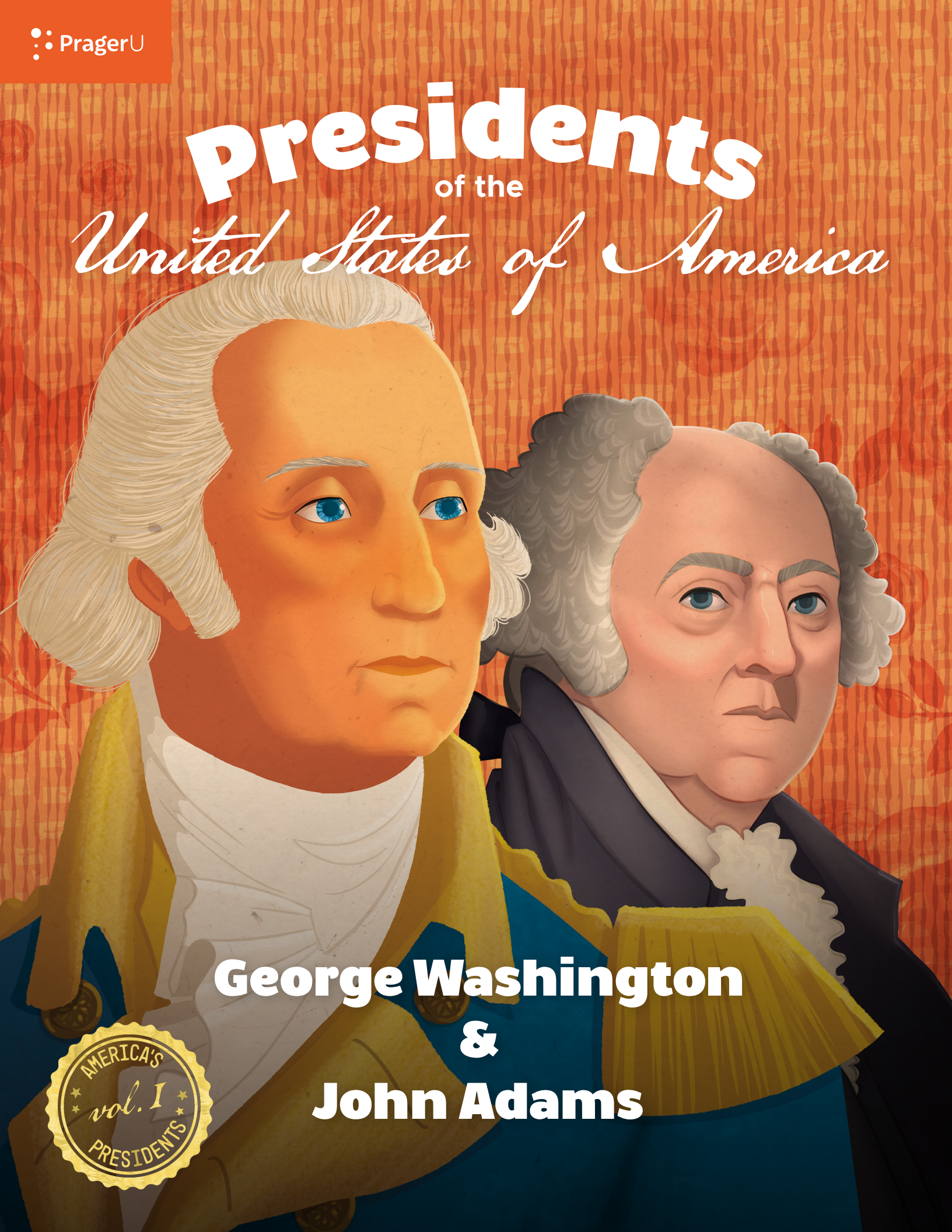
PragerU

Presidents of the United States of America



George Washington & John Adams

AMERICA'S PRESIDENTS vol. I



PragerU is redefining how people think about media and education. Watched millions of times every day, PragerU is the world's leading nonprofit with educational, entertaining, pro-American videos for every age. From intellectual, fact-based 5-Minute Videos and powerful personal storytelling to animated shows made just for kids—PragerU helps people of all ages think and live better.

PragerU Kids teaches history, civics, financial literacy, and American values to children across the K-12th grade spectrum. With kids shows, books, and educational resources for every grade, PragerU Kids offers content that parents and teachers trust and children love. Watch for free and learn more at PragerUkids.com.

All text and illustrations Copyright © 2024 Prager University Foundation.

All rights reserved, including the right of reproduction in whole or in part in any form.

PragerU is a registered trademark of Prager University Foundation.

Published by PragerU

15021 Ventura Boulevard #552

Sherman Oaks, CA 91403

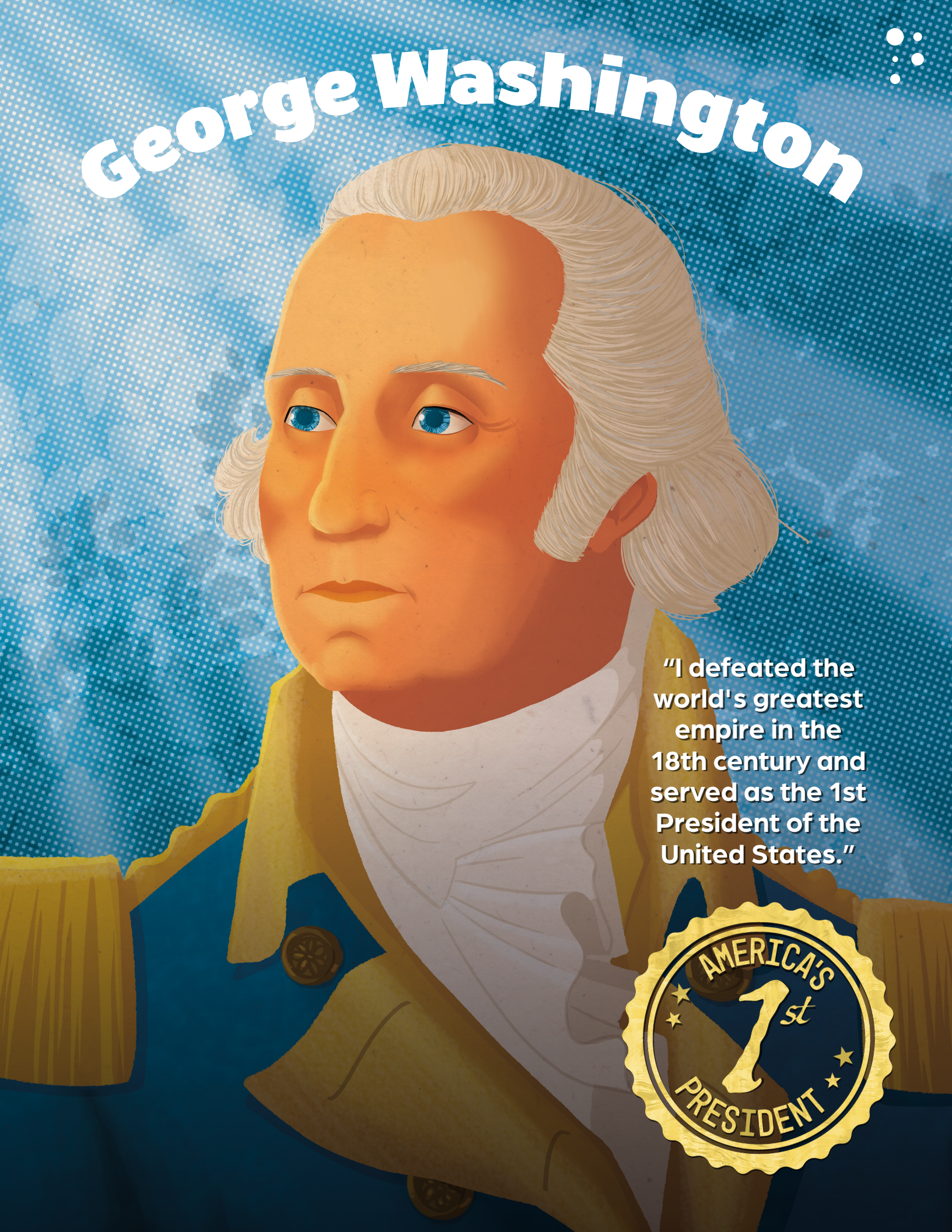
presidents of the United States of America

Table of Contents:

George Washington 1

John Adams 17

George Washington



Become a Presidential Historian By Solving This Puzzle

In this book, you'll learn all sorts of facts about George Washington's amazing life and accomplishments. But there's still one last thing we need to know about him.

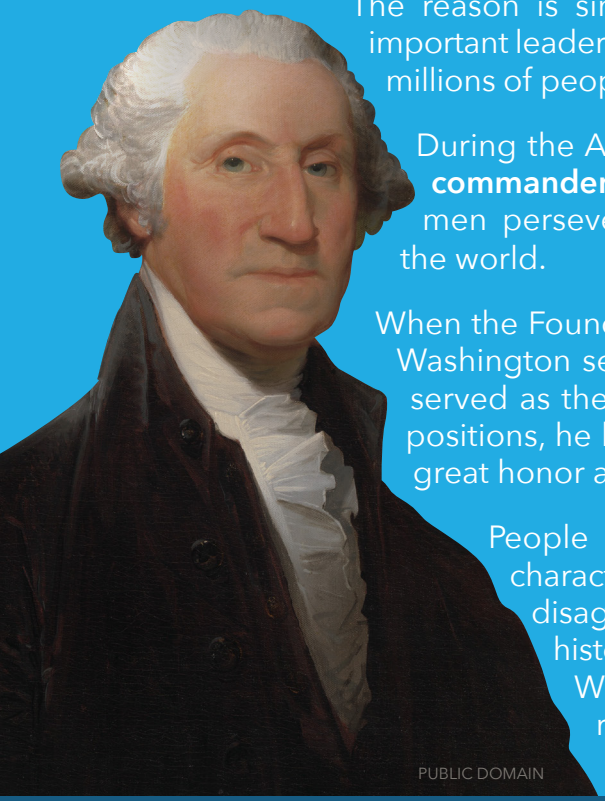
During the Christmas season in 1787, George Washington paid 18 shillings to bring a unique animal to his home to entertain his guests, and your task is to find out what it was. You can help us uncover the answer! Hidden in the text are bolded letters. Read this book carefully to find them and fill the letters into the blanks below in the order they appear.

_ _ _ _ _

Once you've solved this puzzle, you'll be a true PragerU Kids presidential historian!

Meet George Washington

George Washington is literally everywhere! His face is carved on Mount Rushmore. His name is on street signs, schools, and even the nation's capital. An entire state is named after him. His portrait even appears on the one dollar bill. Have you ever wondered what made him so special?



PUBLIC DOMAIN

The reason is simple: George Washington was one of the greatest and most important leaders in all of history. Without him, there would be no United States, and millions of people, including Americans today, would have never lived in freedom.

During the American Revolution, Washington led the Continental Army as its **commander-in-chief**. Despite facing great hardships, Washington and his men persevered and defeated Great Britain, the most powerful empire in the world.

When the Founding Fathers met in 1787 to create a new system of government, Washington served as the president of the Constitutional Convention. He also served as the first President of the United States from 1789 to 1797. In these positions, he helped create our system of government and led the nation with great honor and integrity.

People around the world respect Washington because of his great character. He worked hard to do what he believed was right, even if others disagreed with him. Most military and political leaders throughout history have wanted to conquer and rule as many people as possible. Washington, however, was different. He believed that power should remain with the people and he gave up his positions of authority twice in his life, so that his fellow countrymen could be free.

Young George

George Washington was born on February 22, 1732 in Popes Creek, Virginia to Augustine and Mary Ball Washington. His father was a farmer who owned many acres of land in Virginia. Young George had three older half-siblings (from his father's first marriage) and five younger siblings. He grew to become a strong boy, working hard on his family's plantations and enjoying the outdoors. Life seemed to be going well for young George, but in 1743, when he was 11, his father died. It was a difficult loss for the Washington family. Also, without his father around to provide for them, the family couldn't afford to give George much of an education.

Still, young George did inherit land and several enslaved servants. Also, since George was left without a father, his older half-brother Lawrence helped raise and mentor him. Sadly, tragedy struck the Washington family again when Lawrence suffered from a lung disease and died in 1752.



Interesting Facts

- He is often referred to as the "Father of His Country."
- He supported the Federalist Party.
- He left the colonies/the United States just once in his life–during a trip to Barbados when he was 19 years old.
- He was over six feet tall while his wife Martha was barely five feet tall.
- He was a member of a prominent social organization called Freemasons.
- Thomas Jefferson once called him "the best horseman of his age."
- He is the only President to be **unanimously** elected by the Electoral College (twice, in 1789 and 1792).
- His close friend, Henry Lee, paid tribute to Washington after his death, famously saying that he was "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."
- He is one of only two people whose birthdays are celebrated as a national holiday in the United States (the other being Martin Luther King, Jr.).

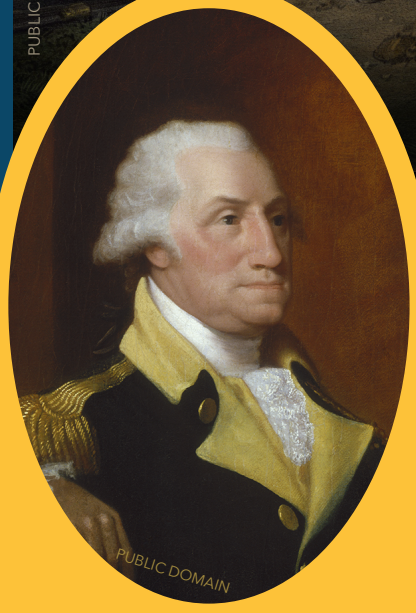
Young Warrior

By the time he was a young man, Washington craved adventure, so he joined the local militia under the British army, becoming a colonel. At the time, the British and the French were competing to control North America. In 1754, at the age of 22, Washington led an attack on the French at the Battle of Jumonville Glen. The attack on the French force helped spark a major global conflict known as the **Seven Years' War.**

The following year, in July 1755, he fought the French and Native Americans in the Battle of the Monongahela. Although he was sick at the time, the young Washington braved enemy fire and rallied the British forces into a retreat, saving many of their lives. He survived, even though the French shot two horses that he rode during the battle, and he had four bullet holes through his coat. Later, Washington said he survived the battle because of "the miraculous care of **Providence**." After this event, many people recognized Washington's courage and leadership abilities, calling him the "Hero of the Monongahela."

By this time, Washington wanted to settle down. He owned thousands of acres of land and lived at his beautiful Mount Vernon estate overlooking the Potomac River. In 1759, he married a wealthy widow named Martha Dandridge Custis, who had two children, Jacky and Patsy, from her previous husband. Although he and Martha never had any of their own children, he served as Jacky and Patsy's stepfather. Washington retired from the military and spent most of his time working on his farm, becoming one of the richest men in America.







Quote

"I retain an unalterable affection for you, which neither time nor distance can change."
- Letter to Martha Washington, June 1775

The American Revolution

In the 1760s, the British government began violating Americans' rights by imposing unfair taxes. These taxes were unfair because the British did not allow the Americans representation when creating the taxes. As a result, the Americans had never agreed to them. In response, the colonists began to send petitions and protest against these measures. Washington emerged as a leader of the **patriot** cause. In 1774, the colony of Virginia sent him to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to meet with delegates from the other colonies in the **Continental Congress.** They discussed how to respond to the crisis.

When **King George III** sent a large military force to Boston to enforce his taxes, the patriots began to take up arms to defend themselves. In April of 1775, war broke out, and the American Revolution began. By June of 1775, the Americans needed someone to lead the **Continental Army**, so the Congress unanimously chose Washington as its commander-in-chief. Americans were amazed that, as a wealthy man, Washington was willing to risk everything he had to defend their rights. Just before taking command, he wrote to Martha, "I go fully trusting in that Providence, which has been more bountiful to me than I deserve."

The war lasted eight long years. For most of the conflict, the British appeared to be winning. They had a well-trained army with years of experience fighting in Europe. Meanwhile, Washington's army had less experience and barely had any food or supplies. Washington worked very hard to support his men. He didn't take a single day off during the entire war, and spent much of it begging Congress and the states for the supplies his army needed.



PUBLIC DOMAIN

In the summer of 1776, the British inflicted a devastating defeat on Washington's army in New York. It looked like the Americans might lose the war and their freedoms, but Washington executed a daring plan on Christmas night in 1776. He and his army crossed the Delaware in the middle of a major snowstorm and won an impressive victory at the Battle of Trenton. One week later, he defeated the British again at the Battle of Princeton. Through these victories, Washington saved the American cause.

The next several years, however, were very frustrating times for Washington. He suffered several defeats and many of his soldiers died during the brutal winter of 1777-78 when they set up camp in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Ultimately, Washington lost more battles than he won, but he was still able to keep his army together. He also got a major boost from his former adversary, the French, who decided to help the Americans.

In October of 1781, Washington and the French commander, the Comte de Rochambeau, combined their forces and attacked the British at Yorktown, Virginia. Washington fired the first shot of the battle and, after almost two weeks of fighting, the American and French armies triumphed. At this point, the British knew they could not win the war.



GETTY IMAGES

Quote

"I go fully trusting in that Providence, which has been more bountiful to me than I deserve."
- June 1775



GETTY IMAGES

Even though the Americans were on the verge of winning independence, many wondered if their new country could survive without a king. In 1782, an officer named Lewis Nicola encouraged Washington himself to become the king of the new United States. In response, Washington rejected this suggestion. He had fought too long to free his country from one king. He knew that if he had declared himself a monarch, America would just replace one king for another, and the entire war would have been for nothing.

In 1783, Washington also had to stop his soldiers from disobeying Congress. By then, many of his officers were mad that Congress hadn't paid them for their service. The officers considered intimidating members of Congress with their weapons. Although Washington wanted his men to be paid, he feared that disobeying the people's representatives might lead to a dictatorship of some kind, where the military and not the people made laws. In 1783, Washington gave a passionate speech at the army camp in Newburgh, begging them to respect America's civilian leaders. Inspired by Washington's example, the officers gave up on their plot, allowing America to remain a free country.

The United States officially won its independence when a peace treaty was signed on September 3, 1783. On December 23, 1783, George Washington appeared before Congress to say goodbye and formally give up his title as commander-in-chief. He then returned back on horseback to his Mount Vernon estate, arriving on Christmas day. Washington's decision to give up power stunned the world. Even his former adversary, King George III, said that this act made him "the most distinguished character of the age."



PUBLIC DOMAIN

Quote

"It is better to offer no excuse than a bad one."
- October 1791

Constitutional Convention

Washington enjoyed being home again at Mount Vernon with Martha. By then, Jacky and Patsy had both died. The Washingtons were sad to lose them both, but they were overjoyed to adopt two of Jacky's children, Washy and Nelly, raising them as their own children.

Although the United States was free, its government did not function well. The country had very little leadership and couldn't perform many basic tasks, like raising money to carry out its duties. Washington and others worried that if the government was too weak, European empires might try to take advantage of the situation, split up the states into different countries, and rule once again over the American people.

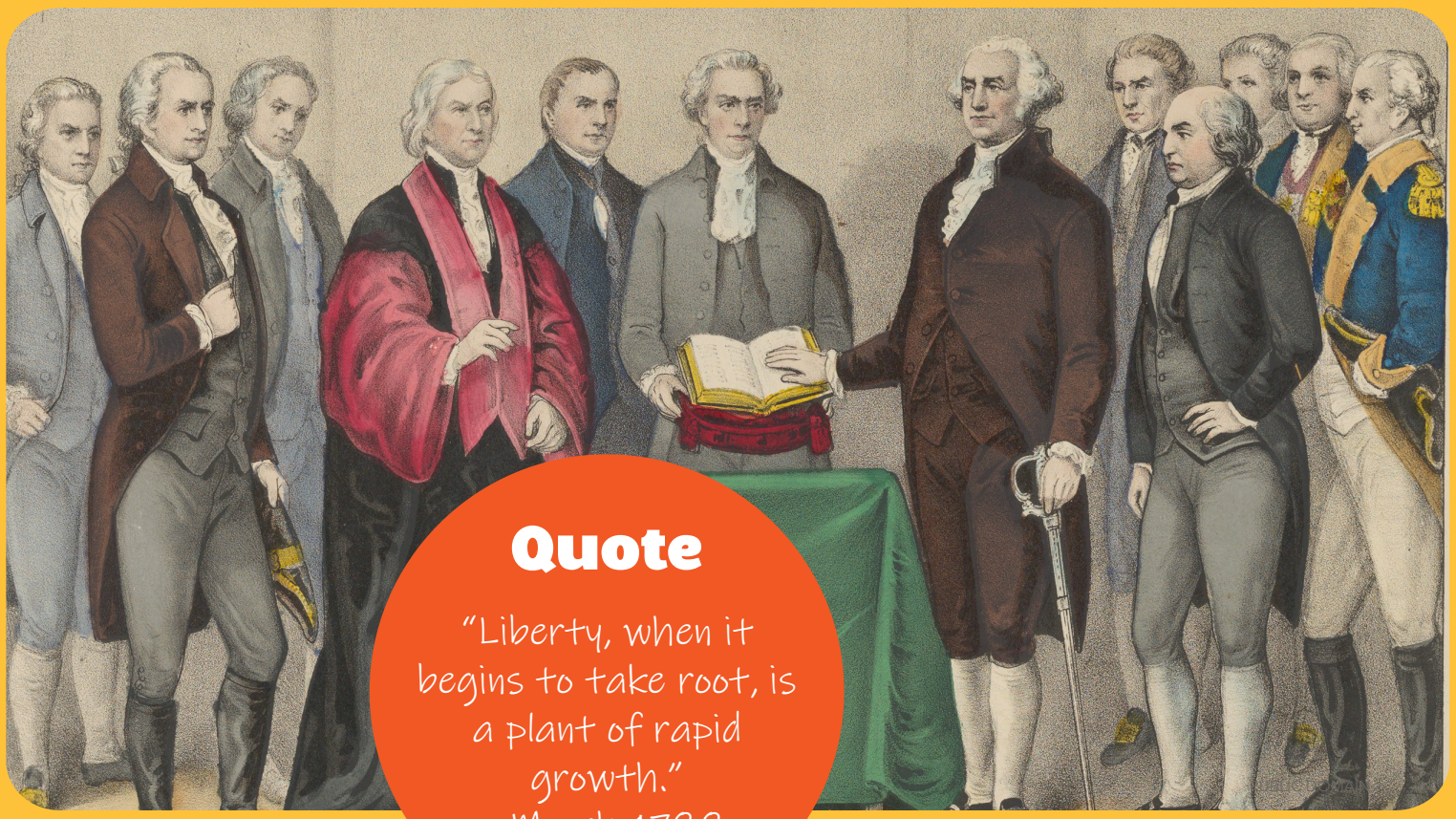
To address these issues, Washington and other Founders met in Philadelphia for the **Constitutional Convention** of 1787. The delegates unanimously elected Washington to serve as the president of the Convention. During the Convention, the delegates worked hard to draft a new constitution for their country. By September 1787, they had finished drafting what would become the U.S. Constitution, the official law of the land. Americans felt safe about the Constitution because Washington supported it. Without Washington's endorsement, one of the greatest political documents in world history may never have been ratified.

The Constitution created a new office: the Presidency of the United States. The American people overwhelmingly wanted one man for the job: George Washington. Although he preferred to remain at home in Mount Vernon, he answered the call of duty once again. After Washington was elected unanimously in early 1789, he took the oath of office in New York City to become America's first President on April 30 of that year.

President

Washington served as President, first in New York City, and then in Philadelphia. As President, he made many important decisions that still impact our lives today. He supported the adoption of the **Bill of Rights**, which guaranteed Americans' basic freedoms. He helped decide where the White House and U.S. Capitol building would be located. He established the first **Cabinet of the United States** and first national bank, which brought order to the nation's political and economic systems. Many historians consider Washington's Cabinet the greatest in American history, since it included brilliant Founders like Thomas Jefferson as the Secretary of State and Alexander Hamilton as the Secretary of Treasury. He also appointed the first members of the Supreme Court.

In 1789, the French Revolution broke out, sparking another war throughout Europe. Some Americans wanted to enter the war in support of their former ally France, while others favored having closer ties to Great Britain so the United States could access greater trade. People argued passionately about which side to support. Washington knew, however, that the United States was still too young and weak to fight in another war. He worked hard to preserve peace for America and succeeded by signing the Jay Treaty with the British. Although the agreement was controversial, historians now credit Washington for saving his country from being destroyed in an unnecessary war.



Quote

"Liberty, when it begins to take root, is a plant of rapid growth."
- March 1788

Some Americans, like Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, disagreed with some of President Washington's decisions and created a new party, the Democratic-Republican Party. Alexander Hamilton opposed Jefferson and Madison and formed the Federalist Party. Although Washington hoped to maintain national unity between the two parties, he felt most at home with the Federalists.

Many historians believe that Washington's most important decision as President was, once again, to leave power. He was so popular that he could have been re-elected over and over, serving as President for the rest of his life. In 1796, however, one year before the end of his second term, he issued a Farewell Address announcing his retirement. After his Vice President John Adams was elected to replace him, Washington left office in 1797, once again returning to Mount Vernon. In doing so, he established the **precedent** that Presidents should only serve, at most, two terms. Future Presidents followed Washington's example and refused serving more than two terms, until Franklin D. Roosevelt decided to run for a third term in 1940. Many Americans believe that the two-term limit has prevented many Presidents from becoming too powerful.



GETTY IMAGES

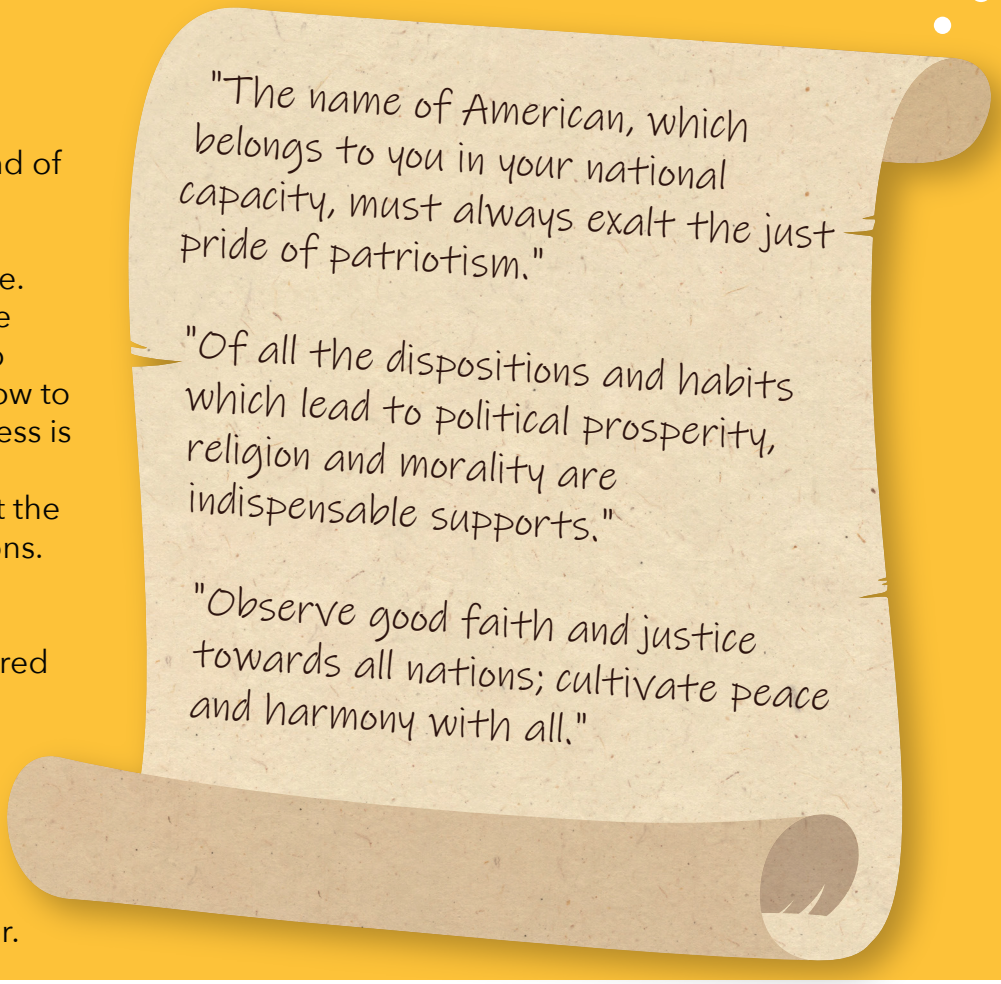
Quote

"There is but one straight course & that is to seek truth & pursue it steadily."
- July 1795

Farewell Address

In September 1796, near the end of his presidency, Washington published his famous Farewell Address to the American people. Not only did it announce that he was retiring for good, but it also gave advice to Americans on how to succeed without him. The Address is full of great wisdom and was intended to guide those alive at the time, as well as future generations.

For over a century after its publication, Americans considered the Farewell Address to be as important a document as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Washington's advice in his Farewell Address still guides America over two centuries later.



Retirement

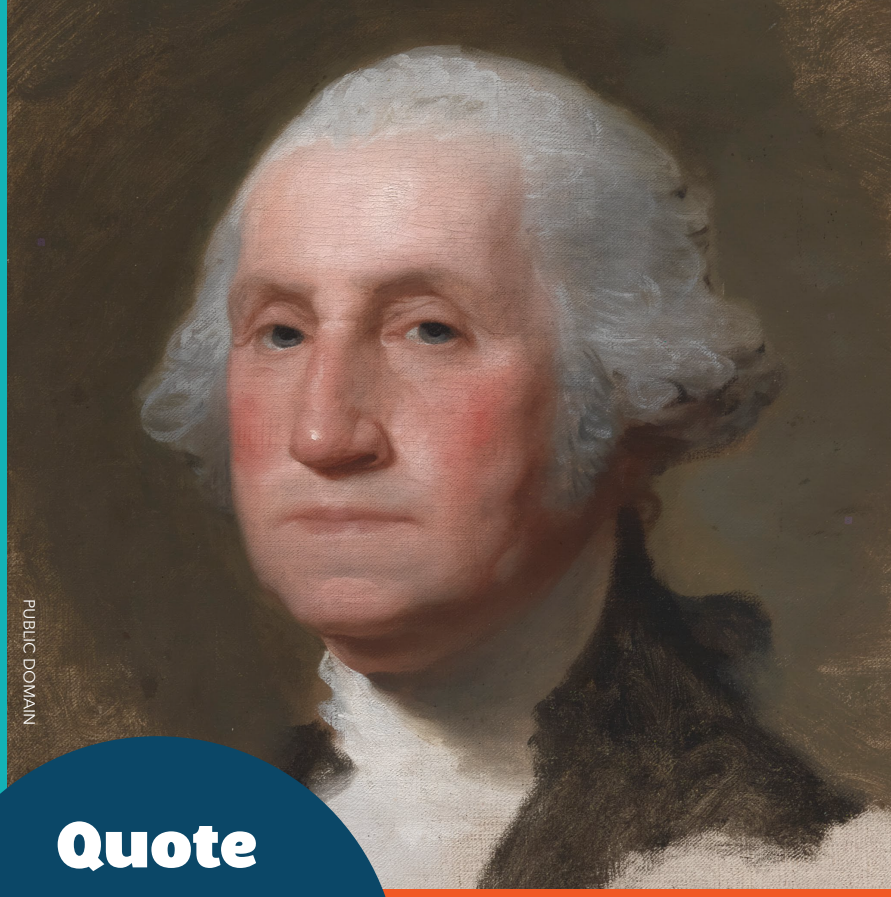
Tired from a lifetime of public service, Washington was grateful to be back at home with Martha, Washy, and Nelly. There was, however, one remaining problem in his life that he wanted to resolve. Just like many of his fellow Virginians, he had depended on enslaved African-American servants on his estate throughout his life. By the time he had left the presidency, there were over 300 enslaved people at Mount Vernon.

Washington knew, however, that slavery was evil and went against the principles of equality that he had long fought for. Washington saw many African-Americans fight courageously in the American Revolution and supported passing laws to end slavery over time. In 1786, he wrote "there is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a plan adopted for the abolition of it [slavery]."

Washington worried that trying to eliminate slavery too quickly would disrupt the young country's social and economic fabric and destroy it, preventing *anyone* from having freedom. This would harm millions of white and black people's lives. Also, if slavery was eliminated too quickly, the southern states, which were dependent on it, might break off from the Union. This would divide up the young nation and make it vulnerable to its enemies.

He came up with plans to lease out his enslaved servants to other estates so they could be paid for their labor. Unfortunately, these plans never worked out. As he neared the end of his life, however, he wanted to find the best possible solution. In his will, Washington ordered that all of the enslaved servants under his authority be freed and that the elderly among them be taken care of by his estate for the rest of their lives. He also wanted the young among them to be given an opportunity to have a better future, so he required that they be taught how to read and write and be taught a "useful occupation." In doing so, Washington became the only major slaveholding Founder to free his enslaved servants. African-American activist Frederick Douglass later praised him as the Founder who "could not die till he had broken the chains of his slaves."

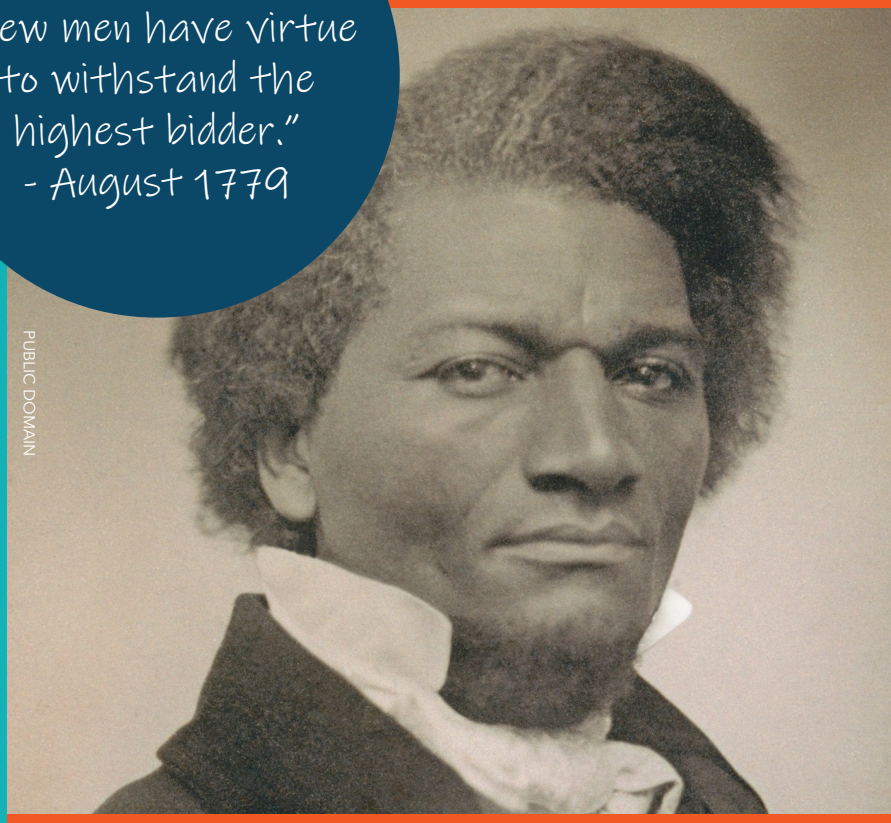
George Washington remained active in retirement. Every day, he rode horseback and inspected his farms. After serving the country for so long, he also enjoyed spending time with his family. However, after riding in a rain and snowstorm on December 12, 1799, he began suffering from a throat ailment, or what some now call epiglottitis. The situation worsened and, on the evening of December 14, he died at the age of 67 at his home, Mount Vernon. As the news of his passing spread across the country, millions of Americans mourned the loss of their greatest Founding Father.



PUBLIC DOMAIN

Quote

"Few men have virtue to withstand the highest bidder."
- August 1779



PUBLIC DOMAIN

"Washington could not die till he had broken the chains of his slaves."
- Frederick Douglass



GETTY IMAGES

Legacy

For most of world history, almost every country or empire was ruled by a monarch, emperor, or some type of military conqueror. These rulers often took control of as much land and people as possible and rarely respected the rights of those they ruled. They usually held a tight grip on power until they died.

Washington wanted to change all of that. He had a vision for a country where the people lived free from **tyranny** and where political power ultimately belonged to them, not their leaders. By defeating the British and leading the effort to set up the new American government, he successfully established the first large, free **republic** in world history.

Throughout his career, many wanted Washington to become a dictator or remain as President for the rest of his life. Instead, he proved his devotion to the people by leaving power twice, first after the American Revolution, and second, after two terms as President. He could have remained the most powerful man in the country, but, because of his character and integrity, instead chose to live as a private citizen on his farm. In doing so, he set an example for all future leaders, that they should use power to serve the people and not themselves. Over 200 years after his death, Washington remains an inspiration for people around the world who believe in liberty and justice for all.



GETTY IMAGES

Word Search

B P L B A T Z P A N N K U T S
T D U A K O L U I D R N Y T F
V O C A B I N E T K A R H R U
R O Y E V R U S A N A G A E X
G E R K E T O C I N I U H P U
P F C U Z A M M N R M L R U T
X R K N A P O Y F L M N M B P
I Q E E E U N O F D I I Q L A
E H C C S D L N B E D A C I P
X N K L E L I V A A U K C C W
S F Y A I D Q V P K K Y J V Z
P L I B O N E W O L X K N N A
A S K E G Q E N R R M Y N W M
M F R D X B S D T I P U Y X X
G H V R Y P C M J P T D I G Q

UNANIMOUSLY
PROVIDENCE
PATRIOT
BILL OF RIGHTS
CABINET
PRECEDENT
REPUBLIC
TYRANNY

ANSWERS ON PG 16



GETTY IMAGES

Action Hero

Some of the most famous images of Washington, such as the one on the dollar bill, depict him as a stern, old man. The real George Washington, however, was a man of action. Throughout his military career, Washington fearlessly led his troops into battle himself, coming under enemy fire. He miraculously survived so many battles (in one instance, with bullet holes in his coat) that many people felt he was protected by God.

During the Battle of Princeton, General Washington single-handedly stopped a retreat and inspired his men to victory. One of his men later wrote, "I shall never forget what I felt at Princeton on his account, when I saw him brave all the dangers of the field and his important life hanging as it were by a single hair with a thousand deaths flying around him. Believe me, I thought not of myself."



GETTY IMAGES

Mt. Vernon, home of
President George Washington

Do You Know the U.S. Constitution?

Fill in the blanks to complete the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution

We the People of the _____States, in Order to _____ a more _____ Union, establish _____, insure _____Tranquility, _____for the common _____, promote the general _____, and secure the _____of _____to ourselves and our _____, do ordain and _____this Constitution for the United States of America.

ANSWERS ON PG 16

Glossary

Commander-in-Chief: The person who is the top leader of an army or military branch.

Unanimously: With the agreement of everyone involved.

Seven Years' War: A major war mainly between Great Britain and France that took place from 1756 to 1763. In the United States, it was and is known as the French and Indian War.

Providence: A term people in George Washington's time used to refer to God.

Patriot: A person who strongly supports their country and is willing to defend it from all threats. During the American Revolution, the colonists who fought for their rights and supported an independent United States were often referred to as patriots.

Continental Congress: The legislative body that made laws for the American colonies and states around the time of the American Revolution. George Washington was a delegate to the first and second continental congresses from 1774 to 1775.

King George III: The ruler of Great Britain who presided over unjust laws that oppressed the American colonies. During his reign, the United States declared and won independence from Great Britain.

Continental Army: The military force that fought to free the United States against Great Britain during the American Revolution. George Washington served as the Continental Army's commander-in-chief.

Constitutional Convention: The meeting that took place from May to September 1787 in Philadelphia where many of the Founding Fathers drafted the U.S. Constitution. George Washington served as the presiding officer of the Convention.

Bill of Rights: The first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution, which were ratified in 1791. They are often considered the most important amendments and protect the basic rights of American citizens, such as freedom of speech and worship and the right to bear arms and to be tried by jury.

Cabinet of the United States: A senior group of advisors to the President of the United States. Its members include the Vice President of the United States and the top agency and department leaders in the federal government, such as the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Treasury, and the Attorney General.

Precedent: An event or action that serves as an example for similar situations in the future.

Tyranny: When a government rules unfairly and harshly without respecting the rights of the people.

Republic: A system of government in which power ultimately comes from the people. In this system, the people usually exercise that power by electing representatives to vote for laws and a President to enforce those laws. The power of the government in a republic is limited and exists to protect the rights of the people.

Sources

Chernow, Ron. *Washington: A Life*. Penguin Press, 2010.

"George Washington" *George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate*, https://www.mountvernon.org/-george-washington/. Accessed 16 May 2022.

Lim, Richard. "It's Not Presidents' Day – It's Washington's Birthday." *RealClearPublicAffairs*, 21 February 2022, https://www.realclearpublicaffairs.com/articles/2022/02/21/its_not_presidents_day__its_washingtons_birthday_817591.html/. Accessed 7 June 2022.

Lim, Richard. "Yes, Even George Washington Can Be Redeemed." *History News Network*, 2 August 2020, https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/176678/. Accessed 7 June 2022.

Phelps, Glenn A. *George Washington and American Constitutionalism*. University Press of Kansas, 1993.

Rhodehamel, John H., ed. *George Washington: Writings*. Library of America, 1997.

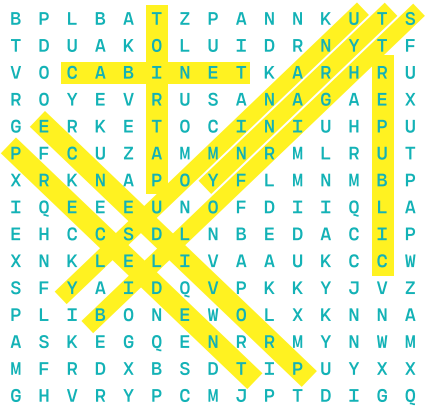
Smith, Richard Norton. *Patriarch: George Washington and the New American Nation*. Houghton Mifflin, 1993.

Thompson, Mary V. *The Only Unavoidable Subject of Regret*": George Washington, Slavery, and the Enslaved Community at Mount Vernon. University of Virginia Press, 2019.

Wiencek, Henry. *An Imperfect God: George Washington, His Slaves, and the Creation of America*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003.

Images: Getty Images, WikiCommons

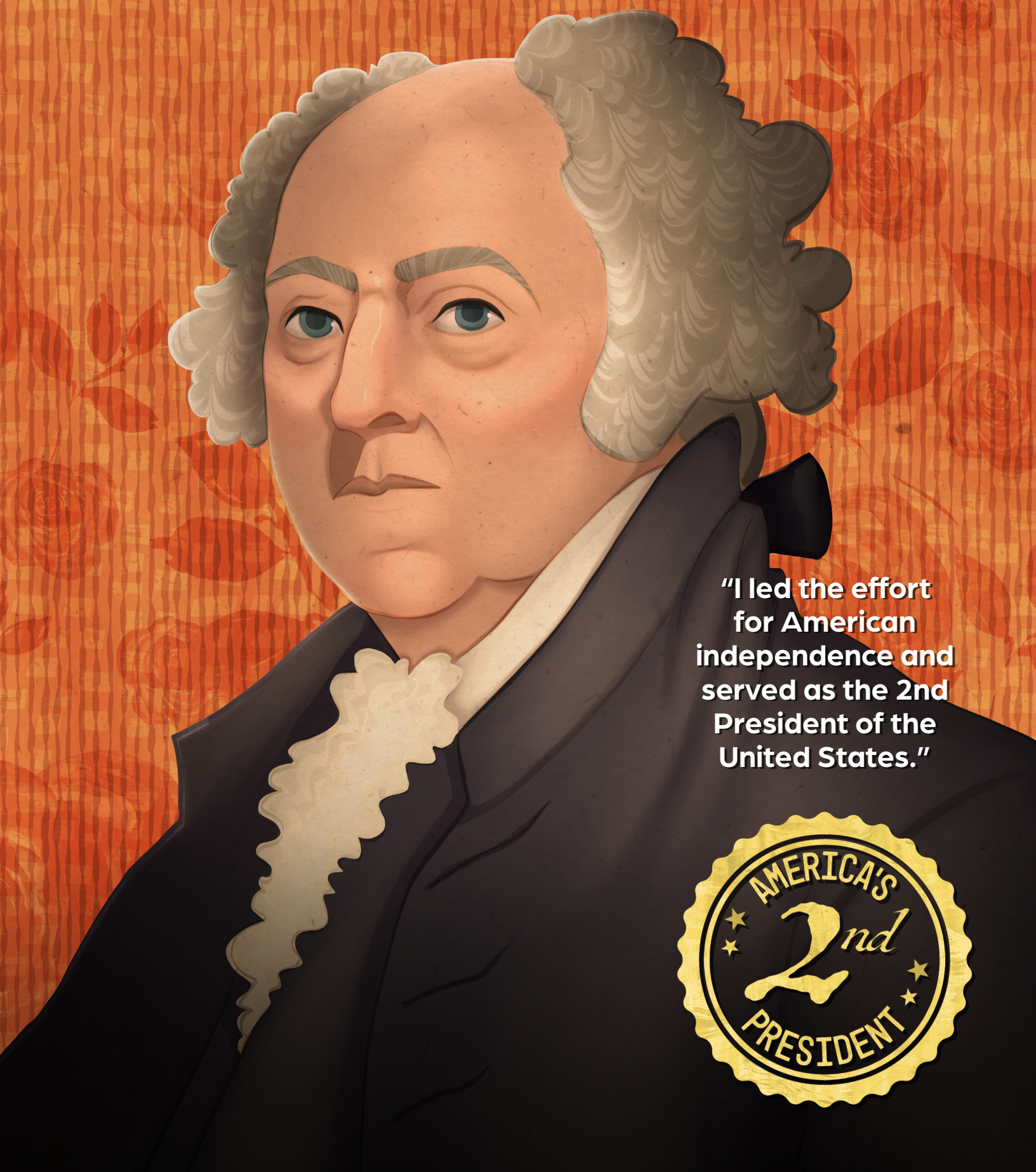
Answers:



WASHINGTON'S UNIQUE ANIMAL:
CAMEL

DO YOU KNOW THE U.S. CONSTITUTION?
We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

John Adams



"I led the effort for American independence and served as the 2nd President of the United States."

Become a Presidential Historian By Solving This Puzzle

In this book, you'll learn all sorts of facts about John Adams's amazing life and accomplishments. But there's still one last thing we need to know about him.

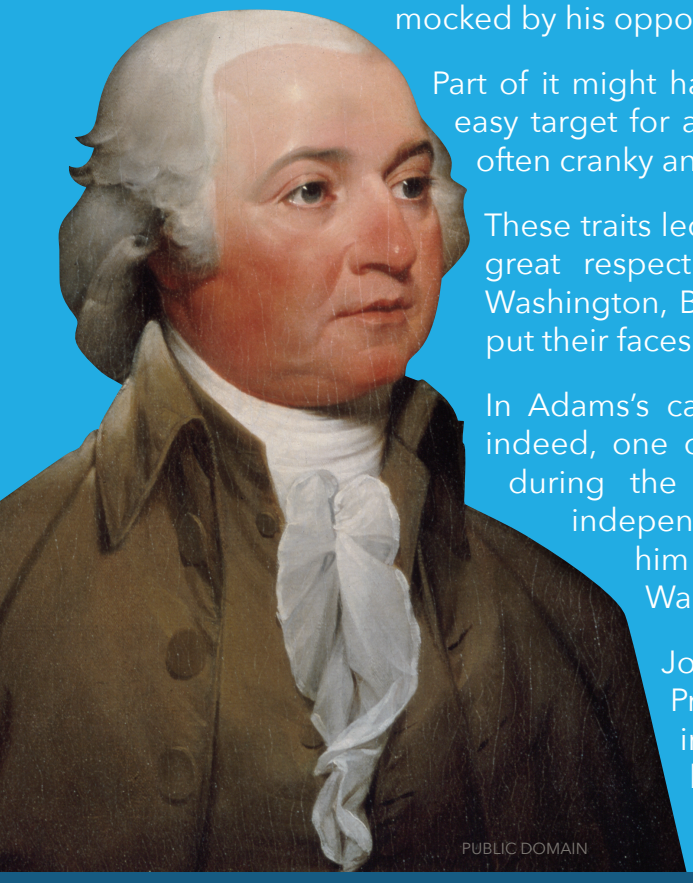
He and his wife Abigail owned a horse, and we need to find out what its name was. You can help us uncover the answer! Hidden in the text are bolded letters. Read this book carefully to find them and fill the letters into the blanks below in the order they appear.

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Once you've solved this puzzle, you'll be a true PragerU Kids presidential historian!

Meet John Adams

Have you ever felt overlooked or unappreciated? If you have, you might be surprised to know that some of America's Presidents have felt the same way. Being President is a tough job – you get criticized a lot and people often don't always appreciate the good things that you do. Few people understood this more than our second President, John Adams – a man who was often attacked and mocked by his opponents.



PUBLIC DOMAIN

Part of it might have been his appearance. Short and bald, Adams was an easy target for attacks. Part of it might have been his personality. He was often cranky and got into heated arguments with his colleagues.

These traits led people to focus on Adams's negative qualities. They had great respect for the other Founding Fathers – men like George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson. Americans even put their faces on currency, but not John Adams's.

In Adams's case, however, looks can be deceiving, because he was, indeed, one of the greatest Founding Fathers. Few people did more during the American Revolution to make the United States an independent nation. Despite his flaws, the American people chose him as their first Vice President. Then, when the great George Washington retired, they chose him as their second President.

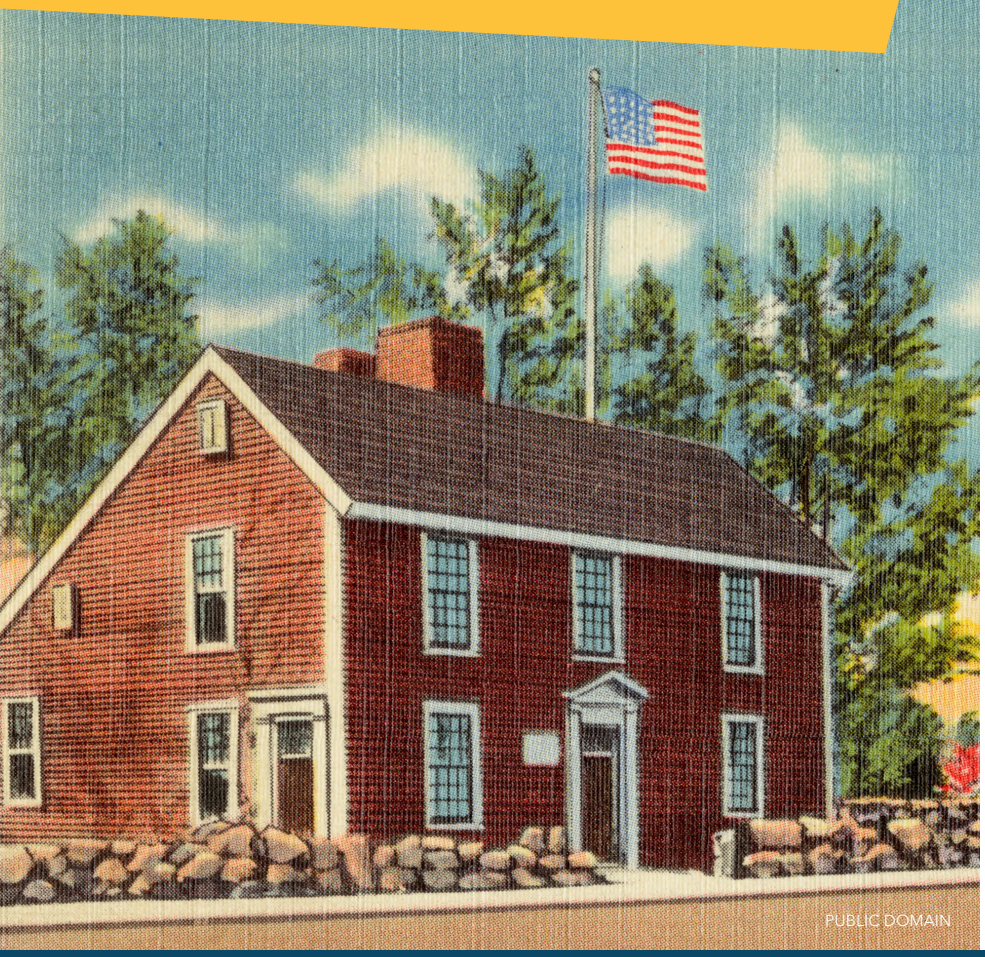
John Adams may be one of America's least appreciated Presidents, but it's hard to imagine the country winning independence and surviving in its early years without his leadership.

Young John

John Adams, son of John Sr. and Susanna Adams, was born on October 30, 1735. He grew up on a farm in Braintree (now Quincy) Massachusetts, just outside of Boston. His father, John Sr., was very busy as a **deacon** in the Congregational Church, a farmer, and a shoemaker. Young John and his two younger brothers, Peter and Elihu, helped the family by doing chores on the farm, but they also found time to have outdoor adventures. They especially loved going hunting and fishing.

Young John dreamed one day of following his father's footsteps and becoming a farmer. John Sr., on the other hand, saw that his son was highly intelligent and might be suited for something else – perhaps being a **clergyman**. Encouraged by his father, young John studied hard at a local school, becoming one of its best students. He was so smart that he was admitted into Harvard College at the young age of 15.

John Adams's birthplace
in Braintree (now Quincy), Massachusetts



PUBLIC DOMAIN

Interesting Facts

- He was a member of the Federalist Party.
- He was the first Vice President of the United States and the second President of the United States.
- He and George H.W. Bush are the only two Presidents whose sons also became President.
- He and his son John Quincy Adams are the only Presidents of the first twelve Presidents that never had enslaved servants.
- He was the first President to live in the White House.
- He died on the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.



PUBLIC DOMAIN

Early Career

After graduating from Harvard in 1755, Adams studied law and became a successful attorney. Later, in 1764, he married a highly intelligent woman named Abigail Smith, the daughter of a prominent local minister. They eventually had five children, although one, Susanna, died in infancy.

John Adams was just one of many lawyers in **New England**, but in 1770, he got his big break. By then, the British government had been imposing unfair and oppressive taxes on the American colonists for several years. Many Americans protested against the British government. On March 5, 1770, violence broke out in Boston when a group of more than 300 colonists yelled at and threatened a group of nine British soldiers. Fearing for their lives, the British soldiers fired upon the crowd, killing five. Many Americans were outraged and wanted the soldiers hanged. The incident would forever be remembered as the Boston Massacre.

Although Adams was a colonist and strongly believed in defending the Americans' rights, he also believed that the mob was to blame for **provoking** the soldiers. He courageously defended the British soldiers in court and successfully prevented the accused soldiers from going to jail. This **verdict** showed the world that the American cause would be built upon the rule of law. It also gave John Adams a reputation for being both brilliant and fair.

John and Abigail

John and Abigail Adams lived in a time when most women stayed at home to raise the children while their husbands had professional careers. Although Abigail Adams did indeed stay at home and raise their kids, she was very smart and well-informed about political issues. Unlike many husbands of the time, John respected his wife's political opinions and sought her advice throughout his career. They wrote over 1,000 letters to each other during the course of their marriage. In fact, when John served in the Continental Congress in 1776, Abigail famously wrote to him, reminding him to "remember the ladies" when he drafted laws for the colonies.


PUBLIC DOMAIN


PUBLIC DOMAIN

Quote

"I must study politics and war that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy. My sons ought to study mathematics and philosophy... in order to give their Children a right to study Painting, Poetry, Music... and Porcelain."
- May 1780

The American Revolution

By 1774, many American colonists worried that they would have to fight a war against Great Britain. That year, the colonies sent delegates to the Continental Congress to decide on what to do. John Adams and his cousin Samuel Adams (an outspoken opponent of British policies) attended Congress as representatives of Massachusetts.

War broke out in April 1775. Soon, the Congress looked for someone to lead the military effort against the British. In June of that year, Adams rose up in Congress to **nominate** Virginian delegate George Washington as the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army. Congress approved Washington's selection unanimously. It was a brilliant decision – Washington led the army with great determination and integrity.

Even though the war had begun, the members of Congress couldn't agree on what to do. Some hoped that negotiations with Great Britain could end the war. **O**thers, like Adams, believed that negotiations would only allow the British to continue imposing their oppressive laws. He believed that, to be truly free, America had to leave the British Empire permanently. He worked hard to convince other delegates of his views. His efforts paid off when Congress declared independence on July 4, 1776.

When Congress looked for someone to write the first draft of the Declaration, Adams nominated Virginia delegate Thomas Jefferson. Once again, it was a brilliant choice, since Jefferson was one of the most eloquent writers in the colonies.

During the war, Adams traveled to Europe to convince its leaders to provide military and financial assistance to the United States. All of these travels meant he had to make long, dangerous voyages across the sea and live far away from his family for many years. The Adams family made great sacrifices on behalf of the nation.

After Washington won a major victory at the Battle of Yorktown in 1781, the British realized they couldn't win the war. Adams, along with Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, and Henry Laurens, negotiated with the British to end the conflict. In 1783, the Americans and the British signed the Treaty of **P**aris. The war was over and the United States was free.

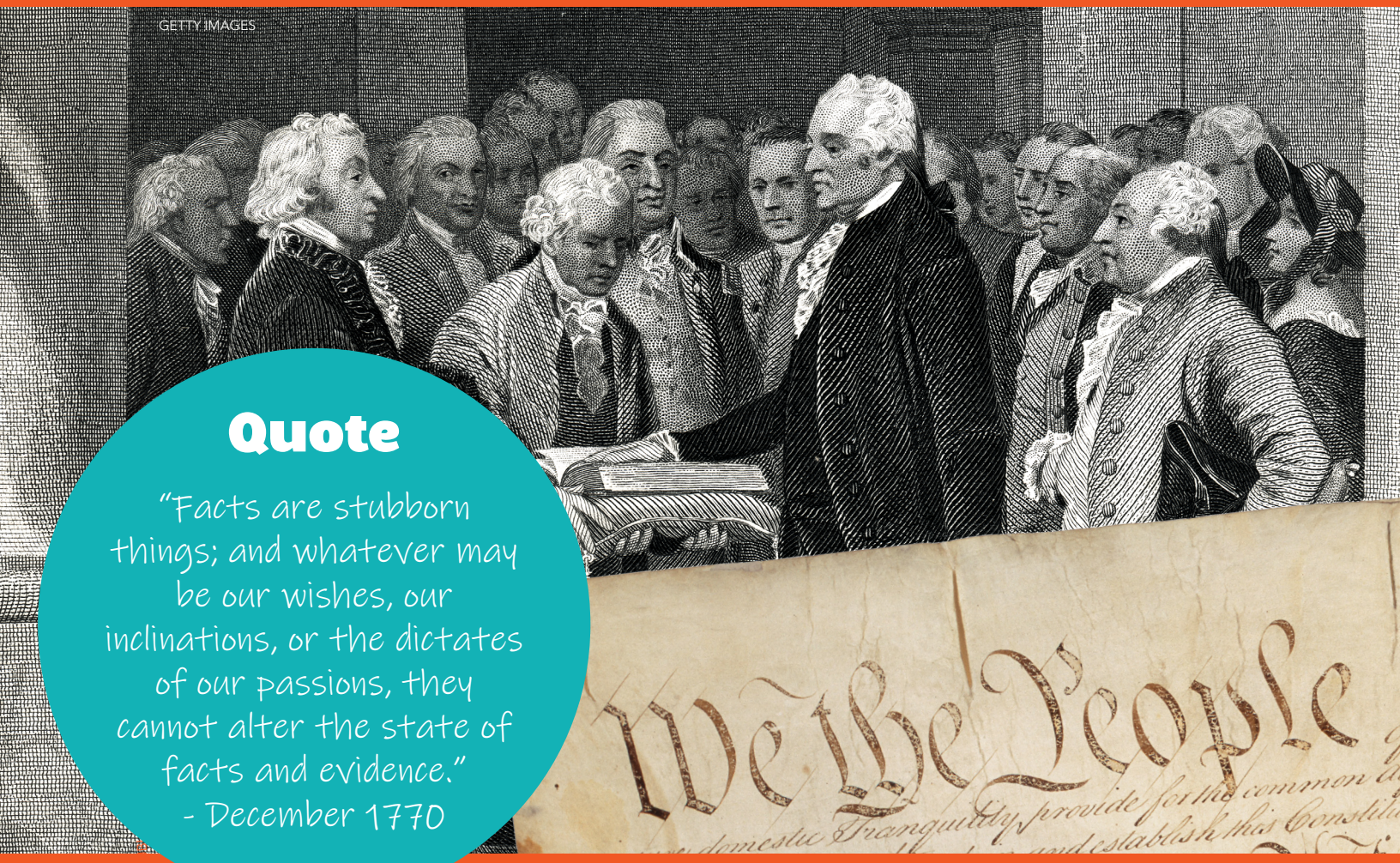


PUBLIC DOMAIN

After the War

In 1787, many of the Founders gathered to draft a new constitution for the country. The states ratified it in 1788, making it the law in the land. The new Constitution created two new offices, the President and the Vice President of the United States. They would be the two highest-ranking positions in the country. From December 1788 to January 1789, the nation held its first presidential election. Everyone knew that George Washington would be chosen as the nation's first President and he ended up being elected unanimously by the Electoral College. Since John Adams had the second highest number of votes, he became the first Vice President. Both Washington and Adams would be re-elected in 1792.

Vice President Adams loyally supported Washington for two terms, although things did not always go smoothly. Americans began disagreeing on many issues, splitting into two parties: the **Federalists** and the **Democratic-Republicans**. While Washington, Adams, and Secretary of Treasury Alexander Hamilton led the Federalist Party, Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson and Congressman James Madison led the Democratic-Republicans. When Washington announced he was retiring in 1796, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson emerged as candidates to replace him. The election was heated and divisive, but Adams won a close victory, 71 electoral votes to 68.



Quote

"Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence."
- December 1770

President

President Adams immediately faced a major crisis. At the time, Britain and France were at war, and Americans disagreed on how to respond. Most Federalists wanted to support Britain, because it was the United States' biggest trading partner, while most Democratic-Republicans wanted to support France, because it had helped America during its revolution.

The French enraged many Americans when they began attacking U.S. **merchant** ships in 1796. This led to an undeclared naval conflict between America and France known as the "Quasi-War." People across the United States demanded that Adams officially declare war on France. President Adams, however, knew that America could not survive a war because it was so much younger and weaker than the European countries. He did everything he could to stay out of the conflict, sending **diplomats** to negotiate with the French government and building up the U.S. Navy to **deter** further attacks.

In 1798, Adams signed into law the Alien and Sedition Acts, which allowed the government to deport foreigners and made it illegal to criticize the government. It remains a controversial decision to this day – one that many believed violated Americans' rights.

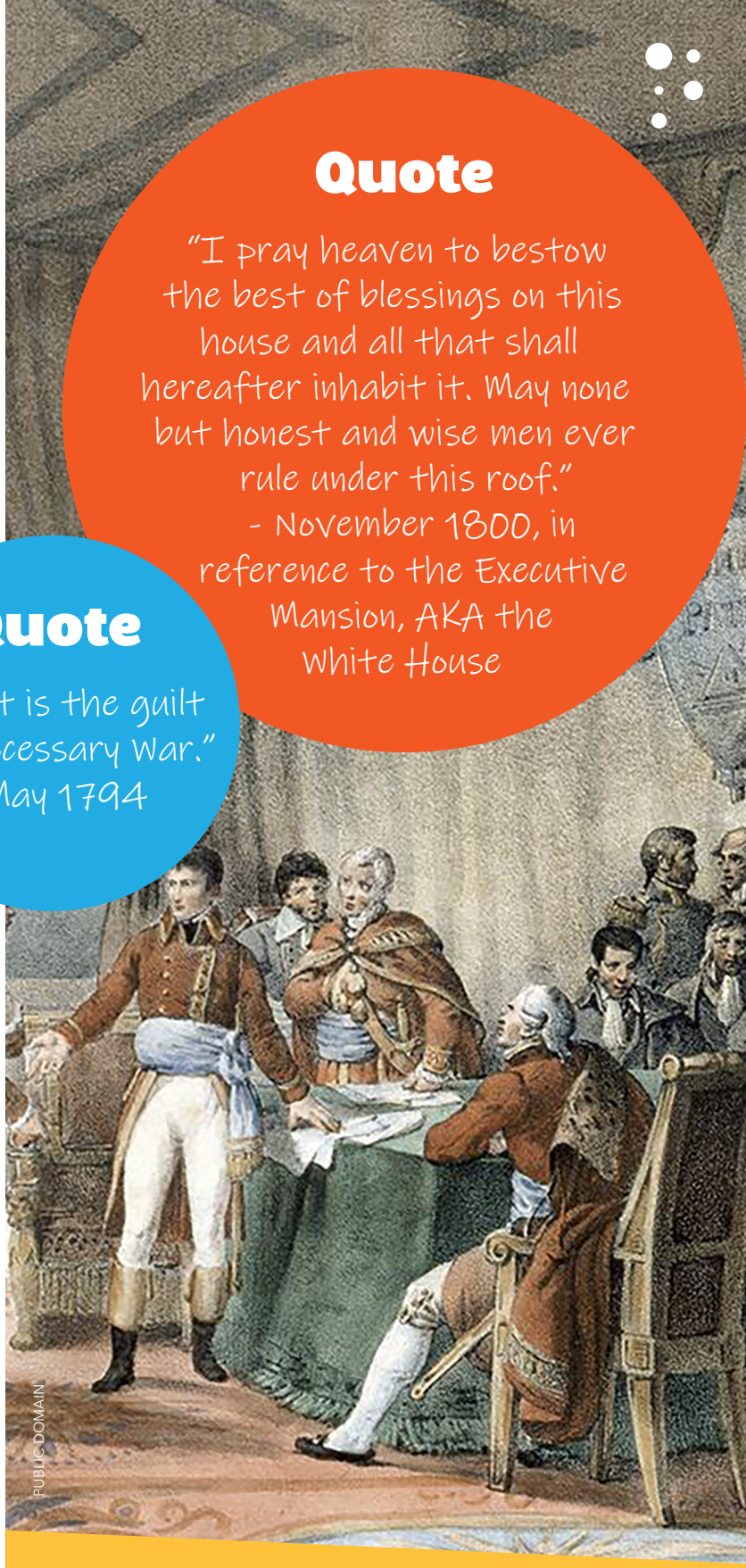
Adams's hard work for peace paid off when his diplomats signed the Treaty of Mortefontaine in 1800. The treaty solved many of the disagreements between the two countries and ended the Quasi-War. It was a great triumph for Adams who, like Washington, saved the country from an unnecessary war. Unfortunately, news of the treaty didn't arrive until after electors began voting in the 1800 presidential election. They voted without knowing of Adams's success. This time, Jefferson defeated him.

Quote

"I pray heaven to bestow the best of blessings on this house and all that shall hereafter inhabit it. May none but honest and wise men ever rule under this roof."
- November 1800, in reference to the Executive Mansion, AKA the White House

Quote

"Great is the guilt of unnecessary war."
- May 1794



PUBLIC DOMAIN

Signing of the Treaty of Mortefontaine

Retirement

After the presidency, John and Abigail Adams moved back to their farm, Peacefield, in Quincy, Massachusetts.

Adams and the new President, Thomas Jefferson, had been longtime friends and colleagues. However, their political disagreements strained their friendship and for more than a decade after Adams's presidency, both men ceased having any contact. In 1812, they began writing to each other again. They renewed their friendship and frequently sent letters, debating the great issues of the day and expressing admiration for each other.

Adams suffered tragedies in his life when his daughter Nabby died in 1813 and his wife Abigail died in 1818. He did, however, enjoy one of the rarest of experiences in American history: in 1824, when Adams was 88 years old, he saw his son John Quincy Adams elected as the sixth President of the United States. John Adams was the first President whose son also served as President.

Adams lived to the age of 90, dying at Peacefield on July 4, 1826.



Thomas Jefferson



John Adams

Quote

"Independence forever!"
- June 1826

Friends Until the End

During their retirements, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson rekindled a close friendship and regularly wrote letters to each other. Both men passed away on July 4, 1826 – the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Americans marveled that the two men who had the most influence over the Declaration had died during such a milestone anniversary. Just moments before he died, Adams spoke his last words in tribute to his longtime friend: "Thomas Jefferson survives." He didn't know that Jefferson had died a few hours earlier.

Legacy

Unlike Washington and Jefferson, John Adams does not have a famous memorial in DC, nor is he on any coins or dollar bills. He was, however, one of the most important of the Founding Fathers. He played the leading role in pushing the United States to break away from the British Empire – so much so that Thomas Jefferson later called him the "Colossus of Independence." He made wise choices when he nominated Washington to lead the war effort and Jefferson to write the **Declaration of Independence**. Lastly, he helped guide the new nation in its early years as the second U.S. President.

Quote

"The doctrine of human equality is founded entirely in the Christian doctrine that we are all children of the same Father, all accountable to Him for our conduct to one another."
- date unknown (Adams wrote this as a note in a book he owned)

Adams was a man of principle who never feared doing what was right, even when it was unpopular. He opposed slavery his entire career and, as President, resisted taking America into an unwise war. Adams was not a perfect man – he often angered or alienated his friends with his blunt personality, and many historians criticize him for signing the Alien and Sedition Acts. Overall, however, he did so much to make the United States a strong, independent nation.

Match the Man

Washington, Adams and Jefferson were very important in the founding of the nation. Match the Founding Father to his accomplishments.

George Washington

1st President

2nd President

3rd President

Wrote the Declaration of Independence

John Adams

Led the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War

Nominated the man who served as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army

Thomas Jefferson

Nominated the man who wrote the Declaration of Independence

ANSWERS ON PG 26

True or False?

T F John Adams was the first President to live in the White House.

T F Adams wrote the first draft of the Declaration of Independence.

T F Thomas Jefferson and John Adams were friends until the end of their lives.

T F John Adams is the only President whose son also served as President as well.

T F Adams graduated from Harvard and became a lawyer.

T F During George Washington's presidency, John Adams served as Vice President.

ANSWERS ON PG 26

Glossary

Deacon: A member of a church who ranks below the priest or minister and performs certain duties and services.

Clergyman: A formal leader in a church who often performs religious services.

New England: The northeastern region of the United States, consisting of the states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Provoke: To purposefully cause someone else to become angry or excited.

Verdict: A decision, often by a jury or a judge, deciding a case in court.

Nominate: To propose that a specific person be appointed for a specific office.

Federalist Party: The party that formed in the 1790s in the United States that believed the federal government needed to be strengthened at the time for the country to prosper. It was led by George Washington, John Adams, and Alexander Hamilton.

Democratic-Republican Party: The party formed in the 1790s in the United States that believed the federal government should remain relatively weak and that states should have more power. It was led by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

Merchant: A person or company involved in trading goods.

Diplomat: A person who represents his or her country in other countries or in international organizations.

Deter: To prevent something, such as a military attack, often by the threat of force.

Declaration of Independence: The document, published by America's Founding Fathers on July 4, 1776, announcing the creation of the United States as a new nation, no longer part of the British Empire. John Adams helped convince many of the Founders to support it.

Sources

"John Adams." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Adams-president-of-United-States.. Accessed 27 May 2022.

McCullough, David. *John Adams*. Simon & Schuster, 2001.

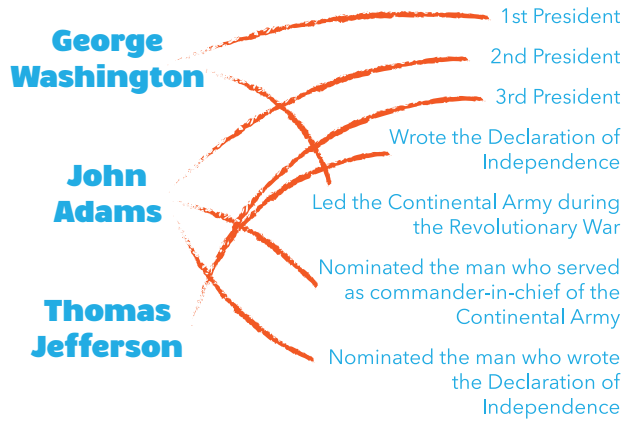
Taylor, C. James. "John Adams." *Miller Center, University of Virginia,* https://millercenter.org/president/adams/. Accessed 27 May 2022.

Images: Getty Images, WikiCommons

Answers:

THE NAME OF ADAM'S HORSE:
CLEOPATRA

TRUE OR FALSE?
TRUE
FALSE
TRUE
FALSE
TRUE
TRUE





GUESS OR MESS

A PragerU Kids Game Show

WATCH NOW!



Test Your Knowledge of Our **PragerU Kids Biography Books** with This Fun and Messy **Trivia Game Show** for Kids!

PragerU KIDS

Experience Fun, Interactive, and Educational Content at

PRAGERUKIDS.COM