



## Zachary Taylor | Lesson Plan

Was Zachary Taylor the president who could have prevented the Civil War?

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Students will understand how Zachary Taylor contributed to U.S. history both as a military leader in the Mexican-American War and as a president who navigated the challenges of his time. They will also understand the complexities of his stance on key issues like slavery and preserving the Union.

### Learning Objectives:

- Identify the key life events of Zachary Taylor.
- Explain how Zachary Taylor influenced the United States during his presidency.
- Compare the key hardships and achievements of Zachary Taylor that shaped his leadership style.
- Evaluate Zachary Taylor's leadership skills and decisions and their impact on American history.

### Key Vocabulary:

- **Mexican-American War:** A conflict between the United States and Mexico from 1846 to 1848, where Zachary Taylor emerged as a key military leader.
- **Seminole Wars:** A series of three wars that took place in Florida from 1816 to 1858 between the United States and several Native American tribes. Several presidents, including Andrew Jackson and Zachary Taylor, participated in the war.
- **Secession:** The act of leaving an organization or government.
- **Compromise of 1850:** A set of laws intended to settle the differences between slave and free states, passed shortly after Taylor's death.
- **Frontier:** An area that is not populated or well known, often in the wilderness.

**Educational Standards:** CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.7, CCRA.W.2, CCRA.W.4, CCRA.W.9, CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2

**Academic Subject Areas:** Biography, U.S. Presidents, Historical Figures

### What You'll Need

- Video: *Guess or Mess: Zachary Taylor* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Guess or Mess: Zachary Taylor* (Click [Here](#))
- PragerU Kids biographical book: *Zachary Taylor* (Download [Here](#))
- Large paper or poster board for each group, along with markers

### Lesson Plan: Read, Discuss, and Complete (60 minutes)

**Introduction to Taylor: (5 minutes)**



1. Begin with a brief discussion about U.S. presidents and the qualities that make a great leader. Ask students if they know any presidents who were known for their military service.
2. Display the *Zachary Taylor* digital book using an electronic device. Briefly highlight Taylor's significance as the 12th president, his role in the Mexican-American War, and his stance on slavery and the Union. Show images from the digital book to give a visual overview of his life and achievements.

### **Taylor History Huddle: (25 minutes)**

1. Read the "Meet Zachary Taylor" section on page 2 together as a class, with the teacher leading this page to model fluent reading and set the tone for the lesson.
2. After the teacher-led reading, explain that students will now explore other key aspects of Taylor's life in small groups.
3. Split the class into small groups and assign each group a different section of the digital book to explore. The following are recommendations:
  - Group 1: *Young Zachary, Interesting Facts* (page 3)
  - Group 2: *Early Career* (Page 4)
  - Group 3: *Mexican-American War* (page 5)
  - Group 4: *1848 Presidential Election, President* (pages 6-7)
  - Group 5: *Death of a President, Death By Poison?* (page 8)
  - Group 6: *Legacy, Peacemaker* (page 9)
4. Allow time for each group to read their assigned section, taking turns reading aloud. As students read, they should discuss the main ideas.
5. Provide each group with a large piece of paper or a poster board and markers to write down key points and any interesting facts or quotes they find.
6. Allow each group one to two minutes to present their findings to the class. After each presentation, provide time for classmates to ask questions and discuss the content.

### **Worksheet Workshop: (15 minutes)**

1. Hand out individual copies of the worksheet to each student. Explain how to fill out each section of the worksheet with these instructions:
2. **Timeline:** Students should select key dates and events mentioned throughout the digital book. The following are recommendations, but the teacher and students can use many other dates mentioned in the book:
  - 1784 - Birth of Zachary Taylor
  - 1846-1848 - Mexican-American War
  - 1849-1850 - Presidency of Zachary Taylor
  - 1850 - Death of Zachary Taylor
3. **Interesting Quote:** Have students choose a meaningful quote from the book to fill in the quote section on their worksheet.
4. **Interesting Fact:** Ask students to select an interesting fact about Zachary Taylor that stood out to them and write it in the space provided.

5. **Vocabulary Builder:** Instruct students to choose a word from the Glossary that they find interesting and use it in a sentence that conveys its meaning.
6. **Multiple Choice:** Explain that students should complete the multiple-choice section of the worksheet individually. (Note: The multiple-choice section corresponds to the *Guess or Mess* episode about Zachary Taylor and can also be used to play along while watching. See “Extension Activity” below.)

### **Reflection Round-Up: (10 minutes)**

1. Briefly summarize the key points covered about Zachary Taylor, focusing on his life, presidency, and legacy.
2. **Think-Pair-Share:** Ask students to recall one fact about Zachary Taylor and share it with a partner. Encourage them to discuss why that fact was significant.
3. Give each student a sticky note or index card and ask them to answer one of these three sample reflection questions:
  - What did you find most interesting about Zachary Taylor?
  - How do you think his presidency impacted the United States?
  - Can you think of a modern issue that relates to something Taylor dealt with?
4. **Bonus Activities:** If time allows, let students complete puzzles or engage with other interactive activities related to Taylor in the book.

### **Extension Activity:** (20 minutes)

*Guess or Mess* Trivia Show: After the lesson, students can participate in the *Guess or Mess* trivia show for Zachary Taylor—direct students to the multiple-choice section of the worksheet. Students can play along with the contestants to see if they can answer the trivia questions correctly.

### **PragerU 5-Minute Videos:**

Did you know that PragerU has a comprehensive video catalog of U.S. Presidents in an easy-to-watch 5-minute format? Enhance this lesson plan with one of our insightful, engaging, and educational videos that provide students with a deep dive into the lives and legacies of America’s leaders. To view *Zachary Taylor: The Man Who Might Have Prevented the Civil War*, click [here](#).

### **Don’t have time for a full lesson? Quick Activity (30 minutes)**

Read the *Zachary Taylor* book together as a class, with students taking turns reading aloud. Then, watch the *Guess or Mess* video and play along with the trivia questions.