



PROFILES IN COURAGE

Teacher's Guide

EDMUND ROSS

CREDITS:

Starring Bradford Dillman, Barry Morse, Simon Oakland, James Westerfield, Kent Smith, Cyril Delevanti, Arlene Martel, and Herschel Bernardi. Written by Andy Lewis. Directed by Gerald Mayer. Produced by Gordon Oliver and Robert Saudek Associates. Inspired by John F. Kennedy's Pulitzer Prize-winning book. **50 minutes.** Guide prepared for Social Studies School Service by Robert D. Barnes, 1983.

OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the relationship of executive and legislative power.
- To discover how close we came to a fundamental change in our form of government.
- To explore the process of impeachment.
- To understand the meaning of moral courage.

BACKGROUND:

With his election to a second term of office, and the Civil War nearly over, President Lincoln intended to follow a policy of liberality and conciliation toward the conquered South. But in Congress, a powerful group of "Radical Republicans," cried for vengeance. But Lincoln was assassinated five days after the war had ended and his successor, Andrew Johnson, did not have the prestige and power required to push his conciliatory program through a hostile congress. Moreover, Johnson was a Southerner and a Democrat, two factors that added to the bitterness of his congressional opposition.

SYNOPSIS:

Congress has passed the Tenure of Office Act, making it illegal for a president to remove a cabinet officer without Senate approval. This is a direct challenge to President Johnson, who wishes to remove his disloyal Secretary of War, Stanton, a holdover from the Lincoln cabinet and a Radical Republican spy.

Johnson, believing the law to be unconstitutional, defiantly appoints General Thomas as "at interim" Secretary of War.

Johnson's defiance gives the Radical Republicans an excuse for impeachment. The stage is set for a confrontation between the legislative and executive branches, to see if Congress has the power to dominate the presidency.

Checking votes for conviction, Senate leaders come to Edmund G. Ross, the junior Senator from Kansas. When his Senate colleague from Kansas, Pomeroy, explains Ross's strong antislavery background, Ross's support for conviction appears certain.

Senator Grimes of Iowa, old and ill, has no love for Johnson, but he is concerned that the proceedings are political and not supported by evidence. Ross is moved by these arguments. Ross views Johnson as a "fool, but not a villain." Ross and Grimes both wonder what a conviction might do to the office of the president.

The vote appears to be close, and pressure mounts on Ross to state his position. A Kansas delegation demands that Ross vote for conviction. Pomeroy suggests that Ross consider his future. In the ensuing days, Ross finds himself urged, cajoled, badgered, and threatened.

After hearing all the evidence, Ross decides there is no way he can vote for conviction. A final threat, from Pomeroy, that Ross will be charged with bribery, serves to only make Ross angry and more committed.

On May 16, 1868, standing against their party and the Senate majority, seven Republican senators, Fressenden, Henderson, Van Winkle, Trumbull, Fowler, Grimes, and Ross vote "not guilty." None are ever elected to the Senate again.

VOCABULARY:

The following words and phrases appear in the program. Teachers may wish to check for student understanding:

impeachment	picket duty (war)
Radical Republicans	grape and cannister
Jayhawker	Black Codes
bigamy	capital punishment
acquittal	abomination
executive	vindicated
expediency	Tenure of Office Act
chivvied about	

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What does Secretary of War Stanton do to remind General Thomas who will remain in charge? Should Thomas have considered the use of force? Explain.
2. How does Judge Newton feel about his role in the treachery directed at Ross? Why does he participate?
3. Senator Sumner, telling Ross that he was not participating in a trial, said: "impeachment is not a punishment, it's simply a removal from office." Is this a persuasive argument? Explain.
4. In explaining why he was going to take the "wide view," Ross explained: "I have no care for Andrew Johnson, but I have some care for the Presidency." What did Ross mean? What do you think might have happened if the vote had gone the other way? Consider the immediate consequences and the "wide view."
5. General Sickles, in an indictment of Johnson, read from the Black Codes, and told Ross of Johnson's action when Sickles suspended them. What did you learn about the Black Codes? What role did Johnson play in their enforcement?

ACTIVITY:

Obtain a copy of the Constitution of the United States. Read in Article I, Section III, Clauses VI and VII, what is said about impeachment trials and punishment. Read further in Article II, Section III, to find out what grounds constitute impeachment.

On August 20, 1974, the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives, submitted three Articles of Impeachment to the House. They accused President Richard Nixon of "high crimes and misdemeanors." Nixon had resigned his office on August 8, 1974, so the articles never came to a vote. Read the charges in the three articles. Hold a class discussion. Assuming the House believes the charges and that the Senate holds a "trial," what will be the fate of the President? Back up your view. Remember the Constitutional requirements.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION:

1. Conduct research on the Reconstruction period following the Civil War. What were the Johnson policies that so angered Radical Republicans? Might Lincoln have advanced similar policies? What would have happened? Why?
2. Imagine that Stevens, Sumner, and the other Radical Republicans had convicted Johnson. What might have happened to our system of government? Support your answer. With Johnson removed, how would the period of Reconstruction (1865-1877) have been different in the South? What would be the relationship of North and South today? Explain.
3. Is there any reason why impeachment shouldn't be allowed for political reasons? How does impeachment work in other representative governments? To what extent were impeachment proceedings against President Nixon politically motivated?