

A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR

BRINGING DOWN A PRESIDENT

THE WATERGATE SCANDAL

FOR USE
WITH COMMON
CORE STATE
STANDARDS

ABOUT THE BOOK

A middle-grade retelling of Richard Nixon's downfall, *Bringing Down a President: The Watergate Scandal* is an inventive and timely look at one of the biggest scandals to ever rock our nation, by Andrea Balis and Elizabeth Levy, featuring graphic novel-style illustrations by Tim Foley.

Composed almost completely of primary source quotes (good thing Nixon's recorder was on) and interspersed with contextual narrative, this captivating account of the trials and tribulations of the Nixon administration has been rendered screenplay style, offering an extraordinarily immediate narrative of one of America's most turbulent eras.

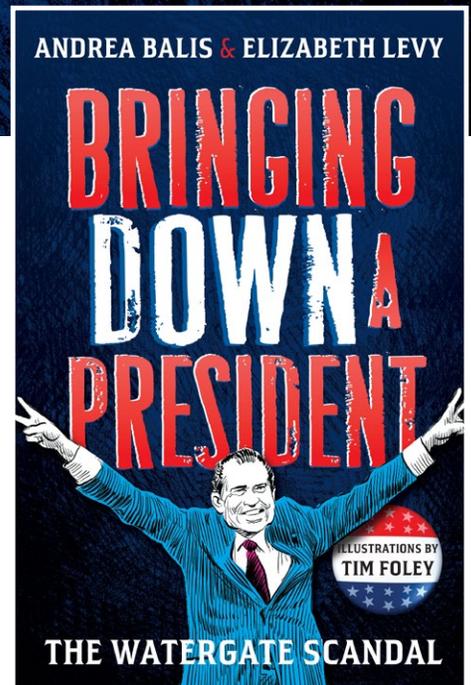
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

DR. ANDREA BALIS is a faculty member in the history department of John Jay College, City University of New York. Her specialization is twentieth-century political history. She has also written extensively for the theater and worked as a director. She is the author of *What Are You Using?: A Birth Control Guide for Teenagers* and a novel, *P.J.*

ELIZABETH LEVY is the award-winning author of over one hundred fiction and nonfiction books for children and young adults. She is known for the humor and research that she brings to her subjects, from studying stand-up comedy for *My Life as a Fifth-Grade Comedian*, to working with renowned historians for America's Funny but True History book series and *If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution*.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

TIM FOLEY was born in Flint, Michigan, and attended college at the Kendall College of Art and Design in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He has illustrated such books as Ben Thompson and Erik Slader's Epic Fails history series and *Is It Safe to Kiss My Cat?* Tim lives and works in Grand Rapids with his wife, Terri.



HC 9781250176790 • AGES 10-14



This guide is intended to support your classroom instruction. The standards listed throughout are aligned with the NCSS C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards and the Common Core State Standards for grades six through eight, but the activities and questions can be applied to multiple grade levels. Please adapt the activities and questions to meet the needs of your students. You know your students better than anyone else!

BEFORE READING

1. Ask students individually or as a class to list the characteristics they believe make an ideal president.

CCSS.SL.6.1.A Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.

D2.CIV.10.6-8. Explain the relevance of personal interests and perspectives, civic virtues, and democratic principles when people address issues and problems in government and civil society.

2. Using the Cast of Leading Characters, select a person or group and design an infographic that shares important biographical information to build background knowledge prior to reading the book.

CCSS.W.7.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.

CCSS.W.7.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

DURING READING

1. In the chapter titled “The Gang That Couldn’t Burgle Straight,” what was the downfall of the burglars and how did Frank Wills know something was going on?

CCSS.RI.6.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

2. Who were “the plumbers,” and what role did they play for Nixon?

CCSS.RI.6.2 Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

3. Design a Venn diagram comparing Gordon Liddy and Nathan Hale, completing additional research as needed. Determine if Liddy’s comparison of himself with Nathan Hale was accurate.

CCSS.RI.6.3 Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).

4. Read the full text of Nixon’s Checkers speech, and describe the impact the speech had on public opinion of Nixon. Select an additional excerpt to pull from the speech and design another panel to be added to pages 32–33, highlighting a key moment of the speech.

CCSS.RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author’s point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

5. What is the silent majority, and why did Nixon promise to listen to them?

CCSS.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.RI.7.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

6. In the chapter titled “Blackmail”, how do the authors present the criminal acts the Nixon administration participated in to keep the Watergate break-in a secret?

CCSS.RH.6-8.5: Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).

7. In the chapter titled “Under the Bus: Part I,” how do the authors include illustrations to highlight key events of the chapter? What illustrations should be added to add depth to the chapter?
- CCSS.RH.6-8.7** Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
8. Beginning with the chapter titled “Fuzzy Eyebrows,” explain how the US Constitution established a procedure for investigating a president. How did this play out for Nixon after he won his reelection in 1972?
- CCSS.RH.6-8.3** Identify key steps in a text’s description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).
9. How did Nixon’s recordings of Oval Office meetings, once thought to cement his legacy, instead become part of his downfall, based on the evidence in the chapter titled “Under the Bus: Part II?”
- CCSS.RH.6-8.2** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- CCSS.RI.7.1** Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
10. On page 113, the authors include an infographic of the impeachment process. Explain this process and make connections to Nixon’s impeachment. Evaluate the effectiveness of the infographic and how it aided in your understanding of this process.
- CCSS.RH.6-8.3** Identify key steps in a text’s description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).
- CCSS.RH.6-8.5** Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).
11. Compare and contrast Nixon’s actions during the Watergate scandal to the behaviors of the demagogues introduced in the chapter titled “The Law versus Richard Nixon”: McCarthy, Hitler, Mussolini, Flamininus, and Cleon. Where does Nixon fall on this list of demagogues?
- CCSS.W.7.9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
12. What happened to the missing portions of the Nixon tapes? Do you believe that Rose Mary Woods was telling the truth with her explanation of why portions were missing?
- CCSS.RI.7.8** Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims.
13. What became known as the “smoking gun” in regards to the Watergate scandal?
- CCSS.RI.7.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.
14. Using the information included in the chapter titled “Where Are They Now: People Who Went to Jail” and additional research as needed, design wanted posters for the people implicated in the crimes using specific evidence from the text as well as visuals.
- CCSS.W.7.7** Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.
- CCSS.W.7.8** Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

AFTER READING

1. As the Introduction states, “reading the actual words of the players in this scandal reminds us that these were real people, in real situations, and they did not know how it would end. For many of them, it ended in a jail cell” (xiv). What do you think about the authors’ choice to primarily use primary sources to tell the story? How would more secondary sources have impacted the telling of the scandal?

CCSS.RI.6.5 Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.

2. “When people assume their political parties are corrupt, and when they worry about their own government eavesdropping on them, then if that society happens to be a democracy, the whole system falls apart. Democracy demands trust in the government’s essential honesty. But that didn’t seem to matter to Nixon” (15). Is this statement fact, opinion, or reasoned judgment? Defend your thinking with evidence from the text.

CCSS.RI.6.6 Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

CCSS.RI.6.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.RI.6.8 Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

CCSS.RH.6-8.8 Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

3. The set of letters from Nixon and Terry Eagleton allows the reader to see another side of Nixon: “The letter shows a side of Nixon that the American public rarely saw. His sentimental Checkers speech might have been calculated to have political effect, but he could also feel genuine compassion, even if he usually kept it hidden” (65). Have students write to an elected official by email or letter sharing a concern or a commendation of a job well done.

CCSS.W.7.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.W.7.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

4. Mimicking the style of *Bringing Down a President*, create a similarly formatted analysis of a scandal of historical significance from the past or present. Include illustrations and primary sources just as the authors of *Bringing Down a President* have done.

CCSS.W.7.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

CCSS.W.7.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.W.7.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.

CCSS.W.7.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

5. “Nixon was saying that the man and his job were separate things, that whoever was in the president’s office didn’t have to obey any court orders or tell the truth under oath. He believed it to his dying day” (132). Based on the evidence presented in this book, is Nixon correct?

CCSS.W.7.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.W.7.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

6. “On September 8, 1974, President Gerald Ford granted Nixon a full and unconditional pardon” (179). Write an editorial about President Ford’s decision to pardon Nixon. Was this the best choice or should Nixon have been held accountable for his actions?

CCSS.W.7.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

CCSS.W.7.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

NICOLE WOULFE has a bachelor of arts in history and a master of arts in secondary education from the University of New Hampshire. She is currently teaching at Sanborn Regional Middle School and was named the 2018 New Hampshire History Teacher of the Year.