

Transfer of power  
NewsDepth, November 13, 2008  
Classroom Activities



<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/11/us/politics/11transition.html>

**Overview:**

In some countries around the globe, the only way leadership power is transferred is through war or assassination. In other countries, a new leader emerges as a result of a family or a particular party being in power. In the United States the transition at the top comes about as a result of people voting on issues and candidates. This past week, Democrat Barack Obama was elected the next President of the United States. The transfer of power from Republican President George Bush to Obama began almost immediately. Presidential historians say that this transition period is an important time for the administration taking office. In this case, the problems the country faces demand that the democratic process of transferring power take place harmoniously. Students will learn about the importance of this 77 day transition period and what Obama will be doing to make it run smoothly.

**Grade levels:** 7-8

**Subject:** Social Studies.

**Classroom Activities**

**1. Activity #1 The Transition of Power (20-30 minutes)**

- In the Executive branch of our United States government, what party is presently in power? How did that change as a result of the election on November 4<sup>th</sup>? What party will take over the executive branch on inauguration day?
- There are only 77 days from the general election to inauguration day. This period of time is referred to as "The Transfer of Power". This transition will require at least 800 people at its peak and cost nearly \$10 million. President-elect Obama has many "to dos": fill 4,000 political positions, over 1,100 of which will require Senate confirmation; research current Executive Orders;

review campaign promises to form a policy agenda; and prepare an annual federal budget to present to Congress in early February.

- In general, there is a natural conflict between the outgoing head of state, who wants to maintain his structure, and the incoming president, who wants to change everything. This is heightened when the two leaders are from opposing parties. President Bush, however, has been very cooperative in showing how the transfer of power is to be done. The following websites provide additional information on the meeting between President Bush and President elect Obama.

[http://www.star-](http://www.star-telegram.com/news/columnists/bob_ray_sanders/story/1032760.html)

[telegram.com/news/columnists/bob\\_ray\\_sanders/story/1032760.html](http://www.star-telegram.com/news/columnists/bob_ray_sanders/story/1032760.html) Bush shows how transition of power is supposed to be done

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/11/us/politics/11transition.html?bl&ex=1226638800&en=f24a9509e53ce37f&ei=5087%0A> The New York Times

assessment of the Transfer of Power

[http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20081109/valerie\\_jarret\\_081109/20081109?hub=CTVNewsAt11](http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20081109/valerie_jarret_081109/20081109?hub=CTVNewsAt11) The priorities of the Obama

Transition Team

- How is the transfer of power similar or different in other countries? Research recent changes of leadership in Mexico, Haiti, Nigeria, Yugoslavia, and other nations.

## 2. Activity #2 Historical comparison of Transitions (20-30 minutes)

- While steps taken by the current and the next President are encouraging, history dating back to the very first transfer has shown us that the transition periods have not always proven to be seamless. Bush and Obama can take comfort in the knowledge that their meeting and transition will likely be more successful than that experienced by some of their predecessors dating back hundreds of years.
- Visit the website <http://www.digitaljournal.com/article/262197> Have students read and react to some of the monumental Presidential transitions in our nation's history.

## 3. Activity #3 Keeping track of the Transition of Power (1 class period with follow-up)

- PBS NewsHour presents a close look at the challenges of the Bush Obama Transition:  
[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/us/july-dec08/transition\\_11-07.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/us/july-dec08/transition_11-07.html)
- Follow through with the PBS lesson that covers this transition:  
[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/lessonplans/us/july-dec08/transition\\_11-07.pdf](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/lessonplans/us/july-dec08/transition_11-07.pdf) There is a warm up, a main activity, and a follow up discussion.
- <http://usgovinfo.about.com/od/the-president-and-cabinet/a/prestrans.htm> A website that tracks the Presidential Transition very clearly. Take your

- students through the entire process. Then continue on a tracking of the Transition Process with your students.
- Create a handout with your students that highlights what they think are the most important positions that need to be filled during the transition period. Have students report weekly or biweekly over the next 10 weeks how those positions are being filled. Also report any decisions that are made in terms of his position on the issues that have been mentioned in the transition articles referred to under the activities section of the lesson.

**Resources:**

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/10/20081028-1.html> This is a fact sheet generated from the White house that covers the transfer of power information.

[http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20081109/valerie\\_jarrett\\_081109/20081109?hub=CTVNewsAt11](http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20081109/valerie_jarrett_081109/20081109?hub=CTVNewsAt11) Priorities of the Obama Transition Team.

[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/indepth\\_coverage/white\\_house/transition2008/](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/indepth_coverage/white_house/transition2008/) More of Obama's Priorities