LESSON PLAN for
THE HOUSE THAT GEORGE BUILT picture book

Holiday Tie-ins:
February (third Monday) President’s Day, G. Washington’s official birthday
November (Tuesday after the first Monday) Election Day

OVERVIEW
Students will read the picture book THE HOUSE THAT GEORGE BUILT (Charlesbridge, 2012) – a Junior Library Guild Selection and 2013 Bank Street’s Best Children’s Book list title. After reading the nonfiction exemplar text, students will write an informative text about the construction of the President’s House (White House), its later additions, and a short narrative about their own plans to improve it. This may be a short assignment or expanded to an in-depth research assignment.

The CCSS emphasizes the importance of writing informative texts that clearly convey complex information accurately through selection, organization and analysis of content (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.2). The CCSS also promotes writing narratives which develop real or imagined events using well chosen details and a structured sequence of events (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.3).

In this lesson plan, students will research the history of the White House from the exemplar text, reliable websites, and additional book texts, and present their finding in an oral presentation with visual diagrams and informational and narratives backup texts. Their information will be presented in an organized fashion so that listeners can follow their line of reasoning with a purpose and style appropriate for their student audience (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.4).

TOPIC
Students will learn about the original construction and later changes made to the White House, and develop their own plans for future improvements.

OBJECTIVES – Overview standards.
CCSS Reading: 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10
CCSS Writing: 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10
CCSS Speaking & Listening: 1, 2, 4
CCSS Language: 1, 2, 3, 4
INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES
THE HOUSE THAT GEORGE BUILT by Suzanne Slade (Charlesbridge, 2012)
ISBN: 1580892620

Changing White House Timeline
http://www.pbs.org/wnet/whitehouse/timeline/1792b.html

The White House Time Machine
http://www.whitehousehistory.org/whha_shows/whitehouse_timemachine/index.htm

Grade appropriate books about the White House
(see “Resources to Learn More” in the back of exemplar text)

TIER TWO AND TIER THREE VOCABULARY
Construction site
Foundation
Frame
Kiln
Sealer

PROCEDURE
1. SET
Students will research and write a narrative about how the construction of the President’s House (White House) and how it has changed through the years. Each student or group will share a future improvement they would like to make to the White House.

2. TEACH
Students will read THE HOUSE THAT GEORGE BUILT and “The Changing President’s House” in the back of the book, paying special attention to the materials and the order of events in the construction of the President’s House.

Based on grade level, assignment may include any or all of the following:
(Completed items may presented on a poster board for display.)

1. President’s House Sketch
Students will draw a simple sketch of the President’s House. The last illustration in the book or the White House photo in the backmatter may be used as reference.

2. Building the President’s House
Students will identify the raw materials used to build the President’s House from the rhyming text (bricks, stone, wood, slate), prose (stone sealer, plaster, staircase wood) and illustrations (doors, windows, shutters, wood flooring, etc.)
Students will write a descriptive paragraph(s) that explains how the President’s House was built, including raw materials and the proper order of construction. (Teacher may specify number of construction steps based on grade level.)

3. Changing the President’s House
Review “The Changing President’s House” in the back of exemplar text to learn about the modifications various presidents made to the President’s House. Students will write a descriptive paragraph(s) which shares several improvements to the President’s House with details of who made each and why.

(For older grades, students may reference two reliable websites, below, and discuss one improvement from each that is not listed in the book.)

Changing White House Timeline
http://www.pbs.org/wnet/whitehouse/timeline/1792b.html

The White House Time Machine
http://www.whitehousehistory.org/whha_shows/whitehouse_timemachine/index.htm

4. Student Improvement for the President’s House
Students will write a narrative paragraph(s) about their plans for a future improvement/addition to the President’s House or grounds. This narrative will include well-chosen details about the improvement and its potential benefits (for President’s family, White House staff, visitors, or the country, etc.)

You can adapt the listening/speaking part for group projects, or require specific presentation methods of a speech, digital display or essay.

3. CLOSURE
As a class, discuss one of the following topics:
– the challenges George Washington faced while building the President’s House
– the various additions/improvements made over the years
– the merits of the President’s House additions/improvements proposed by students/groups.

4. ASSESSMENT
Evaluate each project based on clarity of information presented in descriptive informational text about the building of the President’s House and its improvements, and/or the use of well-chosen details in the narrative text about the students’ plans for future improvements.

5. DIFFERENTIATION
Complexity:
For early grades, teacher may select only one or two of the four “Teach” items. The length of the writing assignment may be modified to one paragraph.

For upper grades, students will conduct a full individual research project by completing all four items under “Teach.” In addition to the exemplar text, students will reference the two White House websites in Instructional Resources and one book from “Resources to Learn More” in the back of book and provide a bibliography of sources.

The research project may assigned as a group project, where each student in a group will complete one of the four options. The group will present the project. Tasks: This is adaptable to a written assignment (with sketch/essays presented on a poster board or collated in folder, a speech, or a digital display.)

For all grades, teacher may assign a one hour writing task. After reading the exemplar text, students will write a paragraph(s) describing their plan to improve the White House (Item 4 under Teach).

WORKSHEETS or CONSUMABLES


White House Historical Association, K–3 Activity Pages, “The Colors and Shapes of the White House”  

White House Historical Association, 4–8 Activity Pages, “Building the White House”  

BIOGRAPHY
Suzanne Slade is the award-winning author of over 100 nonfiction children’s books. You can find out more about the author and her upcoming books on her website [www.suzanneslade.com](http://www.suzanneslade.com).