

Researching Technological Innovations

Help students discover how the White House played a key role in introducing cutting-edge technology that still impacts us today.

Objective

Students will apply primary and secondary sources to present information on historical technology.

Standards

CCSS ELA, Grs. 6–8

RH.1

Cite specific textual evidence from primary and secondary sources

CCRA.W.4

Produce writing developed, organized, and styled to task an audience

CCRA.W.7

Conduct short research projects from focused questions, demonstrating understanding

Time

120 minutes

Materials

- Internet access for student pairs (or computer lab time)
- Tap Into the Tech activity sheet
- Create Your Brochure! activity sheet
- Blank 8½ x 11-inch paper and art supplies
- Welcome to the White House classroom poster



Check out the [White House Experience App](#) to find educational and interactive experiences to further engage students with history. Just scan the code above to get started!

1 ★ **Have** students pair up and brainstorm technologies that are important in their daily lives (for example, phone, school bus, etc.). Then facilitate a class discussion about technologies we use that now seem mundane but were game-changing when first introduced. (Examples: vacuum cleaner, electricity, telegraph, air conditioning, etc.)

2 ★ **Explain** that historically, the White House has hosted, presented, and introduced all kinds of new technologies. In fact, one way we can consider how technology has changed in the United States is to look at how and when new technologies were adopted at the White House. Show the classroom poster, emphasizing the tech callouts. Ask: *What would make a specific technology at the White House a game changer?* Guide students toward criteria such as: enhances human comfort, is more efficient, builds community connections, has a unique purpose. Collect ideas on the board. As a class, decide on five criteria of top technologies.

3 ★ **Pair up** students to research technological advances using the Tap Into the Tech activity sheet. Explain that at the end, they will choose one technology that's most interesting to them. Students over 13 may use [bit.ly/WH-Tech1](#)

and/or [bit.ly/WH-Tech2](#) for internet research; for those under 13, you may print (or project onto the board) some advances from the site, then direct students to use books or child-friendly, COPPA-compliant research sites.

4 ★ **Direct** each pair to create a White House Visitor's Guide brochure that focuses on their chosen technology. Hand out the Create Your Brochure! activity sheet to guide their work in describing their technology, explaining its impact, and drawing conclusions on how it has shaped life since its introduction.

5 ★ **Host** a showcase in which pairs present their brochures, or set up a gallery walk.

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Supporting All Learners

To increase the challenge:

Have students prepare a video or slide presentation to replace or supplement their brochure. Teachers can include a public-speaking rubric.

To decrease the challenge:

Show students how to turn the questions on the Create Your Brochure! sheet into sentence stems to facilitate their writing.

ELA Lesson Online!

Teach students more applications for research with our story-writing activity based on historical setting at [scholastic.com/whitehousehistory](#).

Name _____

Tap Into the Tech

As you start your fact-finding mission on White House innovations, use this chart to collect info. Then choose the technology on your list that's most interesting to use for your final brochure.

The Technology

List four or five technological advances that were adopted at the White House. (Example: the vacuum cleaner.)



Immediate Impact

Explain how the technology improved life. (Example: It made cleaning the many rooms at the White House easier.)



The Bigger Picture

Combine your research and inferencing skills to describe how the technology made life better for all Americans.



Name _____



This chandelier was made by Christoph Palme & Co., a lighting design firm that supplied electric lighting fixtures to the White House in 1902.

Create Your Brochure!

Now that you've chosen your top technology from White House history, it's time to present it in a Visitor's Guide brochure. Follow this planner to help you get creative.

Page 1 ★ Think of the cover as what sells your technology and makes people want to come to the White House to learn about it. On this first page, include a clear title that reveals your technology. Feel free to get clever and catchy! Also, include a great photo or illustration of your innovation. Jot down several possibilities for your title here:

Page 2 ★ Here, give visitors a short history of your innovation. Who invented it, and when was it introduced? What exactly does it do? How does it work?

Page 3 ★ Describe why the technology was adopted at the White House. What issue did it help with? How did it impact the lives of those living and working there at the time?

Page 4 ★ The back cover wraps up your brochure. Give a short report on how this technology impacted the nation at the time. How did it make life easier or better? What problems did it solve? And how has it evolved over time to serve generations of Americans?
