



PROFILES IN COURAGE

Teacher's Guide

GROVER CLEVELAND

CREDITS:

Starring Carroll O'Connor, George Macready, Barbara Feldon, Paul Lambert, Judson Pratt, and John Hoyt. Written by Philip S. Goodman. Directed by Lamont Johnson. 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 examine the emerging political influence of big business in the last decades of the 19th century.
- To discuss the responsibilities of government to citizens, and of citizens to their government.
- To explore the issue of protectionism vs. free trade.
- To understand the meaning of moral courage.

BACKGROUND:

When Grover Cleveland entered office as America's 22nd president in 1885, he was a bachelor, but within a year he had married the beautiful 21-year-old daughter of his late law partner. A previous relationship had produced for Cleveland an illegitimate child and a great deal of public gossip. But it was an earlier incident that now inflamed public sentiment. During the Civil War, while his brothers fought in the Union Army, Cleveland remained home in Buffalo, New York, where he served as district attorney and supported his mother and sisters. The law at the time allowed him to avoid army duty by paying for another man to serve in his place.

In this episode, despite a large surplus in the federal treasury, Cleveland vetoes a number of pension bills for Civil War veterans, enraging the public and causing his "war record" (or lack of one) to become a topic of angry debate.

SYNOPSIS:

We see Grover Cleveland, determined to follow his belief in honest and efficient government. Though the treasury contains a huge surplus, Cleveland will not consider solutions he considers expedient, but unworthy. He vetoes scores of pension bills, arousing the animosity of Civil War veterans. He fights to reduce America's high protective tariff, which burdens the consumer and contributes to the treasury surplus, while powerful business interests rail at him and his advisers warn that he is damaging his chances for re-election.

In an unprecedented move, Cleveland devotes his entire State of the Union message in 1887 to the tariff issue. He is defeated in the presidential election of 1888.

Also unprecedented, Grover Cleveland is returned to office four years later as America's 24th president.

VOCABULARY:

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

supplicant	defamed
G.A.R.	animosity
lobbying	budgeted
dispersed	waving a bloody shirt
pittance	palsy
skulking	conspicuous
testimonial	dastard
hoard	fiscal
graft	paramount
holocaust	consensus
vulnerable	unequivocal
secession	legacy
conscription	

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What groups did Cleveland antagonize with his positions on the pension and tariff bills? Why?
2. What examples did Cleveland give to explain his veto of the "22 private pension bills" on his desk? How did he feel about pensions? Give specific examples to support your answer.
3. "It is right and proper," said Cleveland, "for the people to support the country. It is wrong for the country's government to support the people." What do you think he meant? Do you agree?
4. Cleveland did not participate as a soldier during the Civil War, though he was young and fit. What reasons did he give for not serving? How do you feel about his decision?
5. General Lucius Fairchild admitted that he was filled with "hate" to the point of being a "fanatic." He said, "I can't find it in my heart to forgive..." Have you ever held similar feelings? Are you willing to discuss this difficult issue?
6. Several times Cleveland looks adoringly at his wife Frances and remarks, "You are a pretty little thing." Is she insulted by his remarks? Should she be? Is Frances politically sophisticated? Is she intelligent? Well educated? How do you view the relationship between Grover and Frances? Give supporting examples.
7. Cleveland's adviser, William Whitney, explains how the U.S. Treasury developed a surplus. Can you explain his analogy? What suggestions did Frances make?
8. Why do General Drum, the Secretary of War, and Cleveland agree to return Southern battle flags? What is wrong with this idea?

ACTIVITY:

America is presented today with relentless competition from foreign products. Foreign suppliers have become an integral part of our wholesale distribution system. Protective tariffs have given way to agreements limiting imports, but government "help" often proves ineffective.

Ask each class member to read about the problems of foreign competition faced by U.S. industries such as steel, automobiles, tools, electronics, and textiles. In a class discussion consider what trade policies our government should adopt for the future. Be sure to understand the following terms: laissez-faire, subsidy, protectionism, multinational corporations, world wide money markets, the dollar's foreign-exchange value.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION:

1. When Cleveland issued the order to return the captured Confederate battle flags, General Fairchild, Commander of the G.A.R., shouted hysterically to his audience of veterans, "May God palsy the hand that wrote that order!" Why were attitudes so strong, so long after the war? What issues concern American war veterans today? Find out about Agent Orange.
2. Based on his refusal to agree to the pensions, what do you think Cleveland would have felt about Social Security, welfare, and other entitlement programs? Compare his philosophy on spending and taxing with the policies of Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan. Who do you think he would agree with more? What are some similarities? Differences?