

Presidents' Day

The Third Monday in February

This holiday was first known as Washington's birthday. It was celebrated on February 22. It honored our first president. In some states, people also celebrated President Lincoln's birthday on February 12. Now we honor all of our country's presidents on one day, Presidents' Day.



Summary of Activities

Reading: Literature

Memorial to a Great President—fictional story with comprehension questions

Reading: Informational Text

Washington and Lincoln—nonfiction passage with a compare-and-contrast activity

Writing

Great Men of Our Country—activity in which students write in response to a prompt

Bonus

Washington or Lincoln?—activity in which students prepare flashcards

Vocabulary: Civil War, compassion, engraved, memorial, slavery, surveyor, Union



Name _____

Date _____

Memorial to a Great President

Directions: Read the story. Then answer the questions on page 28.

Mia's footsteps echoed as she walked across the pink marble floor. She wrapped her arms around herself. Outside, the sun shone warm. Her sweater was more than enough against the cool breezes from the river. In this stone building, she felt a chill in the air.

Mia stood in awe, not daring to speak aloud. "Wow," she whispered. "It's huge." People walked around silently, studying the statue. They wandered into the side rooms and looked at the displays.

Taller than the other girls in her class, Mia still had to stand on tiptoe to read the words written in the stone above the statue. She pulled on her father's hand so he would lean close to hear her. "Temple? Is this man a god?"

"No." Her father smiled. "Abraham Lincoln was a president and a great man."

"Why does it say 'in the hearts of the people' and 'he saved the Union'? What does that mean?" Mia felt better about talking now that her dad had said something.

"People will always remember him because he kept all the states together after the Civil War. They remember his strength and compassion." Dad turned around and gestured to the pillars around the building. "How many columns do you see?"

Mia counted. "Thirty-six. That's a funny number."

"At the end of the Civil War, that's how many states there were in the United States. Can you find their names?"

She looked around and shook her head. Dad had gone out to the front steps, and Mia followed him. "I never did find the names of the states."

"Keep looking," he said.

Mia wrinkled her face. Writing on the outside of the building? She looked at the columns again. There, above the columns, she saw what might be letters. Mia pointed. "Is that it?"

"Yes. Each name in the Union is engraved in the stone. I guess it's a good reminder that all those states were reunited under Lincoln's leadership. Do you want to go back inside?"

"What is there to see besides the statue?" Mia wasn't sure she wanted to go back into the cold, quiet building. It felt more like a tomb than a temple. She stretched her arms out, enjoying the sun.

"Two of Lincoln's famous speeches are engraved in stone. It's important to remember the good things he said."

"Yes." Mia took her father's hand. "I heard in school he wanted all people to be free. That's a good thing."



Name _____

Date _____

Washington and Lincoln

Directions: Read the passage. Then complete the activity.

George Washington was our country's first president. He had eight years of formal schooling, which was not unusual for that time. But he was good at math. He was only sixteen when he got a job as a surveyor. He went on to serve in the Army. Later, he served in the Continental Congress. He was commander of the Army in the Revolutionary War. Washington got all of the electoral votes to become president. He served two terms.

After his time as president, Washington retired to Mt. Vernon, his farm in Virginia. He owned a lot of land and grew different types of grains. More than 300 slaves worked on the farm. Washington had other business interests besides farming. People at Mt. Vernon worked at other jobs, too. Some people were blacksmiths. Carpenters and bricklayers worked on the farm.

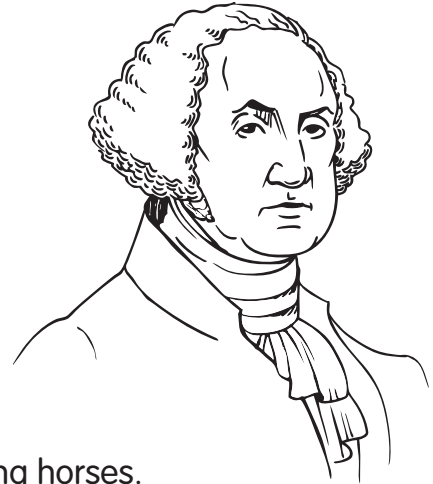
Washington owned two fishing boats. He was skilled at riding horses.

In later years, after the war, he wanted to free his slaves. He wanted them to work as hired hands for pay. During his lifetime, Washington wrote thousands of letters. Many people visited Mt. Vernon then and still do today.

Abraham Lincoln served our country as president during the Civil War. He was the sixteenth president. His humble beginnings are well known. Born in a log cabin, Lincoln was mostly self-educated. He had a little over a year of formal schooling.

Lincoln had many different jobs. He worked on a riverboat and ran a general store. He practiced law, even though he didn't have a degree. Working on the riverboat gave him an idea. He invented a bellows system to help boats navigate in shallow water. His idea received a patent. Lincoln was also a skilled wrestler.

Lincoln ran for several political offices. He lost many of the elections. Once, he ran for vice president and lost. When Lincoln was finally elected president, he served two terms. While president, he used the telegraph to communicate with generals. Lincoln made a famous speech. He said that all slaves would be "forever free."



Activity: Use a blue pencil or crayon to underline things that Washington and Lincoln have in common. Use a red pencil or crayon to underline ways in which they are different. On the back of the page, create a Venn diagram using the underlined information.



Name _____

Date _____

Great Men of Our Country

Directions: Read the passage. Then complete the activity.

George Washington was the first president of our country. Many things he did set an example. Before he became president, Washington was a military leader. He led the colonial army. They fought for freedom from the British. He became the leader of the new country. His tasks were huge.

Abraham Lincoln served as president during the Civil War. This was a time of great unrest for our country. The states were divided over slavery. They did not agree on how much power the government should have. Lincoln had a very difficult task. He had to get people to agree to free slaves. He wanted to reunite all the states under one central government. Lincoln did these things and saved the Union. Lincoln had served in politics, and he understood how to work with people.

Washington and Lincoln show us there are different paths to being great. These two men are famous. Not all great people are famous. Each of these men had a huge job to do. They each met their unique tasks with courage and common sense.

Activity: Write your response to one or more of these questions:

- What does it take for someone to be great?
- How is being a great person different from being famous?
- Think of someone you would define as a great person. This could be someone you do not know but have read about or someone you do know. What makes this person great?



Name _____

Date _____

Washington or Lincoln?

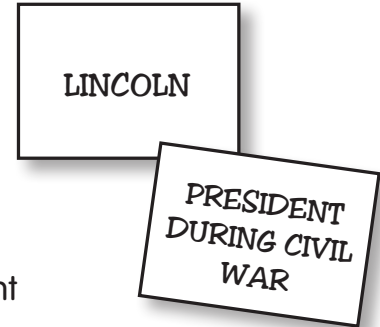
Directions: Follow the instructions to make presidential flashcards.

What You Will Need

cardstock or heavy paper cut into cards (for example, 2" x 3")

What You Will Do

1. Review the previous three activities to find interesting facts about Washington and Lincoln.
2. Write one fact on each card.
3. Make a matching card by writing the name of the president that goes with that fact.
4. Continue making sets of cards.
5. Trade your cards with a classmate. Try to match each fact with the correct president.



Challenge

- Research to make additional cards for other presidents.
- Write question cards instead of fact cards. For example:
 What three jobs did Lincoln have? (He worked on a riverboat, ran a general store, and was a lawyer.)

 How might his jobs have prepared Lincoln to be president? (They gave him a variety of skills and experience; he was able to work with different people.)

Answer Key

Countdown to the New Year (page 6)

1. It's made of crystal and is twelve feet across. That's about as wide as our living room.
2. Answers will vary.
3. watching the ball drop and counting down to the New Year

A New Millenium (page 7)

What Might Happen: Computer programs would need to be changed. People thought computers would read 00 as 1900 instead of 2000. People who worked at banks worried that the numbers would be wrong. The computers might now use the wrong dates, etc.

What Did Happen: The world did not shut down. Most computers did not crash. A few places did have power failures. The government has spaceships that send important information. For a short time, the data could not be used. The most common problem was that reports showed the wrong dates. People quickly fixed the errors.

Groundhog Relatives (page 17-18)

Hoary Marmots	both	Groundhogs
live high in the mountains	a species of marmot	live in fields where trees meet open spaces
live in alpine meadows above the tree line	live in burrows	climb trees and swim
eat seeds in the fall	eat grass and leaves	also eat fruit and tree bark
get water from melted snow	get water from dew and plants they eat	gray fur with brown or dull red on tips
brown or black fur with gray or silver on front half of back and nose	small ears	short tails
long tails	make alarm calls	strong jaws
	hibernate in winter	

Memorial to a Great President (pages 27-28)

1. b
2. a
3. c
4. Answers will vary.

Washington and Lincoln (page 29)

Washington	both	Lincoln
formal schooling	elected to two terms in office	self-educated
good at math	wanted to free slaves	worked on a riverboat and in a general store
worked as surveyor		worked as a lawyer
served in the Continental Congress		ran for many political offices
served as commander of the Army		time period: Civil War
time period: Revolutionary War		was an inventor
had a lot of land		skilled wrestler
skilled at riding horses		used telegraph to communicate with generals
wrote many letters		

Celebrating the New Year (page 35)

1. a
2. c
3. c

The Blarney Stone (page 39)

1. c
2. b
3. Answers will vary.

The Great Pacific Garbage Patch (page 44)

1. c
2. b
3. Answers will vary.