



# PRESIDENTS' DAY

## *Lesson Plan for Museum Educators*



Published by Raising Citizens  
A partnership between Freedom's Feast  
and the Children's Museum of Manhattan.

# Program Overview

- Children will learn that every American has the right to freedom of speech – including children. To reinforce the importance of freedom of speech, they will each create a campaign button to speak out for an issue that is important to them.
- **Theme** Freedom of Speech
- **Ages** 5 – 10
- **Workshop Length** 45- 60 minutes

# Introductory Information

- On Presidents' Day, we recognize the change in our government from having a king as our ruler to having a president. In 1609, King George III ruled over what is now the United State of America. The king did not treat people fairly, he only cared about what he wanted. The people were not free to speak out against how the king treated them.
- The colonists became tired of being treated poorly by the king. In 1775, George Washington helped the people fight the king for their freedom in the Revolutionary War and became the new leader (called "President") of our nation. Unlike a king, a president represents the wishes of the people.
- Today in America, we can freely criticize the government without getting into trouble. We can voice what we would like to see changed. Freedom of speech is very important to our country and democracy and is guaranteed by the First Amendment to the Constitution.

# Freedom of Speech

- Everyone is entitled to the freedom of speech – even children. Here are two examples of youth who used their right to free speech to change some laws:
- In the 1960s, Mary Beth Tinker, age 13, and John Tinker, age 15, decided to wear a black strip of fabric around their left arm to protest the Vietnam War. The school board declared the arm bands a “disruptive influence” and they were suspended from school. With their parents’ help, they sued the school board, and their case ended up in the Supreme Court. In *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* (1969), the Supreme Court decided in the students’ favor. The Court ruled that students “do not shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.” The verdict held that the First Amendment protects the right of public school students to express their political and social views.



*Mary Beth Tinker and John Tinker*

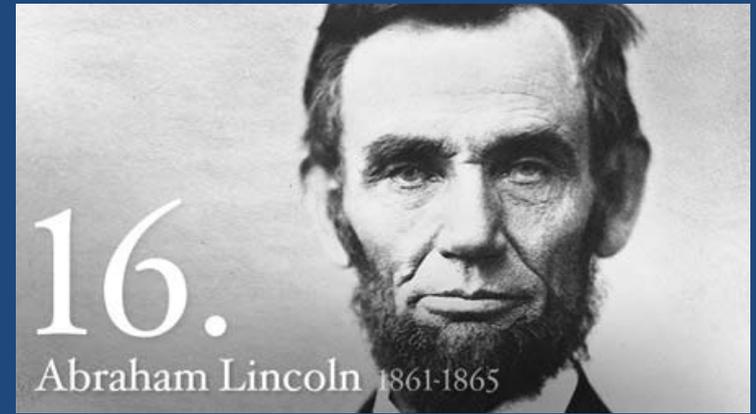
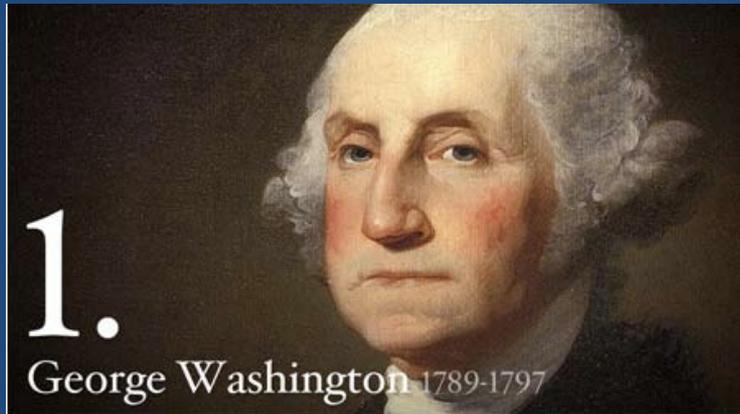
# Freedom of Speech (continued)

- In 1982, Steven Pico and his four schoolmates sued their school because nine books were removed from their libraries. The Supreme Court ruled that the school could not remove the books just because they did not like the ideas in them.
- We should also remember that not everyone shares the same ideas that we may have. So, while we are free to say what we want, we need to remember to do so respectfully. This also means we have to be willing to listen to people who have different opinions than ours.



*The nine books that were removed from the library that led to the landmark Supreme Court case.*

# Images for Discussion



# Questions for Discussion

- Who is the president of the United States today?
- How did he become president?
- What are we celebrating today (or this week)?
- Why do we have a president instead of a king?
- Does anyone have any ideas about what “freedom of speech” means?
- What would it be like if you could not talk about your religion, your family or something that’s important to you?
- What kinds of things can we do with freedom of speech? Protest? Express different opinions?
- Why would this be important to our country?

# Hands-on Activity:

## *Speak Your Mind; Buttons for a Cause*

- *Materials:* Designer Buttons\*, sketch paper, pencils, colored markers.  
\*(Order from Discount school supply item#8WWBUTNUP)

### Instructions

- **Step 1** Show an example of a button for the cause and tell the children how they are going to exercise their right to freedom of speech.
- **Step 2** Brainstorm ideas that are important to the children. Help them think of symbols or images that convey their ideas.
- **Step 3** Pass out buttons and art materials.
- **Step 4** Children decorate the paper inside the buttons.
- **Step 5** Children share their buttons and “issues “with each other.

# For more information:

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Freedom's Feast offers a number of resources that complement this lesson plan. Visit us at [www.freedomfeast.us/presidents-day/index.html](http://www.freedomfeast.us/presidents-day/index.html)

# Credits

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- Photo of John and Mary Beth Tinker.  
<http://silverchips.mbhs.edu/picture/12935/>
- Photo of nine books.  
<http://www.chriscrutcher.com/teens-can-stop-censors.html>
- Cover photo & photos of the presidents.  
[Whitehouse.gov](http://Whitehouse.gov)