

Selections from *More than Two Words*  
A Video Teaching Unit on  
Calvin Coolidge



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# OVERVIEW

## To The Teacher

Why did we make this video and why should you use it? These are very logical questions about any subject. Calvin Coolidge was a Vermonter and he went on to have a successful political career in Massachusetts. He held eighteen political offices in his lifetime including President of the United States.

This unit focuses on various stages of Coolidge's life: growing up in rural Vermont; going off to college and becoming a lawyer; being elected to the Massachusetts Senate; becoming Governor of Massachusetts; becoming Vice-President and President of the United States.

Calvin Coolidge was from Vermont and his rural New England background taught him the values of hard work, frugality, and respect for all humankind. Tragedy entered his life at a relatively young age with the death of both his mother and sister. Then, while President, he buried his son as well. As a young boy, Calvin was shy, almost painfully so, yet he came to enter a private boarding school at the age of thirteen. Later, he graduated from Amherst College, studied law, started his own practice and eventually entered politics.

Unlike many politicians today, Calvin never thought or planned to become President. His success in life came from a combination of hard work, honesty, and luck - lessons for anybody at any stage in history. He began to study the Constitution as a teenager and never stopped doing so, believing fervently in its precepts. As with a number of politicians of today, he believed that the role of the federal government in the life of the average citizen should be minimal. Any student of political science or the Constitution could benefit from studying Calvin Coolidge and this video. Through the use of this video and the materials that go with it, this Calvin Coolidge unit can help you and your students understand what was happening in the United States during his lifetime. This unit on Calvin Coolidge can help you teach many aspects of American history in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **The Video**

The video is divided into six segments, each with two parts. The first part of each segment is a short documentary component using historic photographs that gives historical information about Coolidge and his life. The second is a performance featuring actor Jim Cooke portraying Calvin Coolidge.

The video has been designed to be stopped between segments and we recommend doing so.

## **This Guide**

The guide provides information designed to enhance the viewing of the video by including material that will help foster discussion and understanding of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century American and Vermont history.

## VERMONT'S FRAMEWORK OF STANDARDS

Below is a list of Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities, which are supported by the educational materials in this packet. The materials are meant to compliment your curriculum and do not necessarily address the Standards completely.

**Analyzing Knowledge. 6.3:** Students analyze knowledge as a collection of selected facts and interpretations based on a particular historical or social setting.  
*See Guide: Compare Your Life to His; "Have Faith in Massachusetts"*  
c. Recognize and evaluate the human tendencies to categorize, romanticize, or vilify individuals and groups through selected facts and interpretations.  
*See Guide: The Vermonter; "Have Faith in Massachusetts"*

**Historical Connections. 6.4 :** Students identify major historical eras and analyze periods of transition in various time in their local community, in Vermont, in the United States, and in various locations worldwide to understand the past, the present, and the relationship between the two.

*See Guide: Second Industrial Revolution; "Have Faith in Massachusetts"; Roaring 20's; Post Viewing,*

dd. Sequence historical eras; identify the characteristics of transitions between eras being sure to make connections to the present;

*See Guide: Second Industrial Revolution; "Have Faith in Massachusetts"; Roaring 20's*

ddd .The emergence of modern America (1877-1930)

*See Guide: Second Industrial Revolution; Roaring 20's*

**Traditional and Social Histories. 6.5:** Students investigate both the traditional and the social histories of the people, places, and cultures under study, including those of indigenous peoples.

b. Demonstrate understanding of the relationships among powerful people, important events, and the lives of common people.

*See Guide: Second Industrial Revolution*

c. Identify and analyze the influence of various groups (e.g. racial, gender, religious, and various socioeconomic classes) on major issues and events under study.

*See Guide: KKK: Labor Unions*

**Being a Historian. 6.6:** Students use historical methodology to make interpretations concerning history

*See Guide: Compare Your Life to His; Second Industrial Revolution; "Have Faith in Massachusetts"; Post Viewing,*

f. Identify and analyze recurring themes in the midst of change.

*See Guide: Second Industrial Revolution*

**Movements and Settlements. 6.8:** Students analyze the factors and implications associated with the historical and contemporary movements and settlements of people in various times in their local community, in Vermont, in the United States, and in various locations world wide. This is evident when students:  
aa. Analyze and evaluate the causes and effects, processes and patterns of human movements, both chosen and forced in the community, Vermont, and the world (e.g., impact of transportation, technology.)  
*See Guide: Boyhood; Second Industrial Revolution*

**Human Rights. 6.12:** Students identify and evaluate the concept of human rights in various times in their local community, in Vermont, and in the United States, and in various locations world wide.

*See Guide: Presidential Years; KKK*

aaa. Identify and evaluate how individual and group action promote or deny human rights.

*See Guide: Presidential Years; KKK*

**Forces of Unity and Disunity. 6.14:** Students understand the tensions between the forces of unity and those of disunity in various times in their local community, in the United States, and in various locations in the world.

*See Guide: Governor of Massachusetts; KKK*

c. Analyze the shared values and beliefs of various subcultures that hold them together.

*See Guide: Governor of Massachusetts; KKK*

**Conflicts and Conflict Resolution. 6.18:** Students analyze the nature of conflicts, how they have been or might be resolved, and how some have shaped the divisions in various times of their local community, Vermont, the United States, and the world.

*See Guide: Governor of Massachusetts; KKK; Boston Police Strike*

aa. Explain a conflict (e.g. Labor Issues) by recognizing the interests, values, perspectives, and points of view of those directly and indirectly involved in the conflict.

*See Guide: Governor of Massachusetts; KKK; Boston Police Strike*

**Identity and Interdependence. 6.19:** Students understand the variety of the influences and impacts of the construction, preservation, and change of identity, within families, other social structures, and nations.

e. Demonstrate understanding of how various groups build and preserve identity (e.g. ceremonies, education.)

*See Guide: Roaring 20's*

## **Connections to Vermont Standards**

### Vital Results

#### Communication Standards

- 1 Reading Strategies
- 1.3 Reading Comprehension
- 1.6 Writing Conventions
- 1.12 Personal Essays
- 1.14 Listening Critique
- 1.15 Speaking
- 1.18 Information Technology
- Continuity and Change
- 4.4 Effects of Prejudice
- 4.5 Continuity and Change

### **The Fields of Knowledge**

#### Art, Language and Literature Standards

- 5.2 Times and Culture
- 5.7 Audience Response
- 5.13 Responding to Text
- 5.14 Responding to Media

### **Learning Objectives**

This set of educational materials is designed to enhance the teaching of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century American history and Vermont history. Students will gain insight into:

- The character of a Vermonter
- What life was like growing up in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century
- Coolidge's Political thinking
- Politics as a career for Coolidge vs. politics as a career today
- Comparing the student's and Coolidge's childhood
- Evolution of Labor Unions
- The Role of Political Speech Making
- The Roaring 20s
- Changing American Attitudes toward Life in General
- The Second Industrial Revolution and its effects on American Life
- Presidential Trivia

### **Target Audience**

This material has been compiled for and is meant to be used along with an 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum. Although the format is designed for that age level, applications could be made

for the elementary level especially the 4<sup>th</sup> grade which teaches Vermont history in its curriculum. The first two segments may be particularly helpful in the understanding of what life was like in rural Vermont in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

# COOLIDGE'S EARLY YEARS (1872-1920)

## I. Calvin Coolidge's Boyhood (1870s - 1880s)

### Previewing Activities

1. Prior to viewing the film, begin with a vocabulary list displayed in collage style.

Divide into groups of 3. Ask the students how many of the terms they know?

- a. **Prohibition** - Era in 1920s and early 1930s. Called so because the Volstead Act made the sale of alcohol illegal in the United States.
- b. **Roaring 20s** - a name for the decade of the 1920s (See Roaring Twenties in Guide)
- c. **KKK** - The Ku Klux Klan, an anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant organization that achieved a revival in the 1920s
- d. **Labor Unions** - organized group of workers formed to improve working conditions and wages.
- e. **Assembly Line** - manufacturing process perfected by Henry Ford in the manufacture of automobiles.
- f. **Second Industrial Revolution** - new ways of manufacturing, giving rise to a consumer society.
- g. **Strike** - union workers walk off the job and picket the employer in an effort to force the employer to improve working conditions and wages.
- h. **Henry Ford** - founder of Ford Motor Company.
- i. **American Federation of Labor** - early labor union and most active union (the AFL, the American Federation of Labor), as stated by its president and founder Samuel Gompers, was to "improve the work man's welfare year by year."
- j. **Samuel Gompers** - founder of the AFL.
- k. **Boston Police Strike** - 1919 strike of the police in Boston.
- l. **Howard University** - Coolidge gave a commencement address in June of 1924 at Howard University, a black college, in which he praised the progress that blacks were making in this country.
- m. **Babe Ruth** - New York Yankee baseball player who hit 60 home runs in 1927.
- n. **Charles Lindbergh** - First person to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean in 1927.
- o. **Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney** - famous professional boxers of the 1920s.
- p. **Speakeasy** - a place where alcoholic beverages are sold illegally, primarily during prohibition.
- q. **Flapper** - a young woman of the 1920s who dressed in the style of the 20s with dresses that flapped against the thighs.
- r. **Charleston** - famous dance of the 1920s.
- s. **Warren G. Harding** - President when Coolidge was Vice-President. Died in August, 1923. Coolidge became President.
- t. **Scopes' Trial** - trial of Tennessee teacher John Scopes who illegally taught Darwin's theory of evolution.
- u. **Teapot Dome** - scandal during the Harding Administration involving a conspiracy to steal America's oil reserves.

v. **Revenue Reduction Act** - passed in 1926 and cut taxes while at the same time giving the president authority to lower the national debt. It repealed the gift tax and halved estate taxes.

w. **Kellogg-Briand Pact** - sixty-two nations promised to renounce war as a means of settling disputes.

2. Give each student a card with an event before the film. After viewing the film have them place event on a time line that goes across the classroom wall. *Refer to the time line to identify important dates that fit with curriculum.*

3. Locate Vermont on a United States map and find the town of Plymouth, the birthplace of Calvin Coolidge.

## ACTIVITIES

Before playing Segment one, introduce the video by introducing the students to Calvin Coolidge and who he was - Calvin Coolidge was born in Plymouth Notch, Vermont on July 4, 1872 and grew up to become the 30<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. He was the only President born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. See Timeline.

Do you wonder what Calvin Coolidge was like as a boy, and what his life might have been like?

- The first Coolidge arrived in Plymouth, Vermont in 1780, from Massachusetts.
- Calvin was born July 4, 1872, in Plymouth Notch.
- Calvin was wiry, had red hair and freckles, allergies and asthma.
- The Notch itself only had four public buildings--a school, a church, a general store, and a blacksmith shop.
- He started at the one room school at the Notch when he was five, the youngest in the class.
- He liked horseback riding, going sledding, and a good practical joke.
- As a child, Calvin was painfully shy. His wife, Grace, once noted that this shyness continued even as an adult. She commented that he did like people, but that it was difficult for him to show it.
- Calvin loved reading; his favorite subject in school was history
- His mother died when he was twelve.
- At the age of thirteen he attended Black River Academy, a boarding school. He left Vermont after graduating from high school, and returned often to visit his relatives. His summer White House Office of 1924 was in Plymouth.
- After he grew up, he came to greatly value his youth in Vermont, and many times spoke fondly of the rural life style in which he was raised.
- His sister Abbie was born when he was three. She was a great joy to him, a lively companion. They became especially close when they attended Black River Academy in Ludlow, Vermont together.
- He grew up near his grandparents and was very close to them. His stepmother was a positive influence, along with his father. He grew up surrounded by loved ones.

- Calvin enjoyed the husking bees, apple-paring bees and singing schools in the winter. In some husking bees, when a boy husked an ear of corn that was red, he was able to give all of the girls kisses.
- Holidays were celebrated. He was partial to the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, his birthday. A trip to the circus was usually in order come summer.
- He seldom asked for anything we had in hand, recalled one of his first teachers. He seemed to understand every question that came up in class. He always seemed to be thinking of something. Although very accomplished in many areas, he had math anxiety and often struggled with some work at Black River Academy.
- After graduation, Calvin returned home. At the end of the summer he traveled to Amherst, Massachusetts to take the entrance exams to Amherst College. He became ill and left before completing them. Later that year he attended St. Johnsbury Academy. After two months, he was pronounced ready for Amherst.
- He stated in his Autobiography that “It would be hard to imagine better surroundings for the development of a boy than those which I had.”

### **Show Segment One of the Video**

Length: 12 minutes and 14 seconds. Pause when the screen goes black – Visual and Audio cue - Letter being read and shown on the screen.

1) Topic - Introduction to the early years

2) Performance by Jim Cooke as Calvin Coolidge talking about his childhood, family, home, and education.

### **Stop video**

## DISCUSSION - POST VIEWING

### Compare Your Life to His

1. There was no electricity and no running water, no automobiles and no telephones.

*Think for a moment about what that really means? What would that be like? Which of these would you miss the most? Why?*

2. Although Calvin came from a rural background, his father was a very successful businessman, postmaster, farmer, and politician. An example of this comes from Calvin's Autobiography where he writes:

*"My Father, John Coolidge, ran the store. He was successful. The annual rent for the whole place was \$40. I have heard him say that his merchandise bills were about \$10,000 yearly. He had no other expenses. His profits were about \$100 per month on the average, so he must have sold on a very short margin."*

*What was Coolidge's average yearly income from the store? Does that seem like enough? The average income in the United States was \$360 per year. Did John seem to be doing well?*

3. When Calvin was twelve his mother died. When he was eighteen his sister died of what we now know was appendicitis. While Calvin was President his son died at the age of sixteen as a result of blood poisoning from a blister on his toe that he got while playing tennis. Medicine was very different back then. The leading causes of death were tuberculosis, influenza, gastritis, and, for women, childbirth. The average life span was forty years. A male who survived childhood would often live longer, as females had to survive both childhood and childbirth. In Vermont in the 1880's, 16% of all deaths were from tuberculosis.

*Think for a moment about modern medicine. Obviously death does not come to us as frequently so we must be better off today. Do you agree? Are there examples in your health (or that of family members) that are easily treated today, but would have been much more serious in Calvin's day?*

4. At thirteen, he began school at Black River Academy in Ludlow, Vermont. It was a private boarding school and these were not uncommon at this time. The fees were \$7 a term while board was \$3 per week making the total \$150 per year. This was a sum his father could afford.

*Percentage wise, is private school more or less costly today? Do you know students who attend private school today? Are there more or less of them? How far away are they?*

5. Calvin looked forward to going a way to school. He later said it was his first great adventure. According to his *Autobiography*, he was casting off what he saw then as drudgery. He was happy to leave his everyday clothes and cow hide boots behind. Although he never returned home except to visit, he did come to appreciate his upbringing.

*Do you ever feel like you can not wait to get away from your town? What would be some things you would miss and perhaps later value about your upbringing?*

6. The town of Ludlow may have seemed quite big to Calvin. It had water wheels, a brick factory and many more businesses. It must have seemed much bigger than the Notch with many more buildings. Yet even in Ludlow there was still no electricity, sidewalks, or sewer system.

*What would be an equivalent move for you today? What difficulties might you experience in getting used to a new, bigger community?*

7. The curriculum at Black River Academy included Mathematics, both American and English Literature and American and World History. College prep classes also included Greek, Latin and Classical Literature. There were approximately 125 students and three terms per year. Students chose when they attended the Academy, which often depended on when they were needed at home.

*How does this differ from your courses? How does it differ from your schedule? Why might they be needed at home?*

8. Calvin was excited to leave to get a better education since he had learned all he could at the country school at the Notch. However, Calvin was still very homesick his first year. (Later on it helped when his sister also attended Black River Academy.) He would sometimes walk four miles to the house of his aunt and uncle, and even, on some occasions, the twelve miles home to the notch.

*How long would those trips take? Would you do it? Could you do it?*

9. Calvin mentions the influence of his grandparents. They influenced his love of reading surrounding him with books and newspapers. They also influenced his character both morally and religiously.

*Have your Grandparents influenced you? In what way? Is it easier or more difficult for Grandparents to influence their grandchildren today than in Calvin's day? Why or why not?*

10. In his senior year, influenced by classic Greek Literature, Calvin became fluent in Latin and also became known for his speaking ability. Although he may not have realized it, his political beliefs were already being molded.

*Are yours being molded today? How?*

## Suggested Hands on Activities

1. Make a list of what was considered a necessity in Coolidge's time. Compare that list with a list of what we would consider necessities today. Students might also interview parents asking them for a similar list and compare the parent's list with those developed by the students.
2. Have the student write a paragraph describing his/her mother. How does the student's paragraph differ from Calvin's?

“It seems impossible that any man could adequately describe his mother. I cannot describe mine. She bore the name of two empresses. "Victoria Josephine." She was of a light and fair complexion with a rich growth of brown hair that had a glint of gold in it. Her hands and features were regular and finely modeled. The older people always told me how beautiful she was in her youth. She was practically an invalid ever after I could remember her, but used what strength she had in lavish care upon me and my sister Abbie, who was three years younger. There was a touch of poetry and mysticism in her nature which made her love to gaze at the purple sunsets and watch the evening stars.”

## II. Calvin Coolidge: “Have Faith in Massachusetts”

Calvin Coolidge not only believed in the values of hard work and honesty, he believed that they were rooted in the very core of human existence. He felt that a good day’s work should be at the heart of everybody’s day. During his lifetime many changes came to the American workday. Some of these changes were for the good such as limiting the age of factory workers to eliminate child labor, and reducing the number of hours worked in a day. Coolidge saw the rise of prominence of labor unions, which indicated a shift in the prevailing Americans attitude towards work. At the same time, Coolidge did not begrudge large corporations their right to exist or to make a large profit. He believed that the American Constitution gave wealthy Americans the right to large profits and their riches. He believed that the Constitution was a solid bedrock for our country and that we needed to rely on it and on people, not on government, to solve our problems.

According to his *Autobiography*, Coolidge wrote in 1914, while President of the Senate, that:

“A spirit of radicalism prevailed which unless checked was likely to prove very destructive. It had been encouraged by the opposition and by a large faction of my own party. It consisted of a claim in general that in some way the government was to be blamed because everyone was not prosperous, because it was necessary to work for a living, and because our written constitutions, the legislatures, and the courts protected the rights of private owners especially in relation to large aggregations of property.

The previous session had been overwhelmed with a record number of bills introduced, many of them in an attempt to help the employee by impairing the property of the employer. Though anxious to improve the condition of our wage earners, I believed this doctrine would soon destroy business and deprive them of a livelihood. What was needed was a restoration of confidence in our institutions and in each other, on which economic progress might rest.

In taking the chair as President of the Senate I therefore made a short address, which I had carefully prepared, appealing to the conservative spirit of the people. I argued that the government could not relieve us from toil, that large concerns are necessary for the progress in which capital and labor all have a common interest, and I defended representative government and the integrity of the courts.”

The most quoted part of the speech is as follows:

“Do the days work. If it be to protect the rights of the weak, whoever objects, do it. If it be to help powerful corporation do that. Expect to be called a stand-patter, but don’t be a stand-patter. Expect to be called a demagogue, but don’t be a demagogue. Don’t hesitate to be as revolutionary as science. Don’t hesitate to be a reactionary as the multiplication table. Don’t expect to build up the weak by pulling down the strong. Don’t hurry to legislate. Give administration a chance to catch up with legislation.

We need a broader, firmer, deeper faith in the people--a faith that men desire to do right, that the commonwealth is founded upon righteousness which will endure, a reconstructed faith that the final approval of the people is given not to demagogues, slavishly pandering to their selfishness, merchandising with the clamor of the hour, but to the statesmen, ministering to their welfare, representing their deep, silent, abiding convictions.”

### **Show Segment Two of Video**

Length: 5 minutes and 56 seconds. Pause when screen goes black -

Visual and Audio cue - Actor in front of flag says - “Have Faith in Massachusetts”

- 1) Coolidge the politician, sums up events of his life to his election as President of the Massachusetts Senate and gives his speech
- 2) Portrayal of Calvin’s political career through the President of the Senate of Massachusetts.

### **Stop video**

## DISCUSSION - POST VIEWING

### Questions Concerning the Issues Surrounding this Speech

1. *Who were the weak that Coolidge was referring? How were they being helped? What were the rights he wanted to protect?*
2. *Who are the weak today? Is the government protecting them? How?*
3. *What do you think this passage suggests the role of government should be? Why? Do you agree or disagree?*
4. *With companies that do not want to be regulated today (dot coms), can this belief be applied to government today?*
5. *With the debate over welfare, and medical insurance, and the high cost of health care, are there themes in this speech that could be applied to our government today? What are they?*
6. *Do you find any Vermonter characteristics (or New England characteristics) that influenced Coolidge in writing this speech? What are they?*
7. *Coolidge had strong characteristics that had been influenced by his childhood. He was a moral and honest man, with a deep religious faith. He believed that the common man should have these as well. How did these characteristics influence his opinions about government?*
8. *Do politicians use their beliefs today to influence the government? How?*

### Suggested Hands on Activity

How did Coolidge define radicalism? How is radicalism defined today? Make a chart to show the similarities and differences.

## **Further Discussion about Character Being a Vermonter**

Calvin Coolidge has been described as a true Vermonter. This supposedly made it easier for the public to trust him. Below is a list of characteristics commonly attributed to Calvin Coolidge. Some or all of these characteristics are usually attributed to Vermonters generally as well.

**FRUGAL  
DOES FOR ONESELF  
CHOOSES WORDS CAREFULLY  
CLOSE TO NATURE  
USES FEW WORDS  
COMMUNITY MINDED  
HARDY  
INDEPENDENT  
NOT AFRAID TO SPEAK OUT  
STARK  
BLUNT  
FAITHFUL  
TRUSTWORTHY  
HONEST  
HAS COMMON SENSE  
HUMOROUS**

- 1. Do you think these traits are characteristics of Vermonters? Why or why not?*
- 2. How did these characteristics help the public to trust Calvin Coolidge?*
- 3. Do you feel these values are worthwhile?*
- 4. Do these characteristics still hold true for Vermonters today?*
- 5. Which ones would you like to possess today?*
- 6. Could any be added to this list?*
- 7. Are Vermonters the only ones who can have these characteristics?*
- 8. If not, are they more common among rural cultures?*

## **ADDITIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CALVIN COOLIDGE:**

**LEADER**

**RELIGIOUS**

**HUMOROUS**

**MORAL**

- 1. Were these important for a politician to have?*
- 2. Are they important for a politician to have today ?*
- 3. Are these characteristics important for president to have? Why or why not?*

### **III. Labor Unions**

The first labor unions were formed in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, but they remained very weak until the 1890's. During that decade membership almost quadrupled from 250,000 to about one million. Membership continued to grow in succeeding years, to two million by 1914. This segment of the population represented one-third of the work force, a significant number, to be sure, but it still meant that a large majority of the work force, both skilled and unskilled, were not members of a union.

The premise of the most active union (the AFL, the American Federation of Labor), as stated by its president and founder Samuel Gompers, was to “improve the work man's welfare year by year.” He and other union organizers advocated for higher wages, shorter working hours, and better working conditions. Unions were predominately male, although there were a few affiliates that did allow women, but it also made it very difficult for blacks and unskilled workers (predominantly recent immigrants) to join.

Unions attempted to do more for the workingman than just improve the basics of pay, hours, and conditions. Some offered insurance policies that workers could afford. Others helped with job placement. Many provided a social outlet, building union halls where entertainment, picnics, and other gatherings could be held.

The entire history of relations between management and labor unions is largely a poor one. In the early industrial age, before unions existed, management had the upper hand so it is not surprising that they were resistant to the formation of unions. When strikes and walkouts occurred, management often responded by simply hiring cheaper workers. Violent confrontations on both sides lead to bloodshed and death. In the twenty years between 1880 and 1900, this country witnessed over 23,000 strikes (not all organized by official unions) that involved over 6.6 million workers.

What were the working conditions like that led to these disputes? They differed not only from industry to industry but also from individual factory to individual factory. One example comes from a canning factory in 1902. Its workers put in five ten-hour days and four hours on Saturday. There was no such thing as overtime pay for workweeks over 40 hours. Saturdays the worker spent his or her time on their hands and knees scrubbing until the entire factory was clean. The work was not only tedious and monotonous, but the roar of the plants

was so loud it often caused premature deafness. The pay was \$4.20 per week, of which at least \$3.00 usually went for food.

World War I (1914-1919) brought about a time of greater cooperation between unions and management, partially due to government intervention in order to aid the war movement. Membership still grew, especially in the AFL, which went from 2.7 million workers in 1916 to about 4 million by the war's end. The AFL created the War Labor Board (WLB). President Woodrow Wilson wanted to increase production of war goods by discouraging strikes, which disrupted production. Thus, he helped improve wages and hours by standardizing them. Any improvements for the workingman like these lessened the likelihood of strikes.

The decade including the 1920s (including the Coolidge presidency) saw little advancement for labor unions. Some employers were able to forbid their workers from joining unions. As a result, membership declined by almost a million during the decade. Coolidge, however, noted in statement in a press conference during his last year in office:

*Wages have been slightly increasing. There has been no time that there has been any marked lack of employment....generally speaking, there has been employment for everyone who wished employment...there has been rather a time of marked peace in industry as between employer and employees.*

### **Show Segment Three of Video**

Length: 2 minutes and 22 seconds. Pause when screen goes black -

Visual and Audio cue - Actor against wood background says - "...I was not gifted with intuition."

- 1) Coolidge is elected Governor of Massachusetts and becomes involved in the Boston Police Strike.
- 2) Portrayal of Coolidge's handling of the Boston police strike.

### **Stop video**

## DISCUSSION - POST VIEWING

One of Calvin Coolidge's greatest political involvements with labor unions came while he was Governor of Massachusetts. It also is the event that first brought Coolidge onto the national scene and led to his nomination for vice-president in 1920.

Unions were formed to help the conditions of the working class. Coolidge agreed with this premise. In 1918, city policemen in Boston, wanting to improve their working conditions, attempted to form a union. The notion of government workers joining a union was new. Coolidge felt that leaving a job where public safety was at risk was not okay. The policemen did strike in September. Coolidge did not act for a few days (letting the Boston mayor handle the situation) and some minor looting and violence occurred. Once public safety was at risk, Coolidge called out the State Guard to restore control and stated "There is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, anytime." Although he later proclaimed that he was afraid his actions might mean the end of his political career, the public backed him. They appreciated his actions.

(To read more about the Boston police strike and Coolidge's role, see Robert Sobel, *Coolidge: An American Enigma* (Washington D.C., Regnery Publishing Inc., 1998), Chapter 6, pp. 133-148. This section would provide more background for a discussion of the following questions.)

1. *Do you think that public workers should have the right to strike? Why or why not?*
2. *Can you think of any more recent examples of this? What about the air traffic controllers strike and President Reagan's response in the 1980s?*
3. *Why do you think that Coolidge felt his career could be hurt by his response to the police strike? Why do you think it turned out so well for him in the end?*

### **Suggested Hands on Activity**

Divide the students into groups of three. Take turns defending both union and management with regard to the police strike. (See Labor Union segment in guide).

### **Show Segment Four of Video**

Length: 2 minutes and 57 seconds. Pause when screen goes black -  
Visual and Audio cue - Actor visits gravesite - music

- 1) Coolidge becomes President.
- 2) Portrayal of Coolidge being sworn in as President.

### **Stop Video**

### **Discussion - Post Viewing Activities**

**Coolidge becomes president after the death of the sitting president, Warren G. Harding. It is the special circumstances of Coolidge's taking the oath of office that is unique. There is an opportunity to discuss the role of the vice-president in American political life.**

1. How does a vice-president become president? Upon the death or resignation of a president, or by becoming a candidate and being elected.
2. What recent vice-presidents have become president and under what circumstances? Lyndon B. Johnson upon the death of Kennedy. Later elected. George Bush elected after serving under Ronald Reagan.

## THE PRESIDENTIAL YEARS (1923-1929)

### IV. The Second Industrial Revolution

**During Calvin's presidency in the 1920s, Americans were experiencing the highest standard of living of any nation on earth. There was a new consumer goods industry that consisted of everything from automobiles to appliances and synthetic textiles to packaged foods. In a brief seven-year period between 1922 and 1929, industrial output doubled and the gross national product rose by 40%.**

1. What did Henry Ford develop in the automotive industry that made manufacturing different than ever before?

*The assembly line. Henry Ford's dream was to make automobiles from beginning to end, even starting with the iron ore. He felt that the efficiency of this process would allow him to sell automobiles more cheaply so that everybody could afford one. By the mid-1920s his concept of an assembly line where automobile workers did the same repetitive job, putting the same piece on car after car, became a reality.*

2. Did Henry Ford's idea of the assembly line become popular in other areas of manufacturing? Why or why not?

*Absolutely. Since it made manufacturing more efficient there was more potential profit for the owners of the manufacturing plants. Henry Ford's massive amount of machines (43,000 in all) was incredibly efficient because the workers stood still as the work passed in front of them. This method could be equally applicable in the manufacturing of appliances and many other consumer goods. It could even be utilized by the food processing industries.*

3. What did this do for the American economy?

*It meant higher profits for manufacturers and lower prices for buyers. The work force stayed the same size from 1919 to 1929, yet it produced twice as many goods.*

4. What form of power became very common in the 1920's? How did this effect manufacture?

*Electricity. Electric motors replaced steam engines as the most common form of energy. By 1929, 70% of all industrial power came from electricity.*

5. How did the growing use of the automobile and electricity effect the household?

*Two-thirds of all American families now had electricity by the end of the 1920s, primarily in urban areas. Electricity allowed the use of washing machines, vacuum cleaners, refrigerators*

*and radios, to name just a few. Entertainment was provided by not only the radio in the home but in movie theater outside the home. The automobile made people much more mobile. They could now begin to live in the suburbs and commute to work.*

6. Was there a downside to mass production? If so, what was it? Are there lessons from this that relate to us today?

*The homogenization of American society occurred. Now the farmer in Iowa, the businessman in Boston, and the textile factory worker in North Carolina all have easier access to the same goods. Regional and ethnic differences in all aspects of society, from the goods themselves to the traditions associated with them and their manufacture, began to disappear. Nationally produced goods were replacing locally produced goods. As traditional industries declined, some were left without work. This process has not only continued but also mushroomed more recently with the advent of chain franchises and national superstores.*

### **Suggested Hands on Activity**

**Assembly Line Concept** - A hands-on experience might be helpful. Make hoagies for lunch and eat the profit!! How long will group A which divides the tasks take to make the hoagies? How long will group B that makes the entire hoagie individually take? Form a hypothesis.

## **V. The Ku Klux Klan**

The Ku Klux Klan was first organized in 1866 in Tennessee. Its purpose was to restore white supremacy by not allowing blacks to vote or become involved in politics. Membership spread into other southern states. Brutal violence against blacks was committed, and the threat of more kept blacks from going to the polls. In 1870, the Federal Government did step in and arrest thousands of Klansmen. However, very few were ever brought to trial.

In 1915, the KKK experienced a significant revival and its influence spread to other parts of the country. This time not only blacks were targeted, but also immigrants, Catholics, and Jews. Men embraced the KKK to relieve their fears about newcomers to American society significantly altering their traditional way of life. With five million members in 1924 Klansmen won political office in several states, including several (Oregon and Indiana) outside the south.

However, the KKK did not remain a significant political force for long. Their violent acts of kidnapping, lynching, and church and synagogue burning ultimately offended the nation. Financial scandals within the organization caused problems too. By the end of the 1920s, the Klan had again all but ceased to exist.

During the presidential election year of 1924, the Ku Klux Klan still had formidable political clout and thus was an issue for candidates on both state and national levels including Vermont. Coolidge gave a commencement address in June of 1924 at Howard University, a black college, in which he praised the progress that blacks were making in this country. In October, just one month before the election, he gave a speech in Omaha, Nebraska in which he spoke against bigotry and for toleration of all peoples.

### **Show Segment Five of Video**

Length: 2 minutes and 15 seconds. Pause when screen goes black -

Visual and Audio cue - Actor in front of flag says - "Let us cast off our hatreds."

- 1) Coolidge's Presidential election.
- 2) Portrayal of Coolidge giving a speech in which Coolidge addresses the American Legion and speaks about racism.

### **Stop video**

## DISCUSSION - POST ACTIVITIES

1. *What do you think of Calvin Coolidge's role in this issue? He has been criticized (perhaps unfairly) for not taking on the KKK more directly. This organization had millions of members spread nationwide.*

2. *Do you think that the content of his speeches were guided more by politics or by what he actually believed?*

3. *Was Coolidge more effective in combating prejudice by a careful, considered approach rather than a confrontational approach?*

4. *Did he really have a choice? Is this consistent with Coolidge's methods of handling other situations?*

5. *After hearing his speech is there any doubt about his beliefs on this issue?*

### Speech as Quoted in the Video

"The generally expressed desire of 'America First' can not be criticized. It is a perfectly correct aspiration for our people to cherish. But the problem we have to solve is how to make America first. It can not be done by the cultivation of national bigotry, arrogance, or selfishness. Hatreds, jealousies, and suspicions will not be productive of any benefits in this direction. Here again we must apply the rule of toleration . . .

"By toleration I do not mean indifference to evil. I mean respect for different kinds of good. Whether one traces his Americanism back three centuries to the Mayflower, or three years to the steerage, is not half so important as whether his Americanism is real and genuine. No matter by what various crafts we came here, we are all now in the same boat. Let us cast off our hatreds."

### Show Segment 6 of Video

Length: 3 minutes and 41 seconds. Program ends with credits-  
Coolidge Reflects on the Presidency

- 1) The Burden of the Presidency
- 2) The Difficulty Coolidge had in Meeting New People
- 3) Humorous Look at the Need of the President to Greet People Each Day

## **Stop video**

### **DISCUSSION - POST VIEWING**

- 1. Do you agree that the presidency is a burden?*
- 2. Why would someone want to be president?*
- 3. How does a person who has difficulty meeting people become such a successful politician?*

Although some refer to Coolidge as “Silent Cal”, he actually was not at all. Calvin held press conferences twice a week. He felt that good public relations were invaluable and wanted to be in touch with the public. He entertained more than any previous President. He was the last president to write all of his own speeches. He felt he was really working for the public, and really wanted to do a good job.

- 1. How is this different from the office of the presidency today?*
- 2. Could a president successfully carry out his duties in this way today?*
- 3. Would our system of government today allow it? Would the American press allow it? Would the American public allow it?*

### **Suggested Hands on Activity**

Have students interview other students, parents, and grandparents about whether or not they know Calvin Coolidge was a president of the United States from Vermont. Create a bar graph that shows the differences between age groups

### **Additional Discussion**

## **VI. The Roaring Twenties**

### **Leisure Time**

There were many new pleasures for Americans in the 1920s. It was the time of Charles Lindbergh's solo flight across the Atlantic and the first talking motion pictures. It was a golden age in sports led by Babe Ruth and the New York Yankees. Professional boxers Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney were national figures as well. Golf grew in popularity, thanks to Bobby Jones. Universities built football stadiums to hold the large crowds of spectators. Radio helped to spread the excitement of these times. Fashions were changing with the flapper style dresses, which were daringly shorter than ever before. The Charleston became the dance to learn. There was more leisure time than in any previous decade. Many Americans wanted a telephone, a radio, and a phonograph.

- 1. Would you like to have lived back then?*
- 2. Would life be more or less exciting than today?*
- 3. Many people living then saw these as exhilarating times; do you think you would have shared that view?*
- 4. How much of this should be attributed to Calvin Coolidge's presidency?*
- 5. Should a president get credit for good times or bad times?*

### **Prohibition**

The Volstead Act made the sale of alcohol illegal. This was known as Prohibition. It began as a women's push for morality, a way to protect women from the violence which can be caused from alcohol abuse. This reform did not keep all Americans from drinking however. Some people made their own alcohol known as "moonshine", while others visited secret saloons known as speakeasies. Alcohol was being smuggled into this country. A number of Americans found their way around this act until it was repealed in 1933.

Coolidge grew up with the prohibition movement. The moral values that surrounded the movement ran deep in his Vermont roots. Still, Coolidge disliked Prohibition because he felt it would not work, and generally opposed governmental interference. He did, however, back the Volstead Act because it was the law at the time he was in office.

- 1. How much impact do you think Prohibition had on American drinking habits?*
- 2. Did it create more drinking than it stopped?*
- 3. In what ways is this similar to the use of illegal drugs in America today?*
- 4. In what ways is it different?*

## **Teaching**

Educational thinking was broadened by Tennessee teacher John Scopes who illegally taught Darwin's theory of evolution. It suggested that human beings may have descended from apes as opposed to the traditional Biblical theory of Adam and Eve. Technically Scopes lost the case, but it was an important step in changing how the subject is taught.

- 1. How has this changed what you are taught in school today?*
- 2. Today the Biblical theory can not be taught in the public school system.*
- 3. What do you think should be taught?*

## **Suggested Hands on Activities**

- 1. Create a scrapbook of advertisements of products that did not exist in the 1920's but do today.*
- 2. Look up the amendments on prohibition in the United States Constitution. What drugs today should be restricted why and why not?*
- 3. The material on leisure offers the opportunity for a culminating activity. The students might learn how to do the Charleston.*

## PRESIDENTIAL TRIVIA

Name all of the presidents that came from New England and what state they came from.

President	State
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____

Match the vice-presidents with the presidents they replaced.

Calvin Coolidge	Franklin D. Roosevelt
Lyndon B. Johnson	Warren G. Harding
Millard Fillmore	John F. Kennedy
Harry S. Truman	Zachary Taylor
Gerald Ford	Richard Nixon
John Tyler	William Henry Harrison
Theodore Roosevelt	James Garfield
Andrew Johnson	William McKinley
Chester A. Arthur	Abraham Lincoln

## **MORE FACTS ABOUT THESE PRESIDENTS**

Gerald Ford was the only vice-president who was not elected to become President. Richard Nixon appointed him after Spiro Agnew resigned. After Nixon resigned, Ford became President.

- Calvin Coolidge was elected to more offices than any other President.
- John Adams and John Quincy Adams were father and son.
- William Henry Harrison and Benjamin Harrison were grandfather and grandson.
- Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt were distant cousins.
- Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected to four terms, that cannot be done again, Congress voted to limit a president to two terms (22<sup>nd</sup> Amendment to the Constitution).

### **Dates they were President:**

John Adams 1797-1801

John Quincy Adams 1825-1829

William Henry Harrison 1841 (March to April)

John Tyler 1841-1845

Zachary Taylor 1849-1850

Millard Fillmore 1850-1853

Abraham Lincoln 1861-1865

Andrew Johnson 1865-1869

James Garfield 1881

Chester A. Arthur 1881- 1885

William McKinley 1897-1901

Warren G. Harding 1921-1923

Calvin Coolidge 1923-1929

Franklin D. Roosevelt 1933-1945

Harry S. Truman 1945-1953

John F. Kennedy 1961-1963

Lyndon B. Johnson 1963-1969

Richard Nixon 1969-1974

Gerald Ford 1974-1977

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## INTERNET RESOURCES

“American Leaders Speak: Recordings from World War I and the 1920 Election,” Library of Congress, available from <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/nfhtml/>  
Contains recordings of speeches of such leaders as Coolidge, Harding, and Samuel Gompers.

“Calvin Coolidge,” The White House, available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents/cc30.html>  
Excellent introduction to Coolidge. The site also contains a material on Grace Coolidge.

“Vermont Division for Historical Preservation,” available from <http://www.historicvermont.org/>  
Contains information about events happening at CCMF as well as events from historic landmarks from around the state of Vermont.

“Famous Trials”, available from <http://www.umkc.edu/famoustrials>  
This site by Professor Doug Linder at the University of Missouri-Kansas City Law School has extensive materials on the Leopold and Loeb Trial (1924) and the Scopes “Monkey” Trial (1925).

“Prosperity and Thrift: The Coolidge Era and the Consumer Economy, 1921-1929,” Library of Congress, available from <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/coolhtml/coolhome.html>  
Culled from several LOC collections, this site explores the nation’s transition to a mass consumer economy and the role of the government in this transition.

“The Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation,” available at <http://www.calvin-coolidge.org/>  
This newly expanded site contains a variety of materials on Calvin Coolidge.

“The 1920s Experience,” available from <http://www.angelfire.com/co/pscst/index.html>  
Provides material on the technology (automobile, radio, airplane) and the cultural life of the 1920s.

# Calvin Coolidge Time Line

## PERSONAL

July 4, 1872, Calvin Coolidge born  
April 15, 1875, sister Abbie born  
1878, grandfather dies  
March 14, 1885, mother dies  
March 6, 1890, sister Abbie dies

## SCHOOL/CAREER

Sept. 1877, began school in Plymouth Notch  
May 23, 1890, graduated from Black River Academy, Ludlow, VT  
June 26, 1895, graduated Amherst College on September 23, began studying the law

## UNITED STATES

1876, Baseball National League founded  
1879, Edison invents the light bulb  
1882-83, construction begins on Santa Fe, Southern and Northern Pacific railroads  
1886, Statue of Liberty dedicated  
1889, North and South Dakota, Washington, and Montana become states  
1890, Wyoming and Idaho become states  
1893, The World Columbian Exposition, Chicago  
1896, Rural Free Delivery  
1898, Spanish-American War  
1899, Treaty of Paris, grants independence to Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, War ends

October 4, 1905 married Grace Goodhue

September 1906, John Coolidge, first child born

April 13, 1908, Calvin Coolidge Jr. second child born

July 2, 1897, admitted the Bar. Later became a member of the Republican City Committee from Ward 2  
December 6, 1898, elected City Councilman from Ward 2  
January 18, 1900, elected City Solicitor (by City Council)  
January 17, 1901, re-elected Solicitor  
January 16, 1902, defeated for Solicitor  
June 4, 1903, appointed Clerk of Courts  
1904, Named, Chairman, Republican City Committee, Northampton  
December 5, 1905, defeated for School Committeeman by John J. Kennedy

November 6, 1906, elected Representative to the Massachusetts General Court  
November 5, 1907, re-elected Representative

1903, Alaskan frontier settled

December 7, 1909, elected Mayor, Northampton  
December 6, 1910, re-elected Mayor  
November 7, 1911, elected State Senator  
November 5, 1912, re-elected State Senator  
November 4, 1913, re-elected State Senator and elected President of the Senate  
November 3, 1914, re-elected State Senator and President of the Senate  
November 2, 1915, elected Lieut. Governor  
November 7, 1916, re-elected Lieut. Governor  
November 6, 1917, re-elected Lieut. Governor  
November 5, 1918, elected Governor of MA.  
November 4, 1919, re-elected Governor

1908, Ford introduces Model T  
1909, NAACP founded  
1910, Boy scouts of America founded  
1913, Federal Income Tax established  
1913, U.S. Department of Labor created  
1914, WWI begins in Europe.  
1915, First feature length moving picture  
1917, United States enters the war in Europe  
1918, Flu epidemic kills thousands  
1918, November 11 World War ends.  
1919, Boston Police Strike

## PERSONAL

## SCHOOL/CAREER

## UNITED STATES

June 12, 1920, nominated for Vice-President  
November 2, 1920, elected Vice-President  
March 4, 1921, sworn in  
August 3, 1923, President Harding dies  
August 3, 1923 Coolidge sworn in as president

1920, 19th Amendment (Women's Suffrage) ratified  
1920, The first radio broadcast KDKA, Pittsburgh, Penn.

National debt is \$22.3 billion  
August 21, 1923 Five-power treaty proclaimed

1923, KKK involvement reaches all time high

September 7, 1923, Coal Strike Agreement  
October 22, 1923, Veterans Bureau investigated

December 6, 1923, First Annual Message by Coolidge

December 10, 1923, 1st radio talk from the White House  
February, 1924, Mellon Plan to reduce income tax

July 7, 1924, Calvin Coolidge Jr. dies

April 9, 1924 Dawes plan; debt payment for Germany

May 15, 1924, vetoed bonus bill, over-ridden by Congress

May 26, 1924, signed immigration act, excluding orientals

June 2, 1924, signed bill granting Native Americans citizenship

August 5, 1925, Nine Power Treaty

December 9, 1925, asked for appropriation for aviation

1925, Federal Triangle of Building began in Washington D.C.

March 18, 1926, Coolidge's father John dies

January 27, 1926, signed revenue act reducing taxes

May 10, 1926, Marines sent to Nicaragua

January 12, 1927, Pan American Treaty

February 25, 1927, vetoed Farm Bill

June 11, 1927, Awards Lindbergh Distinguished Flying Cross

May 5, 1928, Teapot Dome Hearings ended

May 29, 1928, Revenue Reduction Act, 98% of people pay no tax

August 2, 1927, Coolidge will not run for Presidency, despite the fact that he might be re-elected

August 2, 1927, Coolidge will not run for Presidency, despite the fact that he might be re-elected

August, 27, 1928, signing of Pact of Paris, the Kellogg-Briand Act

August 27, 1928, signing of Pact of Paris, the Kellogg-Briand Act

January 17, 1929, Kellogg-Briand Act signed

March 1929, Coolidge retires.

March 1929, Coolidge retires.

March 1929, Coolidge retires.

National debt \$16.9 billion

1927, Lindbergh flies across the Atlantic  
1927, Babe Ruth hits 60 home runs

January 5, 1933, Calvin Coolidge dies