



The Presidential Medal of Freedom An Arizona Connection

A Lesson Plan from the Citizenship Series

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Presidential Medal of Freedom: The Arizona Connection Lesson Ideas

The Presidential Medal of Freedom has been awarded to at least three Arizona residents. This lesson highlights the accomplishments of Gerda Weissmann Klein, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor (ret.) and Senator Barry Goldwater. The lesson also includes a brief history of the Presidential Medal of Freedom since its inception in 1945. The concepts included in this lesson are aligned to the Rights, Responsibilities, and Roles of Citizenship (PO 1-3) in the Civics Strand of the Arizona Social Studies Standard for seventh and eighth grade.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will identify the accomplishments of Arizona residents who have been recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom (Sandra Day O'Connor – 2009; Barry Goldwater – 1986; Gerda Weissmann Klein – 2010).
2. Students will demonstrate their understanding of:
 - the purpose of the Presidential Medal of Freedom.
 - meritorious behavior worthy of the Presidential Medal of Freedom
 - the benefits of community service.
 - the character traits (e.g., respect, responsibility, fairness, involvement) important to the preservation and improvement of constitutional democracy in the United States.
 - the importance of citizens being actively involved in the democratic process (i.e., voting, student government, involvement in political decision making, analyzing issues, petitioning public officials).

Students can demonstrate their understanding of the objectives by:

- Designing a poster
- Researching the life of Arizona resident Gerda Weissmann Klein, Sandra Day O'Connor or Barry Goldwater
- Writing a song
- Writing and producing a play
- Producing a video of community service activities
- Planning a community or school service project
- Writing a biography of recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom
- Creating a collage of examples of meritorious behavior worthy of the Presidential Medal of Freedom

History of the Presidential Medal of Freedom

The Medal of Freedom was established in 1945 by President Harry S. Truman to honor civilians for their service during World War II. The first Medal of Freedom was awarded in 1946. In 1963, President John F. Kennedy issued an executive order and added the word Presidential to the award. According to Executive Order 11085, the Presidential Medal of Freedom may be awarded by the President any person who has made an especially meritorious contribution to:

- (1) the security or national interests of the United States,
- (2) world peace, or
- (3) cultural or other significant public or private endeavors

Key Concepts

Executive Order

civilians

meritorious

significant

contribution

cultural

endeavors

The Presidential Medal of Freedom is the highest civilian award given by the President of the United States. The Presidential Medal of Freedom can be awarded to citizens, both U.S. and foreign citizens and military personnel.

What does the Medal look Like?

The medal has a golden star with white enamel. The background of the star is in the form of a red pentagon. The gold circle in the center of the star has a blue background with 13 gold stars. Five Golden American Bald Eagles form a ring with their wings spread between the points of the star. The Presidential Medal of Freedom hangs on a blue ribbon with white stripes on the edges and is worn around the neck.



Who has received the Presidential Medal of Freedom?

Since 1946 the Presidential Medal of Freedom has been awarded to approximately 257 recipients from many different walks of life. Here are just a few:

Examples of Presidential Medal of Freedom Recipients

U.S. Presidents	Activists/Humanitarians	Sports Figures	Entertainers	Religious	Political Leaders
George H.W. Bush	Gerda Weissmann Klein	Jesse Owens	Bill Cosby	Mother Theresa	Sandra Day O'Connor
Ronald Reagan	César Chávez	Billie Jean King	Frank Sinatra	Dr. Billie Graham	Barry Goldwater
John F. Kennedy	Martin Luther King	Roberto Clemente	Walt Disney	Pope John Paul II	Edward Kennedy

THE ARIZONA CONNECTION

Gerda Klein, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and Barry Goldwater are three residents of Arizona who were awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Gerda Klein is a 2011 recipient; Sandra Day O'Connor was awarded her medal in 2009; and Barry Goldwater was a recipient in 1986. All three of these citizens were awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom for their meritorious citizenship.

Gerda Weissmann Klein – Awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2010 by President Barack Obama

For more than six decades, Gerda Klein has captivated audiences worldwide with her powerful message of hope, inspiration, love and humanity. In her speeches and books she draws from her wealth of life experiences – from surviving the Holocaust and meeting her future husband on the day of her liberation, to her journey to the United States where she raised her family and has fought to promote tolerance and combat hunger.



Gerda was born May 8, 1924 in Bielsko, Poland. In 1939 her life changed forever when German troops invaded her hometown of Bielsko. From 1939 until the end of World War II she lived in fear and deprivation. After being separated from her brother shortly after the invasion and from her parents in 1942, she worked in slave labor and concentration camps until she was forced to walk in a 350-mile death march. She never lost the will to live. When World War II ended in 1945, Gerda was left homeless and without family or friends. Despite all that was lost, she found a fairy-tale ending when she married her liberator, U.S. Army Intelligence officer, Kurt Klein. Two years after she immigrated to the United States as Kurt's wife, Gerda became an American citizen.

Gerda Klein cherishes her American citizenship and the opportunities this country has given her. As someone who was sold as a slave laborer in Nazi Germany, she brings a unique perspective to the meaning of immigration and citizenship. She has always marveled at the irony and shared bond of those who were brought to America as slaves and those, like her, who were slaves in another country and came to America seeking freedom. They and their descendents built this country, created its rich tapestry and have made innumerable contributions as citizens.

One of the most remarkable chapters in Gerda Weissmann's life began when U.S. Army Lieutenant Kurt Klein – a refugee of German Jewish descent – liberated her on May 7, 1945, the day before her 21st birthday. Gerda remembers young Lieutenant Klein returning her humanity to her when he treated her with concern and respect. The story of Gerda and Kurt's meeting and their life together is documented in her autobiography, *All But My Life*, which has been in print for 53 years, in 62 editions and has been read by countless students around the world.

All But My Life is the foundation for the documentary film, "One Survivor Remembers" which was produced by Home Box Office (HBO) and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM). The film won the 1995 Academy Award for Documentary Short Subject and the 1994-95 Primetime Emmy for Outstanding Information Special. In 1998, a public foundation, the Gerda and Kurt Klein Foundation, was established to honor the Klein's mission to promote tolerance and community service through the creation of two nationally recognized educational programs. The Klein Foundation partnered with Southern Poverty Law Center/Teaching Tolerance to create a teaching kit distributed to more than 116,000 schools, reaching over 11 million students across the globe. In 2003, the Gerda and Kurt Klein Foundation partnered with TIME Classroom to create Stand Up, Speak Out, Lend A Hand which has been sent to over 22,000 middle and high school teachers. This curriculum shares Gerda Klein's experiences as the basis for teaching students about the importance of respect, responsibility and the acceptance of differences. The curriculum also provides unique service learning activities and resources. Through the lessons of history, these educational programs provide students the opportunity to learn from the past and take responsibility for making a difference in their future.

In 2008, Gerda founded *Citizenship Counts* as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The mission of *Citizenship Counts* is to inspire and empower middle and high school students throughout the United States by engaging them in a civics education curriculum that builds a better understanding of the value and responsibilities of citizenship. The *Citizenship Counts* curriculum engages American youth to be involved in their communities, to be responsible, participatory and socially-just citizens and creates a greater awareness and appreciation among all Americans about the benefits of living in a diverse, inclusive and democratic country. *Citizenship Counts* advances an interactive, multi-disciplinary curriculum that culminates in students planning and hosting a community-based naturalization ceremony in their schools. The Citizenship Counts program can be accessed at <http://www.citizenshipcounts.org>.

Sandra Day O'Connor – Awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2009 by President Barack Obama

Sandra Day O'Connor was the first woman to be appointed to the Supreme Court of the United States. She was appointed by President Ronald Reagan in 1981 and became the 102nd Justice to sit on the high court.

O'Connor was born in El Paso, Texas in 1930 and grew up on her family's ranch in Southeastern Arizona. When she was of school age, she went to live with her grandmother in El Paso and attended school there.

Justice O'Connor graduated with Great Distinction from Stanford University with a major in economics. She went on to law school at Stanford where she served on the Law Review. It was in law school that Sandra Day met John O'Connor. The two were married shortly after graduation. They had three sons.



In the early 1950's it was difficult for women to find positions as attorneys but she was eventually hired as a Deputy County Attorney of San Mateo County, California, and when they moved to Europe, she became a civilian attorney for Quartermaster Market Center in Frankfurt, Germany. When the O'Connors returned from Germany, she practiced law in Phoenix. She served as the Assistant Attorney General of Arizona for four years from 1965 to 1969. In 1969 Sandra Day O'Connor was appointed to the Arizona State Senate and was reelected to that office for two more terms. She became the first woman to serve as the majority leader of a state Senate anywhere in the country.

In 1975 O'Connor was elected judge of the Maricopa County Superior Court in Phoenix, Arizona where she served from 1975 to 1979. (Since that time, the law was changed and judges are now appointed.)

On July 7, 1981 President Reagan appointed Sandra Day O'Connor as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. She was confirmed by the United States Senate on September 22, 1981 and took the oath of office on September 25, 1981. Justice O'Connor was the first woman to sit on the Supreme Court, a position she held for 25 years until her retirement in 2006.

When O'Connor retired she pursued her interest in civic education and assembled a team to develop a program for teaching middle school children about civics with a specific focus on the judiciary. Her passion for developing a civic education program was realized through iCivics, an online program for middle school students. The program is game-based with lesson plans for teachers to reinforce critical

civics concepts. The program is highly successful and is used in schools across the country. You can find the program at <http://www.icivics.org>.

Barry Goldwater - Awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1986 by President Ronald Reagan

Goldwater was born in 1909 in Phoenix, in what was then the Arizona Territory. He was the son of Baron Goldwater and his wife, Hattie Josephine Williams. His father's family started Goldwater's which became one of the largest department stores in Phoenix.

Goldwater graduated from Staunton Military Academy, a private school in Virginia, and attended the University of Arizona for one year. Barry took over the family business after his father's death in 1930.

In 1934, he married Margaret "Peggy" Johnson. They had four children: Joann, Barry, Michael, and Peggy. Barry was widowed in 1985. In 1992 he married Susan Wechsler.



Goldwater received a reserve commission in the United States Army Air Force during World War II. He retired as a command pilot from the Air Force Reserve with the rank of Major General. At the time of his retirement he had flown 165 different types of aircraft.

Goldwater was influential in creating the United States Air Force Academy. The Visitor Center at the USAF Academy is now named in his honor. As a Colonel he founded the Arizona Air National Guard (Delete the comma) and desegregated it two years before the rest of the US military. Goldwater was also instrumental in pushing the pentagon to support desegregation of the Armed Services.

Goldwater entered Phoenix politics in 1949 when he was elected to the City Council. In 1952 he was elected to the United States Senate. In 1964, he left the Senate to run for President as the Republican candidate. He ran against the Democratic candidate, Lyndon Johnson, who won the election. Goldwater is often referred to as "Mr. Conservative". His granddaughter, CC Goldwater documented his life in an HBO documentary called *Mr. Conservative: Goldwater on Goldwater*.

In 1916, Goldwater visited the Hopi Reservation where he bought his first Kachina doll. He continued to collect Kachina dolls and, over time, his collection increased to 437 dolls. In 1969 Goldwater generously donated his collection to the Heard Museum in Phoenix. (delete in 1969.) Over half of the Kachina dolls at the Heard Museum were donated by Senator Goldwater.

Goldwater received a camera from his wife on their first Christmas together, which sparked his interest in photography. He became an accomplished photographer, known for his photographs of Native Americans and Western landscapes. Goldwater contributed his photographs of Arizona to *Arizona Highways*. He donated approximately 15,000 of his images to three Arizona institutions.

Three books were published with his photographs: *People and Places*, from 1967; *Barry Goldwater and the Southwest*, from 1976; and *Delightful Journey*, first published in 1940 and reprinted in 1970.

Goldwater's son, Michael Goldwater, formed the Goldwater Family Foundation with the goal of making his father's photography available via the internet. The site, *Barry Goldwater Photographs*, was launched in September 2006. Goldwater's photographs can be found at:
<http://www.barrygoldwaterphotographs.com/>.

In 1986, The Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Program was established by Congress. The goal of the scholarship is to provide (delete a) assistance to highly qualified scientists, mathematicians, and engineers by awarding scholarships to college students who intend to pursue careers in these fields. The Scholarship is considered one of the most prestigious awards in the U.S. for students interested in studying science. It is awarded to about 300 students nationwide in the amount of \$7500 per academic year. The scholarship honors Goldwater's interest in science and technology.

Senator Goldwater died in 1998 at the age of 89. He died in his home in Paradise Valley, Arizona, of complications from a stroke. A nine-foot bronze memorial statue of Goldwater was erected in a small park near his home to honor his meritorious service.



2011 Presidential Medal of Freedom Award Winners¹

Gerda Weissmann Klein

Gerda Weissmann Klein is a Jewish Holocaust survivor who has written several books about her experiences. After Nazi Germany took over her homeland of Poland, Klein was separated from both her parents: they were sent to Auschwitz and she to a series of labor and concentration camps. In 1945, she was sent on a forced 350-mile death march to avoid the advance of Allied forces. She was one of the minority who survived the forced journey. In May 1945, Klein was liberated by forces of the United States Army in Volary, Czechoslovakia, and later married Army Lieutenant Kurt Klein, who liberated her camp. A naturalized citizen, she recently founded Citizenship Counts, an organization that teaches students to cherish the value of their American citizenship. Klein has spoken to audiences of all ages and faith around the world about the value of freedom and has dedicated her life to promoting tolerance and understanding among all people.

President George H. W. Bush

George Herbert Walker Bush was the 41st President of the United States. Prior to that, he was Vice President in the Reagan Administration, Director of Central Intelligence, Chief of the U.S. Liaison's Office to the People's Republic of China, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, and a Member of the House of Representatives from the 7th District of Texas. He served in the Navy during World War II. President Bush and President Clinton worked together to encourage aid for victims of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004.

Chancellor Angela Merkel

Angela Merkel is the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. She is the first woman and first East German to serve as Chancellor of a unified Germany, which this year marks its 20th anniversary. She has often said that freedom is the happiest experience of her life. Chancellor Merkel was born in Hamburg but was raised in what was then Communist East Germany after her family moved to Templin. Her political career began when she joined the new Democratic Awakening party in 1989 after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In 1990, as West and East Germany merged into one reunited country, her party joined with the Christian Democratic Union, and she was elected to the German parliament. She has been chairman of the CDU since April 2000 and was recently reelected to another term.

Congressman John Lewis

John Lewis is an American hero and a giant of the Civil Rights Movement. He served as chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), helped to organize the first lunch-counter sit-in in 1959 at the age of 19, and was the youngest speaker at the 1963 March on Washington. In May 1961, he participated in the initial Freedom Ride, during which he endured violent attacks in Rock Hill, South Carolina, and Montgomery, Alabama. In 1964, he helped to coordinate the Mississippi Freedom Project, and, in 1965, he led the Selma-to-Montgomery march to petition for voting rights where marchers were brutally confronted in an incident that became known as “Bloody Sunday.” Eight days later, President Johnson addressed a joint session of Congress, condemned the violence in Selma, and called for passage of the Voting Rights Act, which was enacted within months. Since 1987, John Lewis has continued his service to the nation as the U.S. Representative for Georgia’s 5th District, which encompasses all of Atlanta.

John H. Adams

John H. Adams co-founded the Natural Resources Defense Council in 1970. Adams served as Executive Director and, later, as president of the nonprofit environmental advocacy group until 2006. His tenure is unparalleled by the leader of any other environmental organization. Rolling Stone writes: “If the planet has a lawyer, it’s John Adams.”

Maya Angelou

Dr. Maya Angelou is a prominent and celebrated author, poet, educator, producer, actress, filmmaker, and civil rights activist, who is currently the Reynolds Professor of American Studies at Wake Forest University. She has served on two presidential committees, was awarded the Presidential Medal for the Arts in 2000 and the Lincoln Medal in 2008.

Warren Buffett

Warren Buffett is an American investor, industrialist, and philanthropist. He is one of the most successful investors in the world. Often called the “legendary investor Warren Buffett,” he is the primary shareholder, Chairman and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway. Mr. Buffett has pledged that all of his shares in Berkshire Hathaway – about 99 percent of his net worth – will be given to philanthropic endeavors. He is a co-founder of The Giving Pledge, an organization that encourages wealthy Americans to devote at least 50 percent of their net worth to philanthropy.

Jasper Johns

American artist Jasper Johns has produced a distinguished body of work dealing with themes of perception and identity since the mid-1950s. Among his best known works are depictions of familiar objects and signs, including flags, targets and numbers. He has incorporated innovative approaches to materials and techniques, and his work has influenced pop, minimal, and conceptual art.

Dr. Tom Little (Posthumous)

Dr. Tom Little was an optometrist who was brutally murdered on August 6, 2010, by the Taliban in the Kuran Wa Munjan district of Badakhshan, Afghanistan, along with nine other members of a team returning from a humanitarian mission to provide vision care in the remote Parun valley of Nuristan. Dr. Little and his wife, Libby, lived and worked in Afghanistan for three decades beginning in 1976, raising three daughters and providing vision, dental and mother/child care to the people of that country

through the NOOR program (Noor means “light” in Persian) that Dr. Little ran for the International Assistance Mission.

Yo-Yo Ma

Yo-Yo Ma is considered the world’s greatest living cellist, recognized as a prodigy since the age of five whose celebrity transcends the world of classical music. Born in Paris, Ma was a child prodigy who went on to study with Leonard Rose in New York. He made his Carnegie Hall debut at age nine. He was the recipient of the Avery Fisher Prize in 1978, and, in 1991, Harvard awarded him an honorary doctorate in music. He serves as Artistic Director of the Silk Road Project, and has won sixteen Grammy awards. He is known especially for his interpretations of Bach and Beethoven, and for his ability to play many different styles of music, including tango and bluegrass. He serves on the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities.

Sylvia Mendez

Sylvia Mendez is a civil rights activist of Mexican and Puerto Rican descent. As an eight-year-old, her parents attempted to enroll Mendez in an all-white school in their community, but were denied entry at and were told to go to the school for Mexican children. Her father and other parents sued and prevailed. The Mendez v. Westminster case was a landmark decision in the civil rights movement against segregation. Mendez currently travels around the country giving speeches on the value of a good education.

Stan Musial

Stan “The Man” Musial is a baseball legend and Hall of Fame first baseman for the St. Louis Cardinals. Musial played 22 seasons for the Cardinals from 1941 to 1963. A 24-time All-Star selection, Musial accumulated 3,630 hits and 475 home runs during his career, was named the National League’s Most Valuable Player three times, and was a member of three World Series championship teams. Musial also served as the Cardinals’ general manager in 1967, when the team once again won the World Series.

Bill Russell

Bill Russell is the former Boston Celtics’ Captain who almost single-handedly redefined the game of basketball. Russell led the Celtics to a virtually unparalleled string of eleven championships in thirteen years and was named the NBA’s Most Valuable Player five times. The first African American to coach in the NBA—indeed he was the first to coach a major sport at the professional level in the United States—Bill Russell is also an impassioned advocate of human rights. He marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and has been a consistent advocate of equality.

Jean Kennedy Smith

In 1974, Jean Kennedy Smith founded VSA, a non-profit organization affiliated with the John F. Kennedy Center that promotes the artistic talents of children, youth and adults with disabilities. From 1993 to 1998, Smith served as U. S. Ambassador to Ireland, and played a pivotal role in the peace process. Smith is the youngest daughter of Joseph and Rose Kennedy and is the Secretary of the Board of Trustees of the Kennedy Center.

John J. Sweeney

John J. Sweeney is the current President Emeritus of the AFL-CIO, and served as President of the AFL-CIO from 1995 to 2009. The son of Irish immigrants, a domestic worker and a bus driver in the Bronx, he

worked his way up in the labor movement to become President of the Service Employees International Union, growing the union to serve as a strong voice for working people. As President of the AFL-CIO, he revitalized the American labor movement, emphasizing union organizing and social justice, and was a powerful advocate for America's workers.

1. Retrieved from the Whitehouse at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/11/17/president-obama-names-presidential-medal-freedom-recipient>

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