

THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

from

The Almost Painless Guide to the Branches of Government

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Published & Distributed by...



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THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH


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THE ALMOST PAINLESS GUIDE TO THE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT

Unit of Study Grades 5-UP

INTRODUCTION

This three-part Unit of Study examines the three branches of the American federal government. The three programs (“The Executive Branch,” “The Legislative Branch,” and “The Judicial Branch”) may be used independently, or as a Unit of Study, intended to present a comprehensive approach to all three branches, their independent functions, and their extensive interactions, especially the system of “checks and balances” between the branches.

The Unit of Study includes Unit Goals, which govern the entire three-part package; Unit Assessment Tools, intended to be used prior to and after the presentation of all three lessons; and Unit Culminating Activities, intended to provide closure for the Unit. The Unit of Study materials and goals are delineated at the beginning of this Teacher’s Guide, and the individual lessons are presented thereafter.

The individual programs include lesson assessment tools, intended to be used prior to and after the presentation of each lesson. Each program has its own Teacher’s Guide, which follows the Unit of Study information. The Guide presents the contents of the program, Student Objectives for the lesson, and ensuing activities for each lesson.

MATERIALS IN THE UNIT OF STUDY

- Three videos;
- Three Teacher’s Guides, including lesson plans, Student Objectives, follow-up activities, and scripts;
- Unit Pre- and Post-Tests, Unit Goals, and Unit Culminating Activities.

Unit Goals

Unit goals for student comprehension govern the entire three-part Unit of Study. Unit assessment tools and culminating activities reflect these goals.

After participating in all three lessons included in this Unit of Study, students should be able to:

- Identify and explain the basic function of the three branches of federal government.
- Explain how the powers of the national government are distributed, shared, and limited.
- Explain how the three opening words of the Preamble to the Constitution, “We the People...,” embody the principle of the people as sovereign - the ultimate source of authority.
- Explain how legislative, executive, and judicial powers are distributed and shared among the three branches of the national government.
- Explain how each branch of government can check the powers of the other branches.

Unit Blackline Masters

The following blackline masters present the Unit Assessment Tools and Culminating Activities. A Unit Answer Key may be found on pages 3-6 of this Guide.

(1.) **Unit Blackline Masters #1a-1b: Unit of Study Pre-Test** is a Unit Assessment Tool to be used before you present any of the materials in the Unit Study. This tool should clarify student knowledge and misconceptions prior to the commencement of the Unit, and may be contrasted with **Blackline Masters #6a-6h: Unit of Study Post-Test** to gauge student comprehension of the Unit Goals, stated above, after the Unit has been completed.

(2.) **Unit Blackline Master #2: Political Cartoon** asks students to interpret a political cartoon based on the division of power between the branches of government.

(3.) **Blackline Masters #3, 4, and 5: Checks and Balances, More Checks and Balances, and Still More Checks**

and Balances asks students to delineate between the powers and responsibilities of the three branches of government. (4.) **Unit Blackline Masters #6a-6h: Unit of Study Post-Test** provides a Unit Assessment Tool based on the Unit Goals, and should be administered after the completion of all three components of the Unit of Study and its Culminating Activities.

Unit Answer Key

Unit Blackline Masters #1a-1b: Pre-Test

1. A
2. B
3. B
4. A
5. A
6. C
7. A
8. D
9. A
10. D

Unit Blackline Master #3: Checks and Balances

1.
 - A. legislative
 - B. executive
 - C. judicial
2.
 - A. executive
 - B. legislative
 - C. judicial
3.
 - A. judicial
 - B. executive
 - C. legislative
4. The different powers guarantee that no one branch of the government can become too powerful. While the legislative branch and executive branch are both elected the source of their constituency is different. The executive branch must gain support nationally while the legislative branch need only gain the support of the members of the states they represent. This helps to guarantee that issues

will be viewed from both a national and state point of view. In addition, Supreme Court justices are appointed by the executive branch and confirmed by the legislative branch. Also, the term of office for the legislative branch and executive branch are limited so that the people may control how powerful these officials become. This is especially true of the legislative branch which does not have term limits. Lastly, the term for a member of the judicial branch is for life so as to prevent them from being influenced by political elections or reappointment.

Unit Blackline Master #4: More Checks and Balances

1. executive
2. legislative
3. judicial
4. legislative
5. executive
6. legislative
7. judicial
8. legislative
9. executive
10. judicial
11. legislative
12. executive
13. legislative
14. legislative
15. executive

Unit Blackline Master #5: Still More Checks and Balances

1. Possible actions taken by the executive branch: The President would have two basic options; (1) sign the bill into law, or (2) veto the bill.
2. Possible actions taken by the legislative branch: If the President vetoed the bill, the legislative branch could override the veto with a two-thirds majority vote. Because the bill passed with so much support in both the House and Senate, this probably would occur.

3. Possible actions taken by the judicial branch: If a court case made its way through the lower courts to the Supreme Court, the Supreme Court could decide to hear the case. If the Supreme Court decided to hear the case, it could rule the law as either constitutional or unconstitutional because it violates the Second Amendment of the Constitution.

Unit Blackline Masters #6a-6h: Post-Test

- | | |
|-------|------------------------------|
| 1. A | 31. B |
| 2. B | 32. B |
| 3. A | 33. D |
| 4. B | 34. A |
| 5. A | 35. B |
| 6. B | 36. D |
| 7. B | 37. D |
| 8. B | 38. B |
| 9. A | 39. A |
| 10. B | 40. D |
| 11. A | 41. Bicameral |
| 12. B | 42. Electoral College |
| 13. B | 43. Speaker of the House |
| 14. B | 44. House of Representatives |
| 15. A | 45. Judicial review |
| 16. A | 46. Appellate jurisdiction |
| 17. B | 47. Impeach |
| 18. A | 48. Congress |
| 19. A | 49. Original jurisdiction |
| 20. A | 50. Veto |
| 21. C | 51. E |
| 22. D | 52. L |
| 23. D | 53. J |
| 24. C | 54. L |
| 25. A | 55. E |
| 26. D | 56. L |
| 27. B | 57. J |
| 28. C | 58. L |
| 29. D | 59. E |
| 30. C | 60. J |

61. **legislative branch - make laws**
 executive branch - enforce laws
 judicial branch - interpret laws
62. **The President appoints a candidate to fill a vacancy. This candidate is then confirmed by the Senate (legislative branch). The term of the justice is for life; therefore, he is immune from any influences by the other two branches.**
63. **The executive branch (President) can either sign the bill or veto the bill. If so, the legislative branch can override this veto with a 2/3 majority vote. In this case, the bill will be signed into law. If the law is challenged, it will go to the federal judicial system, which is the judicial branch. The case can eventually be appealed until it reaches the Supreme Court. In which case they can declare it constitutional or unconstitutional.**
64. **Answers will vary.**

THE ALMOST PAINLESS GUIDE TO THE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT

The Executive Branch

Running Time: 20 minutes

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

The Almost Painless Guide to the Branches of the Government: The Executive Branch uses contemporary footage, archival footage and photographs, original graphics, and dialog narration to provide students in grades five and up with information on the Executive Branch of the federal government.

Although the program focuses on the executive branch, it is considered in context with the legislative branch and the judicial branch to examine how each branch checks the others to create a balance of power.

The program looks at the United States Constitution as the foundation of federal government and the concept of “We the People” as the ultimate authority. The system of checks and balances is examined in detail with various graphic and video examples provided. Additionally, we see how power is divided between state and federal governments.

The creation of the executive branch and the office of the President is studied along with the powers and responsibilities that the office entails. We also look at the requirements of the Presidency, how he is elected, the process of impeachment, and the role the Vice-President plays in the executive branch.

The program concludes with “The Almost Painless Review,” which offers an excellent synopsis of the entire program. Also, a Video Quiz is provided after the closing credits.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

It is suggested that you preview the video and read the related Suggested Instructional Procedures before involving your students in the lesson activities. In this way, you will become familiar with the materials and be better prepared to adapt the program to the needs of your class.

You will probably find it helpful to follow the video and lesson activities in the order in which they are presented in this Teacher's Guide, but this is not necessary.

It is also suggested that the video presentation take place before the entire class and under your direction. The lesson activities focus on the content of the video; therefore, the presentations should be a common experience for all students.

As you review the instructional program outlined in the Teacher's Guide, you may find it necessary to make some changes, deletions, or additions to fit the specific needs of your students. We encourage you to do so, for only by tailoring this program to your students will they obtain the instructional benefits afforded by the materials.

SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES

Teacher Preparation

- Preview the video The Executive Branch.
- Duplicate any blackline masters you intend to use.
- Read the descriptions of the blackline masters.

Student Preparation

The students should be supplied with the necessary copies of blackline masters required to complete the activities supplied. Teachers can extend any of the lessons on presidential powers by analyzing current events articles.

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

After viewing the videotape, The Executive Branch, and participating in follow up activities, students should be able to:

- Define the powers of the executive branch as the power to:
 - √ Veto laws passed by Congress;
 - √ Nominate members of the federal judiciary.
- Describe and define the following:
 - √ The establishment by the Constitution of the executive branch;
 - √ The powers of the executive branch;
 - √ Requirements for holding the office of President.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

BLACKLINE MASTERS

The following duplicable blackline masters are included with this guide. An Answer Key appears on pages 11-13.

- (1.) **Blackline Master #1: Pre-Test** is an assessment tool intended to gauge student comprehension of the Objectives prior to the launching of the executive branch lesson, which includes the video and the ensuing activities. The results of the Pre-Test may be contrasted with the results of the Post-Test (**Blackline Masters #8a-8c**) to assess the efficacy of the lesson in achieving the Student Objectives.
- (2.) **Blackline Master #2: Video Quiz** is a printed copy of the questions which appear at the end of the video presentation. The Video Quiz is intended to reinforce the salient points of the video immediately following its completion and may be used for assessment or as a catalyst for discussion.
- (3.) **Blackline Master #3: Vocabulary** is a list of pertinent terms and definitions.

- (4.) **Blackline Masters #4a-4b: Powers of the President** defines the roles and powers of the President.
- (5.) **Blackline Masters #5a-5e: Electoral College Activity** simulates a mock Presidential election. It is a game that can be played by two individual players or two teams. Each game will need a die and a copy of the electoral college map. The rules and procedures of the game are enumerated on Blackline Master #5a.
- (6.) **Blackline Master #6: Your Own Candidate** requests that students profile their own Presidential candidates, providing demographic information that will be contrasted to the data presented in **Blackline Master #8: Presidential Profiles**.
- (7.) **Blackline Masters #7a-7b: Presidential Profiles** provides students with demographic information about American Presidents through Bill Clinton. It asks students to compile and analyze the data presented and determine if their candidates, profiled in **Blackline Master #6** fit the typical demographic profile of a President.
- (8.) **Blackline Masters #8a-8c: Post-Test** is an assessment tool to be administered after the lesson (Pre-Test, video, and follow-up activities) have been completed.

EXTENDED LEARNING ACTIVITY

The following activity may be assigned to more advanced students:

Read Article II sections 2 and 3 of the Constitution. Of the eight roles of the Presidency, which two are not described in the Constitution? In a 100- to 200-word essay, explain why these roles exist, even though they are not outlined in the Constitution.

INTERNET RESOURCES

(1.) Government Servers:

<http://www.eff.org/govt.html>

This server contains a host of links to both foreign and domestic governments. In addition, there are several links that will give detailed information about the executive branch and related offices.

(2.) The Democratic Party On-Line:

<http://www.democrats.org>

This server contains detailed information about the Democratic Party and its candidates.

(3.) The Republican Main Street:

<http://www.rnc.org>

This server contains detailed information about the Republican Party and its candidates.

(4.) Welcome to the White House:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov>

This server contains links to other offices and departments for which the executive branch is responsible. In addition, it contains detailed historical information about the office of the President.

(5.) National Archives and Records Administration:

<http://www.nara.gov/nara/president/address.html>

This server will allow viewers to select a President and visit the website of his presidential library.

ANSWER KEY

Blackline Master #1: Pre-Test

1. B 9. B
2. A 10. A
3. B
4. A
5. A
6. B
7. A
8. B

Blackline Master #2: Video Quiz

1. A
2. B
3. B
4. B
5. A
6. D
7. D
8. A
9. B
10. D

Blackline Master #4a: Powers of the President

1. G
2. H
3. B
4. F
5. C
6. D
7. E
8. A

Blackline Master #4b: Powers of the President

Part 1

1. B
2. A
3. A
4. D
5. B
6. C

Part 2

1. This Presidential power allows the President to enforce, put into effect, and carry out laws that are passed by Congress. In addition the President is responsible for planning the economic policies of the government.

2. This Presidential power allows the President to make treaties with the consent of two-thirds of the Senate, and to appoint ambassadors to other nations as well as other diplomatic officers, subject to Senate confirmation. It also al-

allows the President to determine the nation's foreign policy.

3. This Presidential power places the nation's armed forces under the control of the President.

4. This Presidential power allows the President to suggest legislation that he/she wishes to see enacted. In addition, this power gives the President the ability to veto laws passed by Congress.

Blackline Masters #8a-8c: Post-Test

1. A
 2. B
 3. A
 4. B
 5. B
 6. D
 7. B
 8. D
 9. D
 10. A
 11. G
 12. D
 13. B
 14. F
 15. A
 16. Commander-In-Chief.
 17. Chief Legislator.
 18. Chief Diplomat
 19. Chief Executive
 20. Chief-of-State
- Essay: Answers will vary.

THE ALMOST PAINLESS GUIDE TO THE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT

The Executive Branch

SCRIPT OF NARRATION

Harlan:

Marie? Can we actually say that?

Marie:

What, Harlan?

Harlan:

You know - that this video will be a painless guide to the branches of government?

Marie:

Absolutely, it's really a very interesting subject.

Harlan:

Well, you were a good student, but when I was in school...

Marie:

And you were just learning to walk upright....

Harlan:

Very funny. To me, learning about the executive branch, the legislative branch, and the judicial branch of government seemed like torture. Actually worse - required torture!

Marie:

Maybe you didn't really pay close attention, Harlan.

Harlan:

Well, I was a bit distracted.

Marie:

I remember. I think her name was Lesley wasn't it?

Harlan:

Actually, I was very busy with football and soccer and...

Marie:

Never had any trouble remembering your sports game plans did you?

Harlan:

Well, no...

Marie:

So, let's look at the branches of the U.S. government like one big game plan, only for the whole country.

Harlan:

Makes sense, at least to me. So the "teams" would be the executive branch, the judicial branch, and the legislative branch. And then the "players" would be the President, The Supreme Court justices, and Congressmen and women. And the "rulebook" would be the Constitution!

Marie:

In a way, yes! And by the way, as times change, the rules can change through "amendments," or additions, to the Constitution.

Harlan:

Got it.

Marie:

See, even you are never too old to learn something!

Harlan:

I'll ignore that.

Marie:

Well, today we're going to talk about the Presidency, how and why the office was created, and just what powers the executive branch possesses.

Harlan:

But first we'll dig down deep to see how the seeds of democracy sprouted into the strong roots of government and then branched out to the...

Marie:

Harlan, don't even start with the tree analogies.

Harlan:

Sorry, you were saying?

Marie:

Well, in a nutshell...

Harlan:

Hold it! That sounds suspiciously like a tree analogy.

Marie:

Please! Honestly sometimes you can't see the forest for the...

Harlan:

That's two...

Marie:

Stop barking at me!

Harlan:

I shall remain silent and well-grounded, while you give us the dirt.

Marie:

First, we have to mention the most important players in our system of government.

Harlan:

Who are they?

Marie:

Us.

Harlan:

Us?

Marie:

We, the people.

Harlan:

I love it when you sound so, so, “historically literate,” Marie. But, haven’t I heard that phrase before somewhere?

Marie:

Well, I certainly hope so! Those three words are vitally important to understanding our entire system of government, Harlan. They’re the first three words to the Preamble of our Constitution. Unlike other countries, we the citizens of the United States granted our government and its leaders the privilege of governing us for our common good. But, and this is very important, “we the people” are the ultimate authority.

Harlan:

Ah, yeah. No kings, queens, or dictators for us!

Marie:

Got it! So the framers of the Constitution designed the government with a system of checks and balances built in, so that no one branch of the government that we established, could become too powerful.

Harlan:

So, the branches operate like sort of like “referees” for each other.

Marie:

You could say that.

Harlan:

Just did. I hate to admit it, but I am interested in how this all came to be.

Marie:

Back in 1788, our Constitution went into effect, creating a federal gov-

ernment, a period I know YOU remember. Then, in 1789, George Washington was elected our first President and...

Harlan:

Question! Why is it called a “federal government?” Why not the “Acme Government,” or, better yet, “Laws Are Us?”

Marie:

You know that’s a good question. (I’m stunned) A central federal system of government shares its power and responsibilities with the individual states.

Harlan:

So that’s why a state like say, Delaware, doesn’t print its own money, or decide to declare war on New Zealand.

Marie:

Right. You won’t see “Delaware dimes” or the “First State Flotilla,” but at the same time, the states reserve many powers for themselves, like operating schools, setting local laws, collecting taxes...

Harlan:

They’re real good at that.

Marie:

No comment. Now, at the Constitutional Convention....

Harlan:

Held in beautiful Beverly Hills...

Marie:

Held in Philadelphia! Now, as I was saying, at the Constitutional Convention, the individual colonies were understandably very concerned about creating too strong a central government.

Harlan:

Naturally, they’d just finished a war over the tyrannical rule of England.

Marie:

So, to protect and preserve the states' rights, but, at the same time, establish an effective national government, a federal system was designed in which the three main functions of government would be held by three separate branches. The legislative branch, or Congress, was empowered to make laws; the President, through the offices of the executive branch, was charged with assuring that the laws were faithfully executed; and the judicial branch, or The Supreme Court, was established to interpret the laws as they apply to the Constitution. Their powers were clearly defined, and limited, at the Constitutional Convention.

Harlan:

And that provided the system of checks and balances that you mentioned.

Marie:

Wow, you were actually listening.

Harlan:

Don't sound so surprised.

Marie:

You're right though. For example, while the President is our Commander-In-Chief of the armed forces, only Congress can declare war.

Harlan:

Check! Congress is the legislative branch, right?

Marie:

Right. And The Supreme Court can check Congress and the President by declaring laws unconstitutional.

Harlan:

Check! And since the Senate approves nominees to the Supreme Court, that provides the legislative branch a check of the judicial branch.

Marie:

Check mate! Just kidding. And while Congress is empowered to cre-

ate laws, the President can veto any law passed by Congress. But, Congress can override a veto, with a two-thirds majority vote, or they can even impeach the President.

Harlan:
How do they do that?

Marie:
Well, the House of Representatives must vote on the charges brought against the President. These are called the “Articles of Impeachment.” In order for the President to be impeached, a majority of representatives must vote in favor of these Articles.

Harlan:
And out he goes!

Marie:
No, not necessarily. If the President is impeached, a trial is then conducted in the Senate with the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court as judge and the Senators as jurors. A two-thirds majority of all senators must vote to convict the President in order to remove him from office.

Harlan:
You're right, Marie. I remember when William Jefferson Clinton was impeached by the House in 1998, but not convicted by the Senate the following year. Has any President actually been impeached and removed?

Marie:
Well, in 1868, impeachment proceedings were begun against President Andrew Johnson, who succeeded Abraham Lincoln after his assassination. But, the Senate failed by only one vote to convict him. And, in 1974, the House Judiciary Committee approved articles of impeachment against Richard M. Nixon. However, he resigned before the full House could consider them. Shhhh....listen:

Richard M. Nixon:

I shall resign the Presidency effective at noon tomorrow. Vice President Ford will be sworn in as President at that hour, in this office.

Harlan:

Wow, that's serious stuff! So the checks and balances system really seems to work, Marie. The convention guys did good!

Marie:

Well. They did well. So well, in fact, that the government laid out by our Constitution is the oldest continual form of government in use today! And, Harlan, most people prefer to call them the "framers of the Constitution," and not "the convention guys."

Harlan:

Whatever.

Marie:

Of course, there was a lot of debate over what type of executive branch to establish at the convention and how much power to grant the President. Some favored a strong Chief Executive, others favored a weak "figurehead President." Some wanted Congress to elect the President. And one delegate to the Constitutional Convention even proposed that we import a king from some other country to govern!

Harlan:

You're kidding!

Marie:

Nope. But, when all was said and done, Article Two, Section One of the Constitution simply said, "The executive power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America."

Harlan:

Now wait a minute, does the Constitution define just what this "executive power" that the President has, is?

Marie:

Yes, although people do disagree from time to time over the interpretation of those powers. Here's a good example of the executive's powers, Harlan. Let's look at Article Two, Section Two, the Constitution says, "The President would be Commander-In-Chief of the army, navy, and militia of the several states when Congress called them into service."

Harlan:

And the President was granted the power to grant reprieves and pardons for offenses against the United States. And the President has the power to conduct foreign affairs, make treaties, and appoint ambassadors...

Marie:

With the consent of the Senate, one of the two parts of the legislative branch of government.

Harlan:

The old...

Harlan and Marie:

Checks and balances.

Harlan:

I said it first.

Marie:

Actually, John Adams, our second President, said it first.

Harlan:

Such a know-it-all.

Marie:

And, with the consent of the Senate, the President has the power to appoint other executive officials, as well as justices of the Supreme Court.

Harlan:

The third branch, as I recall - the judicial branch.

Marie:

Very good. The President is also expected to play a role in the legislative process by recommending laws and programs, submitting an annual budget, and giving Congress information on the state of the union.

Harlan:

You know, it seems to me, Marie, that the most important job of the President is right here in the oath of office: "I do solemnly swear..."

John F. Kennedy:

"That I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States..."

George H.W. Bush:

...and will to the best of my ability...preserve, protect...

William J. Clinton:

...and defend the Constitution of the United States

Chief Justice Rehnquist:

So help me God.

William J. Clinton:

So help me God.

Marie:

I couldn't agree more, Harlan. You know, our first President, George Washington, at his swearing in, added the phrase "So help me God" spontaneously to his oath, and every President since has said it.

Harlan:

Well, in all seriousness, I guess that shows just how big and dif-

difficult a job it is to be the Chief Executive.

Marie:

Right. And there are so many other duties and responsibilities of the Executive that, although not specifically spelled out by the Constitution, have become parts of the President's job. For starters, he appoints and manages his Cabinet, his group of advisors. Since 1939, the President has been assisted by an organization called the Executive Office of the President, to deal with all of this.

Harlan:

Wow! Being President is a huge responsibility, but I'm thinking I could handle it, so where do I apply?

Marie:

Well, you don't apply, Harlan. You're elected.

Harlan:

So every citizen of the U.S., at least 18 years of age and registered to vote, stops by their local neighborhood polling place, casts their ballot, then they count 'em up and the winner - me - moves in to the White House, where I get to meet ambassadors and famous people. And the pay is pretty good, too!

Marie:

The actual election of the President is more complicated than that, Harlan. In fact, most people find this part a little difficult, so try, just this once, to pay attention.

Harlan:

I promise.

Marie:

Two words: Electoral College.

Harlan:

Never heard of em'. Do they have a football team?

Marie:

No, but the Electoral College actually votes and elects the President. Each state legislature appoints as many members as the total of its representatives and senators in Congress to the Electoral College. They're called "electoral delegates." During a Presidential election, the delegates pledge their votes to the candidate who wins the state's popular vote. Whichever candidate gets the most electoral votes nationwide, wins, even if he doesn't win the popular vote.

Harlan:

I like my method better.

Marie:

Well, at the time the Constitution was written, there were no computers, voting machines, or even telephones, so it's generally felt that the Electoral College was instituted because the mechanics of counting actual, individual votes would take too long, and cost too much. In fairness, the College usually reflects the popular vote.

Harlan:

Maybe we should modernize the system? Didn't you mention that the Constitution can be changed through amendments?

Marie:

Right, and in fact President Jimmy Carter, in 1979, strongly recommended to the Senate an amendment to abolish the Electoral College, but it didn't receive enough votes. In the future, who knows?

Harlan:

Ok, so I want to be President. What other job qualifications are there? Oh, and how long can I keep the job?

Marie:

Well, longer than any of the other jobs you've had, I'm sure. You

must be a native born-citizen of the United States, 35 years of age, and have lived in the United States for at least 14 years. Your term of office is four years.

Harlan:

Hang on, I'd do such a great job, I'm sure the people would want to reelect me

Marie:

Must be nice to live in a fantasy world. But if, in the unlikely event, you were reelected, you can serve two terms.

Harlan:

That's what it says in the old "rulebook?"

Marie:

Not really. The Constitution didn't originally set a limit on the number of times you could serve as President. George Washington set the example though, by not seeking a third term.

Harlan:

How can that be? My mom told me she voted for Franklin Roosevelt four times.

Marie:

And I'm sure she'll be thrilled you told the world her secret vote!

Harlan:

Sorry, Mom.

Marie:

Remember amendments? Well, in 1951, the twenty-second amendment to the Constitution was ratified, limiting the terms of the office of President to two.

Harlan:

Any easier getting elected Vice President? And by the way what does the Vice President do anyway?

Marie:

Same rules, different job description. And it's not an easy job either.

Harlan:

I was afraid of that.

Marie:

Former Vice President Hubert Humphrey once said, "The President has only 190 million bosses. But the Vice President has 190 million and one!" However, it is true that the only official duty of the Vice President is to preside over the Senate.

Harlan:

So, you'd have to show up then?

Marie:

Yes, Harlan, the Vice President has to show up, even though he doesn't take part in the Senate's deliberations. Except in the case of an impeachment vote, he does cast the deciding vote in the case of a tie.

Harlan:

Geez, you have to wear a tie?

Marie:

Oh, you are hopeless! In recent times, beginning with President Harry S. Truman, the Vice President has been a member of the National Security Council, and most Presidents actively seek to involve their Vice Presidents in their administrations. The Constitution states that the Vice President becomes President in the event of the President's death. And the twenty-fifth amendment, which was adopted in 1967, provides for the Vice President to act as President should the President be temporarily incapable of performing his duties.

Harlan:

Boy, all this talk about the President and Vice President and the White House, I'm starting to get that strange urge I...

Harlan and Marie:

...always seem to get about now...

Harlan:

FIELD TRIP!!!

Harlan:

Well, here we are! It's big, it's white, and, as a taxpayer, it's mine! I wonder if anyone's home?

Marie:

Do you think they'll let me use the bathroom?

Harlan:

Wow! Do you think those guys work for the President?

Marie:

Yes, they work for the President. Ohhhh, nice doggies!

Harlan:

Woof, woof, woof! Check out this great souvenir I got! What'd you get?

Marie:

Just this.

Harlan:

Only you could turn a fun-filled field trip into a learning experience. Well, at least I can safely say, "George Washington slept here."

Marie:

No.

Harlan:

No?

Marie:

No, no, no. Martha and George Washington had to put up with a cramped, rented house in New York City.

Harlan:

New York City!

Marie:

John and Abigail Adams, our second President and his wife, moved here in November, 1800. Oh, and by the way, at the time everybody called it the “Presidential Palace.”

Harlan:

I like “The White House.” Twelve fireplaces, lots of bathrooms, great front lawn. Boy, it must take the President all day Saturday just mowing it! Or is that the Vice President’s job? Shoot, we’re almost out of time.

Harlan and Marie

Home!

Marie:

That was fun, but I’m glad to be back and I’m ready for one of our soon-to-be-famous painless reviews.

Harlan:

Oh, joy.

Marie:

What?

Harlan:

I said, “Oh, boy!”

Marie:

Ready? I promise this won't hurt a bit: The executive branch has a President, chosen by the Electoral College, who serves for a maximum of two four-year terms, charged with enforcing all federal laws and supervising administrative agencies. That person must be native-born, at least 35 years old, and a resident of the United States for 14 years. The President can grant reprieves and pardons and negotiates treaties with foreign governments with a two-thirds agreement from the Senate. He is also Commander-In-Chief of the armed forces, keeps Congress informed of the need for new legislation, and on the state of the union. He nominates judges to the Supreme Court, with approval of the Senate. And, when Congress passes laws, the President can veto them, unless the Congress overrides him with a two-thirds vote in both houses.

Harlan:

Wow! Painless and fast!

Marie:

Thank you, and I think pretty interesting, as well.

Harlan:

Particularly the field trip. I love Washington, D.C.!

Marie:

I can't wait to go back.

Harlan:

Take a look at this, Marie! See, if you turn it over, it snows on Washington!

Marie:

Look at this picture of Martha Washington. They called her "Lady Washington." So that's where the term "First Lady" came from!