



American History

Through the Eyes of the Presidents

*Includes Text, Comprehension Questions,
Written Narration & Answers*





American History Through the Eyes of the Presidents

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How to Use

The purpose of this unit is to take a brief look at American history focusing on the actions of the presidents. For each president, you will find:

Informational text, a notebooking page, and reading comprehension questions: The student can read the lesson text (or a parent/teacher can read it aloud) and use the notebooking page that is included for written narration, using the questions as writing prompts. This often works better for students who struggle with reading comprehension questions. Alternatively, you can ask the questions orally if that suits your student's learning style best.

Important Facts page: Answers to these questions will need to be looked up in a book or on the Internet. The answers can also be found in the [U.S. Presidents Fact Cards and Bio Sheets](#) resource highlighted on the Recommended Resources page.

Timeline worksheet: Timeline facts and one timeline worksheet for each president is included. A master timeline worksheet that can also be filled in as each president is completed is included at the end of the resource

Research project: Each set of timeline facts includes dates about the president as well as additional facts from American and/or world history. Students can do a research project for any of the American and/or world history events included in the timeline.

A suggested schedule would be:

Day 1: Read first president for the week and complete written narration

Day 2: Answer the reading comprehension questions and complete the Important Facts page

Day 3: Read second president for the week and complete written narration

Day 4: Answer the reading comprehension questions and complete the Important Facts page

Day 5: Complete both timeline worksheets, complete the master timeline (optional), and do the research project for one or both presidents studied (optional)

You will find answer keys for all reading comprehension questions at the end of the resource as well as a master timeline key.

American history is a vast topic that can be explored in so many ways. We encourage you to use this resource as a springboard to study many more parts of America's history.

For students who wish to read the entire text of any presidential speeches mentioned in this unit, the Miller Center provides the full text of numerous speeches here:

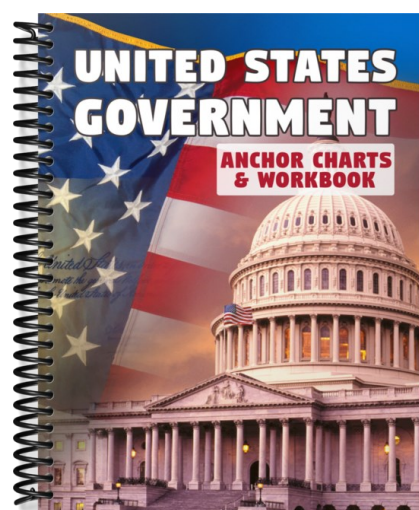
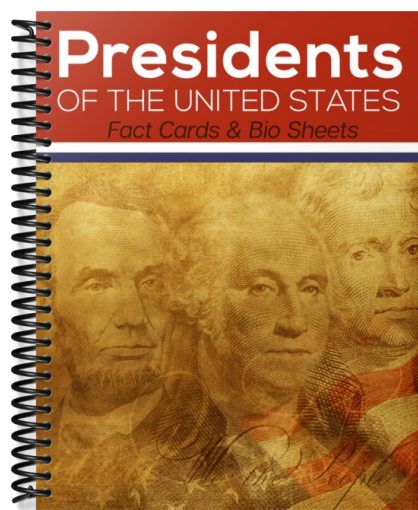
<https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches>.

Recommended Resources

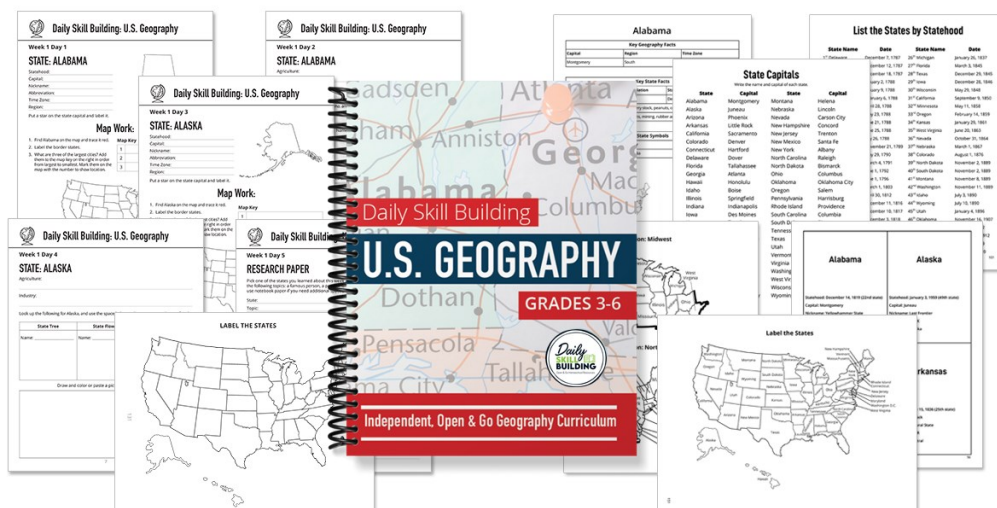
[Free U.S. Presidents Cheat Sheets](#) - Help your kids quickly find the names of every United States President and Vice President alongside when he served, what party he belonged to, and whether he was the fifth, fifteenth, twenty-fifth, or even forty-fifth President.

[U.S. Presidents Fact Cards and Bio Sheets](#) - Have a dozen facts about every U.S. President at your fingertips plus a quick way to review them with these U.S. Presidents Fact Cards and Bio Sheets.

[U.S. Government Anchor Charts & Workbook](#) - Take a closer look at the three branches of government as well as many of the departments and agencies that impact our daily lives.



[Daily Skill Building: U.S. Geography](#) - Are you looking for an EASY open-and-go U.S. geography curriculum that will go beyond teaching your students the states and capitals and help them develop independent learning skills? No teacher's guide needed – includes answer key!



George Washington

Lesson One: George Washington

(April 30, 1789-March 4, 1797)

One of the first things you probably ever learned about the history of the United States is that George Washington was the first president. This remarkable man has been called the “Father of the Country,” and for very good reason. Much of what the United States is today might not have been possible without his leadership. That’s not to say he never made mistakes. Of course he did, just like we make mistakes today. But it highlights the important part he played in American history.

Since this is a book about the presidents, we don’t have room to talk a lot about how Washington led the Continental Army against Britain, one of the largest military empires to have ever existed. And we don’t have time to talk about how he served as the head of the Constitutional Convention that wrote the U.S. Constitution at a point in history where the new nation was teetering on the verge of anarchy. We won’t even talk about how humble a man Washington was or that he freely admitted how much the idea of leading the new nation intimidated him. We’ll start on April 30, 1789, when Washington was sworn in as president in New York City. He stood on a balcony at Federal Hall and took his oath of office on a Bible. Cannons fired a salute, and Washington gave his inaugural address to Congress in the Senate Chamber.

Everything was new ground for Washington, and he knew that history would forever examine everything he did and said. He also knew that everything he did set a precedent that others would follow. Talk about pressure!

In July, the new Congress sent him a bill to sign that allowed taxes on imports, and he signed it. That same year, he created the Department of Foreign Affairs (now the Department of State), the Department of War, and the Department of the Treasury. Congress adopted the Bill of Rights, protecting some of our most important and basic freedoms. He also appointed Chief Justice John Jay, Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of War Henry Knox, Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton, and Attorney General Edmund Randolph. He relied on these men as well as on James Madison, who was a congressman from Virginia, for their advice and opinions. Initially, they corresponded by letter, but within a few years, he began meeting with them in a group. Madison would later call the group the “Cabinet.”

Washington faced many challenges. The states were in debt because of the war. The federal government, after much debate, took on the responsibility for paying the debt. He also faced a debate over forming the First Bank of the United States. Some argued that a national bank wasn’t constitutional while others argued it was necessary. Ultimately, Washington authorized it, and it remained in existence until 1811. It was replaced by the Second Bank of the United States in 1816; the second bank lasted until 1836.

Washington also oversaw moving the capital from New York City to Philadelphia and oversaw the plans that were being made to move the capital in the future to a place later called Washington, D.C.

While it may seem strange today, Washington was not a supporter of political parties. He felt they would harm the nation’s unity. While he was in office, Secretary of State Jefferson and Secretary of the Treasury Hamilton start disagreeing on more and more things.

George Washington

Hamilton's followers were known as Federalists and were in favor of a strong national government. Jefferson and his followers favored state rights over federal control and were called Anti-Federalists or Democratic-Republicans. Washington worked very hard not to take sides. He tried to help the two sides agree.

Washington was ready to retire at the end of his first term, but his advisers—including Madison, Hamilton, Knox, and Randolph, encouraged him to accept reelection, which everyone felt was more than certain. Jefferson was especially strong in his support of Washington remaining in office. Already, the nation's leaders recognized that the North, who favored the Federalists, and the South, who favored the Anti-Federalists, needed someone who could keep all states working toward the same goal—the growth of a *United States* of America. Washington agreed and was reelected.

His second term, in some ways, presented even more challenges than his first. In 1789, a revolution had broken out in France. The French Revolution was very different from the American Revolution in many ways. In 1793, the revolution triggered war in Europe with France, Britain, Spain, Austria, and Prussia all involved. Some in the U.S., such as Jefferson, supported the French Revolution. Others, including Hamilton and Washington, supported neutrality. Washington issued a statement of neutrality, and though the country's neutrality was tested, it held firm.

The following year, Washington faced the Whiskey Rebellion, an uprising in Pennsylvania over a tax on manufacturing whiskey. Washington sent troops to end the rebellion.

The nation's relationship with Britain became strained, with numerous issues cropping up on American soil and at sea. Washington sent John Jay to Britain, where he worked out the Jay Treaty. But the treaty was not unanimously supported by all. As Washington considered whether to sign the treaty or not, riots broke out. In the end, Washington signed the treaty. But public opinion of him was now divided, and some of his opponents suggested Washington should be impeached over a salary issue. By the end of his second term, Washington had succeeded in signing several additional treaties that were beneficial to the country, and public opinion had started to shift back to his favor. But Washington was tired and probably hurt by some of what had happened. He retired to his home at Mount Vernon and enjoyed—for the first time in twenty years, he said—being able to simply sit down to dinner with his wife. In 1798, he was asked to help manage the nation's army. He became ill in 1799 and passed away on December 14.



Lesson One: George Washington



Comprehension Questions

1. What two positions had Washington held before he became President of the United States?

2. What departments did Washington create first? _____

3. Which two men became political rivals during Washington's first term? _____

4. What did Washington issue in 1793 regarding a war in Europe? _____

5. Who did Washington send to Britain to try to improve relations? _____

Written Narration

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Important Facts About George Washington

Date of Birth: _____

Date of Death: _____

Place of Birth: _____

Place of Death: _____

Years Served: _____

Political Party: _____

Vice President: _____

First Lady: _____

Runner-Up: _____

Electoral Votes Won: _____



George Washington, 1st President of the USA

Lesson One: George Washington



Timeline

Create a timeline of the life of George Washington using the dates below. If you are creating a master timeline, add them to the master timeline at the end of the unit as well.

1732: George Washington is born in Virginia.

1754: George Washington fights in the French and Indian War.

1775: George Washington takes charge of the Continental Army during the American Revolution.

1789: George Washington is sworn in as the first President of the United States.

1789: The French Revolution begins with the storming of the Bastille.

1791: The Bill of Rights takes effect.

1794: Eli Whitney patents the cotton gin.

1794: The Battle of Fallen Timbers is fought near modern-day Toledo, Ohio.

1798: George Washington is appointed a lieutenant general and commander in the United States Army.

1799: George Washington dies.

Research

Choose one of the U.S. or world events highlighted in bold above to learn more about. Write what you learn on the following page and complete the information below.

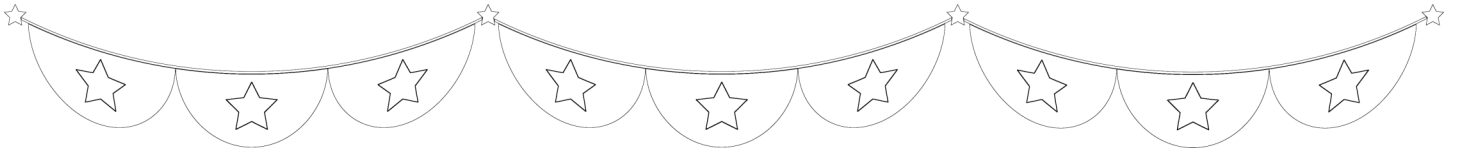
Topic chosen: _____

Why I chose this topic: _____

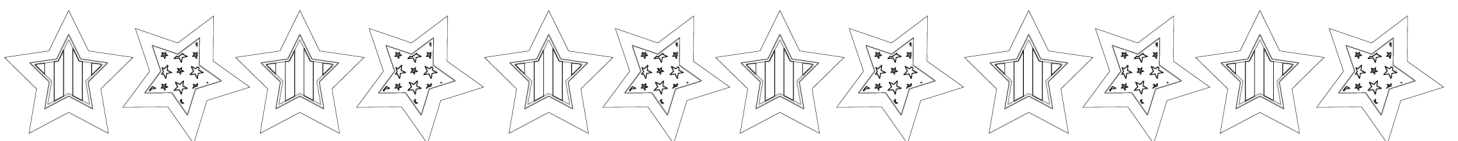
Date(s): _____

Sources used: _____

Notes: _____



Handwriting practice lines consisting of 18 horizontal rows. Each row is defined by two parallel lines, providing a guide for letter height and placement.



George Washington Timeline

	1732	
	1754	
	1775	
	1789	
	1789	
	1791	
	1794	
	1794	
	1798	
	1799	