

Join the First Ladies for Tea at the White House! 8 guided reading playscripts (6 speakers each) plus quizzes for each. All 39 Ladies have something remarkable to relate about their experience as wife to the president. Share some truly moving accounts of what it takes - to be a First Lady.

1.

First Ladies 1-5

Speakers:

Interviewer

Martha Dandridge Custis Washington	Wife of George Washington
Abigail Smith Adams	Wife of John Adams
Dolly Payne Todd Madison	Wife of James Madison
Elizabeth Kortright Monroe	Wife of James Monroe
Louisa Johnson Adams	Wife of John Quincy Adams

Abigail: Now, Louisa. No more barbed comments, please. You know I forgave you for being *foreign* in the end!

Louisa: You see what I had to put up with? No wonder I always found it so hard fitting in over here ... when my *own family* discriminated against me!

Abigail: Oooh! Such harsh words! I was only doing what all good mothers do...

Louisa: And that was?

Abigail: Looking out for my son!

Interviewer: And may I just step in to say what a fine job you did, looking after her son! You were *all* fine wives, without exception. And (aside)... in some cases, rather better at being a wife than a mother-in-law, I suspect!

2.

First Ladies 6 – 10

Speakers:

Interviewer

Anna Tuthill Symmes Harrison	Wife of William Henry Harrison
Letitia Christian Tyler	Wife of John Tyler
Julia Gardiner Tyler	Wife of John Tyler
Sarah Childress Polk	Wife of James K. Polk
Margaret Smith Taylor	Wife of Zachary Taylor

Sarah: Ah, the demands of office! We never had a chance to enjoy our retirement either - for precisely the same reason! These men just don't know when to stop! My poor husband was just exhausted!

Margaret: Mine too. It was all that standing around, at that celebration of the building of the Washington Monument that killed him. A fatal combination of too much heat, too many speeches and acute indigestion.

Interviewer: A tragic way for a Mexican war hero to end his life!

Margaret: Indeed! Those 40 years of being a military wife were the happiest years of my life. How I dreaded the thought of coming to this place!

Anna: Me too! Funny to think of all those dangers we faced on the frontier – but the thought of coming to the White House was ten times worse!

3.

First Ladies 11-15

Speakers:

Interviewer

Abigail Powers Fillmore	Wife of Millard Fillmore
Jane Appleton Pierce	Wife of Franklin Pierce
Mary Todd Lincoln	Wife of Abraham Lincoln
Eliza McCardle Johnson	Wife of Andrew Johnson
Julia Dent Grant	Wife of Ulysses S. Grant

Interviewer: But, dare I say, you *could* have helped those huge debts you ran up whilst you were here?

Mary: What, with all the entertaining I had to do?

Julia: But maybe your *timing* was just a little off!

Mary: And what about you? I don't remember *you* holding back on your lavish parties? And who was it who was only saved from debt because of the writing of your husband?

Julia: That debt was entirely different from yours, and you know it, dear lady!

Mary: Don't you "dear lady" me! A debt is a debt in my book!

Interviewer: Ladies! Ladies! More tea?

4

First Ladies 16-20

(Ellen Herndon Arthur died a year before Chester Arthur became president)

Speakers:

Interviewer

Lucy Webb Hayes	Wife of Rutherford B. Hayes
Lucretia Randolph Garfield	Wife of James Garfield
Francis Folsom Cleveland	Wife of Grover Cleveland
Caroline Scott Harrison	Wife of Benjamin Harrison
Ida Saxton McKinley	Wife of William McKinley

Interviewer: And coped absolutely admirably, may I say. It must have required a huge effort to appear in public, alongside your husband, performing your duties as First Lady ... but you did ... and magnificently, to your huge credit.

Ida: And then, after all my wonderful husband had done to support *me*, in those traumatic times – I have to go and lose *him* at the hands of a crazy assassin! Now where was the justice in that?

Lucretia: The very same question I asked myself, over and over again. After all we'd been through, to lose each other in such circumstances! 3 months of suffering and then he was gone.

Ida: My poor husband was dead within the week.

5

First Ladies 21-25

Speakers:

Interviewer

Edith Kermit Carow Roosevelt	Wife to Theodore Roosevelt	(Mrs. Roosevelt)
Helen Herron Taft	Wife to William H Taft	

Ellen Axson Wilson Wife to Woodrow Wilson
Edith Wilson Wife to Woodrow Wilson
Florence Kling Harding Wife to Warren Harding

Florence: But how sad that that was to be your last public appearance
Interviewer: Before dying on your husband's birthday! Now there's devotion for you!
Edith: But not everyone was such a great fan of mine. Those Republicans sure tried tearing me down a strip or two when I, in their words, 'ran the country' during Woodrow's last year in power.
Ellen: Rather unfair, given Woodrow's condition. After that stroke, he could never have run the country by himself. All you did was to help him – what else were you supposed to do?
Interviewer: Maybe times haven't changed that much, after all!
Florence: Huh! You wouldn't have said that if you'd attended some of my press conferences!
Mrs Roosevelt: How vocal you were - to voice all those opinions!
Helen: Fighting for women's rights!
Ellen: *And* animal rights!
Edith: What a strong woman you were!
Florence: I had to be! It wasn't easy supporting a husband connected to corruption
Mrs Roosevelt: And infidelity! Oh sorry, dear. I don't suppose you want to be reminded of that!

6 **Ladies 26-30**

Speakers:

Interviewer

Grace Goodhue Coolidge Wife of Calvin Coolidge
Lou Henry Hoover Wife of Herbert Hoover
Eleanor Roosevelt Wife of Franklin D. Roosevelt
Bess Wallace Truman Wife of Harry S. Truman
Mamie Doud Eisenhower Wife of Dwight 'Ike' Eisenhower

Interviewer: But you were never one to sit back and wait! What about those wonderful words of yours? "We cannot wait until tomorrow. Tomorrow is now". Words that you truly lived by!
Eleanor: I did try to do my bit, as did Franklin. I guess we both felt a real commitment to helping others less fortunate than ourselves.
Lou: But it was the sheer *scale* on which you worked, that was so amazing! What *didn't* you turn your hand to?
Grace: Yeah, talk about a woman before her time! You were just amazing! *The* most politically active First Lady of all time and always with the aim of putting others first! You were a real beacon of hope in our times!
Eleanor: Well, thank you. But I was only doing what I could.
Interviewer: And I suppose having 4 presidential terms to do it, must have helped.
Bess: Wow! That's some innings!
Marie: Well you can talk! Speaking of 'innings' – all 97 years worth in your case!
Bess: Hm. Not a bad old age I guess!
Interviewer: Only the oldest First Lady in American History!

7

First Ladies 31-35

Speakers:

Interviewer

Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy	Wife of John F. Kennedy
Claudia Taylor Johnson	Wife of Lyndon B. Johnson
Pat Ryan Nixon	Wife of Richard Nixon
Betty Bloomer Ford	Wife of Gerald Ford
Rosalynn Smith Carter	Wife of Jimmy Carter

- Claudia: You were a true champion of the cause – what bravery you showed in undergoing surgery!
- Betty: But no more than any of the other tens of thousands of women out there! They're all just as brave but nobody hears about them.
- Pat: And that's why you were so admired. Not just for your own personal battle with cancer, but for having the courage to speak out about it. It was something of a taboo subject before. Women didn't feel comfortable talking about it. And you changed all that.
- Rosalyn: You made it easier for women to face their fears
- Jacqueline: The result being thousands of women began to have check- ups – so vital for the early detection of the disease.
- Claudia: Think of all the lives you must have saved! I might have campaigned for women's rights, but you gave a lot of those women *life*!

8

Ladies 36-39 (as it stands at the time of writing!)

Speakers:

Interviewer

Nancy Davis Reagan	Wife of Ronald Reagan
Barbara Pierce Bush	Wife of George H.W. Bush
Hillary Rodham Clinton	Wife of Bill Clinton
Laura Welch Bush	Wife of George W. Bush

- Laura: Well, please do make yourselves comfortable. Though I suppose it's just possible, someone else in this room may herself be a White House hostess, one day! And not just as a wife!
- Hillary: Well, thank you, Laura. I'm assuming you *are* referring to *my* intentions of becoming president?
- Barbara: Er, I think you can safely assume neither Nancy nor I will be joining you in that particular race!
- Nancy: No. My 'running' days are long over. But do let me ask the million dollar question
- Hillary: Which is?
- Nancy: How does *Bill* feel about being a First Lady?!
- Hillary: Why, he's probably trying on my stilettos right now!