Subject: Social Studies

Estimated Time: 40-45 minutes

Grade Level: 4th and up

National Council for the Social Studies Standard(s):
IV: Individual Development and Identity: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of individual development and identity.
IX: Global Connections: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of global connections and interdependence.

Iowa Standard(s): Standard 2c: The teacher relates ideas and information within and across content areas.


Objective: Students will become familiar with the life of Herbert Hoover and they will examine how Grant Wood portrayed Herbert Hoover’s birthplace.

Lesson Procedures:
1. Have the students carefully examine Grant Wood’s The Birthplace of Herbert Hoover.
2. Answer these questions about the piece of art:
   • Why is Herbert Hoover’s birthplace significant?
   • Describe some of the details you see in the picture.
   • From looking at this piece of art, what kind of childhood do you think Herbert Hoover had? Explain.
3. Together read "Herbert Hoover Biography" and discuss. Revisit the above questions and see how answers have changed.
4. Read together "Herbert Hoover Birthplace" and discuss.
5. (Assessment) Have students answer any of these examples of follow-up questions:
   • What part of Herbert Hoover’s biography do you see in Grant Wood’s painting?
   • What clues tell you that this painting shows Hoover’s birthplace after he had become famous?
   • Why do you think Grant Wood chose to paint it as a tourist attraction rather than how it really looked when Hoover was born there in 1874?
   • What characteristics of Iowa did Grant Wood include in his painting? How might it look different if Hoover was born in another part of the country?
   • Grant Wood wanted to show through this piece of art that ordinary people can make extra-ordinary achievements. (A poor Iowa orphan can grow up to become president.) Do you think that this holds true today? Why or why not?
   • How is this painting of Herbert Hoover’s birthplace like and unlike your own?
Extension Idea: Have students draw a before and after picture of their own birthplaces if they became famous or write a paragraph describing it. Discuss what would change if they became famous.

Additional Resources:
Herbert Hoover Presidential Library & Museum
West Branch, Iowa 319-643-5031 or visit on web: www.hoover.archives.gov

Books
Dennis, Ruth (1986). *The Homes of the Hoovers*. This book was published by the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Association and describes in detail all the homes President Hoover lived in and the stories behind them.


Online Resources
http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents/hh31.html
Biography of Herbert Hoover’s life and related links.

http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/34hoover/34hoover.htm
More information for kids about Herbert Hoover and additional lesson plans for teachers.
Herbert Hoover Biography

Herbert Clark Hoover was born in 1874 in West Branch, Iowa. He lived with his parents and two siblings in a small cottage. His father, Jesse, died of typhoid fever and his mother, Hulda, died of pneumonia, and Herbert became an orphan at age 10. He was raised by his uncles, first in Iowa and then in Oregon.

At age 17, Herbert Hoover began working his way through Stanford University and earned a degree in engineering. Hoover became a very successful mining engineer, making his fortune operating mines in San Francisco, England, Australia, and China. He married Lou Henry in 1899. Lou was actually born in Waterloo, Iowa, but Herbert first met her while they were attending Stanford. They had two sons who became accustomed to traveling the globe.

Though Hoover found personal wealth overseas, he gave up his mining career to direct emergency relief activities in Europe during World War I. He organized an effort to feed and clothe masses of starving people in war-torn Belgium. In 1921, President Harding appointed him Secretary of Commerce. Hoover’s dedication to relief efforts made him a hero. In 1928, Hoover was elected the 31st president of the United States. Hoover’s rags to riches story gave the country hope that anyone can grow up to be president, even a poor orphan boy from Iowa. Hoover took the oath of office in March 1929, when the nation was prospering, but the stock market crashed the following October and he was blamed as the economy fell and unemployment soared. Because of the Great Depression, Hoover was often seen as an unsuccessful president. As a result, he was overwhelmingly defeated by Franklin D. Roosevelt in the next election. However, Hoover was widely praised for his many other accomplishments. For his leadership in war and famine relief, he is remembered as "The Great Humanitarian."
Herbert Hoover Birthplace

This cottage was built by Herbert Hoover's father before he was born. It was home to the future president for the first 6 years of his life.

When it was sold in 1880, the new owner made major changes to it. The original cottage was turned into a kitchen and a two-story house was joined to it with a walkway. When Hoover became president, people from all over the country flocked to West Branch to visit the birthplace. The owners at the time allowed the visitors to tour the landmark for a 10 cent admission.

Always interested in American legends, especially another Iowa boy, Grant Wood traveled from Cedar Rapids to the tiny community of West Branch in September of 1931. The result was The Study for The Birthplace of Herbert Hoover and the painting The Birthplace of Herbert Hoover. Wood did not re-create the scene as it looked at the president's birth; instead he painted it as the tourist attraction it had become.
The Birthplace of Herbert Hoover