



# JFK AND THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

A re-creation of President Kennedy's striving  
to handle the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962

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**Interact**

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## PURPOSE

Can you help your students appreciate the fear Americans felt in October 1962?

This re-creation examines John Fitzgerald Kennedy's role in resolving the critical Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. It reconstructs the anger, tension, and agitation President Kennedy and his advisers experienced while they sought the best way to pressure Russia into removing its missiles from Cuba. By participating in this re-creation, students will be able to master the following:

### **Knowledge**

1. Tracing and explaining the origins of the Cold War
2. Identifying at least two specific clashes which characterized the Cold War
3. Discussing the record of our relationship with Cuba and Castro
4. Determining the military, political, and psychological implications of the Soviet missiles in Cuba
5. Analyzing President Kennedy's role in ending the Cuban missile crisis

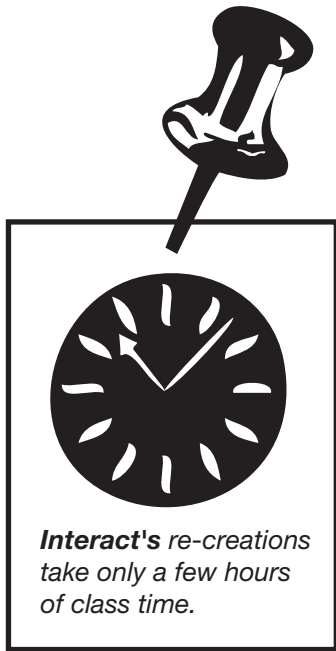
### **Attitudes**

1. Developing tolerance for how persons' backgrounds shape their different points of view
2. Appreciating how the structure of a group may help or hinder the free flow of ideas

### **Skills**

1. Writing paragraphs explaining points of view
2. Defending opinions and questioning conflicting ideas orally
3. Identifying and writing down valuable notes
4. Playing an historical role convincingly

## OVERVIEW



During four days students acquaint themselves with the background of the crisis and view and participate in two presidential meetings, a presidential speech, a debriefing activity, and a test.

### Day 1

Introduce the re-creation with an interest catcher. The students read the Student Guide. Explain and assign the roles.

### Day 2

After you introduce Scene 1, the role players—John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Dean Acheson, Robert McNamara, and Adlai Stevenson—meet to consider their alternatives. The president chooses his initial option.

### Day 3

Acting as a commentator in Scene 2, you introduce the president to the TV audience before he makes his address to the nation. Then, recounting the major events between John Kennedy's speech and the receipt of Nikita Khrushchev's second message, you introduce Scene 3 during which the Kennedy brothers, Dean Rusk, and General Curtis LeMay discuss the president's next move.

### Day 4

On the final day students discuss a debriefing case study and take a test.

## SETUP DIRECTIONS



**Note:** You will not need to duplicate the bulleted items the first time you use this re-creation, for Interact has given you different colored handouts for those students playing roles. If you choose to use the recommended optional UNIT TEST, you will have to duplicate it. All other items necessary for the re-creation are in the Student Guide.

1. **Handouts** See note at left the first time you use this re-creation. For subsequent classes, duplicate the number in parentheses, using the masters in this Teacher Guide.
  - JOHN F. KENNEDY (one: five pages, back to back)
  - ROBERT KENNEDY (one: four pages, back to back)
  - DEAN ACHESON (one: two pages, back to back)
  - ROBERT McNAMARA (one: two pages, back to back)
  - ADLAI STEVENSON (one: two pages, back to back)
  - DEAN RUSK (one: two pages, back to back)
  - GENERAL CURTIS LeMAY (one: two pages, back to back)

**Optional:**

  - \* UNIT TEST (class set: one page)
2. **Assign roles** There are seven roles in this re-creation. Since the moderator's role is unusually demanding, you should play that role. Carefully match roles with appropriate student ability. President Kennedy's and his brother Robert's roles particularly require intelligence, sophistication, and preparation.

*Helping students grow...*

*as persons  
as well as  
historians ...*

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Consider seeing your friendly school librarian so that she/he will set up a JFK AND THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS RESERVE SHELF just for your class.

Certain students—the one playing Kennedy for example—just might go to scholarly works such as Theodore Sorensen's analytical work in order to "flesh out" his/her character.

Cook, Fred J., *The Cuban Missile Crisis*, Franklin Watts, Inc., New York, 1972. This book written for students presents a clear, concise interpretation of the events surrounding the crisis.

Detzer, David, *The Brink: Cuban Missile Crisis*, 1962, Thomas Y. Crowell, New York, 1979. Detzer authors a very readable and interesting account of the entire Cuban affair. He takes a somewhat jaded view of the participants' motivations and actions in relationship to that of the standard textbook.

Kennedy, Robert F., *Thirteen Days*, W.W. Norton and Company, New York, 1969. Robert Kennedy's own recollection of his role in the Cuban Missile Crisis. The book, while an interesting display of Kennedy's mind and perspective, lacks real depth and analysis since he died before its completion.

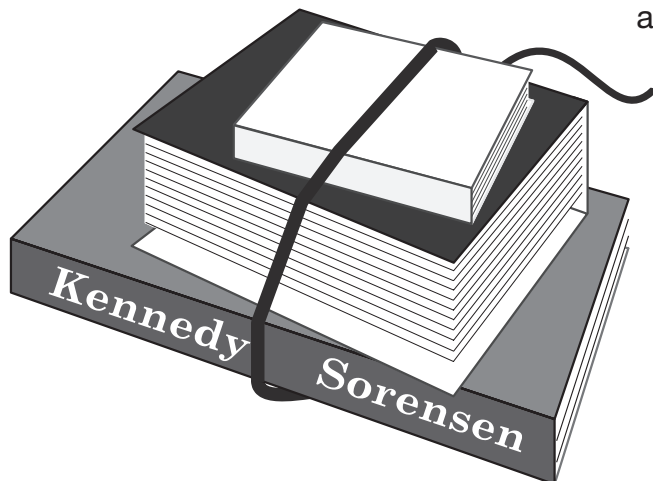
Matthews, Herbert L., *Fidel Castro*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1969. A sound and interesting biography of the Cuban premier offering valuable insight into the "other side's" point of view.

Roberts, Arthur D. and Weinland, Thomas P., *Confrontation: The Cuban Missile Crisis*, Xerox, Connecticut, 1973. This part of the Xerox *Values and Decisions* series lays out the background and personalities involved in the crisis. Provocative questions are included in an ending exercise.

Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1978. The author puts together a valuable biography for any Kennedy-phile to read. His description of the entire crisis is vivid and captivating.

Sorensen, Theodore C., *Decision Making in the White House*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1963. Sorensen, a close Kennedy aide, analyzes the components of presidential decisions during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Sorensen, Theodore C., *Kennedy*, Harper and Row, New York, 1965. Written shortly after JFK's assassination, the author affectionately and accurately discusses Kennedy's career, his opinions, his values, and his actions.



## DAILY TEACHING DIRECTIONS - 1



*Be certain you have carefully planned how to integrate this re-creation with the Cold War history chapters you have had your students read in their textbooks.*

**Before Day 1** Be sure you have thoroughly examined this Teacher Guide, the various handouts, and the Student Guide.

### Day 1

1. Introduce the topic with an interest catcher that will sensitize students to the issues they will examine. A lecture, filmstrip, or an appropriate current events discussion would achieve this objective.
2. Try asking the students about the length of time it takes an ICBM (intercontinental ballistics missile) fired from the Soviet Union to hit Washington, D.C., (about 20 minutes). Most students don't realize this and will likely be doubly appalled at the prospects in 1962 of nuclear armed rockets 90 miles from Florida.
3. Distribute the Student Guides and have the students read the Purpose and Background Essay.
4. Assign the seven roles. **Note:** *Point out that JFK had several more advisers than the six who take part in this re-creation.*
5. Satisfy yourself that everyone understands his/her tasks.
  - a. Separate the actual role-players from the audience and distribute the proper handouts.
  - b. Have the audience prepare their two note-taking sheets.
  - c. Move from group to group and satisfy yourself that all students understand their individual tasks. Help any who need it.

### Day 2

1. Get the room and participants ready.
  - a. Arrange the desks properly.
  - b. Make props available (e.g., a presidential seal, some mock photographs of the Cuban missiles, a map of the Western Hemisphere that clearly shows Cuba's proximity to the United States). If you can, draw circles on the map, with Cuba at the center, indicating the limits of the Cuban missiles. The MRBM had an 1,100-mile range; the IRBM had a 2,200-mile range.
2. Introduce Scene 1 to the audience. **Example:** *"On the morning of October 16, 1962, McGeorge Bundy, President Kennedy's aide, reported to him with photographic evidence of Soviet missile base construction in Cuba. President Kennedy recognized the danger immediately*

## DAILY TEACHING DIRECTIONS - 2



*Encourage your students to speak passionately. Work to get them truly involved in their characterizations.*

*If you have a quality class and you are considering using this re-creation next year, videotape the presidential decision so that you can show portions next year to stimulate students' performance. (Such a video is also useful for open house when you want parents to see the participatory nature of your instruction.)*



*and ordered a secret meeting that day of his top advisers. After much heated debate these men are now to meet with the president to present their refined opinions. It is now October 21. Present besides JFK are his brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy; Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara; U.N. Ambassador Adlai Stevenson; and former Secretary of State Dean Acheson."*

3. **Scene 1:**
  - a. The president opens the meeting.
  - b. Implications of the missiles' presence are discussed.
  - c. The alternatives are analyzed.
  - d. The president announces his quarantine decision.
4. If time permits, set up a presidential press conference and allow the class to question the president on his reasoning.
5. Remind all of Day 3's participants to be thoroughly prepared.

### Day 3

1. Open this day with a summation of yesterday's events.
2. Inform students that they are now the national TV audience gathered before their sets to hear what has only been described as an urgent presidential address. You might "hype" the audience by speculating on the speech's subject (e.g., a new Berlin crisis, a flare-up in Vietnam, a declaration of war, a personal problem, another Bay of Pigs).
3. **Scene 2:** The president delivers his speech.
4. After his speech, quickly sum up his points, possibly interview an average citizen for his/her reaction. Then quickly reset the room for the final scene.
5. **Scene 3:** Introduce the final scene by carefully tracing the events between JFK's speech and this October 27 meeting:
  - a. The military has gone on full alert and American citizens have reacted by practicing air raid drills and hoarding food.
  - b. We've received full support from the OAS (Organization of American States).
  - c. Adlai Stevenson has confronted the Soviet U.N. ambassador in a televised debate.
  - d. Cuba has been quarantined by the U.S. Navy.
  - e. Some ships have been allowed to go on to Cuba.
  - f. One ship, the *Maracula*, was boarded, searched, and allowed to continue.

## DAILY TEACHING DIRECTIONS - 3



*Having students speak about the activity they have experienced will intensify their learning. Such speaking experiences also help students' personal growth.*

- g. At the tensest moment so far, several Russian ships stopped just short of the quarantine line and turned around.
  - h. A note from Khrushchev on Friday, October 26, was received which expressed hope for negotiation and offered to remove the Cuban missiles in exchange for a no-invasion pledge from us.
  - i. A second note, different in tone, arrived Saturday. It demanded that we remove our missiles from our bases in Turkey and then the Russians would remove theirs from Cuba.
  - j. The latest U-2 pictures indicate Russian missiles will be installed and ready for firing by October 30!
  - k. Time is growing short for a peaceful solution.
6. Point out the date (October 27) and the role players: the president, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, General Curtis LeMay, and Secretary of State Dean Rusk.
7. The president opens the scene.
- a. He discusses the immediate problems they face.
  - b. Everyone reacts to the U-2's downing.
  - c. The alternatives are analyzed.
  - d. The president announces his decision.
8. If time permits, set up a press conference and allow the class to question the president about his choice. However, try to save the crisis' outcome for tomorrow. Doing so may enhance the tension and highlight the uncertainty of the president's gamble.

### Day 4

1. End the crisis by reporting something such as the following: *"On Sunday morning Radio Moscow responded to the president's message: 'In order to eliminate as rapidly as possible the conflict which endangers the cause of peace ... the Soviet government ... has given a new order to dismantle the arms which you described as offensive and to crate and return them to the Soviet Union.'* "
2. The crisis is over. Ask the class how they feel now.
3. Administer the UNIT TEST and/or essay question to the class. Here is the key: 1. d, 2. e, 3. b, 4. g, 5. a, 6. j, 7. l, 8. f, 9. m, 10. c, 11. t, 12. k, 13. p, 14. s, 15. n, 16. o, 17. h, 18. r, 19. i, 20. q.
4. Have each activity group discuss and analyze the Debriefing section. After the groups have chosen their options, have the chairpersons report to the whole class.