

Jimmy Carter

2002

“for his decades of untiring effort to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts, to advance democracy and human rights, and to promote economic and social development”

The man who insisted on being sworn into presidential office by the name “Jimmy” was

born James Earl Carter, Jr. on October 1, 1924, in the small farming town of Plains, Georgia and grew up in the nearby community of Archery. He was named after his father, James Earl Carter, Sr., who was a farmer and businessman; his mother a registered nurse.



He was educated in the Plains public schools in Georgia, attended Georgia Southwestern College and the Georgia Institute of Technology, and ultimately received a Bachelor of Science degree from the United States Naval Academy in 1946. He was the first member of his family ever to go to college, and at the Naval Academy ranked 60th in a class of 820. He later did graduate work in nuclear physics at Union College. During his naval career, he served with both the Atlantic and Pacific fleets and rose to the rank of lieutenant, working under Admiral Hyman Rickman in the development of the nuclear submarine program.

On July 7, 1946 he married Rosalyn Smith, his high school sweetheart, also from Plains, Georgia. In 1953, after his father was diagnosed with cancer, Carter resigned his commission and they returned to Plains. He worked his own farm and continued a small business of his father's, selling fertilizer and farm supplies, while Rosalynn kept the books. His first year back in Georgia from the Naval Academy was not easy, barely making a profit on the farm. But soon, Carter's Warehouse grew into a profitable general-purpose seed and farm supply operation.

Soon after his return to Plains, he became a chairman of the county school board and the first president of the Georgia Planning Association. In 1962, he was elected to the Georgia Senate. He lost his first gubernatorial campaign in 1966, which left him feeling down about life. It was during this time that Carter first turned to religion. Carter taught Sunday School, did missionary work in the North, and spoke about Christianity across the South.

In 1970 he finally succeeded in his bid for higher office, becoming Georgia's seventy-sixth governor. On December 12, 1974, he announced his candidacy for president; and won his party's endorsement at the 1976 Democratic National Convention on the first ballot. He was elected to presidential office on November 2, 1976.

Because Carter was from the South, his attitudes on race were closely scrutinized during his presidential campaign. His father was a politically active man who had believed in racial segregation, or separation of blacks and whites. But Carter's mother, Lillian, a nurse, did not share her husband's views. In the 1960s she joined the Peace Corps and went to India, at the age of 68. In the 1950s, Jimmy Carter was the only white man in Plains who refused to join the White Citizens Council, an organization devoted to preserving segregation. That refusal caused a short-lived boycott of the family's peanut warehouse. In the mid-1960s, the Carter family and one other person were the only members of the Plains Baptist Church who voted to admit blacks to the congregation

Carter served as president from January 20, 1977, to January 20, 1981. Noteworthy foreign policy accomplishments of his administration included the Panama Canal treaties, the Camp David Accords, the treaty of peace between Egypt and Israel, the SALT II treaty with the Soviet Union, and the establishment of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. He championed human rights throughout the world. On the domestic side, the administration's achievements included a comprehensive energy program conducted by a new Department of Energy, major educational programs under a new Department of Education, and major environmental protection legislation, including the Alaska Lands Act.

Many regard Carter's presidency as a failure, citing his inability to achieve consensus with Congress, several scandals involving White House staff, and a struggling economy. However, it is Carter's post-White House career as a statesman that has garnered him the most praise and attention. In 1982, he became University Distinguished Professor at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, and, in partnership with the university, founded the Carter Center.

One of the first and main points that the Nobel Committee mentioned about Carter was his participation in the Camp David Accords. The Camp David Accords were peace meetings that Carter held in 1978 between Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli

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- A Giant peanut-shaped balloon was part of Carter's Inauguration Day parade
- Carter had a dog named Grits
- Jimmy has four children
- He was the first president since 1932 that lost re-election

"Unless both sides win, no agreement can be permanent."

Prime Minister Menachem Begin. They were named the Camp David Accords because President Carter hosted them in the presidential retreat in Virginia called Camp David. Begin and Sadat were hardly on speaking terms at the time – Israel and Egypt had been fighting for a long time over territory in the Middle East that they both believed was rightfully theirs. At its root, it is the same argument that the Palestinians and other Arabs still have with the Israelis today.

Carter would talk to one of the men at a time, relaying what the other had said and offering mediation. The three men worked

very hard to come to peaceful agreements about how the Egypt and Israel would treat each other. A few times, Carter had to convince each man to stay and to press on through the peace talks, even though they did not want to. Later that year, Sadat and Begin were both awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, but Carter was left out. His close advisors felt angry that the award had not been awarded to Carter as well, and have now said that they feel the 2002 award was long-awaited and justified. It is said that President Sadat had said that he wanted the talks to be called the Carter Accords, due to the strong commitment and tirelessness that Carter showed the process.

Carter truly believed that peace could be achieved in the Middle East, so he continued to press for better relations in the region even after he left office. In addition to working on diplomacy between Israel and the rest of the countries in the Middle East, he has also worked to promote democracy all over the world as well. He has been an official observer of 15 different elections around the globe in emerging democratic countries. The Nobel Committee also lauded Carter for his work in economic and social development. Carter has led efforts to eradicate infectious diseases in the developing world and to build affordable domestic housing.

Suggested Classroom Activities

Introduction/Warm-Up:

1. React to one of your favorite Jimmy Carter quotes:

“I have one life and one chance to make it count for something . . . I'm free to choose what that something is, and the something I've chosen is my faith. Now, my faith goes beyond theology and religion and requires considerable work and effort. My faith demands -- this is not optional -- my faith demands that I do whatever I can, wherever I am, whenever I can, for as long as I can with whatever I have to try to make a difference.”

““If you fear making anyone mad, then you ultimately probe for the lowest common denominator of human achievement.”

“Unless both sides win, no agreement can be permanent.”

“If you're totally illiterate and living on one dollar a day, the benefits of globalization never come to you.”

Jimmy Carter has been described in the text books as one of the less-effective presidents in American history. Can a person be a bad president but a good leader? Can a person be a good president but a bad person?

How does it feel when someone recognizes something good that you did? Would you be more likely to do good things if you knew that people would tell you how much they appreciate those things?

Discussion Questions:

1. What leadership experience did Jimmy Carter have before becoming president? (Level 1)
2. What is diplomacy between countries? Why is diplomacy important? (Level 1)
3. Should the Nobel Committee have awarded him the prize in 1978? (Level 2)
4. What are some things you believe are human rights? (Level 2)
5. Why do you think Jimmy Carter ran for president in 1976? (Level 2)
6. Should we work to make sure that all people are provided equal human rights? (Level 3)
7. How did Jimmy Carter work to achieve lasting, long-term peace in the world, rather than short-term peace? (Level 3)

Vocabulary:

1. Gubernatorial
2. Party's Endorsement
3. Human Rights
4. Habitat for Humanity
5. Camp David Accords
6. President Anwar Sadat
7. Prime Minister Menachem Begin
8. Diplomacy
9. Economic and social development
10. Eradicate

Activities:

Students read CNN article "From Peanut Farmer to President"

As an extension, students may choose to read the book Talking Peace, by Jimmy Carter

Students write a letter to Jimmy Carter

Technology Option:

Listen to the News Hour interview with Jimmy Carter in 2002 about the Prize. This can be used as an extension for students who desire or need more information. Text is available at the website as well.

What does the Carter Center Do? Students research the projects sponsored by the Carter Center and write a newspaper article about their work

Resources:

Carter, Jimmy. Talking Peace. New York: Dutton's Children's Books, 1993.

Carter Wins Nobel Peace Prize. October 11, 2002

Read or watch streaming video of three experts on Jimmy Carter regarding the prize.

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/international/july-dec02/nobel_10-11.html

Online News Hour Interviews Jimmy Carter. October 11, 2002

Read or listen to streaming audio of an interview with Jimmy Carter just after he had won the prize.

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/international/july-dec02/bkgdnobel_10-11.html