

RESOURCE LIBRARY
ACTIVITY : 1 HR

The Life of Lee Harvey Oswald

Students investigate Lee Harvey Oswald's biography and analyze political and cultural forces that may have influenced him.

GRADES

9 - 12+

SUBJECTS

Social Studies, U.S. History, World History

CONTENTS

1 Resource, 2 PDFs, 4 Links

OVERVIEW

Students investigate Lee Harvey Oswald's biography and analyze political and cultural forces that may have influenced him.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/life-lee-harvey-oswald/>

Program

KILLING
KENNEDY

DIRECTIONS

1. Define "assassinate."

Ask students what the word assassinate means. Tell students that Lee Harvey Oswald assassinated President John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963, in Dallas, Texas. Ask: *Why would anyone want to assassinate a president?* Since the Kennedy assassination, many theories have been developed as to why Oswald did what he did. Many theories are based upon the politics and culture of the time, and how these may have affected Oswald's thinking. Tell students they will investigate Oswald's life story to understand the political and cultural forces that may have shaped his actions.

2. Read the National Geographic GeoStory, *Kennedy and Oswald: A President and His Assassin*, and answer guided questions.

Divide students into small groups and make sure each group has access to a computer. Direct students to view the National Geographic GeoStory, *Kennedy and Oswald: A President and His Assassin*. Distribute the Kennedy and Oswald Questions handout to students and instruct them to read the GeoStory and answer the questions on the handout with their group. While students are working together to answer the questions, each student should record the group answer independently in his or her notebook.

After allowing each group time to finish reading the GeoStory and answering the questions, discuss the questions as a class to clear up misconceptions and ensure all students have accurate responses.

3. Analyze segments of Lee Harvey Oswald's life in small groups.

Allow students to remain in the same small groups, and make sure each group has access to a computer. Assign each group one section of Oswald's life to research in depth using primary sources. Distribute to each group the appropriate primary resource or resources about the section of Oswald's life the group will be researching. Then, distribute the Oswald Graphic Organizer worksheet to all students. Instruct students to use the primary source or sources to answer the questions in the graphic organizer about their assigned section of Oswald's life.

4. Students share what they learn with each other to complete their graphic organizers.

After each group has read the sources and completed the appropriate sections of the graphic organizers, call the class back together. Break the whole class up into new teams. Each new team should have one member of each original group, meaning each team should have a full working knowledge of Oswald's life. Within these teams, have students share what they learned during their research with their original group. Team members should take notes on their graphic organizers as each individual team member shares their findings on a particular phase of Oswald's life.

Once the team members have completed their graphic organizers, have them work together to come to consensus on an overall question. Ask: *Which section of Oswald's life may have had the greatest influence on his decision to assassinate the president?* Remind teams to cite evidence from their Oswald Graphic Organizer to support their response.

5. Students return to their original teams and discuss.

Bring the class back together. Break students up into their original groups. Ask: *Which section of Oswald's life may have had the greatest influence on his decision to assassinate the president?* Within their groups, have students share the answers they developed in their previous teams. Have groups discuss these answers to see if there is consensus, although there does not have to be. There can be differences of opinion, but responses must be backed by evidence.

6. Have a class discussion about the cultural and political influences on Lee Harvey Oswald.

Ask each group to share its consensus, or discussion points, with the class. Prompt students to provide evidence supporting their reasoning. Discuss any similarities and differences between group responses.

Modification

Assess student learning in a written format by asking students to respond to the assessment question in an essay.

Tip

Assign students to groups in advance to ensure smooth transitions during the activity.

Modification

If you do not have access to computers or a computer lab, ask students to read the GeoStory and complete the Oswald and Kennedy Questions handout at home.

Informal Assessment

Ask students to respond to the following question: *Based on your knowledge of Oswald's life, which segment of his life do you think had the biggest influence on the man he became?*

Assess learning based on evidence students use to support their evaluations.

Extending the Learning

- Have students compare the political and cultural forces that shaped Lee Harvey Oswald's life to the political and cultural forces that shaped John F. Kennedy's life. Distribute a T-chart to all students and ask them to read the National Geographic GeoStory, *Kennedy and Oswald: A President and His Assassin*. In the T-chart, tell students to identify influences on Oswald in one section of the chart and influences on Kennedy in the other section of the chart.
- After listing influences, distribute a Venn diagram to all students and ask them to compare and contrast the influences on Oswald and Kennedy in the Venn diagram. Then, discuss the similarities and differences in the political and cultural forces.

OBJECTIVES

Subjects & Disciplines

Social Studies

- U.S. History
- World History

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- analyze the cultural and political forces that influenced Lee Harvey Oswald by reading a GeoStory and examining primary source documents

Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

Teaching Methods

- Discovery learning
- Discussions
- Reading

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- 21st Century Student Outcomes
 - Information, Media, and Technology Skills
 - Information Literacy
 - Information, Communications, and Technology Literacy
 - Media Literacy
 - Learning and Innovation Skills
 - Communication and Collaboration
 - Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- 21st Century Themes
 - Global Awareness
- Critical Thinking Skills
 - Analyzing
 - Evaluating
 - Understanding

National Standards, Principles, and Practices

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM STANDARDS

- **Theme 3:**

People, Places, and Environments

- **Theme 5:**

Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

ISTE STANDARDS FOR STUDENTS (ISTE STANDARDS*S)

- **Standard 2:**

Communication and Collaboration

- **Standard 3:**

Research and Information Fluency

- **Standard 4:**

Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making

Preparation

What You'll Need

MATERIALS YOU PROVIDE

- Pencils
- Pens

REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

- Internet Access: Required
- Tech Setup: 1 computer per small group
- Plug-Ins: Flash

PHYSICAL SPACE

- Classroom

GROUPING

- Large-group instruction

BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

Background Information

Lee Harvey Oswald remains a controversial historical figure. Oswald lacked a nurturing environment in his youth. At 17, he enlisted in the Marines, where he qualified as a sharpshooter. He grew increasingly attracted to Marxism and communism and, at 19, made his way to the Soviet Union, where he applied for Soviet citizenship.

Hoping to be allowed to study in Moscow, Oswald instead was sent to work in Minsk. There, he tired of the realities of existence in the Soviet Union and grew disillusioned with communism as practiced there. He returned to the United States with his Russian wife, Marina. After a few aimless years, Oswald moved his family to New Orleans and even attempted to move to Cuba.

The potential move to Cuba fell through, and Oswald returned to Dallas, taking a job at the Dallas School Book Depository. It is from this building that he assassinated President John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963.

Prior Knowledge

["Basic knowledge of Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union", "Knowledge of the American relationship with Cuba, specifically the Bay of Pigs invasion and Cuban Missile Crisis "]

Recommended Prior Activities

- None

Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
assassinate	<i>verb</i>	to murder someone of political importance.

For Further Exploration

Reference

- [National Archives: JFK Assassination Records: Warren Commission Report](#)
- [Assassination Archives and Research Center: Warren Commission Hearings: Volume XVI - Oswald's "Historic Diary"](#)

Video

- [Youtube: Lee Harvey Oswald Interview with William K. Stuckey on August 17, 1963](#)

Websites

- [JFK Presidential Library and Museum](#)
- [Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza: Exhibits: John F. Kennedy and the Memory of a Nation](#)

PARTNER



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