the video.
  - What was Watergate? Why was the scandal called Watergate?
  - What precipitated the scandal? How did it end?
  - Who were the primary people involved in the event?
  - Who broke the story to the American public? Who was "Deep Throat"?
  - What evidence existed that Nixon was guilty? What was the most incriminating aspect of the White House tapes?
2. Explain that the students' assignment is to interview someone who was an adult at the time of the Watergate scandal (1972-1974). Students should try to get a personal look at how the events of Watergate changed the way the public viewed the U.S. government.
3. Tell students that their interviews may be brief (about 30 minutes). Their questions must allow an interviewee to give opinions and share memories and feelings. They must avoid questions that elicit a one-word answer. Also, students should find out about their interviewee by asking the following questions:
  - How old were you at the time of the Watergate scandal?
  - Where did you live?

- What were you doing? (examples: college student, owned a business, took care of children)
  - Had you voted for Nixon? Did your opinion of Nixon change when the scandal broke?
  - Describe your feelings toward the government and politics before and after the Watergate scandal.
4. Have students work individually to write their own lists of questions. If they would like additional information, direct them to the following Web sites:

Washingtonpost.com: Watergate

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/national/longterm/watergate/front.htm>

Encyclopedia Americana: Watergate

<http://gi.grolier.com/presidents/ea/side/watergte.html>

Watergate Info

<http://watergate.info/>

5. Have students work in pairs to interview their partners, who will critique the questions. Are the questions clear? Are they asked in a logical order? Do they provoke thoughtful answers? Did the interview take longer than 30 minutes?
6. Review techniques for conducting an interview.
- Identify an appropriate person to interview. Ask your relatives, neighbors, or other members of your community.
  - Introduce yourself, if necessary, and explain the purpose of your interview.
  - Schedule the interview at a convenient time for the interviewee. Explain that it will take about 30 minutes.
  - Get permission to use an audio or video recorder during the interview.
  - Arrive on time for the interview.
  - Be familiar with your questions, but it is OK to read from your list.
  - Take notes during the interview, even if you are using an audio or video recorder.
  - Be patient and polite. Do not argue.
  - Refer to your question list, but be prepared to ask follow-up questions in response to the subject's answers.'
  - Review your notes right after the interview. Then write a short summary. Contact your subject quickly if you have additional questions.
  - Very soon after the interview, thank your subject by phone or mail for taking time to talk with you. Offer a copy of your interview.
7. Once students have completed their interviews, they should review their notes to find the highlights to create a brief presentation. They will summarize the interview and include at least two direct quotes from their subject.
8. Discuss the results of the interviews. What surprised students most? What were similarities and differences among the interviewees? What do students see as the most significant outcome of Watergate? What did they learn that they might not have learned from a book or news article?

## Evaluation

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

**3 points:** Students were highly engaged in class discussions; created clear and detailed interview questions, reflecting an exceptional understanding of the events of Watergate; presented a well-organized summary supported with details and two direct quotes.

**2 points:** Students participated in class discussions; created adequate interview questions, reflecting an understanding of the events of Watergate; presented a summary with a few details and one direct quote.

**1 point:** Students participated minimally in class discussions; created an incomplete list of interview questions, reflecting little or no understanding of the events of Watergate; presented a disorganized summary without adequate details and included no direct quotes.

## Vocabulary

### Deep Throat

**Definition:** The mysterious White House informant who provided crucial facts to *Washington Post* reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein

**Context:** The three men who know the identity of Deep Throat have vowed not to reveal his name until he is deceased.

### resign

**Definition:** To give up an office or position

**Context:** Due to the results of the Watergate scandal, President Richard Nixon resigned on August 8, 1974.

### scandal

**Definition:** A crime or act that offends accepted moral standards; an act that disgraces those associated with it

**Context:** The Watergate scandal changed the way the public viewed the United States government.

### Watergate

**Definition:** A political scandal that occurred between 1972 and 1974 and ended with the resignation of the U.S. President Richard Nixon

**Context:** The Watergate scandal began when burglars broke into the Democratic Party's National Committee offices at the Watergate Hotel in Washington, D.C.

## Credit

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