



Rutherford B. Hayes | Lesson Plan

How did Rutherford B. Hayes's presidency shape the outcome of Reconstruction?

Students will understand how Rutherford B. Hayes's leadership during a turbulent post-Civil War era influenced the nation's direction, including the end of Reconstruction, and how his decisions reflect the complexities of balancing national unity with civil rights.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify the key life events of Rutherford B. Hayes.
- Explain why the 1876 presidential election was controversial.
- Identify reasons for conflict throughout Rutherford B. Hayes' presidency.
- Examine how Rutherford B. Hayes attempted to keep the peace in the nation during a divisive time and help the country move on from Reconstruction.
- Evaluate Rutherford B. Hayes' principles, decisions, and overall reputation as president.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Compromise of 1877:** An agreement believed to have ended Reconstruction in exchange for Hayes becoming president.
- **Reconstruction:** The period in American history after the American Civil War ended in 1865 until the late 1870s. The goal of Reconstruction was to rebuild the country, bring the former Confederate states back into the United States, and to assist the newly freed African-Americans in becoming U.S. citizens.
- **Electoral Commission:** A group formed to resolve the disputed 1876 presidential election.
- **Jim Crow Laws:** Discriminatory laws in the Southern United States that oppressed African-Americans.
- **Civil Service Reform:** Efforts to reduce corruption in government by promoting merit-based hiring.

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

Scan to watch episode:



Lesson Plan: (45-60 minutes)

Introduction to Hayes: (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 leadership during challenging times.
2. Display the *Rutherford B. Hayes* digital book using an electronic device. Briefly highlight Hayes's significance as the 19th president, his role in the Civil War, and the controversial 1876 election. Show images from the digital book to give a visual overview of his life and achievements.

Hayes History Huddle: (25 minutes)

1. Read the *Meet Rutherford B. Hayes* section (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 completing the teacher-led reading, explain to the students that they will now explore other key aspects of Hayes'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
 - Group 1: *Young Rud, Early Career* (page 3)
 - Group 2: *The Civil War, Rise to Power* (page 4)
 - Group 3: *The 1876 Presidential Election* (page 5)
 - Group 4: *America's Most Controversial Presidential Election* (page 6)
 - Group 5: *President* (page 7)
 - Group 6: *Paraguay's Favorite, The Easter Egg Roll Tradition* (page 8)
 - Group 7: *Retirement, Legacy* (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 the 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 booklet. The following are recommendations, but the teacher and students can use many other dates mentioned in the book:
 - 1822 - Birth of Rutherford B. Hayes
 - 1861-1865 - Civil War Service
 - 1868-1872 - Governor of Ohio
 - 1876 - Most Contentious Presidential Election
 - 1877-1881 - Presidency

- 1889 - Death of Lucy Hayes
 - 1893 - Death of Rutherford B. Hayes
3. **Interesting Quote:** Have students choose a meaningful quote from the book to fill in the quote bubble on their worksheet.
 4. **Interesting Fact:** Ask students to select an interesting fact about Rutherford B. Hayes that stood out to them and write it in the space provided.
 5. **Vocabulary Builder:** Instruct students to choose a word from the Glossary on page 10 that they find interesting and use it in a sentence that conveys its meaning. For example, “The Civil War was a conflict between the Union and Confederacy of the United States” instead of “The Civil War was a war.”
 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 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 Rutherford B. Hayes, focusing on his life, presidency, and legacy.
2. **Think-Pair-Share:** Ask students to recall one fact about Rutherford B. Hayes 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 Rutherford B. Hayes?
 - How do you think his presidency impacted the United States?
 - Can you think of a modern issue that relates to something Hayes dealt with?
4. **Bonus Activities:** If time allows, allow students to complete the puzzle on page 2 by finding hidden letters throughout the book. They can also explore and engage with the other interactive activities included 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 Rutherford B. Hayes—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 *Rutherford B. Hayes: The Most Disputed President*, click [here](#).

Don't have time for a full lesson? Quick Activity (30 minutes)

Read the *Rutherford B. Hayes* 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.