Anthony Hart

Teaching American History Using Primary Sources

Title of Lesson: John F. Kennedy’s leadership style

Amount of Time required for lesson: one 90 min. class period

Lesson Objective: To identify important features of the Kennedy administration, such as the Peace Corps, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the steel industry crisis.

Essential Question: What can you conclude about Kennedy’s leadership style by studying historical documents

Material Required: Handouts of the transcript from the Cuban Missile Crisis meetings, Executive Order 10924 and Kennedy’s attack on the Steel Companies.

Standard: Students develop a sense of historical time and historical perspective as they study the history of their community, state, nation, and world.

Benchmark: H-1B-H15 Analyzing the economic, political, social and cultural transportation of the United States since World War II (1, 2, 3)

Instructional Strategies Used: The students will participate in a panel discussion. The discussion will focus on Kennedy’s leadership during the “Cuban Missile Crisis,” the “Steel Industry Crisis” and the establishment of the Peace Corp.

Directions for the lesson: The class will have been divided into three groups. Each group will have one of the documents. The group members are to read the documents and discuss the contents. They will be guided in their discussions by the following questions.

1. What type of document is this?
2. Dates of the document.
3. Title of the document.
4. Why was the document written and for what audience was it written?
5. List three things that you think are important about the document.
6. What evidence in the document helps you to know why it was written?
7. Write a question that was left unanswered by the document.

Each group will summarize its document and share the group’s answer to the guided reading questions.
Assessment: Write an essay comparing Kennedy’s leadership style to that of another 20th century American president. Support your argument with documentation.

Enrichment Activity: View the film “John F. Kennedy A Personal Story”

Online Sources:  
www.Nara.gov  
www.loc.gov  
www.law.ou.edu/hist  
www.webcorp.com/sounds/index.html
Transcript of Executive Order 10924: Establishment of the Peace Corps. (1961)

Executive Order 10924
ESTABLISHMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE PEACE CORPS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE

By virtue of the authority vested in me by the Mutual Security Act of 1954, 68 Stat. 832, as amended (22 U.S.C. 1750 et seq.), and as President of the United States, it is hereby ordered as follows:

SECTION 1. Establishment of the Peace Corps. The Secretary of State shall establish an agency in the Department of State which shall be known as the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps shall be headed by a Director.

SEC. 2. Functions of the Peace Corps. (a) The Peace Corps shall be responsible for the training and service abroad of men and women of the United States in new programs of assistance to nations and areas of the world, and in conjunction with or in support of existing economic assistance programs of the United States and of the United Nations and other international organizations.

(b) The Secretary of State shall delegate, or cause to be delegated, to the Director of the Peace Corps such of the functions under the Mutual Security Act of 1954, as amended, vested in the President and delegated to the Secretary, or vested in the Secretary, as the Secretary shall deem necessary for the accomplishment of the purposes of the Peace Corps.

SEC. 3. Financing of the Peace Corps. The Secretary of State shall provide for the financing of the Peace Corps with funds available to the Secretary for the performance of functions under the Mutual Security Act of 1954, as amended.

SEC. 4. Relation to Executive Order No. 10893. This order shall not be deemed to supersede or derogate from any provision of Executive Order No. 10893 of November 8, 1960, as amended, and any delegation made by or pursuant to this order shall, unless otherwise specifically provided therein, be deemed to be in addition to any delegation made by or pursuant to that order.

JOHN F. KENNEDY

THE WHITE HOUSE,
March 1, 1961.
Moving Toward War

Read the following excerpts. Complete transcripts of the Cuban Missile Crisis meetings can be obtained from the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library, Columbia Point, Boston, MA 02125-3398; (617) 929-4500.

Transcript Notes

[Remarks] Remarks within brackets reflect comments from the author of this volume about issues or speakers that have been eliminated for purposes of continuity.

... Ellipses between sections of text indicate material or speakers that have been eliminated due to space limitations.

Off-the-Record Meeting on Cuba
October 16, 1962. A.M. Meeting

Speakers

JFK: John F. Kennedy, President of the United States
Lundahl: Arthur C. Lundahl, Director, National Photographic Interpretation Center
Graybeal: Sidney Graybeal, Chief, Guided Missile Division, Office of Scientific Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency
McNamara: Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense
Also in attendance: Maxwell Taylor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Dean Rusk, Secretary of State; McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant to the President; Marshall Carter, Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency; Douglas Dillon, Secretary of the Treasury; Lyndon Johnson, Vice President; Robert F. Kennedy, Attorney General; unknown speaker

Lundahl: This is a result of the photography taken Sunday, sir.

JFK: Yeah.

Lundahl: There's a medium-range ballistic missile launch site and two new military encampments on the southern edge of Sierra del Rosario in west central Cuba.

[JFK, Graybeal, McNamara, Lundahl, and an unknown speaker discuss what types of missiles are in the photos.]

JFK: Is this ready to be fired?

Graybeal: No, sir.

JFK: ... how long before it can be fired?

Graybeal: That depends. . . .

[JFK, McNamara, Graybeal, Carter, and Rusk discuss if there is evidence of nuclear missiles.]

McNamara: ... The question is one of readiness of the, to fire and—and this is highly critical in forming our plans—that the time between today and the time when the readiness to fire capability develops is a very important thing. . . .

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Off-the-Record Meeting on Cuba
October 16, P.M. Meeting

Speakers

JFK: John F. Kennedy, President of the United States
Carter: Marshall Carter, Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency
Rusk: Dean Rusk, Secretary of State
Also in attendance: McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant to the President; Edwin Martin, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs; Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense; Maxwell Taylor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Robert F. Kennedy, Attorney General; George Ball, Undersecretary of State; U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Undersecretary of State; Douglas Dillon, Secretary of the Treasury; Roswell Gilpatric, Deputy Secretary of Defense; unknown speaker

JFK: [to Carter] Uh, General, how long would you say we had, uh, before these—at least to the best of your ability for the ones we know—will be ready to fire?

Carter: Well, our people estimate that these could be fully operational within two weeks. Uh, this would be the total complex. If they're the oxygen type, uh, we have no . . . it would be considerably longer since we don't have any indication of, uh, oxygen refueling there nor any radars.

. . .

one of 'em, uh, one of them could be operational much sooner. Our people feel that this has been, being put in since early September. We have had two visits of a Soviet ship what has an eight-foot-hold capacity sideways. And this is the only delivery vehicle that we would have any suspicion that they came in on. And that came in late August, and one in early September.

[JFK, Rush, Carter, and McNamara discuss various types of missiles.]

JFK: There isn't any question in your mind, however, uh, that it is an intermediate-range missile?

Carter: No, there's no question in our minds at all . . .

Rusk: You've seen actual missiles themselves and not just the boxes have you?

Carter: . . . In the picture there is an actual missile. . . .
Private Note, Dated October 26, from
Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy

All weapons [Cuba]—and I assure you of this—are of a defensive nature. . . . Mr. President, let us show good sense. I assure you that ships bound for Cuba are carrying no armaments at all. The armaments needed for their defense of Cuba are already there. I do not mean to say that there have been no shipments of arms at all. No, there were such shipments. But now Cuba has already obtained the necessary weapons for defense. . . .

Let us therefore display statesmenlike wisdom. I propose: we, for our part will declare that our ships bound for Cuba are not carrying any armaments. You will declare that the United States will not invade Cuba with its troops and will not support any other forces which might intend to invade Cuba. Then the necessity for the presence of our military specialists in Cuba will be obviated.

Public Announcement Made October 27
By Chairman Khrushchev

. . . How are we, the Soviet Union, our Government, to assess your actions which are expressed in the fact that you have surrounded the Soviet Union with military bases; surrounded our allies with military bases; placed military bases literally around our country; and stationed your missile armaments there? . . . Your missiles are located in Britain, are located in Italy and are aimed against us. Your missiles are located in Turkey.

You are disturbed over Cuba. You say this disturbs you because it [Cuba] is 90 miles by sea from the coast of the United States of America. But Turkey adjoins us.

Off-the-Record Meeting on Cuba
October 27
[This meeting was held before Kennedy officially received the second Khrushchev statement]

Speakers

JFK: John F. Kennedy, President of the United States
Salingar: Pierre Salinger, Presidential Press Secretary
Rusk: Dean Rusk, Secretary of State
Bundy: McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant to the President
Also in attendance: Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense; Paul Nitze, Assistant Secretary of Defense; George Ball, Undersecretary of State; Theodore Sorensen, Presidential Counsel; Llewellyn Thompson, Special Advisor for Soviet Affairs; Douglas Dillon, Secretary of the Treasury; Robert F. Kennedy, Attorney General; John McCone, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency; Maxwell Taylor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Edwin Martin, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs; unknown speaker

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Primary Sources, The 1960s
Lesson 5
Handout 9 (page 4)

Name _______________________
Date _______________________

JFK: [reading a news story] "Premier Khrushchev told President Kennedy yesterday that he would withdraw offensive missiles from Cuba if the United States withdrew its rockets from Turkey."

[Unknown]: He didn’t really say that, did he?

JFK: That may not be—he may be putting out another letter... That wasn’t in the letter we received, was it?

[Unknown]: No.

JFK: Is he supposed to be putting out a letter he’s written me or putting out a statement.

Salinger: Putting out a letter he wrote you.

... 

Rusk: Well, I think we better get—uh—(words unclear). Will you check and be sure that the letter that’s coming in on the ticker is the letter that we were seeing last night.

[extensive discussion about being asked to trade bases in Turkey for bases in Cuba]

Ball: ... This would be an extremely unsettling business.

JFK: Well this is unsettling now, George, because he’s got us in a pretty good spot here, because most people will regard this as not an unreasonable proposal. I’ll just tell you that. In fact, in many ways—

Bundy: But what most people, Mr. President?

JFK: I think you’re going to find it very difficult to explain why we are going to take hostile military action in Cuba, against these sites—what we’ve been thinking about—the thing that he’s saying is, if you’ll get yours out of Turkey, We’ll get ours out of Cuba. I think we’ve got a very tough one here.

... 

Rusk: What would you think of releasing the letter of yesterday?

Bundy: I think it has a good deal of virtue.

JFK: Yes, but I think we have to be now thinking about what our position’s going to be on this one, because this is the one that’s before us, and before the world...