



WHITE HOUSE HOLIDAYS
Labor Day Unit Study



Introduction

Why Study the Holidays?

Welcome to the White House Holidays, Veterans Day Unit Study!

I went to public school from grades K through 12. Some of my fondest memories were celebrating the holidays with my classmates. I remember the parties and crafts. I especially remember the excitement that came with a celebration, break from routine, and a change of pace.

While we did mark the holidays, I do not remember learning much about the rich history behind those holidays. I believe the same is true for many school-age children today. This is a shame because our holiday history really is so rich.

Learning about our holidays is important for children. For younger children, holidays are a way to mark the seasons of the calendar and the progress of time. For children of all ages, holidays bind us together as a nation. They instill in us a sense of patriotism, unity, and togetherness.

I have also heard parents of middle and high school kids lament that when their students phase out of elementary school, holiday celebrations end. I found this to be true during my own schooling. I think this so sad. Holiday celebrations should continue on through the upper grades. For older kids, the holidays can be a time for deeper learning and understanding—and for developing a greater sense of meaning in history.

As a homeschool mom, I know that the holidays can be overwhelming. We do our best to mark them, but it is up to us to invent holiday lessons and come up with fun and creative activities. Sure, we can check out a book or two from the library. But coming up with objectives, lesson plans, and enrichment activities? That's up to us. And that's a good deal of work to pile onto our already busy lives.

As a presidential scholar, I also know that so many of our holidays and traditions are tied to American presidents. That is why I wanted to invent a holiday curriculum with a unique twist—one that uses the American presidency as a window into the holidays.

I also know how important primary sources are to our students' learning. That is why I weave primary sources—like speeches, posters, letters, and photographs—throughout the lessons and activities.

And so I began writing these holiday unit studies—first for my own children, then for families with children of all ages. They have enriched my kids, and they have enriched me. My hope is that they will enrich your entire family as well.

How To Use

This Labor Day curriculum has a one set of lessons for grades K-6 and a separate set of lessons for grades 7-12. There are three lessons for each level. The lessons cover similar topics, but they are appropriate for each age group.

Each of the lessons has a written narrative, story, or teacher script—whatever you would like to call it. Each lesson also has a follow-up activity.

For grades K-6, the historical narratives are vivid but shorter, and the enrichment activities are visual and hands-on. For middle and high school students, the histories are more detailed, while the activities focus more on reading, writing, and thinking.

Before each lesson, there is a brief “Introduction and Overview for Teachers.” Teachers should read through this before beginning the lesson. This overview includes materials needed, learning outcomes, time required (estimated), and a lesson plan.

The primary source documents you will need are included. We try to keep other materials to a minimum and limit them to things you probably already have around the house. We do not want teachers to have to make last-minute shopping trips!

These lessons can all be taught in one day (plan for most of a full school day for grades 7-12 and for about half of a day for grades K-6). Alternatively, they can be spread out over the course of several days—depending upon how they fit into your schedule.

And last but not least...have fun, make memories, and learn history!

Jill Summer



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