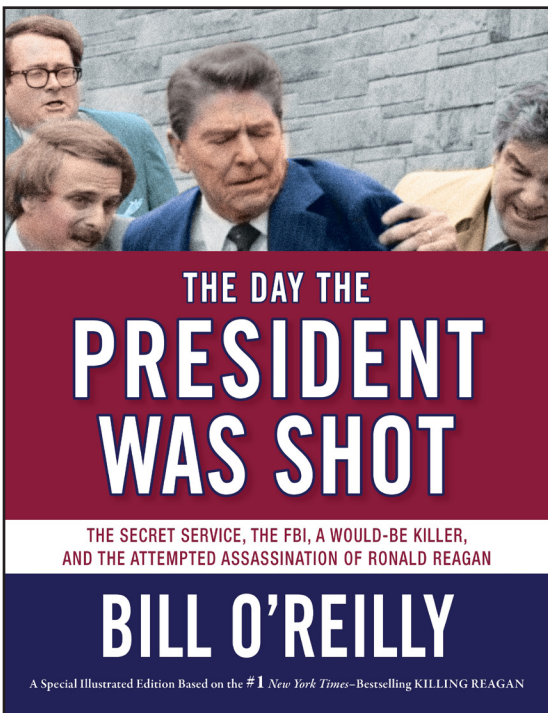


# A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR THE DAY THE PRESIDENT WAS SHOT



FOR  
USE WITH  
COMMON CORE  
STATE  
STANDARDS



HC 9781627796996 • CD/Audio 9781427273598  
e-Book 9781627797009 • Ages 10–14

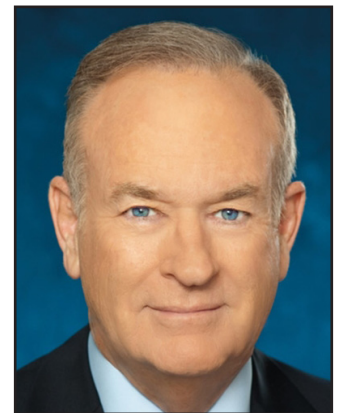
## ABOUT THE BOOK

The year was 1981. Just two months into his presidency, Ronald Reagan was shot after leaving a speaking engagement in Washington, D. C. The quick action of the Secret Service and medical professionals saved the president's life. Mere days after his near-death experience, Reagan's personal strength propelled him back into his presidential duties.

Adapted from Bill O'Reilly's historical thriller *Killing Reagan*, with characteristically gripping storytelling, this story explores the events of the day Reagan was shot. From the scene of the shooting and the dramatic action of the Secret Service to the FBI's interrogation of the shooter, the life-saving measures of the medical professionals, and the president's extraordinary recovery, this is a page-turning account of an attempted assassination and its aftermath.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Bill O'Reilly** is a former high-school history teacher and the author of many bestselling books, including *Lincoln's Last Days* and *Hitler's Last Days*. He is also the anchor of *The O'Reilly Factor*, the highest-rated cable news show in the country.



This guide is aligned with Common Core Standards for 6th grade but can be applied to grades 4–8. To attain specific Common Core grade level standards for their classrooms and students, teachers are encouraged to adapt the activities listed in this guide to their classes' needs. You know your kids best!



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## BEFORE READING

✦ As O'Reilly describes in Chapter 1, “The 1970s have been a brutal time for America. In 1974, President Richard Nixon resigned under suspicion of criminal activity in the Watergate affair. The unchecked growth of the Soviet Union’s war machine and the American failure to win the Vietnam War have tilted the global balance of power. At home, inflation, interest rates, and unemployment rates are sky-high. Gasoline shortages have led to mile-long lines at the pumps. And worst of all is the ongoing humiliation of fifty-two hostages still held in Iran after radicals stormed the American embassy in Tehran in 1979. A rescue attempt six months later failed miserably, resulting in the deaths of eight American servicemen” (pages 5–8).

To understand the tumultuous decade leading up to Reagan’s election, research a topic introduced in Chapter 1 and design a comic strip, poster, or brochure to share your learning.

**CCSS.W.6.2** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

**CCSS.W.6.7** Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

✦ Use The Living Room Candidate, a website of presidential television ads, to investigate the election of 1980: <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1980>. Compare Reagan’s and Carter’s strategies and decide who had the most effective advertisements. Create a Venn diagram to compare and contrast their strategies, and then create a 140-character tweet to state your claim on the most effective advertisement.

**CCSS.W.6.2** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

**CCSS.W.6.2.A** Introduce a topic; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What mental illness is Hinckley diagnosed with? How does this diagnosis impact his day-to-day life?
2. How does Nancy Reagan impact Ronald’s future?
3. O'Reilly describes Reagan’s “people” in detail on pages 25–26: “Many filling this towering ceremonial space are as conservative as he is. The men wear crisp dark suits. Their hair is cut short, in sharp contrast to the shoulder-length locks so many young men are wearing these days. The women’s knee-length dresses are a throwback to the more formal styles of the 1950s, nothing at all like the skimpy miniskirts popular at the time.” According to this description, does the author seem to approve of or dislike Reagan’s “people”?
4. “It will not go unnoticed by the service that this candidate is a wanderer.” Why does O'Reilly conclude Chapter 14 with this sentence? How does this foreshadowing cliffhanger keep the reader engaged?
5. How does Reagan dazzle the crowd at the Republican National Convention in 1976?



6. In Chapter 18, the reader continues to see the downward spiral of Hinckley’s schizophrenia. Describe how his mental illness is intensifying and how his parents react.
7. “John Hinckley walks out of Judge Higgins’s courtroom a free man. He immediately returns to the airport, where he takes the next plane to New York” (page 80). Rewrite this part of the story. Did Hinckley receive a consequence? Did he take a plane somewhere else?
8. “Ronald Reagan stares at the elephant in the room” (page 83). O’Reilly effectively uses hooks to begin many of his chapters. How does this hook get the reader interested in what comes next?
9. Why do Hinckley’s siblings want him placed in a mental hospital? Why are his parents hesitant?
10. Create a timeline using the chronology of events listed in Chapters 30–32 about how Reagan’s attempted assassination unfolded.
11. “Later, in the operating room, Dr. Giordano hears about the quip. ‘Mr. President,’ the surgeon—a lifelong Democrat—tells Reagan, ‘today we are all Republicans’” (page 146). Why would Dr Giordano make such a statement?

**CCSS.RI.6.1** Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

**CCSS.RI.6.3** Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).

**CCSS.RI.6.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.

**CCSS.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.

**CCSS.RI.6.6** Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

**CCSS.W.6.3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

## AFTER READING

✦ Page 14 reveals that “Ronald Reagan receives 50.7 percent of the popular vote and 489 electoral votes. Jimmy Carter receives 41.0 percent of the popular vote and just forty-nine electoral votes.” Using the data collected at <http://www.270towin.com/historical-presidential-elections/>, analyze this election compared with two others.

**CCSS.RI.6.7** Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

✦ Page 70 shows the declassified letter President Carter sent to Ayatollah Khomeini requesting the release of the American hostages. As a member of his Cabinet, review this letter and submit your approval or disapproval to President Carter. Pay careful attention to the voice, tone, and word choice of his letter. Is this an effective way to negotiate? Should he be more forceful, or should he ease up? What edits or revisions do you suggest?

**CCSS.W.6.1** Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

**CCSS.W.6.2** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.



✦ Hinckley's schizophrenia is a major catalyst for his attempted assassination of Ronald Reagan. Throughout the book, many disagree on the best course of treatment for Hinckley. Compare Hinckley's treatment in 1980 to how a patient would be treated today. Additionally, research how Hinckley's schizophrenia would have been treated in 1880. Design a multimedia presentation comparing and contrasting the treatments provided in the three time periods described.

**CCSS.SL.6.5** Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.

**CCSS.SL.6.4** Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.



President Reagan and Nancy Reagan on the morning of the assassination attempt. March 30, 1981. [Ronald Reagan Library]

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