

The Secret Service

A Reading A-Z Level U Leveled Book

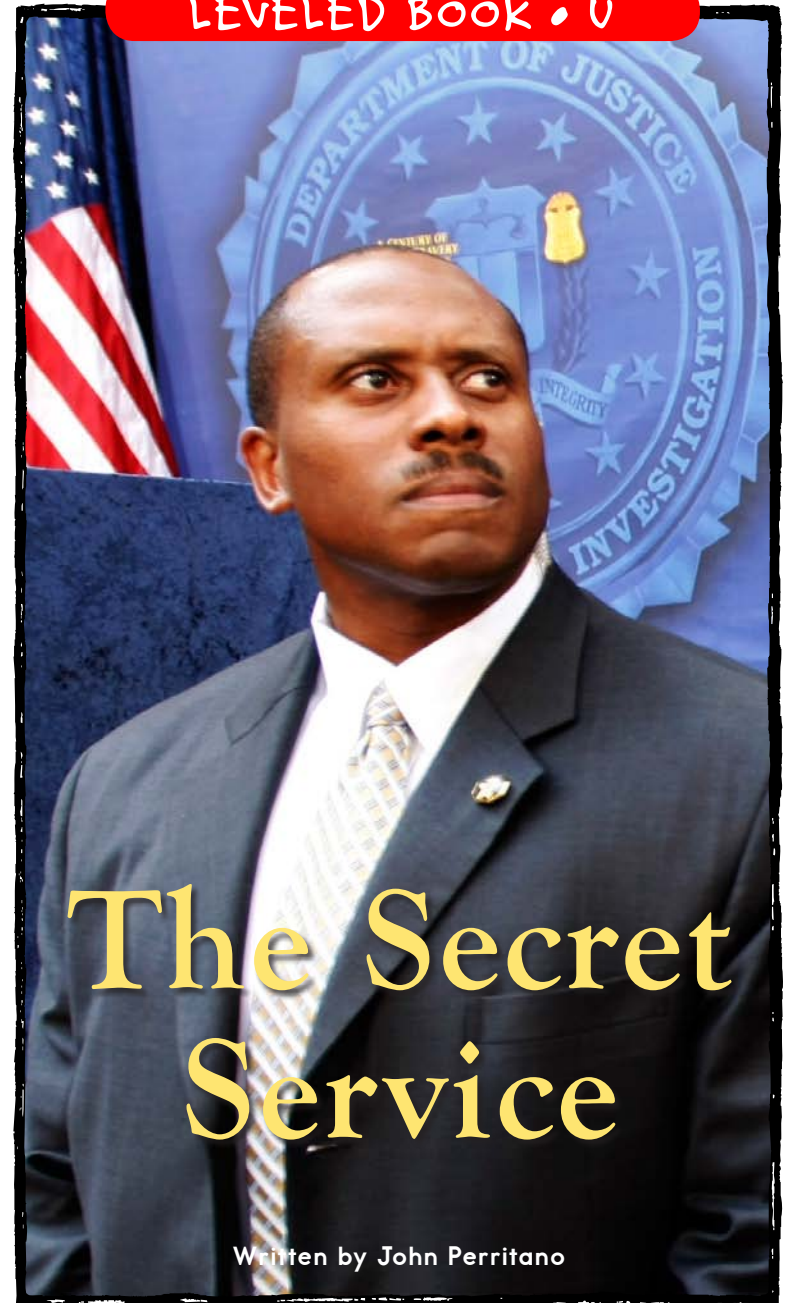
Word Count: 1,579



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Written by John Perritano

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Back cover: President Ronald Reagan and Nancy Reagan arrive at the White House with their dog Rex, followed by a Secret Service agent.

Title page: A U.S. Secret Service agent stands watch as the Marine One helicopter takes off with President Barack Obama on board.

Table of contents: A uniformed officer of the Secret Service patrols Pioneer Square in Seattle, Washington, prior to a visit by President Barack Obama on August 17, 2010.

The Secret Service
Level U Leveled Book
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The Obamas walk to the White House on Inauguration Day 2009.

Introduction

All eyes were on Washington D.C.’s newest couple—the Obamas. It was January 21, 2009. Barack Obama had just been sworn in as the first African-American president of the United States.

The new president smiled as he walked down Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House. He held hands with the **First Lady**, Michelle Obama. The couple waved to the cheering crowd. Nearby, groups of men and women dressed in dark suits, some wearing sunglasses, moved along with the couple. Unlike most people in the crowd, these individuals were not looking at the new president and First Lady. Instead, their eyes were searching the crowd of people lining the street, looking for any hint of danger. These men and women were **agents** of the U.S. Secret Service.

Even though it was freezing cold outside, the agents had their suit jackets open and their hands close to their hidden weapons. They had sworn an **oath** to protect the president and had been planning for **Inauguration** Day for months. The agents left nothing to chance. They had blocked many of Washington's streets and added security checkpoints. Soldiers kept careful watch from the tops of buildings. Fighter jets circled overhead. Boats patrolled the Potomac River.



Secret Service agents closed off the streets to provide security during the Obama inauguration.



The door of "The Beast" reveals its thick armor.

Agents even built the president a new car, which they nicknamed "The Beast." It looked like a black **limousine**, but it was really a tank. Its eight inches of armor could protect the Obamas from just about anything.

All day, agents stuck close to the first couple as the Obamas made their way from the inaugural parade to dances and balls. Nothing bad happened. That's the way it was supposed to be. The planning and hard work of the Secret Service had paid off. It was all in a day's work.

President of the People

If Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Andrew Jackson had been alive in 2009, they would have been shocked. In their day, only rulers of foreign countries—not the president of the United States—had **bodyguards**. In fact, the door to the White House was rarely locked. Anyone could pop in, and many did just that. In the early days of the United States, people came by to chat or to share a cup of tea with the First Lady and president. Others came looking for a job or a special favor.



This engraving from around 1850 shows how the White House used to be open to the general public. Today, an iron fence surrounds the building.



President George W. Bush greets local people at a diner in Crawford, Texas, in 2004.

Why were these early presidents so easy to meet with? The United States was founded as a **democracy**. Americans didn't want to be ruled by a king or queen who just happened to be born into a royal family. Instead, Americans wanted to choose their own leaders through elections. Presidents had to listen to the wishes of voters if they wanted to keep their jobs.

For their part, Jefferson, Adams, and others made time to meet the people who voted them into office. They were happy to talk, shake hands, and hear what people were thinking. They wanted to be seen as just like everyone else.

As the nation grew, so did the **threats** against the president's life. It became difficult to allow people to freely meet with the president while also making sure the nation's leader was kept safe. Something needed to be done.



Allan Pinkerton (seated at left) led the Union Intelligence Service during the Civil War. His agents laid the groundwork for the U.S. Secret Service.

Life in a Cage

Congress formed the Secret Service in 1865, but at first its job wasn't to protect the president. Instead, Congress wanted the Secret Service to track down and arrest people for printing fake money—a crime called *counterfeiting*. At the time, nearly half the paper money in the United States was fake. The agency got its name because it worked in secret to find and catch counterfeiters.

The Secret Service began its work three months after Abraham Lincoln was **assassinated**. Lincoln was president during the Civil War (1861–1865). At the time, many Southern states wanted to leave the Union. The capital city of Washington was full of thieves and plotters. Many people wanted Lincoln dead. Some tried to kidnap him. Others took shots at him. A musket ball knocked Lincoln's hat off his head one day when he was riding a horse along a country road.



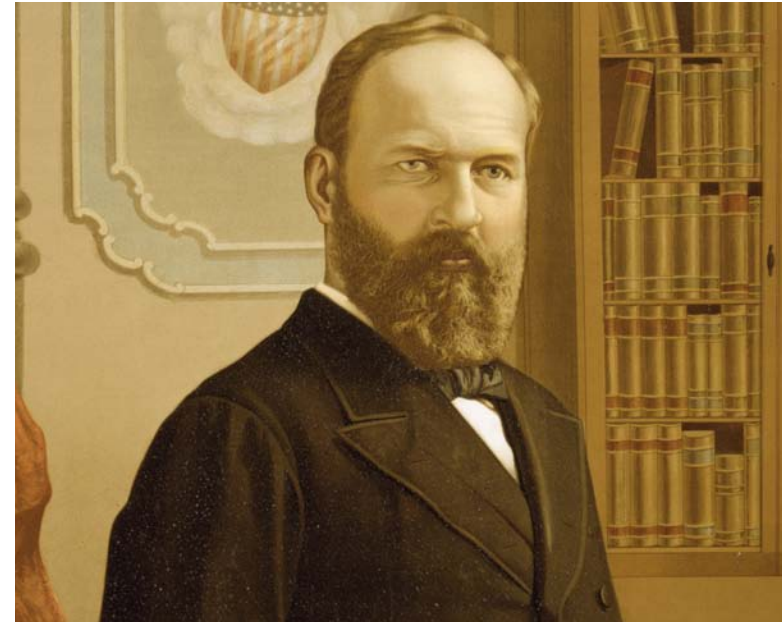
Abraham Lincoln spent his summers at a cottage on the edge of Washington, D.C., and often rode his horse three miles to the White House.

Still, Lincoln refused any protection. He took walks alone at night to the War Department. He wanted news of the war. "Though it would be safer for a president to live in a cage, it would interfere with his business," he said.

Late in the war, Lincoln finally agreed to allow Washington police officers to follow him. Only one bodyguard was on duty when John Wilkes Booth shot Lincoln on April 14, 1865, at Ford's Theatre in Washington.



Lincoln was seated in this box at Ford's Theatre when he was fatally shot by John Wilkes Booth.



James Garfield was president for only two hundred days before his assassination rocked the nation.

A "Slave of His Office"

Even after Lincoln's assassination, it took some time for the government to decide whose job it was to protect the president. Sometimes the U.S. Army guarded the president. Other times, it was the Washington, D.C., police department.

Not much changed even after President James A. Garfield died on the morning of July 2, 1881, after being shot by a man at a Washington train station. The man had met Garfield earlier at the White House. He asked the president for a job. Garfield said no.

The assassination of a second U.S. president shocked the nation. The *New York Tribune*, a leading newspaper of the day, warned against presidential bodyguards. The newspaper said guards would make the president a “slave of his office.”

The next president, Chester A. Arthur, refused to be followed by the Secret Service, although agents tried. Like earlier presidents, Arthur wanted citizens to be able to freely meet with him.

In 1901, President William McKinley was assassinated in Buffalo, New York. Afterward, Congress asked the Secret Service to protect all future presidents.



William McKinley delivers a speech during his presidential inauguration.

On Guard

The headquarters of the Secret Service is a plain office building not far from the White House. On the ninth floor, agents work quickly to keep track of the people they are protecting. Besides protecting the president, the Secret Service also guards presidential **candidates**, officials from other countries, the vice president, and others.



A Secret Service agent guards presidential candidate Mitt Romney at a campaign event in Miami, Florida, on August 13, 2012.



A Secret Service agent stands guard at a football stadium.

The agency also gives protection at special events, including the Olympic Games and the Super Bowl. Every day, the Secret Service learns of new threats against the people they are protecting, including the president. The threats can come over the telephone, in the mail, or over the Internet.

Important Dates in Secret Service History

1865

Congress creates the Secret Service Division on July 5 to battle counterfeiting of U.S. currency. The agency is part of the U.S. Treasury Department.



U.S. currency from the Civil War era

1867

Congress increases the power of the Secret Service to investigate "frauds against the government," such as land swindles.

1901

Congress requests that the Secret Service begin protecting presidents following the assassination of President William McKinley.

1915

President Woodrow Wilson directs the Secret Service to investigate foreign spies in the United States.



Woodrow Wilson

1922

Congress forms the White House Police to guard the building.

1951

The Secret Service begins protecting the president's family.

1965

Congress allows the Secret Service to protect former presidents and their spouses.



Jacqueline and Caroline Kennedy

2002

The Secret Service becomes part of the Department of Homeland Security following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.



A Secret Service agent greets a Chicago police officer while on assignment.

Agents take every threat seriously and **investigate** it. Sometimes agents meet with the person who made the threat to ask them questions. Most of the threats are not serious. Sometimes people make a threat but don't really plan to hurt anyone.

Some threats, though, are very serious. Agents keep careful watch on people who might really try to follow through on their threat.

Family Affair

The Secret Service rarely leaves the president's side. They are there, whether the president is on vacation, playing golf, or meeting with foreign leaders. Teams of agents follow the president's every move. They also stick close to the first family. Their presence can sometimes cause problems, especially for the president's children.

It can be difficult to be a child of the president. Their every move is watched. They can't go to the mall whenever they wish like other children or go to their friend's house after school. If they do, the Secret Service has to be nearby. Sometimes kids rebel. Theodore Roosevelt had six children. One son, Quentin, climbed onto the roof of the White House and threw snowballs at Secret Service agents.



Archie and Quentin, sons of President Theodore Roosevelt, pose for a photo with White House police officers.



Barbara and Jenna Bush sometimes grew tired of Secret Service protection.

Barbara and Jenna Bush, the twin daughters of President George W. Bush, just wanted to be normal teenagers. They were upset that they couldn't take a walk or go shopping without agents following them. Jenna once snuck out of the White House to escape her security team. First Ladies also often get tired of having armed guards following their every move. "We love them dearly and they do a great job," says Michelle Obama. She also says that sometimes she would like to "sneak out" and "walk out the front door" without them.

Shades and Sleeves

It's not hard to spot a Secret Service agent. Just look for the man or woman wearing sunglasses. The glasses allow the agent to see what people in a crowd are doing, even in bright sunlight.

Agents also wear a tiny speaker in their ear. That's because the Secret Service has its own communication system. The speaker allows agents to hear directions from a special command unit. Agents often look as if they are whispering words into the sleeve of their clothing. Inside the sleeve is a tiny microphone that allows agents to talk to one another.



Sunglasses and communications earpieces are often worn by agents on duty.



President Ronald Reagan waves to the crowd just moments before being shot on March 30, 1981.

Danger Is Their Business

President Ronald Reagan was leaving a Washington, D.C., hotel after giving a speech. *Pop! Pop! Pop!* Someone was firing a pistol. Agent Timothy McCarthy quickly responded. He used his body to shield Reagan from the shooter. McCarthy was struck by a bullet. He later recovered from his wounds. Another agent, Dennis McCarthy, grabbed the attacker and stopped the shooting.

Although he was wounded, Reagan survived the attack. “I forgot to duck,” he famously said. Still, President Reagan’s close call shows the dangers that Secret Service agents face.



President Barack Obama is flanked by agents after flying to Tampa, Florida, aboard Air Force One.

Why do Secret Service agents keep doing their job if it is so dangerous? It’s more than a job. By protecting the president, agents are serving their country. The death of a president can change the course of history. That’s why thirty-five Secret Service agents, officers, and other agency workers have given their lives in the line of duty.

Secret Service agents are trained to “take a bullet” for the president. As long as there are people willing to harm America’s elected leader, there will be Secret Service agents sworn to stop them.

Code Names

Every president in modern times has had one. Bill Clinton's was "Eagle." Ronald Reagan went by "Rawhide." John F. Kennedy's was "Lancer." Actually, every person the Secret Service protects gets a code name. It allows agents to avoid mixing up the names of people they are protecting. It's also a good way to keep the subject of the agents' conversations a secret.



Ronald "Rawhide" Reagan

Where do code names come from? President Reagan was an actor who starred in many Western movies. "Rawhide" is an old Western term for the animal skins worn by Native Americans and cowboys. Reagan's wife, Nancy, went by "Rainbow" because she often wore brightly colored clothes. Vice President Dick Cheney loved to fish. He went by the code name "Angler," which is another word for a fisherman.

Even people whom the Secret Service does not protect get names. The singer Frank Sinatra was a friend of President Kennedy. The Secret Service called him "Napoleon," after the French general.

As for President Obama, his code name is "Renegade," and the First Lady is "Renaissance." Their daughters, Malia and Sasha, are "Radiance" and "Rosebud."

Glossary

agents (<i>n.</i>)	people, such as spies, guards, or investigators, who have been given the authority to act on behalf of a government (p. 4)
assassinated (<i>v.</i>)	killed by a surprise attack (p. 10)
bodyguards (<i>n.</i>)	people whose job is to keep someone safe (p. 7)
candidates (<i>n.</i>)	people who seek to be elected or chosen (p. 14)
Congress (<i>n.</i>)	the highest lawmaking body of the U.S. government, which includes the Senate and the House of Representatives (p. 9)
democracy (<i>n.</i>)	a form of government that is run by the people through free and frequent elections (p. 8)
first lady (<i>n.</i>)	the wife of a head of state (p. 4)
inauguration (<i>n.</i>)	a ceremony in which a person is sworn into office (p. 5)
investigate (<i>v.</i>)	to try to find out facts or information about something (p. 17)
limousine (<i>n.</i>)	a long, expensive car often driven by a hired driver (p. 6)
oath (<i>n.</i>)	a formal promise (p. 5)
threats (<i>n.</i>)	statements of intent to cause harm (p. 8)