



# Foreign Friends and Foes

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Lesson Guide

US History and US Government

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BENJAMIN HARRISON PRESIDENTIAL SITE

#23<sup>RD</sup>  
IN  
THE 21<sup>ST</sup>



# Foreign Friends and Foes

Foreign relations and policy have always played a key role in the United States' interactions with the world. While some presidents have taken a hands-off approach, others, like Benjamin Harrison, believed in active engagement. During his presidency, Harrison worked closely with his Secretary of State, James G. Blaine, to strengthen America's international standing. His administration took a firm stance on defending national interests, as seen in conflicts like the near war with Chile, while also promoting cooperation, such as negotiating agreements over seal hunting with Great Britain. One of Harrison's most significant contributions to foreign policy was the organization of the first Pan-American Conference in 1889. This meeting aimed to establish trade agreements, address common issues, and solidify the U.S. as a leader in the Western Hemisphere. The conference set a precedent for future diplomatic collaboration among the nations of North, Central, and South America, ultimately leading to the formation of the Organization of American States (OAS). These organizations continue to foster diplomatic relations and cooperation between American nations today. In the 21st century, the U.S. remains deeply involved in global affairs through organizations like the United Nations, which promotes peace, security, and human rights worldwide. The foundations laid by Harrison's Pan-American efforts continue to influence international diplomacy, reinforcing the idea that strong alliances are crucial for maintaining global stability. As Harrison once said, "Our relationships with foreign powers should be characterized by friendliness and respect," a principle that remains essential in today's world.

Students will examine how foreign policy has evolved over America's history. George Washington's foundational advice on neutrality and avoiding "unwise or unneeded alliances." They will then analyze James Monroe's Doctrine, understanding how it asserted a more protective, yet still regionally focused, stance for the Western Hemisphere against European expansion. Students then look at Benjamin Harrison's presidency, showcasing his administration's shift towards a more active and globally-minded foreign policy, epitomized by the groundbreaking Pan-American Conference. This historical understanding is essential for tracing the continued evolution of U.S. foreign policy into the 20th and 21st centuries, providing a vital context for later presidential approaches, including those of Theodore Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and George W. Bush. Ultimately, the lesson illuminates how the decisions of past leaders, like Benjamin Harrison, continue to shape America's role in the world and remain relevant today in the current debates and situations of the 21st century.

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## Foreign Friends and Foes

# Materials and Outline

### 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Indiana State Standards

4.H.1: Identify and describe important individuals, events, and movements that have shaped Indiana and the nation from early settlement to the present.

### 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Indiana State Standards

8.C.2: Identify and explain the roles of political parties, interest groups, the media, and various elected and appointed officials in public policy debates.

8.H.15 Define nationalism and explain how it affected domestic policy, foreign policy, and the development of an industrial economy during this period. Examples: Monroe Doctrine, American System.

8.E.5 Explain and evaluate examples of domestic and international interdependence throughout United States history.

### US Government and History Indiana State Standards

USG.3.9 Analyze the election of Benjamin Harrison, his approach to the presidency, his relationship to the legislative branch, and his re-election defeat, considering the effects of party politics and public opinion.

USG.4.2 Identify and explain world issues, including political, cultural, demographic, economic, and environmental challenges that affect the United States foreign policy in specific regions of the world.

USG.4.3: Analyze the role of the United States in international organizations, including the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and regional agreements.

USG.5.8 Use information from a variety of sources to describe and discuss current American political issues.

USH.2.1: Explain the causes and consequences of early American foreign policy challenges, including the Quasi-War with France, the Barbary Wars, and the War of 1812.

USH.2.6 Describe and assess the contribution of Indiana's only president, Benjamin Harrison, to national policies on environmental protection, business regulation, immigration, and civil rights.

USH.2.3: Analyze the origins and consequences of the Monroe Doctrine.

USH.3.6: Examine the social, economic, and political effects of U.S. expansionism and imperialism, including the Spanish-American War, the acquisition of new territories, and the debate over the role of the U.S. in world affairs.



## Foreign Friends and Foes

# Materials and Outline

## US History and Government: Evolving Engagements

### Description:

This lesson explores the evolution of U.S. foreign policy from George Washington's Farewell Address and the Monroe Doctrine to Benjamin Harrison's more active engagement, particularly through the Pan-American Conference, to later presidents such as Theodore Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and George W. Bush. Students will analyze primary source excerpts to understand different approaches to foreign relations and their historical context.

### Materials:

- Primary Source Excerpts
- Graphic organizer (e.g., T-chart or Venn diagram) for comparing policies.
- Guiding questions for each primary source.

### Learning Targets:

- Students will analyze primary source excerpts related to the Monroe Doctrine and Benjamin Harrison's foreign policy.
  - Students will compare and contrast different approaches to US foreign policy (isolationism vs. intervention/engagement).
  - Students will evaluate the historical context and impact of these policies.
  - Students will understand the role of the Secretary of State in shaping foreign policy.
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# Materials and Outline

Time	Actions Steps
<p><b>Activate Prior Knowledge (10 min)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce and/or review the concept of foreign policy: Begin by projecting or writing the term "Foreign Policy" on the board. Ask students what comes to mind when they hear this term. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prompt: "What does 'foreign policy' mean to you? Why do countries need foreign policies?"</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Briefly define foreign policy</b> (how a country interacts with other countries) and introduce the idea that the U.S. approach has changed over time. Mention that today we'll look at how it evolved from the early days to the 21st century.</li> <li><b>Open discussion. Ask students:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"How do you think early American presidents approached relations with other countries?"</li> <li>"What precedents have been set by presidents?"</li> <li>"What could influence our foreign policy?"</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Watch Foreign Friends and Foes, context on presidents (10 minutes)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Watch <a href="#"><u>The 23<sup>rd</sup> in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Project: Foreign Friends and Foes</u></a></li> <li><b>Briefly review the historical context for each president:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>George Washington (late 1700s): New nation, vulnerable, focused on internal stability.</li> <li>James Monroe (early 1800s): European powers still active in the Americas, Latin American independence movements.</li> <li>Benjamin Harrison (late 1800s): U.S. growing stronger, industrializing, looking outward for trade and influence.</li> <li>Teddy Roosevelt (early 1900s): Big stick, Involvement In world affairs and Americas</li> <li>Harry Truman (mid 1900s): Containment, Cold War</li> <li>George W Bush (2000s): War on Terror, post 9/11</li> </ul> </li> <li>Explain the role of the Secretary of State as the chief foreign policy advisor and implementer.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Primary Source Analysis (25 min)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Divide students into small groups (3–4 students per group).</li> <li>Distribute the Primary Source Packet and the Foreign Policy Comparison Graphic Organizer to each student.</li> </ul>

# Materials and Outline

Time	Actions Steps
Primary Source Analysis and organizer (25 min)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain the task: "In your groups, you will read and analyze four primary source excerpts related to U.S. foreign policy. For each excerpt, discuss the guiding questions provided in your packet and fill in the corresponding section of your graphic organizer. Focus on understanding the main idea of each policy and how it reflects the president's approach."</li> <li>• Circulate among groups, providing support, clarifying vocabulary, and prompting deeper analysis. Encourage students to highlight key phrases in the texts.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>**Alternative option: teacher can invite students to look at all excerpts but then also assign one specific president/primary source to focus in depth on (later on groups can share their specific expertise with the other groups who focused in depth on primary sources/presidents)</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Class Discussion and Comparison (10-12 min)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring the class back together for a whole-group discussion.</li> <li>• Go through each primary source, asking groups to share their findings.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Prompt: "What was Washington's main advice about foreign policy? How did Monroe's approach differ, especially regarding the Western Hemisphere? What was Harrison's administration trying to achieve with the Pan-American Conference?" etc....</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>**Alternative option: have each group create a poster for their president/foreign policy era and have the posters then be linked together to form a legitimate timeline</b></li> <li>• Facilitate a comparison using the graphic organizer as a guide.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Prompt: "How did the U.S. foreign policy evolve from Washington's time to Harrison's? What factors might have led to these changes (e.g., U.S. growth, global events)?"</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Highlight the shift from a focus on avoiding entanglements to a more active regional and global engagement.</li> </ul>

# Materials and Outline

Time	Actions Steps
<b>Wrap up and Exit Ticket (5 min)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summarize the key takeaway: U.S. foreign policy has evolved from a focus on neutrality and avoiding alliances to a more active role in regional and global affairs, driven by changing national interests and global dynamics.</li> <li>Student Activity (Exit Ticket): On an index card or a small piece of paper, have students answer one of the following questions:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Choose one foreign policy approach discussed today (Washington, Monroe, or Harrison) and explain its main idea in your own words."</li> <li>"How did the U.S. approach to foreign policy change from the early 1800s to the late 1800s?"</li> <li>"Why is it important for a country to have a clear foreign policy?"</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



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