

A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR

# KENNEDY'S LAST DAYS

The Assassination That Defined a Generation

By **BILL O'REILLY**



FOR  
USE WITH  
COMMON CORE  
STATE  
STANDARDS



## KENNEDY'S LAST DAYS

The Assassination That Defined a Generation

**BILL O'REILLY**

A SPECIAL ILLUSTRATED EDITION OF THE #1 NEW YORK TIMES  
BESTSELLING **KILLING KENNEDY**

### ABOUT THE BOOK

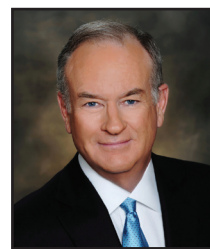
In the first term of his presidency, as the Cold War escalates, John F. Kennedy struggles to contain the growth of Communism while dealing with the many other complexities facing him as president of the United States. In the midst of a 1963 campaign trip to Texas, Kennedy is gunned down by an angry, lonely drifter named Lee Harvey Oswald. The former Marine Corps sharpshooter escapes briefly, but is hunted down, captured, and then shot dead while in police custody.

*Kennedy's Last Days* is a gripping account of the events leading up to the most notorious crime of the twentieth century. Adapted from Bill O'Reilly's bestselling historical thriller, *Killing Kennedy*, this book will have young readers—and grown-ups too—hooked on this fascinating and colorful period of history.

With an unforgettable cast of characters, page-turning action, vivid detail, and art on every spread, *Kennedy's Last Days* is history that reads like a thriller.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Bill O'Reilly** is a former high-school history teacher and the anchor of *The O'Reilly Factor*. He is the author of several bestselling books, including *Killing Kennedy*.



For grades 5 and up

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and color insert, time lines,  
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## Using *Kennedy's Last Days* with the Common Core State Standards

*Kennedy's Last Days* is appropriate for grades 5 to 12 as a supplemental text in history and English classes. The book, while engaging, is a top-notch researched text that uses many primary sources and historical pictures to present Kennedy's 1,036 days in office and his assassination. The Common Core Standards presented here are English Language Arts/Reading examples from the sixth grade; teachers should visit the Common Core State Standards website ([corestandards.org](http://corestandards.org)) to apply their own grade-level equivalents. The subheadings and numerical references will help users easily locate the coordinating standards for specific grade levels.

### Literacy in History/Social Studies

**RH.6-8.1** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

**RH.6-8.2** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

**RH.6-8.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

### English Language Arts: Reading Informational Text

**RI.6.2** Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

**RI.6.5** Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.

**RI.6.8** Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

## PRE-READING ACTIVITY

### Assessing Prior Knowledge

Lead a class discussion on the governmental systems of communism and democracy. Create a Venn diagram comparing communism with democracy. What, if anything, do these two systems have in common? How are they different? Why have they historically been at odds with each other? What do you think is most important to know about each of them? What do you think children in communist countries are taught about capitalism/democracy and America in particular? Why?

Ask pairs of students to brainstorm a list of everything they know (or think they know) about President Kennedy (JFK) and/or his assassination. Next, have students rank their information for accuracy: 1, if they are certain it is correct, to 10, which is a guess. Then, have students write five to ten questions they would like to have answered before they begin reading the text.

As a class activity, divide students into three groups and place a blank poster board in three corners of the room. Add headline questions to each poster.

1. For the first poster, the main headline question is "What was life like in the early 1960s?" Divide this poster into three columns with the subheads: Transportation, Communication, and Entertainment.
2. Divide the second poster into two columns under these headline questions: Who was John F. Kennedy? What important contributions did he make to America?
3. For the third poster, divide it into two columns with these headline questions: What do you know about the assassination of President Kennedy? List any key players and their roles in Kennedy's assassination.

Have each group of students move from poster to poster, adding their own ideas to the previous group's. Then review the posters as a class before reading *Kennedy's Last Days*.

## KEY PLAYERS (refer to pages xiv-xvii in *Kennedy's Last Days*)

Create a bulletin board from the Key Players section of the book. Or have students create a reference of important characters by making a graphic organizer that sorts the information in a way most helpful to them. This will be useful for class discussion and partnership questions.

## DURING AND AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

### Discussion Suggestions

These suggestions can be used individually to check comprehension of the material or for pairs of students to answer together and then follow up with a class discussion.

### PART ONE: The Making of a Hero (Chapters 1-5, pages 1-43)

1. Explain why JFK's inauguration represented a new generation of Americans. During this time, where was Lee Harvey Oswald and what was he doing?
2. List the most interesting fact you learned about everyday life in 1961, the year JFK was elected president.
3. Summarize JFK's heroic deeds aboard *PT-109* during World War II.
4. Explain why the death of JFK's oldest brother, Joe, is perhaps a larger influence on his career in politics than his heroism at war.
5. What convinces Dave Powers to help JFK run for Congress in 1946? What convinces people to vote for this young man?

### PART TWO: The Making of a Leader (Chapters 6-25, pages 45-156)

1. What is a typical day like for JFK while president? What did you find most interesting about a day in the life of an American president?
2. Compare and contrast the private lives of JFK with his assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald. What do the two men have in common, if anything? How have their lives been remarkably different?
3. List the key issues that went wrong for JFK during the Bay of Pigs.
4. Despite many mistakes, how is the president received by the American public?
5. Where has Oswald decided to move his young family?
6. What is America's reaction to JFK's wife, Jackie? What role does she play in the White House?
7. Where did Oswald decide to move to once in the United States again? Why does this city match Oswald's discontent?
8. Why is Oswald being tracked by the FBI? What is suspicious about this man?
9. Summarize what the "big trouble" is that JFK must now face with Cuba.
10. Describe how JFK responds to the Cuban missile crisis and how he reveals the information to the American public. How does the Russian leader Khrushchev respond?
11. Explain how close the U.S. and Russia come to all-out nuclear war. How is the crisis resolved? Do you think JFK handled the crisis well? Why?
12. Define the role of U.S. Secret Service agents during the JFK presidency. How does JFK make their job more difficult with his actions? Meanwhile, how is Oswald acting in Dallas?
13. Explain why JFK has 16,000 pilots and soldiers inside Vietnam, knowing that it is a conflict they cannot win.
14. Describe Lee Harvey Oswald's first attempt at an assassination. What is his motivation? Why is he so disappointed with the results? What does this reveal about his character?
15. While 70% of America loves the president and his family, 30% seem to despise him deeply. What are the issues that divide the country?
16. Summarize what happened in Birmingham, Alabama, on May 3, 1963. How does it gain the notice of President Kennedy and ultimately lead to his involvement in the issue? How is the Civil Rights Movement a complicated issue for the Kennedy presidency?
17. What is ironic about Oswald's voracious reading in the summer of 1963? What does he hope to do someday?
18. On August 23, 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. delivers his famous "I Have a Dream" speech to 250,000 people in the shadow of the Lincoln Memorial. Explain JFK's reaction to this historic event in his words and in his actions.
19. What event at the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, gains the attention of the nation and the world? Did you know about this event before reading this book? What surprised you about it?
20. How does JFK's campaign trip to Montana convince him to be aggressive in Texas where he is not popular?
21. Why is Oswald despondent after his trip to Mexico? What does this reveal about his state of mind?

### **PART THREE: Dallas, Texas—November 1963** (Chapters 26-41, pages 157-239)

1. Name JFK's trusted advisers. Why do they urge JFK to cancel the "Big D" portion of his campaign trip in Texas?
2. Who is James Hosty Jr. and why does he visit Ruth Paine? What does he learn from the woman who is sheltering Oswald's young family?
3. Who is in charge of protecting JFK when he travels? How does this Special Agent prepare for JFK's Dallas visit?
4. List the rules that motorcades followed for both protection and visibility. How did the Kennedy motorcade through Dallas break these rules?
5. How is JFK received in Fort Worth? What may be his best political decision of this trip?
6. How does Oswald prepare for his despicable deed? How does JFK show he is not afraid of Texas and her people? What decisions could have changed this fateful day in history?
7. What advantages does Oswald have to make his plan work? In his own mind, what is he hoping for?
8. Where exactly do the bullets land? How does JFK's back problem give Oswald the advantage he needs?
9. Describe Jackie's response to the tragic events. How does she try to protect JFK and his appearance to the public even in death?
10. How do important people and everyday citizens learn of the president's assassination? What was the most important news event that you remember hearing or reading about recently? How did you react?
11. How does Oswald try to escape? Who else's life is sacrificed? Explain how he is captured.
12. Describe the scene where Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson takes the oath to become the next president and his first address to the American public as their new leader.
13. Where is the president's body before the public ceremony? Who was specifically invited to attend?
14. What fate meets Lee Harvey Oswald? Who does it? Why?

### **PART FOUR: The Making of a Legend** (Chapters 42-43, pages 241-255)

1. How did the United States mourn the death of JFK? How did people show their respect?
2. List and briefly summarize each of the major legacies of JFK's short presidency.

### **EPILOGUE** (pages 256-259)

What most influenced the author Bill O'Reilly's career? Who do you choose as your own inspiration or role model?

### **AFTERWORD** (pages 260-267)

Review the historical details of the key figures mentioned in this section.

<b>KEY FIGURE</b>	<b>Write a one-sentence summary about each person's life <i>after</i> JFK's assassination.</b>
Jackie Kennedy	
Caroline Kennedy	
John F. Kennedy Jr.	
Lyndon B. Johnson	
Robert F. (Bobby) Kennedy	
Jack Ruby	
Martin Luther King Jr.	
Marguerite Oswald	
Marina Oswald (and daughters)	
Robert Oswald	

## JOHN F. KENNEDY'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS, DELIVERED ON JANUARY 20, 1961

(pages 272-279)

Provide the definition for the following rhetorical devices, then allow students to work in small groups to find examples in Kennedy's famous speech.

Rhetorical device	Defined	Example from the speech
Hyperbole	A statement of exaggeration that emphasizes a concept.	"And the glow from that fire can truly light the world."
Metaphor	A figure of speech that compares objects or ideas without using <i>like</i> or <i>as</i> .	
Alliteration	The repetition of consonant sounds usually at the beginning of words in the same line; adds a poetic quality.	
Allusion	An implied or indirect reference to a famous work of literature (often the holy book of the culture).	
Anaphora	The repetition of words at the beginning of phrases, used for effect.	

## JOHN AND JACKIE KENNEDY: SOME FAMOUS AND INTERESTING WORDS

(pages 280-282)

Illustrate one of the quotes included in this section of *Kennedy's Last Days*, and turn it into an inspirational poster. You may use historic photographs (give credit, however) or create your own art.

## THE ZAPRUDER FILM: A MOMENT-BY-MOMENT RECORD (page 282)

Warning: This film on YouTube is graphic and may not be appropriate for viewing in classes younger than high school.

## EVERYBODY'S TALKING ABOUT . . . SOME FACTS ABOUT THE EARLY 1960s

(pages 285-289)

In small groups, create similar lists for this time period and compare them to the ones featured in the book. Have groups create lists under the same topics to include today's current pop culture and cost of living.

## TIME LINE (pages 290-296)

Assign key events from the time line in this section for students to conduct research. Have them create a single slide for a PowerPoint presentation that represents the key information about the event. Compile these into a resource for the book study or for review of the text as a whole.

## PLACES TO VISIT (pages 297-299)

Research or visit the recommended places listed in this section. Have students write a persuasive paragraph about which place they would most like to visit and why.

## RECOMMENDED WEBSITES (pages 301-302)

Allow students time to explore some or all of the Internet resources suggested in the book. Have them evaluate the websites for quality by rating the following characteristics on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = inferior/pathetic; 10 = highest quality/awesome), then discuss the results as a class.

Rate (1–10)	Website name	Notes
	Organization of material	
	Ease of navigation	
	Visual appeal	
	Use of pictures, maps, time lines	
	List of references/bibliography	
	Author identified	
	Copyright or dated materials	

	Average Rating
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## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

### Reading Strategy: QPS (Quote, Paraphrase, Summarize)

Good readers need to stay engaged with the text. Teach your students the difference between quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing nonfiction text and they will have the skills necessary to tackle any research project or rigorous text. Assign chapters of the book to students, either as cooperative pairs or small groups.

Reading strategy	Task
<b>QUOTE</b>	Find a <b>KEY QUOTE</b> from the chapter or excerpt that best represents the main idea of this section. (It would be a quote that could help someone pass a pop quiz even if they forgot to do the reading.)
<b>PARAPHRASE</b>	Choose a <b>KEY SELECTION</b> (a paragraph or two) from the text and <b>TAKE NOTES</b> in your own words: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read carefully</li> <li>2. Close the book</li> <li>3. Write bullet points with as few words as possible</li> </ol>
<b>SUMMARIZE</b>	<b>RETELL</b> the <b>KEY ASPECTS</b> of the chapter or selection in a well-phrased sentence or two in your own words. (This is what you would <b>TELL A FRIEND</b> who forgot to read the chapter.)

## Vocabulary Context

Using context clues, have students insert the correct word from the book. The following examples are from Chapters 1 to 12; create other examples if needed.

patriarch   prominent   rejuvenation   smitten   dignitaries  
ordeal   renovation   enthralled   portable   refined

1. "John Kennedy was born into wealth and has a \_\_\_\_\_ manner of speaking that would seem to distance him from many people." (Chapter 1)
2. "Normally, having just one of these \_\_\_\_\_ at an event means heightened security. Having all of them at the inaugural, sitting together, is a security nightmare." (Chapter 1)
3. "Teens have \_\_\_\_\_ record players, small square boxes that play vinyl singles." (Chapter 2)
4. "His staff made sure to put it in a \_\_\_\_\_ place when they moved him in." (Chapter 3)
5. "At this point in their \_\_\_\_\_, racked by hunger and excruciating thirst, they preferred capture to certain death." (Chapter 3)
6. "All nine Kennedy children obey the \_\_\_\_\_. John Kennedy will one day liken the relationship to that of puppets and their puppet master." (Chapter 4)
7. Other great figures in history such as Winston Churchill napped during the day. For Kennedy, it is a means of \_\_\_\_\_. (Chapter 6)
8. "But she also has a major project—an extensive \_\_\_\_\_ of the White House." (Chapter 7)
9. "In fact, it earns the first lady a special Emmy Award. America is now \_\_\_\_\_. Jacqueline Kennedy is a superstar." (Chapter 9)
10. "But the president takes a larger view, realizing that America is \_\_\_\_\_ by such a young first family and wants to hear about their daily life." (Chapter 12)

## History

Primary sources are those documents that feature first-hand accounts and information of a time period, a person, or an event. In pairs, review the Bibliography (pages 303-305) and highlight any materials that would be considered a primary source. Also review the photographs, maps, and other documents within the book, and discuss whether they would be considered primary or secondary sources.

For an amazing reference in the use of primary documents, allow students to peruse the John F. Kennedy collection at the Library of Congress ([loc.gov/rr/program/bib/presidents/kennedy](http://loc.gov/rr/program/bib/presidents/kennedy)).

## Drama

Have students write a monologue (a speech given by a single character who addresses the audience directly, often onstage alone) from the viewpoint of one of the key players involved in the assassination of Kennedy. Students should write a draft of the piece and have it peer-edited before performing it for the class.

## Art

Take your students through a tour of art popular during the 1960s (with several slides relating directly to the Kennedy assassination) at the Walker Art Center website ([artsconnected.org/collection/118487/art-in-the-1960s](http://artsconnected.org/collection/118487/art-in-the-1960s)). Have students create a piece of art (or perhaps clothing or music) inspired by the O'Reilly book in one of the styles popular during the 1960s