**Directions:** Read each passage about different presidents. As you read, highlight the passage like this:

Green = what the president did

Yellow = how was this different than what was done before

Blue = why was this a controversy

Thomas Jefferson

In 1803, President Thomas Jefferson authorized the purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France for $15 million (the equivalent of $219 million today). The purchase more than doubled the size of the United States, and the land acquired comprises ¼ of current American territory. While a significant event in Jefferson’s presidency, the purchase was highly controversial because the U.S. Constitution does not include any provisions for acquiring territory. Though himself a champion of small government, Jefferson decided to purchase Louisiana because of his concerns over French and Spanish power to block America’s trade through the port of New Orleans.

Andrew Jackson

Whereas members of Congress only represent their specific constituencies, President Andrew Jackson emphasized the presidency as the only office that truly represents all people. Thus when elected, Jackson’s perceived mandate led him to act on the public’s behalf, making decisions as he saw fit. Jackson especially exercised this power through the use of veto; he vetoed more bills in his term in office than all previous presidents put together, and was the first president to use the pocket veto. Jackson particularly used the veto to counter the national bank. Though Congress and the Supreme Court had found the bank to be constitutional, Jackson thought it to be unconstitutional and used the power of the veto to shut it down.

Abraham Lincoln

When the Confederates attacked Fort Sumter, S.C. in 1861, President Lincoln did not wait for Congress to reconvene before taking action. Without Congressional approval, Lincoln increased the size of the army and navy, blockaded Southern ports, spent money that had not been appropriated by Congress, arrested Northern citizens that were suspected to sympathize with the Confederacy, and suspended habeas corpus (which prevents people from being unlawfully detained), thereby taking away civil liberties. Lincoln later addressed Congress and admitted that he had exceeded his authority under the Constitution, but claimed he felt the need to act instantly in response to the crisis. Lincoln asked Congress to retroactively authorize his actions, which it did.

Harry Truman

Up until 1950, it was generally thought that the constitutional power to wage war rested with Congress alone. However, in June of that year President Truman asserted the war-making power in the executive branch by sending troops to South Korea without congressional authorization or a declaration of war. In 1950, North Korean troops invaded the Republic of Korea. President Harry Truman deployed troops to South Korea without a formal declaration of war by Congress. Senators protested this action, saying the president had “usurped power and violated the Constitution” with this action, through they agreed to provide funds to support the war. Truman’s actions set a precedent for presidential “warmaking” without congressional approval, from LBJ and Nixon in Vietnam to Bush in the Middle East.

George W. Bush

As part of his War on Terror (after the attacks of 9/11), President Bush exercised broad powers in the name of national security. The Patriot Act, approved by Congress, enabled surveillance powers such as the ability to monitor emails, phone calls, internet activity, texts, etc. without a search warrant. President Bush’s administration also exercised the rights to detain citizens indefinitely as enemy combatants without a warrant, trial by jury, and proof beyond a reasonable doubt. Additionally, the administration has asserted power to ignore treaties that prohibit torture, and detain foreign citizens indefinitely at Guantanamo Bay.