

LEVELED BOOK • L

Presidents' Day



Written by John Perritano

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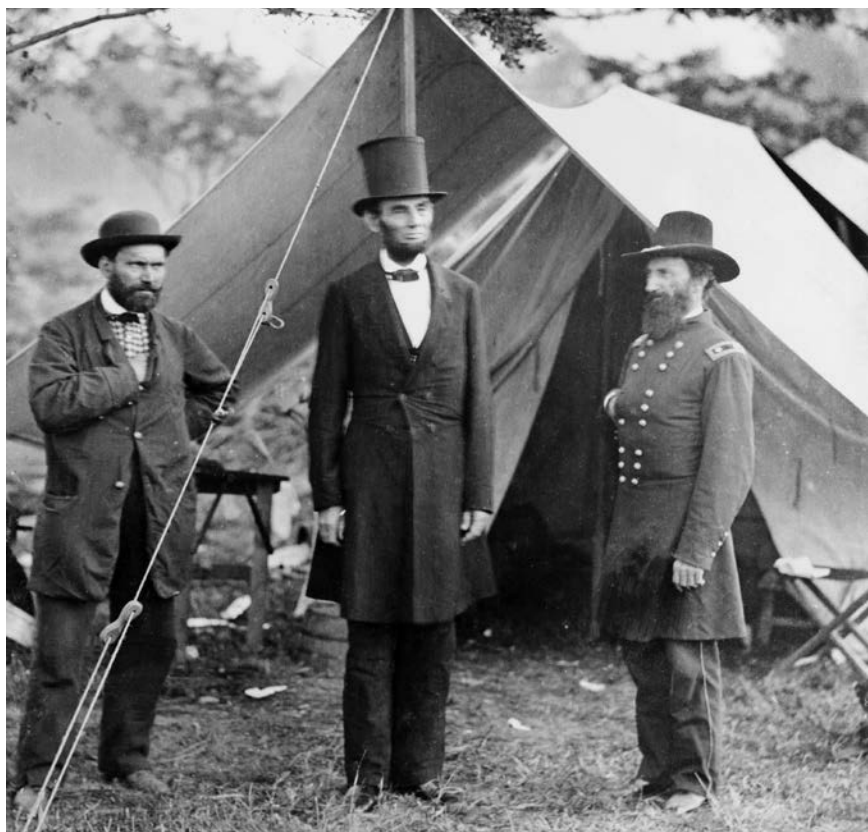


Table of Contents

Introduction	4
George Washington	5
The Country Celebrates	8
Abraham Lincoln	9
Glossary	16



Mount Rushmore has the faces of four popular presidents carved into it: (left to right) George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln.

Introduction

Every four years in the United States, people choose a **president** to lead the country. Some presidents are popular. Others are less popular. Presidents' Day is a time to **honor** all U.S. presidents.



George Washington crossed the Delaware River to lead an attack against enemies of the new country in 1776.

George Washington

Presidents' Day has a lot to do with George Washington. He was the first president of the United States. Before the United States became a country, there were thirteen British colonies. The colonies wanted to be free from British rule. Washington led the army against the British. He was a great leader. After years of fighting, the army defeated the British.



People held a parade for George Washington because he chased the British forces out of New York in 1783.

People loved Washington. Some wanted Washington to be king. Washington thought no one should have the power of a king. He thought people should elect their leaders. The people elected Washington to be the first president of the United States.

Being the first president wasn't easy.
People had different ideas about
how to run the new country.
Washington worked hard to keep
the country from falling apart.



Washington worked with leaders from each state to create the new country.



This painting shows Washington celebrating his birthday with friends and family.

The Country Celebrates

Washington's **birthday** is February 22. People **celebrated** it by setting off fireworks and firing cannon blasts. They held parades, too.

In 1879, Washington's Birthday became a national **holiday**. He was the first person to be given that honor.



Many people visit the Lincoln Memorial (left) and Washington Monument (right) in Washington, D.C.

Abraham Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln was another amazing president. He held the country together during the U.S. Civil War (1861–1865).

At the time, the states in the South wanted to form a country of their own. Many people there wanted to continue owning slaves.



Lincoln's Gettysburg Address is one of the most famous speeches ever given. He gave it to honor the soldiers who fought in the war.

Lincoln did not allow the South to form its own country. The North and South went to war. The war ended, and the North won. The United States remained united, and slavery was made illegal.



Students often learn about Washington and Lincoln on Presidents' Day.

Many people honor Lincoln for being a great president. His birthday is February 12. Yet Lincoln's birthday never became a national holiday.

Do You Know?

Presidents' Day used to be celebrated on Washington's birthday, February 22. In 1968, the U.S. government passed a law moving Presidents' Day to the third Monday in February. The government did this so people could have a three-day weekend.





Abraham Lincoln



George Washington

Some people wanted to **combine** Lincoln's birthday and Washington's birthday into a new holiday called Presidents' Day. Both men were heroes and presidents, and their birthdays are close together.

Other people did not want to celebrate the two presidents' birthdays together.

Instead, the government let each state

decide how to celebrate. Some states decided to celebrate Presidents' Day. Others continue to celebrate only Washington's Birthday.



Some people celebrate by making a birthday cake for President Washington!

Do You Know?



Nine states celebrate only Washington's Birthday. Twenty-four states celebrate Presidents' Day. The remaining seventeen states celebrate some or all of the presidents—with each state choosing which presidents to honor.

Most people in the United States have Presidents' Day off from work or school. Many government offices and banks are closed on that day. Special shows about the presidents are on television.

Many groups use Presidents' Day to act out important events in U.S. history. People dress up like Washington, Lincoln, and other presidents.



Actors at Mount Vernon, Virginia, celebrate Presidents' Day by acting out scenes from the American Revolution.



President Barack Obama works in the Oval Office of the White House.

What do presidents do on Presidents' Day? Some of them visit George Washington's home. Others play golf or go on trips with their families.

Mostly, the presidents go to work. Presidents don't get the day off. They have a country to run!

Glossary

- birthday** (*n.*) the day someone is born; the yearly celebration of that day (p. 8)
- celebrated** (*v.*) having done something special to honor an event (p. 8)
- combine** (*v.*) to mix, bring, or get together (p. 12)
- holiday** (*n.*) a special day of celebration or remembering; a special day when most people do not go to work or school (p. 8)
- honor** (*v.*) to show respect for or think well of; to keep a promise (p. 4)
- president** (*n.*) the leader of the government in some countries (p. 4)

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Front cover: George Washington was sworn in as the first U.S. president on April 30, 1789.

Title page: Artists working on Mount Rushmore needed lots of support to reach the statues.

Page 3: Abraham Lincoln visits the troops at Sharpsburg, Maryland, during the Civil War.

Back cover: George Washington leaves New York after the end of the American Revolution.

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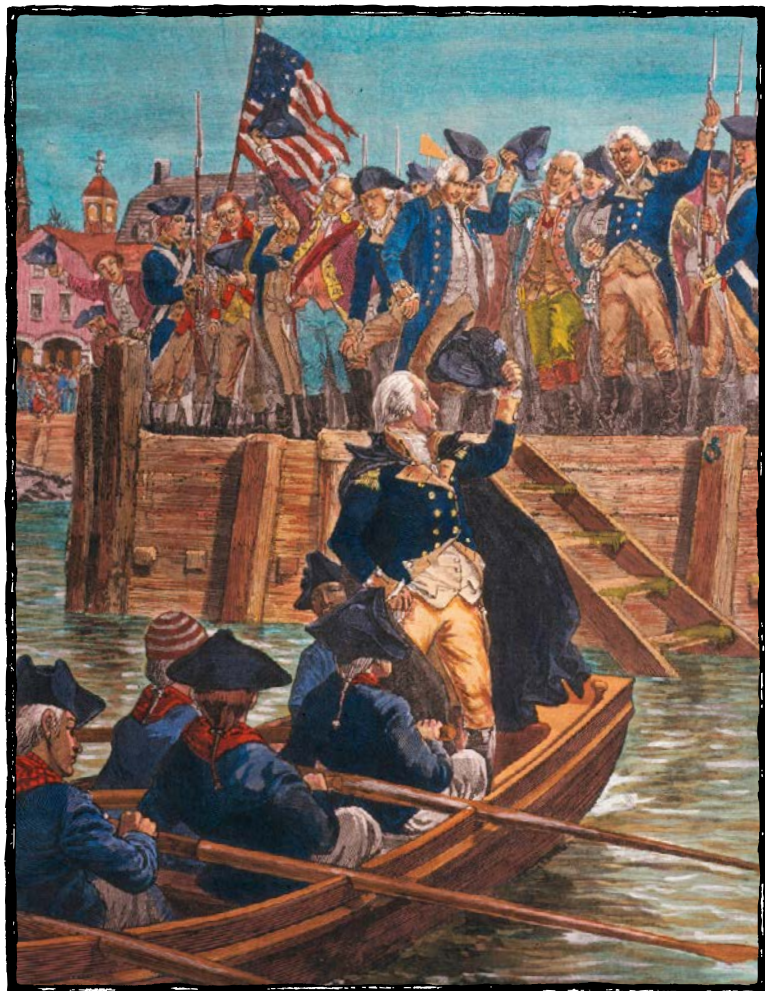
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