

The Mormons Teacher's Guide

About the Film:

In this two-part series, FRONTLINE and AMERICAN EXPERIENCE examine the development and growth of the Mormon faith. The first part chronicles the birth of Mormonism in upstate New York and follows its trek across America under the charismatic leadership of Joseph Smith. This episode also deals with the question, "Why should they be so hated?" as it analyzes the discrimination that the Mormons historically faced. The second part explores the social and political impact of the contemporary Mormon community within itself and on American society.

Watching the Film:

Teachers can either assign the film for viewing as homework or show the film in class. Suggested discussion questions are provided. The lessons and activities in this guide can be used in the classroom without having viewed the film.

A Note to Teachers:

For classes in social studies, language arts, current events and media studies; Grade level 9th - 12th. Teachers can use this lesson in its entirety or select appropriate parts.

Understanding that examinations of religious identity may be a sensitive topic for the classroom, this guide avoids issues and questions of morality. Instead, it focuses on the historic discrimination that faced the Mormon community and the candidacy of former Governor Mitt Romney in the 2008 presidential election.

Discussion Questions:

This guide includes a list of questions for students to discuss after viewing *The Mormons*.

Featured Lesson Plan:

"Vote Or Veto: How Does Religion Affect Candidates And Voters?"

Students will:

- Learn about the constitutionality of religious tests for office
- Consider if the electorate imposes an "unofficial" religious requirement to hold office
- Explore the role of religion in presidential elections
- Evaluate their own attitudes concerning the role of religion in U.S. elections

Additional Lesson Ideas:

The Geography of Mormonism

Students will track the American and international growth of Mormonism.

Real or Reel? Mormons Depicted in Pop Culture

Students will compare and contrast the depiction of Mormons in popular media.

Persecution of the Mormons:

Students will interpret key documents pertaining to the growth of Mormonism in the 19th century.

Additional Resources:

An annotated list of relevant Web sites and articles.

Purchasing the Film:

The Mormons can be purchased from [link] Shop PBS for Teachers. Also, teachers and students can watch the film streamed in its entirety on the FRONTLINE/AMERICAN EXPERIENCE Web site [link]: <http://www.pbs.org/mormons/>

Credits:

This teacher's guide was developed by Simone Bloom Nathan of Media Education Consultants. It was written by Debra Plafker Gutt, Stuyvesant High School, New York. Advisers were Ellen Greenblatt, The Bay School, San Francisco and Greg Timmons, curriculum writer and educational consultant.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the founding of Mormonism reflect social changes taking place in America during the early 19th century?
2. Why do you think the early Mormon community faced hostility from other Americans?
 - Explain this observation from the documentary: "[Mormons are the] embodiment of what it means to be American."
 - What do you think accounts for changes in Americans' perception of the Mormon community?
3. What internal and external factors led The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to change its policies and permit blacks to join the priesthood?
 - What has been the impact of this new policy?
4. Why do you think The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints modified its logo?
5. What is the role of missionaries in the church? What challenges do missionaries face?
6. What is the Mormon view on gays, feminists and intellectuals in their community? How does the church address dissent on these views?
7. Consider the development of Mormonism. Why do you think the family unit became a critical component of Mormonism?
8. Why did the Mormon Church vigorously lobby against the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970s?

FEATURED LESSON PLAN:

"Vote Or Veto: How Does Religion Affect Candidates And Voters?"

- Pre-lesson Activity: "Get Up and Stand Out – Social Barometer"
- Part One: "Is the Country Ready to elect a _____ in 2008?"
- Part Two: "Candidates' Candid Views on Religion"
- Part Three: "Put Your Pen Where Your Mouth Is"

Lesson Objectives:

In this unit, students will:

- Learn about the constitutionality of religious tests for office
- Consider if the electorate impose an "unofficial" religious requirement to hold office
- Explore the role of religion in presidential elections
- Evaluate their own attitudes concerning the role of religion in U.S. elections

Materials Needed:

- Student Handout [link] for Pre-lesson Activity: Get Up and Stand Out - Social Barometer (Note: There are two copies on each page that can be cut to save paper.)
- Copies of The Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints' Neutrality Policy [link]
<http://www.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/v/index.jsp?vnextoid=6203d93c8688f010VgnVCM10000176f620aRCD&vnextchannel=726511154963d010VgnVCM1000004e94610aRCD&vnextfmt=tab1>
- Copies for half the class of Senator Barack Obama's *USA Today* Op-Ed piece, "Politicians Need Not Abandon Faith" [link]
http://blogs.usatoday.com/oped/2006/07/politicians_nee.html#more
- Copies for half the class of Senator John F. Kennedy's "Address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association" [link]
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/presidents/35_kennedy/psources/ps_minister.html
- Copies for each student of the chart [link] comparing and contrasting Kennedy's and Obama's statements
- Poster size sheets with prepared quotes

Time Needed:

20 minutes for "Get Up and Stand Out: Social Barometer"

15 minutes for teacher to download documents and prepare poster-size quote sheets

30 minutes for "Is the Country Ready to elect a _____ in 2008?"

30-40 minute for "Candidates' Candid Views on Religion"

10-15 minutes for student poster activity "Put Your Pen Where Your Mouth Is"

Procedure:

Pre-lesson Activity: Get Up and Stand Out - Social Barometer

1. Designate an end of the classroom as "agree strongly" and the other end as "disagree strongly." Indicate that the space in-between is "agree" and "disagree." The teacher can insist there is no neutral position.

2. Posit the following question to the class: *Should a religious test be mandated for political candidates?* Students will not verbally express or share their views. Instead, they will walk to the part of the room that best reflects their views.

3. Encourage students to look around, but still not speak. Pair off students from opposite ends of the barometer as much as possible for a "pair & share" conversation. Distribute the student handout [link] with questions for a brief, small group discussion. Questions include:

- How did it make you feel to commit to a position without explaining yourself?
- To what extent were you affected by your classmates' positions on the barometer?

- With respect to the original question, *Should a religious test be mandated for political candidates*, why are you standing where you are?
 - The final question should be: Are religious tests constitutional? Why or why not?
4. Reconvene as a class. Have students refer to this excerpt from the U.S. Constitution on their handout from the previous group discussion :

The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath of Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.

U.S. Constitution, Article VI

5. Discuss why the Framers included a prohibition on religious tests for holding public office. Encourage students to consider the religious diversity in 18th century America and in contemporary America in their responses.

Part One: Is the Country Ready to elect a _____ in 2008?

1. Post the following information on the board:

- In 1903 Reed Smoot, a Mormon, was selected by the Utah legislature to represent the state of Utah in the U.S. Congress. (NOTE: This process predates the 17th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which provided for direct election of senators.)
- A Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections prevented Smoot from initially taking his Senate seat. After years of investigation the Senate voted against expelling Smoot in 1907.
- Rasmussen Report: Survey of 1,000 Likely Voters, November 16-17, 2006

Would you ever consider voting for a Mormon candidate in a Presidential election?	
Yes	38%
No	43%
Not Sure	19%

2. Conduct a brief class discussion on these moments of American history.

- Ask the class to consider *why* Reed Smoot’s appointment to the U.S. Senate was held suspect in the early 1900s. Make sure the students understand the following points:
 - Only two percent of Mormons engaged in plural marriage or polygamy in the 19th century.
 - The Mormons issued a manifesto ending the practice in 1890.
 - Contemporary bigamists profiled in the news, such as Warren Jeffs or Tom Green, are not members of the mainstream Mormon community and have been condemned by LDS for their bigamist views and practices.

- Ask the class for possible explanations for the poll results. Make sure the students know that former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney is a front-runner Republican candidate for the 2008 presidential election. He is also a Mormon.

3. Distribute copies of LDS policies on political neutrality and instruct the class to read it: [link] <http://www.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/v/index.jsp?vnextoid=6203d93c8688f010VgnVCM100000176f620aRCRD&vnextchannel=726511154963d010VgnVCM1000004e94610aRCRD&vnextfmt=tab1>

Either as a class or in smaller groups, lead a discussion about Mormon participation in American politics.

- Ask the students to identify LDS' position on political engagement of their institutions (their temples).
- Ask the students to identify LDS' position on political engagement of their members.
- Ask the students to consider the results of the Rasmussen Report. To what extent would respondents be impacted if they had read the LDS neutrality statement?

Part Two: Candidates' Candid Views on Religion

1. Divide the class into groups of four students.

Two group members will receive Senator Barack Obama's *USA Today* Op-Ed piece, "Politicians Need Not Abandon Faith." Inform students that Senator Obama is a Democratic presidential candidate for the 2008 election. [link] http://blogs.usatoday.com/oped/2006/07/politicians_nee.html#more

Two group members will receive (then) Senator John F. Kennedy's "Address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association." Inform students that Senator Kennedy was the Democratic presidential candidate for the 1960 election. [link] http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/presidents/35_kennedy/psources/ps_minister.html

2. Instruct students to read their respective articles. While reading, students should:
- Underline or highlight key phrases that they find meaningful
 - Determine their candidate's perspective about the role of religion in U.S. elections

3. Distribute copies of the chart template [link] to each student. In their groups of four, students will share their candidate's perspective about the role of religion in U.S. elections. Groups will compare and contrast Obama's and Kennedy's position by completing the chart. Remind students to consider each document's historical context.

Part Three: Put Your Pen Where Your Mouth Is

1. Prepare five poster-sized pages (flip charts work well) each with one of the following five quotations and hang them around the classroom. If you have a large class, duplicate the quotations.

- "I am not here to run for cardinal... And I'm not going to get into discussions about how I feel about all my church's beliefs and my church's doctrines... All that does, in my view, is play into religious bigotry." Gov. Mitt Romney, 2006
- Pew Forum Survey, August, 2006

Religion's Influence: Growing or Shrinking?

	On American Life - %	On Government - %
Increasing	34	42
Good thing	21	15
Bad thing	11	24
Decreasing	59	45
Good thing	6	8
Bad thing	50	36
No Change (vol.)	2	6
Don't Know	5	2

- "The 2008 election is for president, not for pastor." Charles Mitchell, blogger
- "I think it's important for people who have deep religious views and are in politics to wear their tolerance on their sleeve and to make it clear that, in our eyes, we're all God's people." Senator (and Episcopal minister) John Danforth, 2006
- "My relationship with God, through Christ, has given me meaning and direction. My faith has made a big difference in my personal life and in my public life as well." President George W. Bush

2. Prepare students to be *silent* for this activity. They are to express themselves through writing or drawing on the big paper. Remind students that though the activity will be conducted in silence, the class must feel safe to participate. Obviously, inappropriate communication will not be permitted.

3. Invite students to circulate around the quotations and write or draw their direct reactions to the quotations or to their classmates' reactions.

4. Reconvene as a class to discuss the activity. Suggested prompts include:

- Invite students to share what it was like, yet again, to communicate their positions without speaking.
- Ask them to highlight a student comment or image that stood out to them. Is there strong agreement or disagreement with the statement?

5. Either as a class, in small groups or as an extended homework assignment, students will write a one page op-ed piece highlighting what *they* believe the role of religion should be in U.S. elections. Students should support their views with specific examples from the pre-lesson activity and the featured lesson.

Methods of Assessment:

- Completion of note-taking assignments
- Participation in small group and class discussions
- Completion and quality of op-ed piece

ADDITIONAL LESSONS OR EXTENSION IDEAS**The Geography of Mormonism:**

Students will track the American and international growth of Mormonism. They will read the article [link] "Mormonism and the American Mainstream." They will consider the role of America's Second Great Awakening and the Burnt Over District of upstate New York in influencing Joseph Smith. Students will learn about the international presence of Mormonism by clicking on the map [link] to examine the worldwide geography of missionary work.

Essay: <http://www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/tserve/nineteen/nkeyinfo/nmormon.htm>

Map: <http://www.mission.net/>

Real or Reel? Mormons Depicted in Pop Culture:

Students will compare and contrast the depiction of Mormons in TV programs and film. Students can consider HBO's series, *Big Love*, Trey Parker and Matt Stone's movie, *Orgasmo* or episode #712 of South Park, "All About the Mormons," and Jon Krakauer's book, *Under the Banner of Heaven*."

Persecution of the Mormons:

In this lesson plan by the Constitutional Rights Foundation, students will interpret key documents pertaining to the growth of Mormonism in the 19th century. [link]

http://www.crf-usa.org/bria/bria17_1.htm#mormons

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: A Note about Internet Resources

Students need to be aware that Web sites sometimes present only one view of an issue. Encourage them to think about Web sites even as they are reading. Guiding questions as they review Web sites are: What did you learn from this site? What didn't you learn from this site? Who sponsors this site? What bias might the sponsor have? How current is the site?

WEB SITES:

The Mormons

<http://www.pbs.org/mormons/>

FRONTLINE's and AMERICAN EXPERIENCE'S Web site on *The Mormons*. The Web site provides questions and explanations about Mormonism, offers an interactive map of the Mormons' westward trek, and includes profiles of key people and events in Mormon history and interviews with church leaders, members and historians.

American Prophet: The Story of Joseph Smith

www.pbs.org/americanprophet

This PBS site provides the history of Mormonism, information about LDS doctrine and a timeline of important events in Mormon and American history.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Web site

<http://www.lds.org/portal/site/LDSOrg>

The official Web site of the Mormon Church provides its history, relevant documents and information about its institutions and missionary work.

The Reed-Smoot Hearings

<http://nboman.people.wm.edu/smoot.php>

William & Mary College's site includes transcripts of the 1903 Reed-Smoot Hearings when a Mormon legislator's appointment to the U.S. Senate was held in question and subsequently investigated.

LESSON PLANS

Religion & Ethics Newsweekly

www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/teachers/plans.html

A catalogue of lesson plans developed for this PBS series examine the intersection of religion with American life.

Religion in American History – What to Teach and How

www.firstamendmentcenter.org/PDF/religioninamericanhistory.PDF

"Chapter 7: No Religion Test" deals with the role of religion in the 1908 presidential election. Students can examine documents written by Presidents Taft and Roosevelt concerning this controversy.

ARTICLES

Religion & Ethics – Election of 2008 Preview

www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week1010/cover.html

In the transcript of this episode, *Religion & Ethics* examines the anticipated politicization of religion in the upcoming presidential election.

Religion & Ethics – The Mormons

www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week427/cover.html

This transcript provides interviews with Mormon leaders and families as well as historians.

Divining America – "Mormonism and the American Mainstream"

<http://www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/tserve/nineteen/nkeyinfo/nmormon.htm>

This terrific essay by Donald Scott of City University of New York provides a concise overview of Mormonism and how its development relates to the religious movements of the 19th century.

Adherents.com

http://www.adherents.com/largecom/com_lds.html

This non-sectarian site charts the number of adherents of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (and other religions) worldwide.

Lives of the Saints

<http://www.lawrencewright.com/art-saints.html>

In this 2002 *New Yorker* article, Lawrence Wright examines the growth of the Mormons, their lives, and their financial success.

Kingdom Come – Salt Lake City was just for Starters: The Mormons' True Great Trek Has Been To Social Acceptance And A \$30 Billion Church Empire

<http://www.lds-mormon.com/time.shtml>

In this 1997 *Time* article, David Van Biema explores the economic success of the Mormons and their national and international growth.

BOOKS

Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism

By Richard Lyman Bushman (University of Illinois Press, 1988)

Professor Bushman chronicles the life of Joseph Smith and explores how the Mormon faith developed.

Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling

By Richard Lyman Bushman (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005)

Professor Bushman continues the narrative of Joseph Smith through the end of his life.

The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot: Mormon Apostle

By Kathleen Flake (University of North Carolina Press, 2003)

This book focuses on the controversy surrounding Senator Smoot's appointment to the Senate.

Student Handout

Pre-lesson Activity: "Get Up and Stand Out - Social Barometer"

Note to Students: Discuss the following questions, then review the following excerpt from the U.S. Constitution in preparation for a class discussion:

- How did it make you feel to commit to a position without explaining yourself?
- To what extent were you affected by your classmates' positions on the barometer?
- With respect to the original question, *Should a religious test be mandated for political candidates*, why are you standing where you are?
- Are religious tests constitutional? Why or why not?

The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath of Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.

U.S. Constitution, Article VI

Student Handout

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Student Handout – "Candidates' Candid Views on Religion"

Note to Students: In your small group, compare and contrast Sen. Barack Obama's and President John F. Kennedy's position on the role of religion in U.S. elections by completing this chart. Use the statements that you underlined in your article to guide you in this exercise.

	Kennedy	Obama
Time period of the document. Why is the candidate writing his piece?		
View on separation of church and state. Provide evidence from the text.		
Appropriate role of a candidate's beliefs in an election. Provide evidence from the text.		
Point #1: Appropriate role of a candidate's beliefs in an election. Provide evidence from the text.		
Point #2: Appropriate role of a candidate's beliefs in an election. Provide evidence from the text.		
Point #3: Appropriate role of a candidate's beliefs in an election. Provide evidence from the text.		

After completing this chart, discuss why you think Obama's and Kennedy's view differs on the role of candidates' religion in election.