

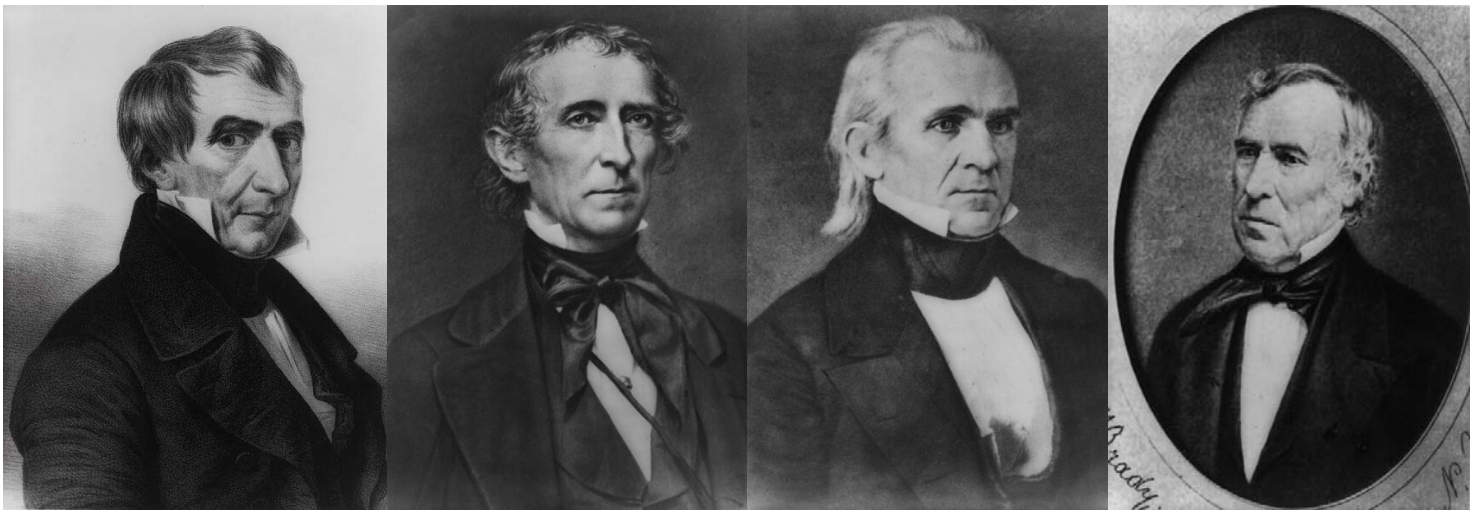
#12136

W. H. HARRISON, TYLER, POLK, & TAYLOR

NEW DIMENSION MEDIA/QUESTAR, 2003

Grade Level: 3–8

12 Minutes



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W.H. Harrison, Tyler, Polk & Taylor **Our Presidents in America's History Series**

Subject Area: Social Studies, U.S. History

Synopsis: Chronicles the presidencies of William H. Harrison, John Tyler, James K. Polk, and Zachary Taylor. Focuses on westward expansion and the growing tensions between Northern and Southern states over slavery. Discusses the dishonest campaign that won Harrison the presidency; the controversial actions of Tyler; the expansion of American borders during the Polk presidency, and the controversy over extending slavery to new territories in Taylor's term.

Learning Objectives:

- Objective 1)** Students will be able to identify the major events of the Harrison, Tyler, Polk and Taylor Presidencies.
- Objective 2)** Students will be able to discuss the growing importance of the West and frontier life during the 19th century and explain the concept of Manifest Destiny.
- Objective 3)** Students will be able to discuss the social problems that arose with the expansion of U.S. borders, industrialization, and increased immigration.
- Objective 4)** Students will be able to discuss the growing tensions between Northern and Southern states over slavery, and the controversy of whether to extend slavery to new territories.

Pre-Viewing Activities:

- 1) On a map, point out the new states and territories added to the Union during the presidencies of Harrison, Tyler, Polk and Taylor. Also note the Indian tribes that originally inhabited these lands.
- 2) Vocabulary: campaign, public relations, party platform, frontiersman, inaugural address, impeachment, dark horse candidate, slogan, manifest destiny, potato famine, immigrants, poverty, bigotry, Mexican War, treaty, industrialization, veteran, controversy, compromise

Post-Viewing Discussion and Activities:

- 1) How did William Harrison present himself in the Presidential campaign of 1840? What was Harrison's economic background? Why was it beneficial to him to create an image as a simpleton born in a log cabin? Do Americans today prefer presidents from humble beginnings? Are American politicians dishonest about their backgrounds today?
- 2) Why did John Tyler's cabinet members resign? In what ways was Tyler a controversial figure?
- 3) Explain the concept of manifest destiny. What events during James K. Polk's presidency furthered the American goal to expand the nation's borders? What people originally inhabited the lands acquired by the United States during this time?

- 4) What gave rise to the wave of Irish immigrants during the 1840's? What kinds of challenges did the immigrants face in the United States? What opportunities were available to them in America?
- 5) What goals did James K. Polk accomplish as President? What issues did he fail to address?
- 6) What was Zachary Taylor's stance of the extension of slavery to new territories? How might things have been different had he accepted a compromise on this issue?

Additional Activities:

- 1) Discuss William H. Harrison's political campaign and the reasons it was appealing to the American people. Divide the class into groups of 4 or 5 students each. Ask each group to create the ideal Presidential candidate. Encourage them to consider their candidate's age, economic background, education level, previous work experience, etc. After students have created a candidate, have them make campaign slogans and posters for their candidate. Display students' work and have a class discussion about the qualities we look for in our leaders.
- 2) Discuss the experiences of Irish immigrants in the 19th century, including the reasons they moved to America, where they lived in the United States, the types of jobs they held, and the challenges they faced. Have students write journal entries as young Irish immigrants during this time. What opportunities do they expect to find in America? How do the events during this time, such as the California Gold Rush and the Mexican War affect them?

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