An Interview with President Teddy Roosevelt

A classroom play by Team HOPE

Cast List

Teddy Roosevelt (ROOS)…………………………..  President of the United States

Chief Student Correspondent (CHIEF)………………..  in charge of facilitating the discussion

Student Correspondent 1 (R1) …………………………  co-host and moderator

Student Correspondent 2 (R2) …………………………  co-host and moderator

Student Correspondent 3 (R3) …………………………  co-host and moderator
TEACHER NOTES

SETTING: A contemporary classroom. It is advised to place five desks in the front of the room in a semi-circle facing the rest of the class. You may choose a podium for the chief student correspondent. A name plate in front of each cast member is highly recommended. A 5x8 index card folded in half works great for this purpose.

COSTUMES: Although not necessary, any period costumes for the historical figures are a great addition. Even a simple hat or wig is excellent.

MASKS: Masks are an easy addition that will add to the drama and make the entire event more fun for the students. First, go to www.google.com and click on “image search.” Type in the historical figure’s name and find an image of the person. Copy and paste the picture in a Word document. You may need to crop and then enlarge the photo so you get a picture large enough to be used as a mask. Portraits obviously work best for this use. Print out the picture and paste it onto a cardboard backing. You can tape a plastic spoon or popsicle stick to be used as a handle. You may decide to make masks for the student correspondents as well, using pictures of television news personalities for the masks.

Note: If there is a historical person you cannot find a picture for, don’t despair! Almost any random “period” person’s picture (as long as it not someone easily recognizable) would work as a mask.

ROLES: Encourage students to act out the roles with as much energy as possible. Do not be too terribly concerned that the sex of the historical figure matching with the sex of the student.

The teacher may decide to take a part in the play, role-modeling one of the historical figures. It is recommended that four copies of the scripts are specifically set aside for each character in the play. For each character, highlight all their lines in order to facilitate a faster pace of dialogue. All other students should receive an unmarked copy of the play to read as the play is performed.

DISCUSSION: Use the attached worksheets to facilitate discussion before and after the play. Students who are not directly involved in the play can attempt to write preliminary answers as the play is performed. The audience should be told that they will be the primarily responsible for the discussion questions at the end of the lesson.
An Interview with Teddy Roosevelt

NOTE: All responses by historical figures reflect actual events and beliefs as closely as possible.

CAST ABBREVIATIONS

Teddy Roosevelt.......................... ROOS
Chief Student Correspondent .......... CHIEF
Student Correspondent 1 ............. ST1
Student Correspondent 2 .............. ST2
Student Correspondent 3 .............. ST3

CHIEF Welcome to our class interview. We are pleased to have former President Teddy Roosevelt with us. He is one of the most dynamic Americans to have lived and we have an opportunity to probe his great mind and learn what it is that makes him tick. In this interview, we are going to focus on President Roosevelt’s life prior to becoming President. Later we will have him back for him to detail his years during and after his presidential term. Mr. President, thank you so much for giving us your time.

ROOS No problem! Glad to be here.

CHIEF Let us begin. Mr. President, most people are unaware that you took the call to “move west young man” literally and lived for a time on the frontier. What motivated you to do that?

ROOS Well, I was twenty-six and tragedy struck. Both my young wife Alice and my mother died on the same day, February 14, 1884.

ST1 Oh, how horrible!

ST2 And on Valentine’s Day no less!

ROOS (saddened) I’m sorry…we do not mention that day in our family…

ST2 I am so sorry Mr. President.

ROOS (cheering up) It is fine! It is fine! The tragedy filled me with grief and I lit out for the territories.

ST3 The Dakota Territories, correct?

ROOS Yes! It was challenging time that taught me what it was to be a man.

ST2 What were some of those challenges?
ROOS  I faced cattle stampedes, floods, and blizzards. One ruffian stole my boat and I got myself deputized by the sheriff and I went after him, captured him, and dragged him to justice. *(he smiles)* What a time!

CHIEF  I’ve read that you had a man pull a gun on you at a saloon. Can you enlighten us with that story?

ROOS  Oh, yes, that story! Basically, I walked into a saloon and this drunken guy pulled his six-shooter on me and slurred, “Four-eyes is going to be buying everyone drinks.”

ST1  Even a President gets made fun of for wearing glasses!

ROOS  Yeah, I got “four-eyes” a lot! Didn’t take too kindly to it either.

ST2  So, did you buy the drinks?

ROOS  Ha! The man foolishly stood too close to me and was rather unsteady. I said, “Well if I got to, I’ve got to.” I looked past him as if I was going to the bar to order. He let his guard down. At that moment I pounced. I struck hard with my right into his jaw, then I hit him quickly with my left, and again with my right. He fired his gun wildly but went down. As he fell, his head struck the corner of the bar. I didn’t take any chances and was ready to pounce on his chest with my knees…but he was senseless!

ST3  These are the sort of stories that made you a hero!

CHIEF  And a conservationist. Your experience in the west made you appreciate nature, did it not?

ROOS  Absolutely. As President, I knew we had to save the vanishing wilderness as our country grew rapidly. That is why I supported the creation of national parks. I created the first National Bird Preserve in Florida along with the United States Forest Service to manage our forests. Overall, I set aside 194 million acres of land for parks and preserves, more than all my predecessors combined. I am very proud of my work to save the beauty of America for future generations.

ST2  Mr. President, you eventually became very famous for your involvement in the Spanish-American War. What led you to that point?

ROOS  At the time, I was Assistant Secretary of the Navy and not terribly well-known, except that I had been a loyal Republican, or stalwart. Because of this, I was rewarded with that position. When the *U.S.S. Maine* blew up in Havana harbor, I had no doubt of Spanish treachery and immediately resigned as Assistant Secretary of the Navy to form my own volunteer regiment.

ST1  The Rough Riders?
ROOS  Exactly. They were a motley crew.

ST1  Describe them.

ROOS  They were Indian and cowboy, miner, packer, and college athlete, the man of unknown ancestry from the Western plains, and the man who carried on his watch the crest of the wealthy New York families Stuyvesant and Fish. They were America.

ST3  What specifically made you famous in the Spanish-American War?

ROOS  Our charge up San Juan Hill.

ST3  In Cuba?

ROOS  Right.

ST2  You were in a tough situation?

ROOS  We faced San Juan Hill under a terribly accurate Spanish fire. We couldn’t go back because our line was choked with soldiers from other units. Nearby, I saw a unit of black soldiers who were under orders to move to the rear. I stopped them, pulled my revolver and told them to join us. They did. We charged San Juan Hill and the Spanish broke and started on the run. I remember old “Fighting Joe” Wheeler, an old Confederate veteran, yelling excitedly: “We’ve got the damn Yankees on the run!”

ST1  Wheeler was still fighting the last war!

ROOS  (smiles) Apparently so, yes, but in this war North and South were once again united.

CHIEF  So after the war your new found popularity launched your political career?

ROOS  Yes. I was elected governor of New York in 1898 and chosen by President McKinley as his Vice President during the election of 1900.

CHIEF  Then tragedy struck?

ROOS  Unfortunately, only a few months after I started my term as Vice-President, President McKinley was assassinated.

ST2  And you became the youngest President ever to be sworn in?

ROOS  Yup. 43 years old. Still the record!

CHIEF  I’m afraid our time is up. However, President Roosevelt will be back again and I want to again thank him for his time.