Don’t Know Much About® the Presidents is a fun way to learn about the Presidency. Kenneth C. Davis presents this topic in a detailed and engaging manner. Below are some activities for classroom teachers to further engage students in the learning process. They are geared toward children in grades 3–6 but can be expanded upon and customized by the teacher to meet the individual needs of his or her students.

Read-Read-Read
Introduce the below activities by reading through the book with the students. Invite students to write down notes and ideas to use in a KWL chart. (i.e. “I already knew that…but I was wondering why ______President ___________). Students can also work on individual KWL charts on sheets of paper. Then regroup as a class for students to share their personal knowledge and questions. They should all be recorded on a chart and reviewed throughout the unit.

He who forgets his history...
Have students keep a response journal beginning at the start of this unit. They should write down their thoughts about historical findings, etc. As the unit progresses, have the students respond to discussions held during class (i.e. political correctness now and then...)

Presidential Roll Call
Tell the students that at the end of this unit, they will prepare a Presidential Show for the rest of the school. Assign each student a president to study, or combine with another class to cover all the presidents. Use references from Don’t Know Much About® the Presidents to give each student a catch phrase or slogan as the starting point for their research project. For example, “Where did James Monroe go that no president had gone before?” From here the students can research and begin to discover information about the assigned president. Students should also assemble a visual project (i.e. power point, triptych, poster, collage) examining the given president, and write a biographical paper, which highlights his achievements, high points and low points.

Another project to complete this unit could be a “living history” fair, in which the students dress in costume and present a two or three minute speech about each president. Then visitors circulate and ask questions of the students who in turn answer as the presidents.

Time is of the Essence
Create a time line of events beginning just prior to the American Revolution. Divide the line into 10 year intervals and provide some of history’s major events (i.e. The French Revolution, Major Battles, World Wars). Assign students to add
key events from their presidential research to the time line. The intervals could also be broken into thematic time frames. For example, Revolutionary Era Presidents, Civil War and Antebellum Presidents, Industrial Revolution Presidents, etc. Have students work in small groups to compile their findings, and place in sequential order before adding it to the time line.

**My Old Kentucky Home...or New York, or Ohio or Tennessee...**
Research and display a map of the United States, highlighting its growth throughout history. Ask students to compare how the map looked at the start of our nation and at the present day. Now ask students to research birthplaces and residences of the presidents. Mark the location of each on a map. Take note of which states were the most numerous birthplaces for presidents, and discuss why this is the case. Students can chart their findings on graph paper.

**The Funniest Factoids**
Have the students review the “strange and curious” facts Kenneth C. Davis highlights in his book. List students’ favorite facts on a chart, and lead a student vote on the strangest fact.

**See how they run...for Office**
Choose ten notable presidents. Assign students to small groups, to act as campaign managers for a president. They must create a campaign complete with posters, commercials, and press secretaries. The students will be acting on behalf of the candidate so that no one is actually the candidate. Students must research the campaign issues of their candidate’s time, in order to run the campaign. As a culminating activity, have other classrooms vote for these chosen candidates.

**First in War...First in Peace**
Have students research any skirmishes or wars which occurred during the time that various presidents were in office. Graph and compare the number of presidents who were peacetime presidents to those who were wartime presidents. As extensions to this activity, students can compare which presidents had college educations (or schooling of any kind) to those without, those who had military experience to those without, etc. What conclusions can be drawn from this information?

**My Old Alma Mater**
Have students research the various colleges and universities attended by former presidents of the United States. Which educational institution has educated the most presidents? What conclusions can be drawn from this? Students can create College Pennants and a bulletin board with this information.

**History will be good to you—NOT**
As a class, review some events in United States history (i.e. The Indian Wars, Atom Bomb, Viet Nam). Discuss and write about where public opinion lay then and now, and how social change influences history.
If necessity is the mother of invention, who is its father?
Divide the presidential timeline and assign student groups a different portion of time. Each group must research and document five major and interesting inventions created during their assigned presidency. Discuss how the needs of a nation change and how this is reflected in the different inventions. As an extension activity, students could also create models of the various inventions.

Hall of Fame or Hall of Shame
As the students progress with their individual research, if they come across information that is noteworthy for either its fame or its shame factor, have them write about the incident and post it on a chart labeled fame / shame and displayed in the room. Each day, review any new information on the chart.

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From the heated debates among the framers of the Constitution in 1787 over an “elected king,” to the creation of the presidency, and on through rich profiles of each man who has held the office, New York Times bestselling author Kenneth C. Davis takes readers on a guided tour of American history. Examining each chief executive, from the low lights to the bright lights, the memorable to the forgettable and the forgotten, Davis tells all the stories, offering rich anecdotes about real people.