

FEBRUARY FLAG CLUB

- **Show one or all three** of the 2-minute videos on www.history.com that give fun facts about our **US Presidents**. <https://www.history.com/topics/holidays/presidents-day/videos>
- **Community Service Project** – Continue working on your club’s patriotic community service project.

Flag Trivia

13. What is the ball on top of the flagpole called?
14. What three items were said to be found inside the “ball” on top of the flagpole?
15. What military branch of the U.S. created the legend of the ball and its contents?
16. What is the procedure called when the American flag is first raised for the day?
17. What is the procedure called when the American flag is lowered for the day?

Special Days in February to discuss:

3rd Monday in February - President’s Day - Presidents Day is an American holiday celebrated on the third Monday in February; Originally established in 1885 in recognition of President George Washington, the holiday became popularly known as Presidents Day after it was moved as part of 1971’s Uniform Monday Holiday Act.

What founding Fathers become Presidents? (George Washington, John Adams, James Madison, and Thomas Jefferson. Of the **Founding Fathers** who **became president**, only George Washington did not go to college. John Adams graduated from Harvard, James Madison graduated from Princeton, and Thomas Jefferson attended the College of William and Mary.)

Who was the President when slavery was abolished?

Who was the only President to serve more than two terms?

Who was the first African American President?

Who was the oldest President?

TEACHING OBJECTIVE: Help students understand when and why the flag is flown at half-staff, how to fly the flag at half-staff, and the difference between half-staff and half-mast.

Talking points and discussion questions:

Half-Staff

- Have you ever seen a United States flag flying in the middle of the flagpole instead of at the top of the flagpole?
- Do you know why the flag is sometimes flown at half-staff?

- The United States Flag Code specifies certain times when the flag should be flown at half-staff. (Download and print “Flying the Flag at Half-Staff” from the web page listed above under. Make a copy for each student. Review with students.)
- Read the editorial at NJLawman.com entitled, “Governor Wrong to Have Flag Lowered to Half Staff for Celebrities” (available on web page listed above). Discuss the reasons why a Governor would want to order flags flown at half-staff for a popular celebrity, and why this is not proper.
- Why do we need to have rules governing when the United States flag is flown at half-staff?
- Bottom line: The U.S. Flag Code is very specific in its instructions concerning flying the United States flag at half-staff. When the circumstances of any person’s death do not meet the criteria for flying the flag at half-staff, failure to do so is not a show of disrespect for that person. It is simply a matter of following the law!
- Interesting note: When a flag cannot be lowered to half-staff (e.g. the type of flag typically mounted to the side of a residence, which is permanently attached to its staff), there is a tradition that allows for the attachment of two black streamers to the top of the flag pole. [Source: "Use of Black Ribbons for Mourning." National Flag Foundation. Accessed October 25, 2014.] 32

Half-Staff or Half-Mast?

- Most people use the terms interchangeably.
- Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary defines “half-mast” as “a point some distance but not necessarily halfway down below the top of a mast or staff or the peak of a gaff.” The entry for “half-staff” simply points to the definition for “half-mast”.
- Grammarist states, “In American English, a flag flown halfway up its flagpole as a symbol of mourning is at half-staff, and a flag flown halfway up a ship’s mast to signal mourning or distress is at half-mast. The distinction does not run deep, though, as the terms are often mixed up, especially in unofficial contexts.” 1
- The Independence Hall Association, on their USHistory.org website, says that “both terms can be used. The term ‘half-mast’ is preferred by dictionaries and seems more appropriate at sea (as ships have masts). ‘Half-staff’ seems more appropriate on land, and is the preferred term used in the Flag Code and in Presidential proclamations.” 2
- The CVS Flags website says, “Flying a flag at half-staff is largely associated with land flagpoles, leaving the term ‘half-mast’ to ships.” 3
- CONCLUSION: For the purposes of the F.L.A.G. Program, the term “half-mast” will be used to refer to flags flown on ships during times of national mourning; and the term “half-staff” will be used to refer to flags flown on land during times of national mourning.