



#9948

SYMBOLS OF AMERICA: THE U.S. CAPITOL BUILDING

FILM IDEAS, INC., 2003
Grade Level: 3-8
16 mins.

DESCRIPTION

Discusses a great symbol of America, the United States Capitol building, located in Washington, D. C. Chronicles its history from the cornerstone laid in 1793 by George Washington to its present and continuous function of housing Congress. Shows points of interest to visitors after mentioning important events surrounding this symbolic American building.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: K-4 History–The History of the United States: Democratic Principles and Values and the People from Many Cultures who Contributed to its Cultural, Economic, and Political Heritage

- Standard: Understands how democratic values came to be, and how they have been exemplified by people, events, and symbols
 - ◆ Benchmark: Knows the history of American symbols (e.g., the eagle, the Liberty Bell, George Washington as the "father of our country," the national flag) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 2 and 4.)
 - ◆ Benchmark: Knows why important buildings, statues, and monuments (e.g., the White House, Lincoln Memorial, Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, Angel Island, Mt. Rushmore, veterans' memorials) are associated with state and national history (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 1, 2, and 4.)

Subject Area: Civics–What are the Basic Values and Principles of American Democracy?

- Standard: Understands the importance of Americans sharing and supporting certain values, beliefs, and principles of American constitutional democracy
 - ◆ Benchmark: Knows how various symbols are used to depict Americans' shared values, principles, and beliefs and explain their meaning (e.g., the flag, Statue of Liberty, Statue of Justice, Uncle Sam, great seal, national anthem, oaths of office, mottoes such as E Pluribus Unum) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 1.)

Subject Area: Geography–The World in Spatial Terms

- Standard: Knows the location of places, geographic features, and patterns of the environment
 - ♦ Benchmark: Knows the location of major cities in North America (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 3.)

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To explain what symbols are and what the U.S. Capitol represents.
2. To illustrate the history of the U.S. Capitol building, including important people and events involved with the origin and design.
3. To describe the primary function of the U.S. Capitol.
4. To show the artifacts inside the Capitol building.
5. To show where the U.S. Capitol is located.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The purpose of this video series is to acquaint young children with the importance of American symbols. It is designed to teach how symbols are objects or pictures that represent a much larger idea. Throughout American history symbols have played a significant role in how ideas have become an influential fabric of our culture. American symbols represent and communicate who we are and what we value as a society. As children learn the importance of symbolism, they will understand their contribution to American history and how symbols have evolved to help shape and define a nation–The United States of America.

VOCABULARY

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 1. capitol | 7. government | 13. rotunda |
| 2. Congress | 8. House of | 14. Senate |
| 3. Declaration of Independence | Representatives | 15. statue of freedom |
| 4. democracy | 9. monument | 16. symbol |
| 5. dome | 10. nation | 17. union |
| 6. gallery | 11. president | 18. U.S. Capitol building |
| | 12. revolution | 19. wings |

BEFORE SHOWING

1. Locate Washington D.C. on a U.S. map.
 - a. Discuss the significance of the city.
 - b. Name famous buildings and monuments.
 - c. Show pictures of the U.S. Capitol building. Discuss what its purpose is.
2. Discuss the word “symbol.” Brainstorm a list of various common symbols. Discuss what the symbols represent. Talk about symbols of the United States. Name as many as possible.

AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Define the word *symbol*. Name several symbols of the United States of America.
2. Where is the Capitol located and who works there? What do the representatives and senators do there?
3. What does the Capitol building represent? Define *democracy*.
4. What is meant by the phrase "a government of the people, by the people, and for the people"?
5. Why do we celebrate July 4 as the "birth" of the U.S.? What year was the U.S. "born"?
6. Who chose the location where the U.S. Capitol building was built? Why did he choose that specific location?
7. What two states donated the land which was used to build Washington, D.C. and the U.S. Capitol building? Why was it named the city of *Washington* and the District of *Columbia*?
8. Who designed the Capitol building? When was the building completely done? Why did it take so long?
9. Describe the design of the Capitol building, including the wings, the dome, and the rotunda.
10. Why was the Capitol later enlarged with new wings on both sides?
11. The Capitol building served many functions during the Civil War. Name some of these functions.
12. What is the name of the statue which stands on top of the Capitol dome? Why was it named that? When was it put in place?
13. What flag flew over the Capitol during the Civil War? Why?
14. Describe the highest tribute that can be paid to a dedicated public servant or a fallen hero.
15. Name and describe some of the works of art inside the Capitol.
16. Who is the president of the Senate?
17. Discuss how other countries in the world view the U.S. form of government.

Applications and Activities

1. Review the dates presented in the video. Create a timeline. Include all important dates from the video. Add other important U.S. history dates. Label each date on the timeline.
2. Research and report on one of the historical figures, places, or events from the video. Present the report to the class. Include visuals if possible.
3. Investigate other symbols of the U.S. Share the findings with the class.
4. Write a short historical biography about a present or past member of Congress.
5. Tour the school or community. Document symbols you see. Research the symbols. Describe what each symbol represents and its origins.
6. Investigate your state capital city and capitol building. Make a timeline of important state historical events, including the planning and building of your state capitol building.

C a p t i o n e d M e d i a P r o g r a m

7. Discuss a problem in the school or community. Evaluate whether the problem may be solved by creating posters which effectively communicate ideas with symbols.
8. Investigate the capitals of other countries in the world. Describe their capitol buildings in terms of basic history, location, and function.
9. Visit Washington D.C. and tour the U.S. Capitol and other important sites. As an alternative, visit your state's capital and tour that capitol building.

SUMMARY

Youngsters will be fascinated by the unique history and importance of one of America's greatest symbols of democracy, the United States Capitol building in Washington D.C. From its early design to its imposing position on Capitol Hill, viewers will understand that this remarkable structure symbolizes the will & strength of the American people and the principles of modern democracy to citizens the world over.

Besides its symbolic and historic significance, the U.S. Capitol building is the work place for all the elected members of Congress. The history and design of the building is centered around one distinguishing feature--the Capitol dome. The dome was completed in December 1863, and was topped off with a 19-foot classical bronze statue of a woman called "Freedom." Construction on the Capitol began in 1793, and from its very inception, the building has become one of America's most enduring symbols of democracy. Throughout its history, the United States Capitol has been built, burnt, rebuilt, extended, and restored. Today's Capitol is the result of several major periods of construction. It's not only a monument of great architectural stature, but represents the ingenuity, determination, and spirit of the American people.

CMP RELATED RESOURCES

- [American Bald Eagle #9436](#)
- [Images of Liberty #9437](#)
- [Old Glory #3277](#)
- [A Pledge is a Promise #3397](#)
- [The Story of the National Anthem #3413](#)
- [The U.S. Flag #9438](#)
- [Uncle Sam #9441](#)
- [The White House #9439](#)

World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **U.S. CAPITOL BUILDING TOUR**

<http://www.senate.gov/vtour/index.html>

Welcome to the U.S. Capitol Virtual Tour--an interactive, user friendly, comprehensive, and integrated multimedia tour of the U.S. Capitol. It includes panorama views and historical information about the rooms of the U.S. Capitol, as well as information about the objects found in those rooms.

- **TEMPLE OF LIBERTY--BUILDING THE CAPITOL FOR A NEW NATION**

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/us.capitol/s0.html>

Read more information about the history of the U.S. Capitol building. Although somewhat "text-heavy," some of the sections of this Web site have links to historical documents, including a variety of plans that were submitted in the contest to design the Capitol building.

- **A BRIEF CONSTRUCTION HISTORY OF THE CAPITOL**

http://www.aoc.gov/cc/capitol/capitol_construction.htm

This Web site has information about the construction phases of the U.S. Capitol building. It includes pictures and a great deal of items linked to further information.

- **BEN'S GUIDE TO U.S. GOVERNMENT FOR KIDS: SYMBOLS OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT**

<http://bensguide.gpo.gov/3-5/symbols/>

Written for grades 3 to 5, here you can find information about federal buildings, symbols, monuments, and songs. Each page has photos and links to additional information.