

PRESIDENTS' DAY

Third Monday of February

**... or rather,
HAPPY BIRTHDAY GEORGE**

Washington's Birthday is a federal holiday celebrated on the third Monday of February. Its purpose is to honor the life and work of George Washington, our first president. However, many states have chosen to celebrate 'Presidents' Day' instead, to commemorate all of our past presidents.



Presidential Fun Facts

- George Washington was the only U.S. president to be unanimously elected.
- Washington's Birthday became the first federal holiday to single out an individual's birthdate.
- Only two Americans have individual federal holidays: George Washington and Martin Luther King, Jr.
- In 1932, the Purple Heart was reinstated on February 22. The Purple Heart was originally created by George Washington to honor soldiers killed or wounded while serving in the armed forces.
- In the 1790s, there was some confusion regarding the actual date of Washington's birth. In 1731, the year Washington was born, the colonies used the Julian calendar so his birthday fell on February 11. However, in 1752 England changed to the Gregorian calendar, which moved dates 11 days forward. Washington's birthday then fell on February 22. It took a while for people to get used to the new calendar! In 1796, the last year of Washington's presidency, Americans throughout the 13 states celebrated his birthday, but they did not all mark the same day as his birthday.
- John Quincy Adams regularly swam naked in the early mornings on the Potomac River.
- Andrew Jackson taught his parrot to swear. During his funeral, the parrot had to be removed because it wouldn't stop cursing!
- While president, Ulysses S. Grant got a speeding ticket for driving his team of horses too fast down a Washington street.
- William Taft, after leaving office, served as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. He was the only man to serve as the head of two branches of government.
- Warren Harding, an inveterate gambler, lost the White House china in a round of poker.
- George W. Bush was head cheerleader at his high school.

THE ROAD FROM WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY TO PRESIDENTS' DAY

1800 – Washington died in 1799. Beginning in 1800, his February 22nd birthday became a perennial day of remembrance.

1879 – “Washington’s Birthday” was designated a federal holiday in the District of Columbia. The principal intent of the resolution was to make February 22 “a bank holiday.”

Washington’s Birthday joined four other recognized federal holidays (Christmas Day, New Year’s Day, Thanksgiving, and Independence Day).

1885 – February 22nd, Washington’s birthday, was made a federal holiday nationwide, extending holiday benefits to federal workers beyond the shores of the Potomac River.

The other four established federal holidays now also applied to federal workers nationwide.

1971 – Washington’s Birthday holiday was moved from February 22 to the third Monday in February under the Uniform Monday Holiday Act.

Prior to this act, there were nine federal holidays observed on specific dates, which fell on different days of the week in different years. This law shifted three holidays (Washington’s Birthday, Memorial Day, and Veterans’ Day) from specific dates to predetermined Mondays and established a new Monday holiday – Columbus Day.

However, due to widespread opposition from veterans’ organizations and many states, Veterans’ Day was returned to its original November 11 date in 1975, taking effect in 1978.

Why mandate these Monday holidays? The purpose was to create three-day weekends for federal workers, with the hope of reducing employee absenteeism before and after midweek holidays.

TRANSITION TO PRESIDENTS' DAY

- Federal holidays are only legally applicable to federal employees. The states and local governments have always had the power to designate their own holidays. Abraham Lincoln also had a February birthday. After Lincoln’s assassination, many states honored Lincoln’s birthday as a state holiday as well as Washington’s birthday. (Lincoln’s birthday never became a federal holiday). After the Uniform Monday Holiday Act, most states began to celebrate both Washington’s and Lincoln’s birthday on the federal Monday holiday for Washington. However, some states chose to rename the holiday “Presidents’ Day.” Illinois, Lincoln’s birthplace, chose to continue celebrating his birthday as a separate state holiday.
- Advertisers sealed the deal on the term “Presidents’ Day.” “Washington’s Birthday” and “Lincoln’s Birthday” morphed into the nice sound bite “Presidents’ Day” for promoting sales over the 3-day holiday weekend. By the mid-1980’s, “Washington’s Birthday” became more commonly known as “Presidents’ Day.”
- Today, Presidents’ Day is commonly seen as a remembrance of all of our past presidents.

George Washington Facts

“First in war – first in peace – and first in the hearts of his countrymen.”

HENRY LEE

George Washington set many precedents for our nascent country. One of the first was set during his tenure as Commander in Chief of the Continental Army. Joseph Ellis called Washington, “the core of gravity that prevented the American Revolution from flying into random orbits, the stable center around which the revolutionary energies formed.” Upon the war’s end, Washington relinquished power. He resigned his commission, then returned to Mount Vernon as a private citizen.

King George III asked his court painter, American-born Benjamin West, whether Washington would be head of the army or head of the state after the war. West stated that Washington was returning to his estate, Mount Vernon. Flabbergasted, King George declared, “If he does that, he will be the greatest man in the world.” Washington was a modern day Cincinnatus.

As a private citizen he continued offering his services. When asked (strongly persuaded and even begged) to participate in and serve as president of the Constitutional Convention, he acquiesced, believing it his civic duty. Without his august presence, the Convention may not have garnered the support needed to make it successful. Through this he helped lay the foundation for the Constitution and the government.

Unanimously elected, George Washington took office as the first president under the Constitution of the United States. This was new territory. There was no such thing as a viable American nation. Washington observed that, “I walk on untrodden ground,” meaning that as the first president everything he did would set a precedent.

One of the first decisions to be made was how to address the president. John Adams suggested “His Elected Majesty” and “His Mightiness,” but these suggestions just prompted someone to offer “His Rotundness” for Adams. The senate settled on simply “Mr. President.”

Washington voluntarily surrendered the presidency after two terms, setting a precedent held until Franklin Delano Roosevelt broke it in 1940. Washington wrote a farewell letter to “the People of the United States” which was printed in the American Daily Advertiser, Philadelphia’s major newspaper, on September 19, 1796. The Courier of New Hampshire gave it the title “Washington’s Farewell Address.” It began:

“Friends, and Fellow Citizens: The period for a new election of a Citizen, to Administer the Executive government of the United States, being not far distant...it seems to me proper,...that I should now apprise you of the resolutions I have formed, to decline being considered among the number of those, out of whom a choice is to be made.”

Incidentally, the senate began a tradition of reading Washington’s 1796 Farewell Address in 1862, during the dark days of the Civil War. In the address, Washington had warned against forces of geographical sectionalism, political factionalism, and urged Americans to subordinate sectional jealousies to common national interests. Every year since 1896 the senate has observed Washington’s birthday by reading his Farewell Address address in legislative session.

The principle established by Washington of voluntary retirement, which effectively demonstrated that the office would routinely outlive the occupant, showed that the American presidency was fundamentally different from a European monarchy. Presidents, no matter how indispensable, were disposable.

On the inauguration day of John Adams, Washington read a short farewell message prior to Adams being sworn in as the second president. Washington ended the ceremony with an “exquisite gesture” by insisting that President Adams and Vice President Jefferson exit the chamber before him. This symbolized the nation’s most powerful man reverting to the humble status of a private citizen. Washington wanted to do all in his power to dramatize his humility before a civilian power.

George Washington, “The Father of Our Country” voluntarily surrendered power in 1783 and 1796 when he stepped down as commander in chief and from the presidency. This set the precedent for a peaceful turnover of power - a cornerstone of our democracy.

Presidential Poems

Washington Monument by Night

CARL SANDBURG (1922)

1
The stone goes straight.
A lean swimmer dives into night sky,
Into half-moon mist.

2
Two trees are coal black.
This is a great white ghost between.
It is cool to look at,
Strong men, strong women, come here.

3
Eight years is a long time
To be fighting all the time.

4
The republic is a dream.
Nothing happens unless first a dream.

5
The wind bit hard at Valley Forge one Christmas.
Soldiers tied rags on their feet.
Red footprints wrote on the snow...
...and stone shoots into stars here
...into half-moon mist tonight.

6
Tongues wrangled dark at a man.
He buttoned his overcoat and stood alone.
In a snowstorm, red hollyberries, thoughts, he
stood alone.

7
Women said: He is lonely
...fighting...fighting...eight years...

8
The name of an iron man goes over the world.
It takes a long time to forget an iron man.

9
.....
.....

A Farmer Remembers Lincoln

WITTER BRYNNER (1919)

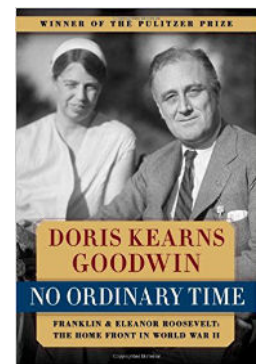
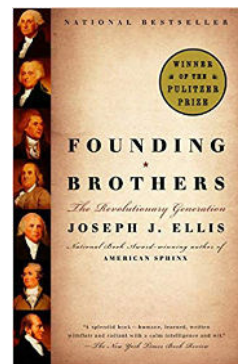
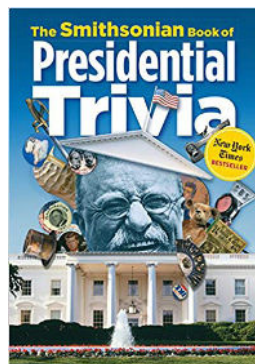
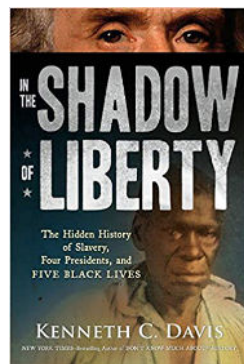
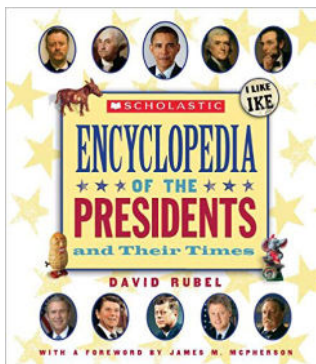
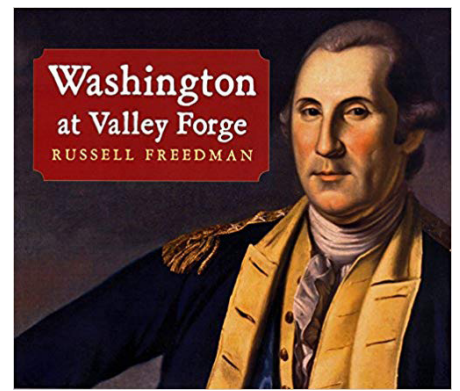
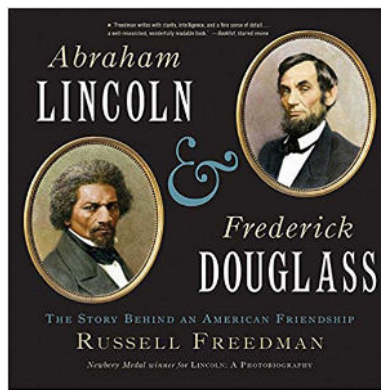
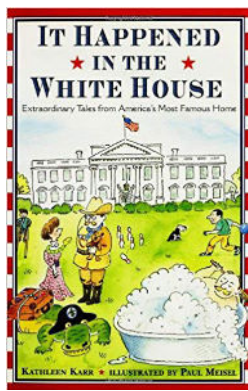
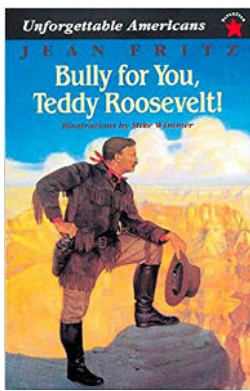
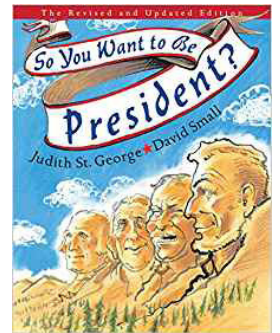
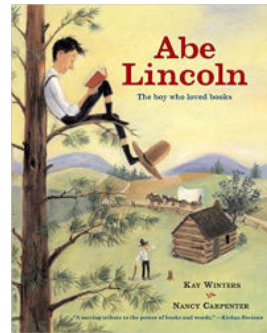
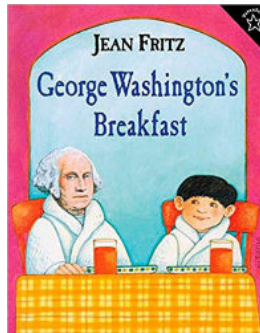
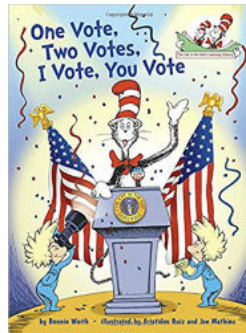
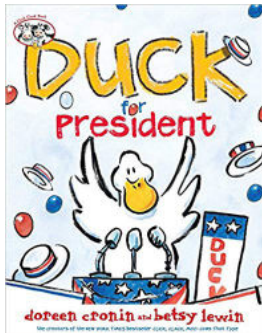
“Lincoln?—
Well, I was in the old Second Maine,
The first regiment in Washington from the Pine Tree
State.
Of course I didn’t get the butt of the clip;
We was there for guardin’ Washington—
We was all green.

“I ain’t never ben to the theayter in my life—
I didn’t know how to behave.
I ain’t never ben since.
I can see as plain as my hat the box where he sat in
When he was shot.
I can tell you, sir, there was a panic
When we found our President was in the shape he
was in!
Never saw a soldier in the world but what liked him.

“Yes, sir. His looks was kind o’ hard to forget.
He was a spare man,
An old farmer.
Everything was all right, you know,
But he wasn’t a smooth-appearin’ man at all—
Not in no ways;
Thin-faced, long-necked,
And a swellin’ kind of a thick lip like.

“And he was a jolly old fellow—always cheerful;
He wasn’t so high but the boys could talk to him their
own ways.
While I was servin’ at the Hospital
He’d come in and say, ‘You look nice in here,’
Praise us up, you know.
And he’d bend over and talk to the boys—
And he’d talk so good to ‘em—so close—
That’s why I call him a farmer.
I don’t mean that everything about him wasn’t all right,
you understand,
It’s just—well, I was a farmer—
And he was my neighbor, anybody’s neighbor.
I guess even you young folks would ‘a’ liked him.”

a small selection of books



parents:

PLEASE PREVIEW ALL MATERIALS BEFORE SHARING WITH YOUR CHILD

You are the best judge of what is appropriate for your child/ren and what they will enjoy. Try checking goodreads.com for reviews.

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR DETAILS + MORE

a small selection of books

CONTINUED

TITLE	AUTHOR	LEVEL
<i>Duck for President</i>	Doreen Cronin	Pre-Pri
<i>If I Were President</i>	Catherine Stier	Pre-Pri
<i>One Vote, Two Votes, You Vote, I Vote</i>	Bonnie Worth	K-Pri
<i>My Name is James Madison Hemings</i>	Jonah Winter	K-Int
<i>Thomas Jefferson's Feast</i>	Frank Murphy	K-Int
<i>George Washington's Breakfast</i>	Jean Fritz	K-Int
<i>Getting to Know the U.S. Presidents (series)</i>	Mike Venezia	K-Int
<i>Abe Lincoln's Hat</i>	Martha Brenner	K-Int
<i>Abe Lincoln: The Boy Who Loved Books</i>	Kay Winters	K-Int
<i>Abe's Honest Words</i>	Doreen Rappaport	K-Int
<i>So You Want to Be President?</i>	Judith St. George	Pri-Int
<i>If I Ran for President</i>	Catherine Stier	Pri-Int
<i>When Penny Met POTUS</i>	Rachel Ruiz	Pri-Int
<i>George Washington: A Picture Book Biography</i>	James Cross Giblin	Pri-Int
<i>George Washington</i>	Ingri & Edgar Parin D'Aulaire	Pri-Int
<i>Abraham Lincoln</i>	Ingri & Edgar Parin D'Aulaire	Pri-Int
<i>Abraham Lincoln Lawyer, Leader, Legend</i>	Justine & Ron Fontes	Int
<i>Revolutionary John Adams</i>	Cheryl Harness	Int-LMS
<i>Bully for You, Teddy Roosevelt!</i>	Jean Fritz	Int-LMS
<i>It Happened in the White House</i>	Kathleen Karr	Int-LMS
<i>Lives of the Presidents: Fame, Shame (and What the Neighbors Thought)</i>	Kathleen Krull	Int-LMS
<i>The Remarkable Rough Riding Life of Theodore Roosevelt</i>	Cheryl Harness	MS
<i>George Washington, Spymaster</i>	Thomas B. Allen	MS
<i>Lincoln: A Photobiography</i>	Russell Freedman	MS-Adult
<i>Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass</i>	Russell Freedman	MS-Adult
<i>Franklin Delano Roosevelt</i>	Russell Freedman	MS-Adult
<i>Washington at Valley Forge</i>	Russell Freedman	MS-Adult
<i>Franklin Delano Roosevelt</i>	Russell Freedman	MS-Adult
<i>Washington at Valley Forge</i>	Russell Freedman	MS-Adult

a small selection of books

CONTINUED

TITLE	AUTHOR	LEVEL
<i>Lincoln's Grave Robbers</i>	Steve Sheinkin	MS-Adult
<i>Scholastic Encyclopedia of the Presidents and Their Times</i>	David Rubel	MS-Adult
<i>Grover Cleveland, Again!</i>	Ken Burns	MS-Adult
<i>In the Shadow of Liberty: The Hidden Story of Slavery, Four Presidents and Five Black Lives</i>	Kenneth C. Davis	MS-Adult
<i>The Smithsonian Book of Presidential Trivia</i>	Amy Pastan, Ed.	MS-Adult
<i>Washington: A Life</i>	Ron Chernow	HS-Adult
<i>John Adams</i>	David McCullough	HS-Adult
<i>Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation</i>	Joseph J. Ellis	HS-Adult
<i>Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power</i>	Jon Meacham	HS-Adult
<i>A Team of Rivals</i>	Doris Kearns Goodwin	HS-Adult
<i>The Bully Pulpit</i>	Doris Kearns Goodwin	HS-Adult
<i>No Ordinary Time: Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt: The Home Front in WWII</i>	Doris Kearns Goodwin	HS-Adult

a small selection of poetry

"Patriot and Man" // Lenore Hetrick

"George Washington" (sung to "Yankee Doodle") + more!

"To His Excellency George Washington" // Phyllis Wheatley, 1775

Last stanza of "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte" // Lord Byron, 1814 html

"George Washington" // James Russell Lowell, 1875

"The Vow of George Washington" // John Greenleaf Whittier, 1889

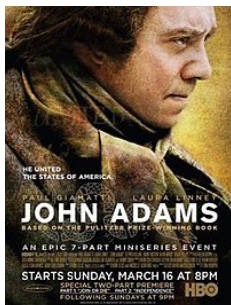
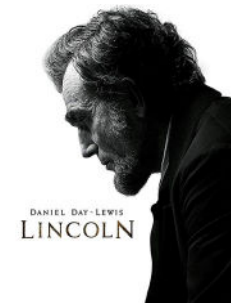
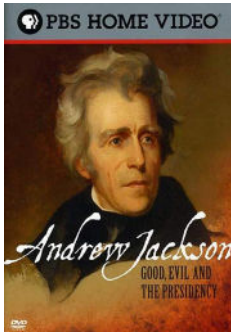
"Washington Monument by Night" // Carl Sandburg, 1922

"O Captain! My Captain!" // Walt Whitman, 1867

"Abraham Lincoln, from the Ode Recited at the Harvard Commemoration" // James Russell Lowell, 1865

"A Farmer Remembers Lincoln" // Witter Bynner, 1919

MOVIES + TELEVISION



DOCUMENTARIES

- *The Ultimate Guide to Presidents* (2013) — a History Channel miniseries looking at the 43 men who have been presidents.
- *The Day Kennedy Died* (2013)
- *The Reagan Presidency* (2012) — a TV documentary miniseries
- *American Experience: JFK* — a PBS documentary miniseries
- *Thomas Jefferson* — a PBS Ken Burns documentary
- *Andrew Jackson: Good, Evil and the Presidency* — PBS biography (DVD)
- *American Experience: JFK*
- *The Presidents* (2012) — History Channel DVD
- *Founding Fathers* — History Channel DVD
- *George Washington* — History Channel 8 hour miniseries on DVD
- *The Roosevelts* — a PBS documentary miniseries

MOVIES/MINISERIES/TV SERIES

- *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939) — starring Henry Fonda
- *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939)
- *1776* (1972) — PG; musical
- *Sunrise at Campobello* (1960) — About Franklin D Roosevelt's polio
- *The Crossing* (2000) — TV movie starring Jeff Daniels as Washington crossing Delaware
- *Thirteen Days* (2000) — PG-13; Kennedy administration's struggle to contain Cuba missile crisis
- *Truman* (1995) — PG; VP Truman becomes president after death of FDR
- *Lincoln* (2012) — PG-13; Daniel Day Lewis as Lincoln
- *The American President* (1995) — PG-13
- *The West Wing* (1999-2006) — TV-14; NBC Series
- *Warm Springs* (2005) — TV movie with Kenneth Branagh as FDR
- *All the President's Men* (1976) — PG
- *John Adams* (2008) — TV-14; HBO miniseries
- *State of the Union* (1948)
- *The Butler* (2013) — PG-13

JUST FOR KIDS

- *Just the Facts: American Presidents* (DVD)
- Disney's *The American Presidents: Revolution and the New Nation & Expansion and Reform* (DVD)
- Disney's *The American Presidents: Civil War and Reconstruction & the Development of the U.S.* (DVD)
- Disney's *The American Presidents: Postwar United States and Contemporary United States* (DVD)
- *Schoolhouse Rock: Election Collection* (DVD)

links

History of Washington's Birthday/Presidents' Day

<https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/us/washington-birthday>

<http://www.theholidayzone.com/president/history.html>

<http://www.aol.com/article/2015/02/16/a-history-of-our-weirdest-federal-holiday-presidents-day/21143272/>

<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2004/winter/gw-birthday-1.html>

https://www.senate.gov/reference/resources/pdf/Federal_Holidays.pdf



Multiple Ages

A Song about the US Presidents

Nat'l Education Society's Presidents' Day activities for all grades

TeacherVision Presidents' Day Resources for K-12

Cooking with White House recipes:

<http://www.food.com/ideas/white-house-recipes-6199>

<http://kidshealth.org/en/kids/white-house-recipes.html#>

<http://ourwhitehouse.org/a-taste-of-the-past/>

Websites for Mount Vernon and George Washington's Birthplace National Monument:

www.mountvernon.org

www.nps.gov/gewa/index.htm

Preschool – Intermediate

Fun, short videos related to presidents

Enchanted Learning crafts

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/presidentsday/>

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/books/holiday/presidentsday/>

President's Day Crafts

<http://www.dltk-kids.com/crafts/presidents.html>

<https://tipjunkie.com/presidents-day-activities/>

Printable worksheets and coloring pages

Middle School – High School

Short biographical information and fun facts for each president

Presidential libraries to visit in California

<https://www.reaganfoundation.org/>

<https://www.nixonlibrary.gov/>

speeches & writings

Worth watching, reading, or
listening on audio

[Washington's Farewell Address](#)
(1796)

[Jefferson's First Inaugural
Address](#) (1801)

[Lincoln's Gettysburg Address](#)
(1863)

[Lincoln's Second Inaugural
Address](#) (1865)

[FDR's First Inaugural Address:](#)
"The only thing we have to fear..."
(1933)

[FDR's State of the Union Address:](#)
The Four Freedoms (1941)

[Eisenhower's Farewell Address](#)
(1961)

[Kennedy's Inaugural Address:](#)
"Ask not what your country can do
for you..." (1961)

[Johnson's Voting Rights Speech:](#)
"We Shall Overcome" (1965)

[Reagan's Brandenburg Gate
Speech](#) (1987)

