

The Highest Office: Campaign History of a Small-Town President

Program Study Guide
Barry Stewart Mann

Program Description

The Highest Office: The Campaign History of a Small-Town President is a Living History performance program, originally commissioned by and presented at the Carter Presidential Library, that traces the rise of Georgia native and 39th President of the United States, Jimmy Carter, through multiple characters and historical images. From a run for State Senate in Southwest Georgia, to the Governor's House in Atlanta, to the 1976 Democratic nomination and Presidential election, Carter's campaigns are dominated by such themes as race, civil rights, regionalism, integrity, and the value of family. Authentic images and memorabilia from the period fill the program, and Barry uses costumes, dialects and sharp characterizations to bring to life such figures as Lester Maddox, Hamilton Jordan, George Wallace, Gerald Ford, and, of course, President Carter himself.



Artist Bio

Barry Stewart Mann is an actor, storyteller, writer and educator who has taught and performed around the country. He holds a B.A. in English from Harvard University and an M.F.A. in Drama from the University of San Diego, and has performed on numerous Atlanta stages, including Theatrical Outfit, Horizon Theatre, ART Station, and the Atlanta Shakespeare Tavern. He is a member of the Southern Order of Storytellers and the National Storytelling Network, and works in schools as a teaching artist through the Alliance Theatre.

Sample Standards

- SS8H11 Evaluate the role of Georgia in the modern civil rights movement.
 - c. Explain the resistance to the 1964 Civil Rights Act, emphasizing the role of Lester Maddox.
- SS8H12 Explain the importance of developments in Georgia since the late 20th century
 - b. Describe the role of Jimmy Carter in Georgia as state senator, governor, president, and past president.
- ELAGSE8RI3: Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories).
- ELAGSE8SL2: Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.
- TA8.RE.1 Engage actively and appropriately as an audience member.

Key Vocabulary

- White Citizens' Councils - an associated network of white supremacist, segregationist organizations, concentrated in the South, that emerged in response to the Brown vs. Board of Education decision ruling
- Brown vs Board of Education - a landmark decision by the U.S. Supreme Court, declaring that U.S. state laws establishing racial segregation in public schools are unconstitutional, even if the segregated schools are otherwise equal in quality.
- Segregation, segregationist – the separation of people, and assignment of unequal rights, based on race or ethnic identity; someone who advocates for such separation.
- Integration, integrationist - the mixing of and assignment of equal rights to people of different racial or ethnic identity; someone who advocates for such mixing..
- Voter suppression – a strategy used to influence the outcome of an election by discouraging or preventing specific groups of people from voting, such as tests or questionnaires that prospective voters must pass in order to cast a vote.
- Primary – an election by which a political party selects and nominates a candidate; one such election in a state that is part of a series in a larger number of states
- Convention - a formal gathering of people for political purposes; specifically, the gathering of members of a political party to choose its candidate and define its political platform
- Electoral College - the group of presidential electors required by the U.S. Constitution to form every four years for the sole purpose of appointing the president and vice president. Each state and the District of Columbia appoints electors pursuant to the methods described by its legislature, equal in number to its congressional delegation (representatives and senators).
- Inauguration, inaugural address - the process of swearing a person into office, often occurring through a formal ceremony or special event, which may also include a formal speech, or address, by the new official.

Objectives

- To impart essential information about Jimmy Carter's rise to the presidency, including general timeline and key events
- To provide context for the contemporary social customs and conventions at the various times during the middle of the 20th Century (c. 1940-1976)
- To share primary sources in the form of historical quotes and images
- To engage students through a 'living history' performance involving multiple characters, appropriate props and costume pieces, and small bits of audience interaction.

Assess the Learning

What were the various campaigns and offices that Jimmy Carter conducted and held on his rise to the Presidency?

What were key issues of concern to Carter as a candidate?

Who were the three people that visited Joe Hurst at the polling station in Georgetown? How did Hurst's behavior with them convey a sense of social norms in southern Georgia in 1962?

What challenges did Carter encounter in his various campaigns?

Who were key figures who opposed and supported Carter?

Based on the program, what were some of the moments in Carter's life that were pivotal in forming his character and political philosophy?

Extend the Learning

- Read some of Carter's books. He has been a prolific author, creating volumes including essays, children's literature, poetry, and historical fiction.
- Read and analyze Carter's poem, "The Pasture Gate."
- Make plans to visit the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum in Atlanta or Jimmy Carter National Historical Park in Plains, GA.
- The program ended at Carter's Inauguration on January 21, 1977. Investigate how Carter governed as President, the challenges he faced, and the legacy he left behind.
- Look for locations mentioned in the program on maps: Georgetown, Quitman County, Americus, Plains, Archery; New Hampshire; Vietnam.
- Research Lester Maddox and the Pickrick Restaurant; and George Wallace and the University of Alabama.

Additional Resources

Books

Alter, Jonathan. His Very Best: Jimmy Carter, A Life.

Carter, Jimmy. A Full Life: Reflections at Ninety.

Carter, Jimmy. Always a Reckoning and Other Poems (including “The Pasture Gate”)

Carter, Jimmy. An Hour Before Daylight: Memories of a Rural Boyhood.

Carter, Jimmy. Our Endangered Values: America’s Moral Crisis.

Carter, Jimmy. Turning Point: A Candidate, a State, and a Nation Come of Age.

Gallard, Frye. Prophet from Plains: Jimmy Carter and His Legacy.

Jordan, Hamilton. No Such Thing as a Bad Day,

Raum, Elizabeth. The Gift of Peace: The Jimmy Carter Story.

Online

<https://www.cartercenter.org/>

<https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/>

<https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/white-citizens-councils-wcc>

<https://www.life.com/history/jimmy-carter-governor-inauguration-discrimination/>

<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2002/carter/biographical/>

<https://stennis.gov/jimmy-carter-a-lifetime-of-public-service/>

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/james-carter/>

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