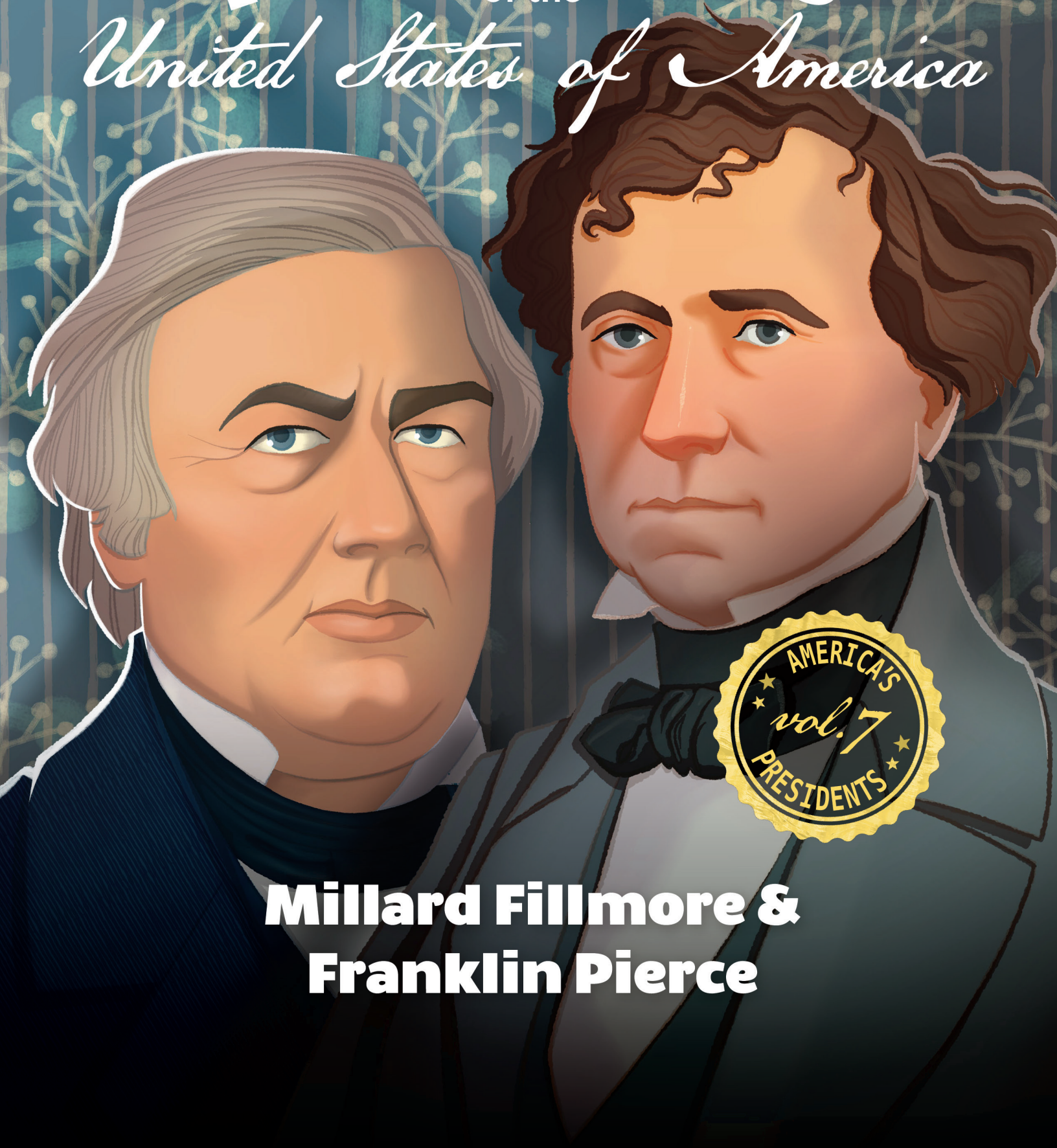


presidents of the *United States of America*



**Millard Fillmore &
Franklin Pierce**



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 © 2026 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

PragerU.com



presidents of the *United States of America*

Table of Contents

Millard Fillmore 1

Franklin Pierce 11



Millard Fillmore

"I served as
the 13th
President of
the United
States and
made a
compromise to
keep the
country
united."

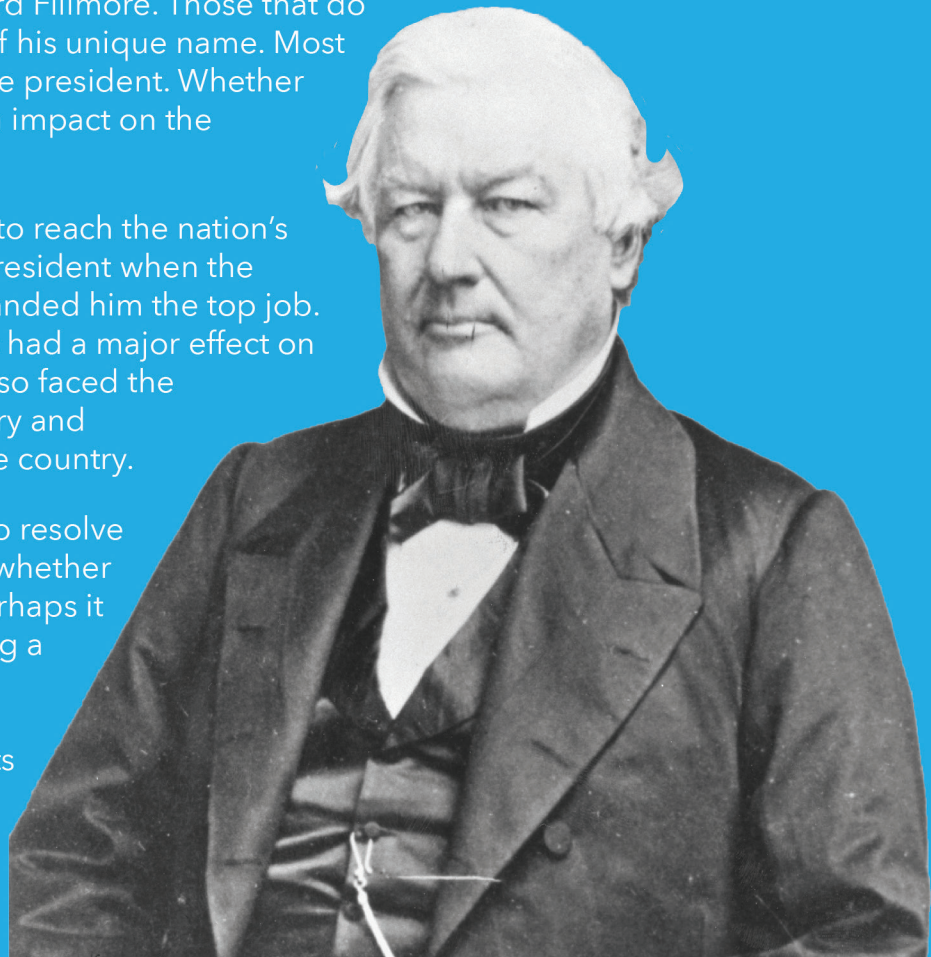




Once you've solved this puzzle, you'll be a true PragerU Kids presidential historian!

Meet Millard Fillmore

The problem of slavery was very hard to resolve because Americans couldn't agree on whether to get rid of it or how to get rid of it. Perhaps it isn't fair to judge Fillmore for not finding a solution. Even with that said, however, Fillmore is rightly criticized for supporting strange political movements that were prejudiced against certain groups of people and for failing to take a courageous stance on slavery.



Young Millard

Millard Fillmore was born on January 7, 1800, in Moravia, New York. His parents, Nathaniel and Phoebe Fillmore, were poor farmers who had moved to upstate New York. They eventually had eight children, with Millard being the second oldest. Young Millard spent most of his childhood working hard on the family farm and didn't have much time for schooling. When Millard became a teenager, his father arranged for him to become an **apprentice** at a **textile** mill. The work was exhausting, and after four years, he returned home.

Millard soon discovered how much he enjoyed reading and learning about the world. He began attending a local **academy**. One of his teachers was a woman, two years older than him, named Abigail Powers. She was very intelligent and well-read, and she encouraged Millard in his studies. Millard fell in love with her, and they eventually married in 1826. They went on to have two children, Millard and Mary.

Interesting Facts

- He was the first president born in the 19th century.
- He was a member of the Anti-Masonic, Whig, and Know-Nothing parties.
- He was the second president who took office because of the death of his predecessor.
- He was the first president whose father was still alive when he left the White House.
- He was the second former president to run for president again after leaving office.
- His first name, Millard, was his mother's maiden name.



Left:
President Millard Fillmore

Top Middle:
Abigail Powers Fillmore,
wife

Right:
Mary Fillmore,
daughter

Bottom Middle:
Millard Fillmore,
son



Early Career

Millard became an attorney and moved to East **Aurora**, New York. There, he began to prosper as a lawyer. Fillmore also started thinking more and more about politics. **H**e became suspicious of a secret social group called the **Masons**. At the time, many leaders in the Democratic Party, such as Andrew Jackson, were Masons. Fillmore and others believed in **conspiracy theories** about the Masons—that they were doing all sorts of evil things to take control of the whole country. He joined the **Anti-Masonic Party**, whose leaders **a**pproached Fillmore about running for political office.

In 1828, Fillmore was elected to the New York state legislature, where he would serve three terms. He was then elected as a member of the

U.S. House of Representatives in 1832, where he would serve until 1843. During this time, his Anti-Masonic Party **merged** with the Whig Party, one of the two major parties in the country and the one that opposed Jackson's Democrats.

While in Congress, Fillmore became chairman of the powerful **Ways and Means Committee**, which focused on making tax laws. He also opposed slavery but worried more about the issue dividing up the Union.

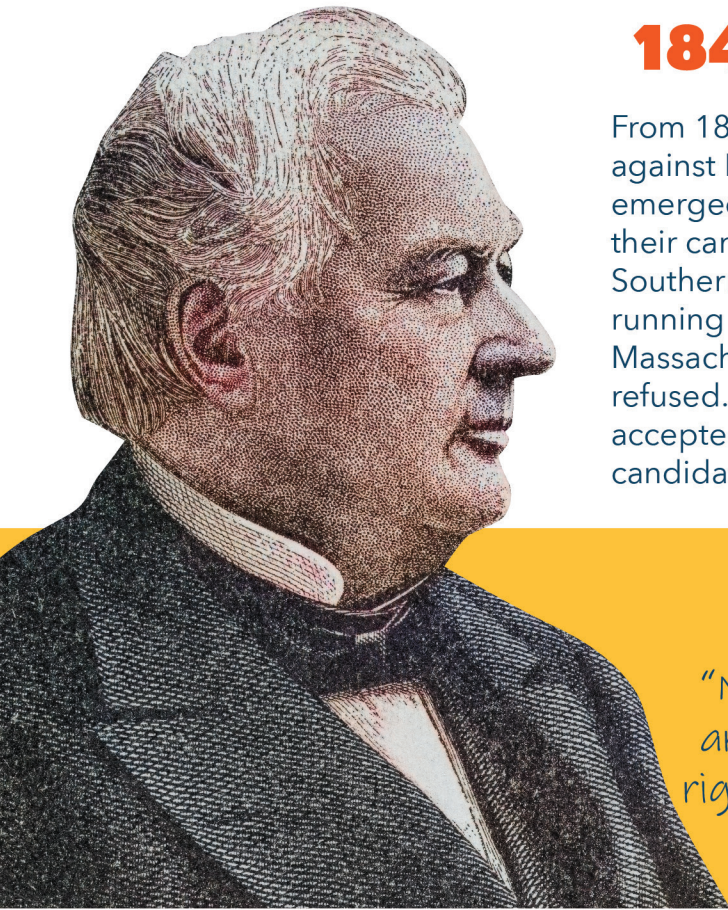
In 1843, Fillmore left Congress. The following year, he ran for Governor of New York but lost. In 1847, however, he was elected as New York's **Comptroller**, which gave **h**im control over the state's finances.

Brainstorm: Your Future

Millard Fillmore had a lot of different jobs and filled a lot of different positions.

Think about your future. What do you see? What kind of jobs interest you?

Write about it, considering your talents and interests.



1848 Presidential Election

From 1846 to 1848, the United States fought and won a war against Mexico. During the conflict, General Zachary Taylor emerged as a national hero. The Whig Party nominated him as their candidate for president in 1848. Since Taylor was a Southerner, the Whigs wanted to choose a Northerner as his running mate to balance the ticket, so they turned to Massachusetts Senator Daniel Webster. Webster, however, refused. The party then turned to Millard Fillmore, who accepted. That fall, Taylor and Fillmore defeated Democratic candidate **L**ewis Cass in a close election.

Quote

"Nations, like individuals in a state of nature, are equal and independent, possessing certain rights and owing certain duties to each other."
- December 1850

Vice President

During Taylor's presidency, slavery remained the biggest issue. The United States had acquired a large amount of land after winning the Mexican-American War. Americans debated about slavery, **w**ith Southerners hoping to expand slavery into the new territories and Northerners hoping to stop it from spreading. At the time, the nation had 15 free states and 15 slave states—a perfect balance. Both sides worried that, if the new territories became states and came in as either free or slave states, it would destroy the perfect balance and give the other side an advantage. Since Northerners and Southerners couldn't agree, many worried that a civil war might break out between the two sides.

Several leaders in Congress tried to forge a compromise to prevent war. Kentucky Senator Henry Clay negotiated a complicated agreement

that tried to satisfy both sides. It would appeal to Northerners because it allowed California to enter as a free state and ban slaves from being imported into Washington, D.C. It would appeal to Southerners because it would allow New Mexico and Utah to decide whether they would accept slavery and would require slaves who escaped slaveholders to be caught and returned (which would be called the **Fugitive Slave Law**).

President Taylor opposed the compromise because he did **n**ot believe that slavery would work in the new territories and refused to sign it into law. Despite being Taylor's vice president, Fillmore disagreed and supported the compromise. This angered Taylor and soured their relationship. Without Taylor's approval, it looked like the compromise was dead.



President

Everything changed when Zachary Taylor died of a stomach ailment in July 1850. Millard Fillmore was now the 13th President of the United States. He immediately faced the question of what to do about the compromise proposal. He decided to reverse Taylor's policy and support it. Angry debates broke out across the country once again.

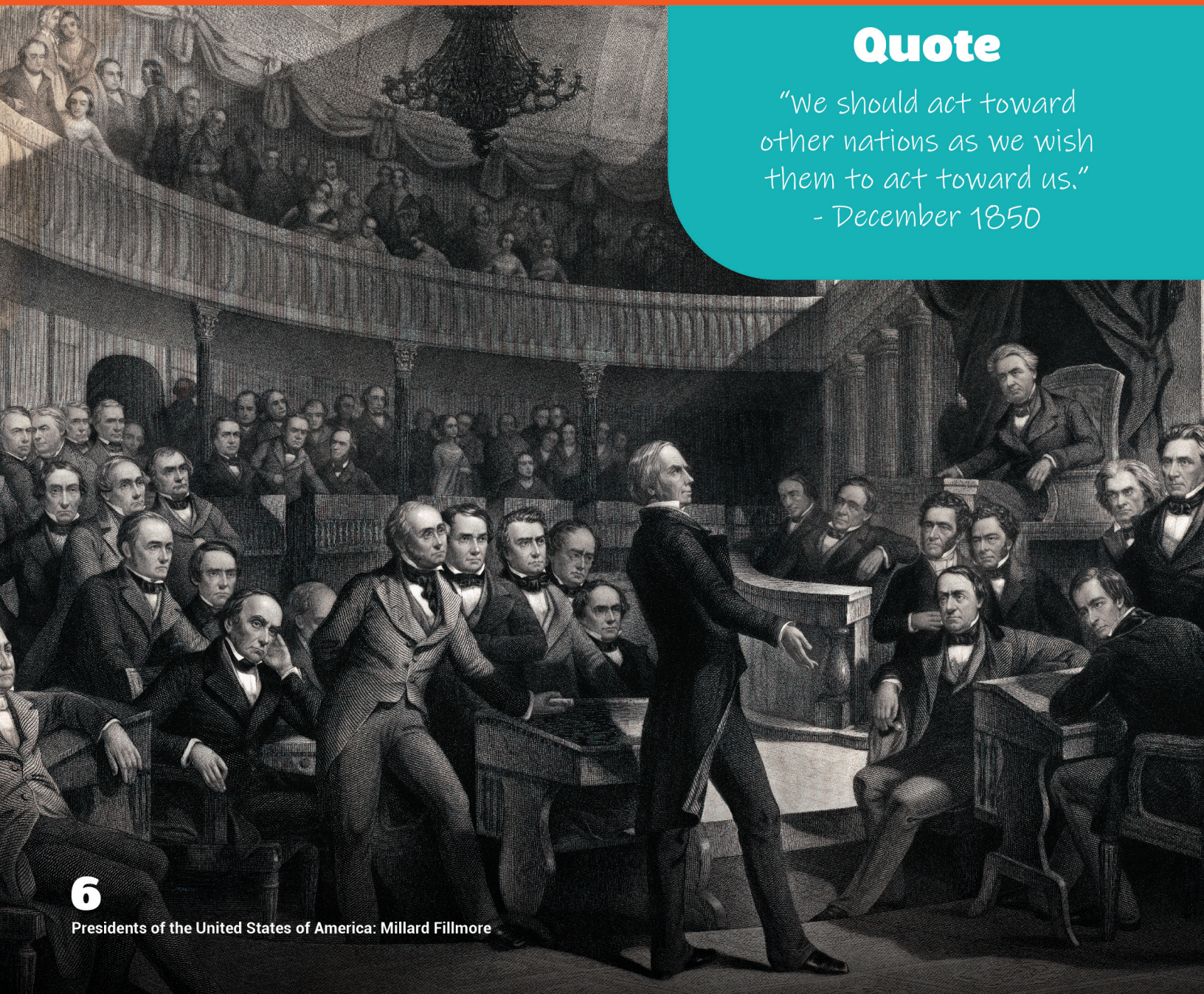
A young Democrat senator from Illinois, Stephen Douglas, took charge and worked hard to get Clay's proposal passed. By September of 1850, he had succeeded, and Fillmore signed it into

law. The **Compromise of 1850** helped keep the Union intact for the time being, but the issue of slavery remained unsettled. Fillmore angered many Northerners when he strongly enforced the Fugitive Slave Law.

Fillmore also had some foreign policy successes. He sent a squadron of ships to Japan led by Commodore Matthew Perry to force Japan to open up trade relations. He also warned the French not to annex the Hawaiian Islands, which, at the time, were an independent kingdom.

Quote

*"We should act toward other nations as we wish them to act toward us."
- December 1850*

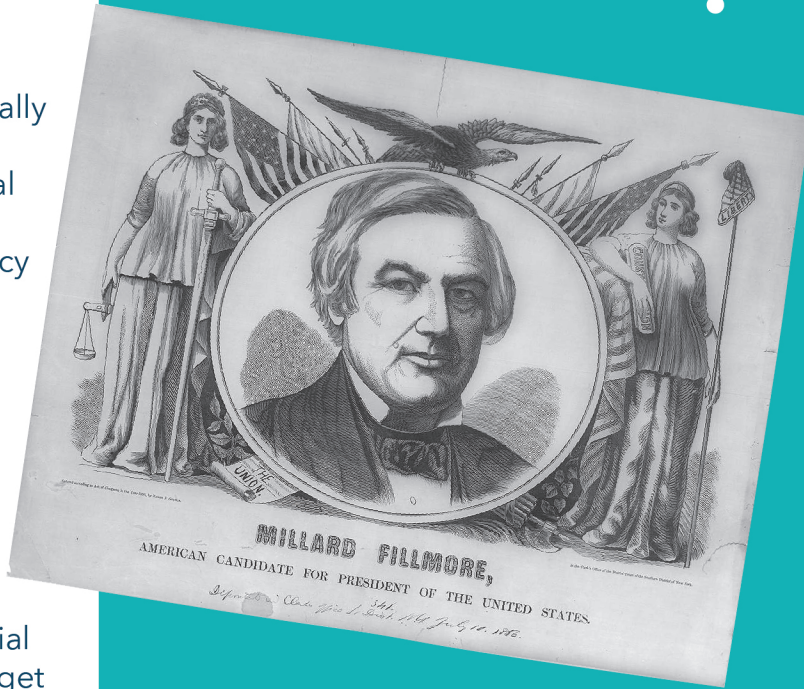


Retirement

The Whigs, angered at Fillmore's policies, especially the Fugitive Slave Law, rejected him as their nominee for the 1852 election and chose General Winfield Scott. Scott lost to Democrat candidate Franklin Pierce that fall. Fillmore left the presidency in 1853. Sadly, soon after he retired, his wife Abigail and daughter Mary died of illnesses.

Fillmore was devastated, and he looked to re-enter politics as a way of coping. He joined a new party called the **Know-Nothing Party**, which supported women's rights and labor, but was also suspicious of immigrants, especially Irish Catholics. The Know-Nothings chose Fillmore as their candidate in the 1856 presidential election. Fillmore didn't win the election but did get about 21 percent of the popular vote.

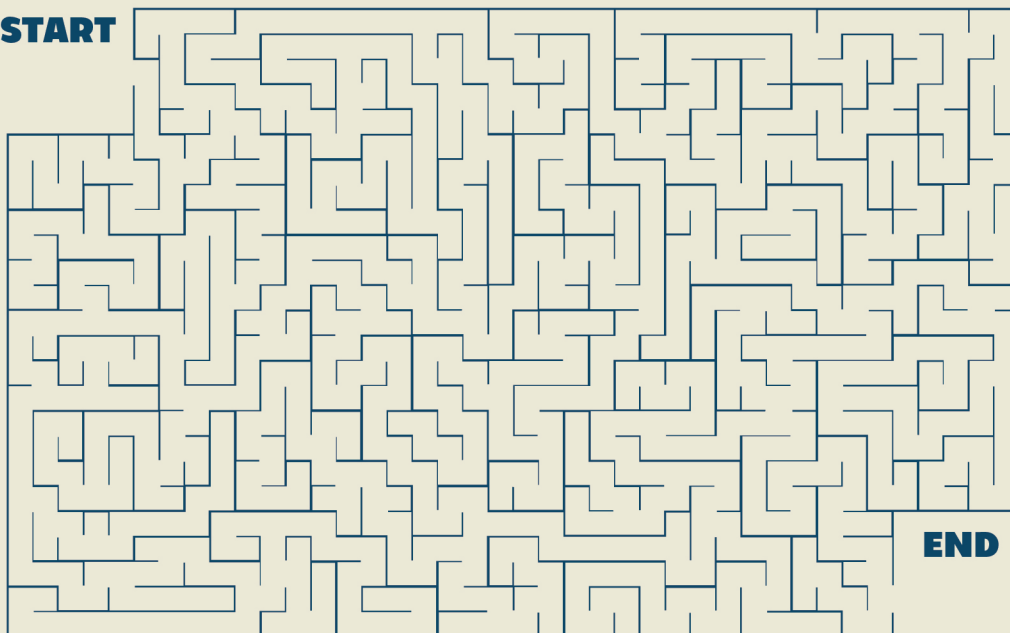
After the election, Fillmore retired to Buffalo, New York, where he married a wealthy widow named Caroline McIntosh. During the Civil War, Fillmore supported the Union but, staying true to form, supported a compromise to allow the South back into the Union with slavery intact. After suffering a couple of strokes, he died on March 8, 1874 at the age of 74.



Quote

"An honorable defeat is better than a dishonorable victory."
- September 1844

START



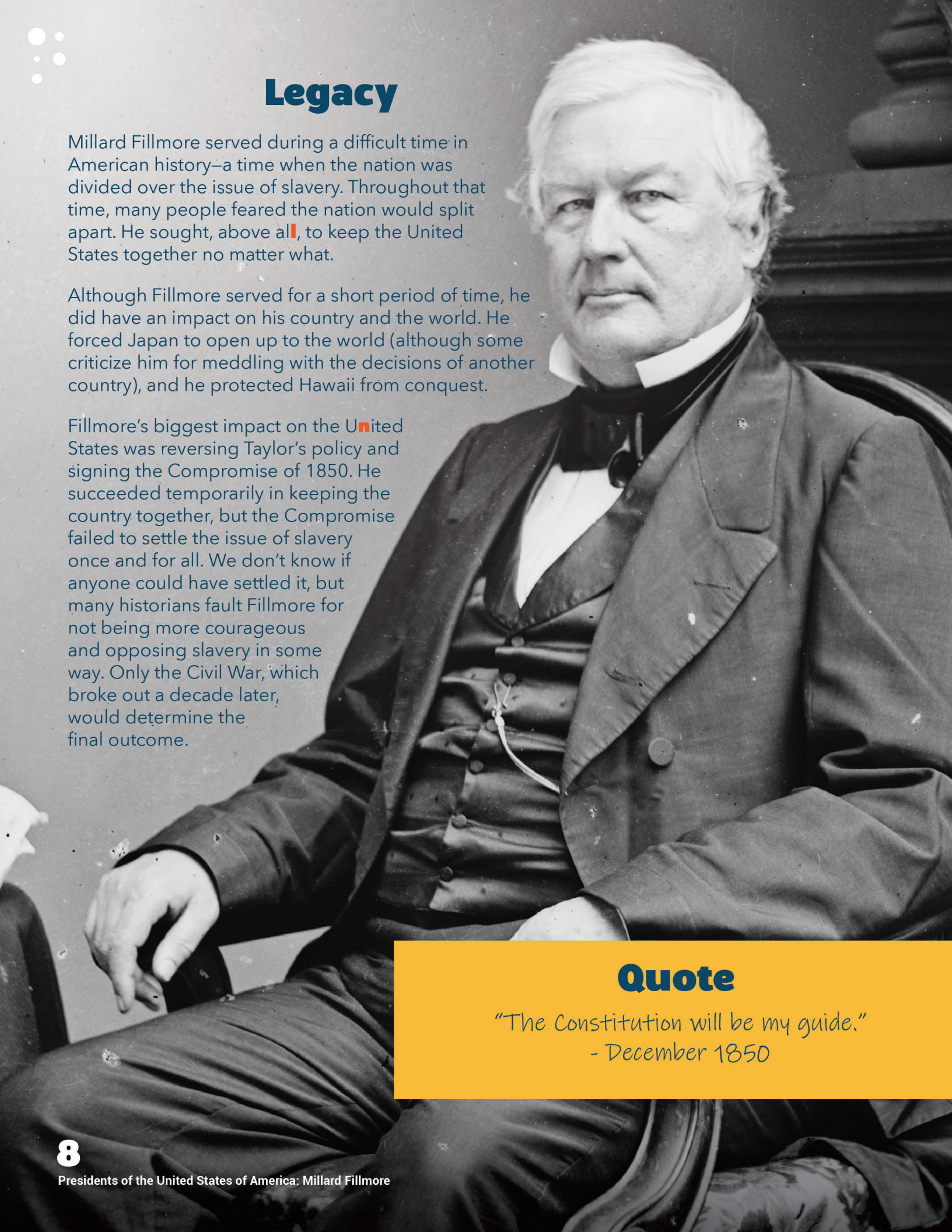
END

Maze of Life

Millard Fillmore's life, like many of us, was filled with twists and turns, successes and failures, open doors and dead ends.

Life can be like a maze with a lot of decisions that lead to different places. Find your way through the maze.

Answer key on page 10



Legacy

Millard Fillmore served during a difficult time in American history—a time when the nation was divided over the issue of slavery. Throughout that time, many people feared the nation would split apart. He sought, above all, to keep the United States together no matter what.

Although Fillmore served for a short period of time, he did have an impact on his country and the world. He forced Japan to open up to the world (although some criticize him for meddling with the decisions of another country), and he protected Hawaii from conquest.

Fillmore's biggest impact on the United States was reversing Taylor's policy and signing the Compromise of 1850. He succeeded temporarily in keeping the country together, but the Compromise failed to settle the issue of slavery once and for all. We don't know if anyone could have settled it, but many historians fault Fillmore for not being more courageous and opposing slavery in some way. Only the Civil War, which broke out a decade later, would determine the final outcome.

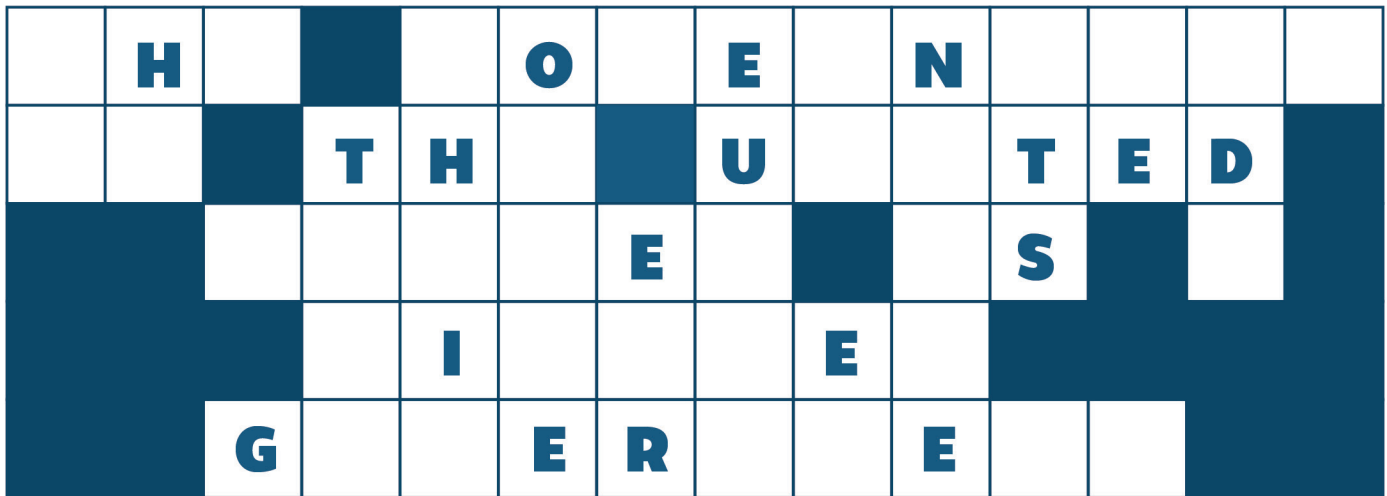
Quote

"The Constitution will be my guide."
- December 1850



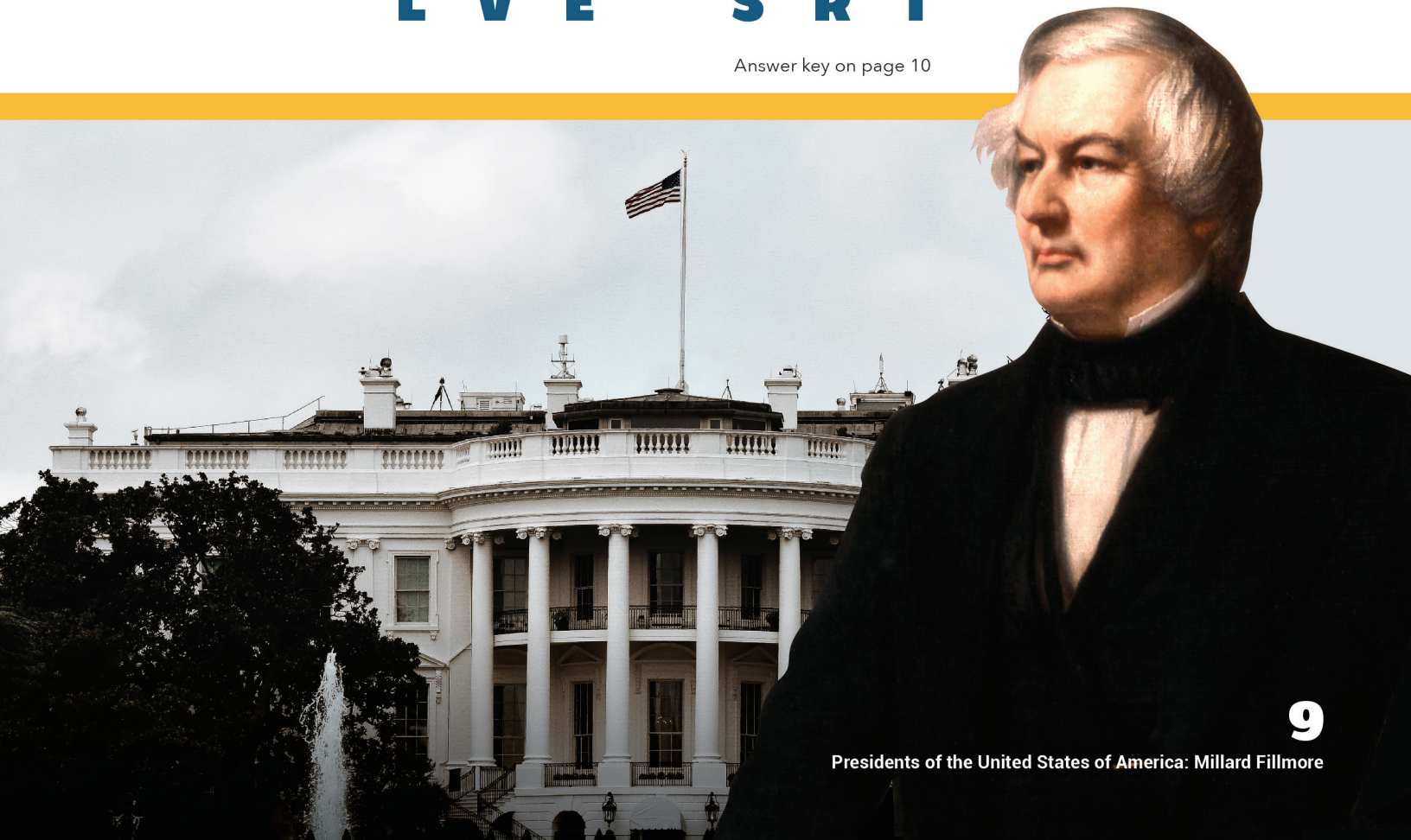
What Did He Say?

Solve the puzzle below to find out what Millard Fillmore said as president in December of 1850. The letters from each column are below the puzzle. Try to rebuild the original message by choosing the letters for each square.



O F E O G E I T M I M T A T
T S T A T V N N D N E N
L V E S R I

Answer key on page 10





Glossary

Apprentice: A person who is learning a trade from someone else with more experience.

Textile: A type of cloth or woven fabric.

Academy: A school usually above the elementary level.

Masons: An organization that traces their origins to artisans and stoneworkers from the Middle Ages. The group often conducted their activities secretly, which has led many people to believe conspiracy theories about them.

Conspiracy Theory: A belief that an event or a set of circumstances is the result of a secret plot by powerful people.

Anti-Masonic Party: A political party in the United States during the early 19th century that believed the Masons were committing crimes and plotting to take over the country.

Merge: To combine into one group.

Ways and Means Committee: The committee in Congress that handles tax policy. It is the oldest committee in Congress and considered one of the most powerful.

Comptroller: A position tasked with managing the accounting and finances of an organization.

Fugitive Slave Law: A law, part of the Compromise of 1850, that required all slaves who escaped a slaveholder to be captured and returned to that slaveholder.

Compromise of 1850: A series of laws passed by Congress and signed by President Millard Fillmore in 1850 to resolve issues related to slavery and land acquired in the Mexican-American War. The Compromise helped to delay the Civil War but didn't resolve the underlying issue of slavery.

Know-Nothing Party: A political party in the United States during the mid-19th century that opposed immigration, especially by Irish Catholics. It collapsed in the late 1850s.

Sources

Finkelman, Paul. *Millard Fillmore: The American Presidents Series: The 13th President, 1850-1853*. Times Books, 2011.

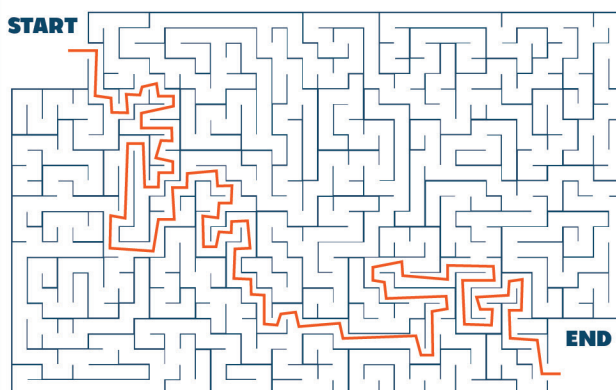
Holt, Michael. "Millard Fillmore." *Miller Center, University of Virginia*, <https://millercenter.org/President/fillmore/>. Accessed 12 October 2022.

Images: Getty Images, WikiCommons, FreePix

Answers:

NAME OF PRESIDENT THAT VISITED
FILLMORE:
ABRAHAM LINCOLN

MAZE OF LIFE:



WHAT DID HE SAY?

T	H	E		G	O	V	E	R	N	M	E	N	T
O	F		T	H	E		U	N	I	T	E	D	
		S	T	A	T	E	S		I	S		A	
			L	I	M	I	T	E	D				
		G	O	V	E	R	N	M	E	N	T		

Franklin Pierce

"I was a popular politician from New Hampshire and served as the 14th President of the United States."





Become a Presidential Historian by Solving This Puzzle

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

Almost every president has taken the oath of office while swearing on the Bible, but not Franklin Pierce. What did he use instead of the Bible? Your task is to 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.

— — — — —

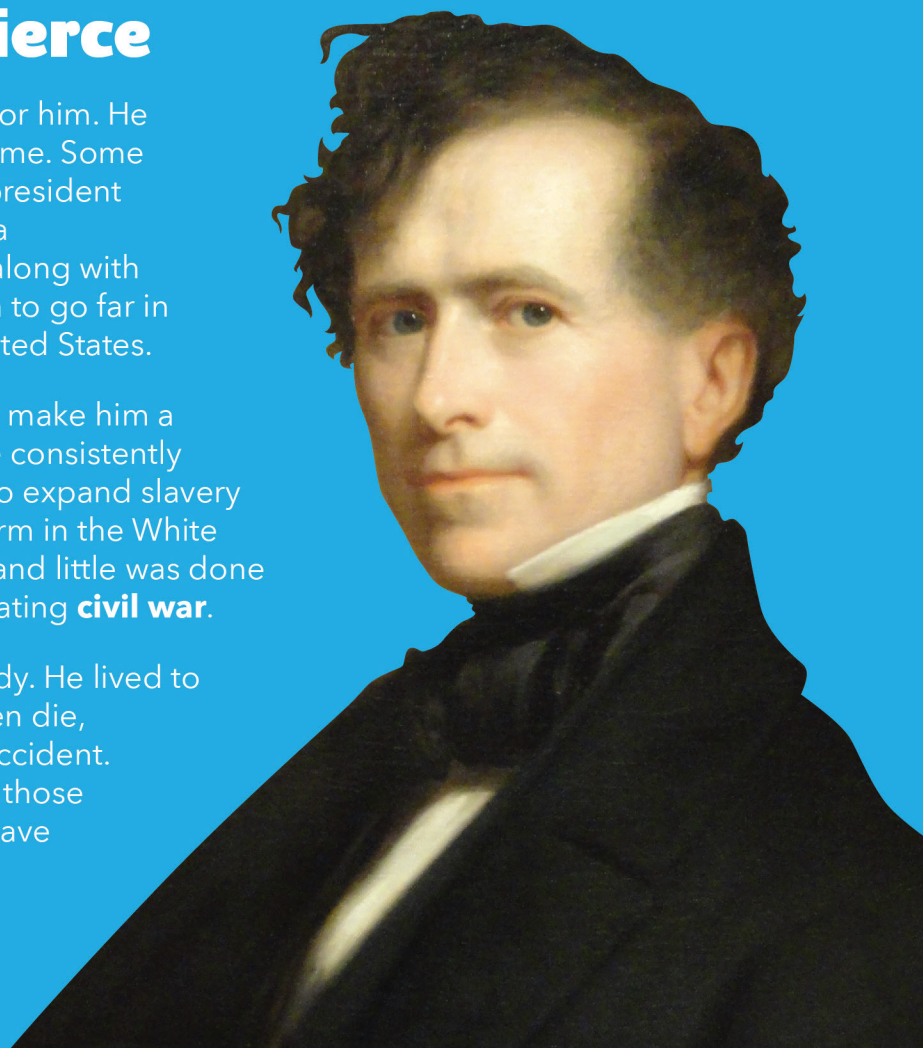
Once you've solved this puzzle, you'll be a true PragerU Kids presidential historian!

Meet Franklin Pierce

Franklin Pierce had everything going for him. He was charming, intelligent, and handsome. Some have called him the most handsome president America has ever had. He came from a prominent family and seemed to get along with everyone. These qualities allowed him to go far in life, rising to the presidency of the United States.

Unfortunately, they weren't enough to make him a successful leader. **A**s president, Pierce consistently supported slaveholders who wished to expand slavery across the nation. During his single term in the White House, violence broke out in Kansas, and little was done to avert what would become a devastating **civil war**.

Pierce's **l**ife was also marked by tragedy. He lived to see his wife and all three of his children die, including a son who died in a tragic accident. Franklin Pierce's story reminds us that those who seem to have it all don't always have a happy ending.



Young Franklin

Franklin Pierce was born November 23, 1804, in Hillsborough, New Hampshire. He was the sixth child of Benjamin and Anna Pierce. His father was a veteran of the American Revolution and served under General George Washington at **Valley Forge**. Benjamin would also end up serving as the Governor of New Hampshire in the 1820s.

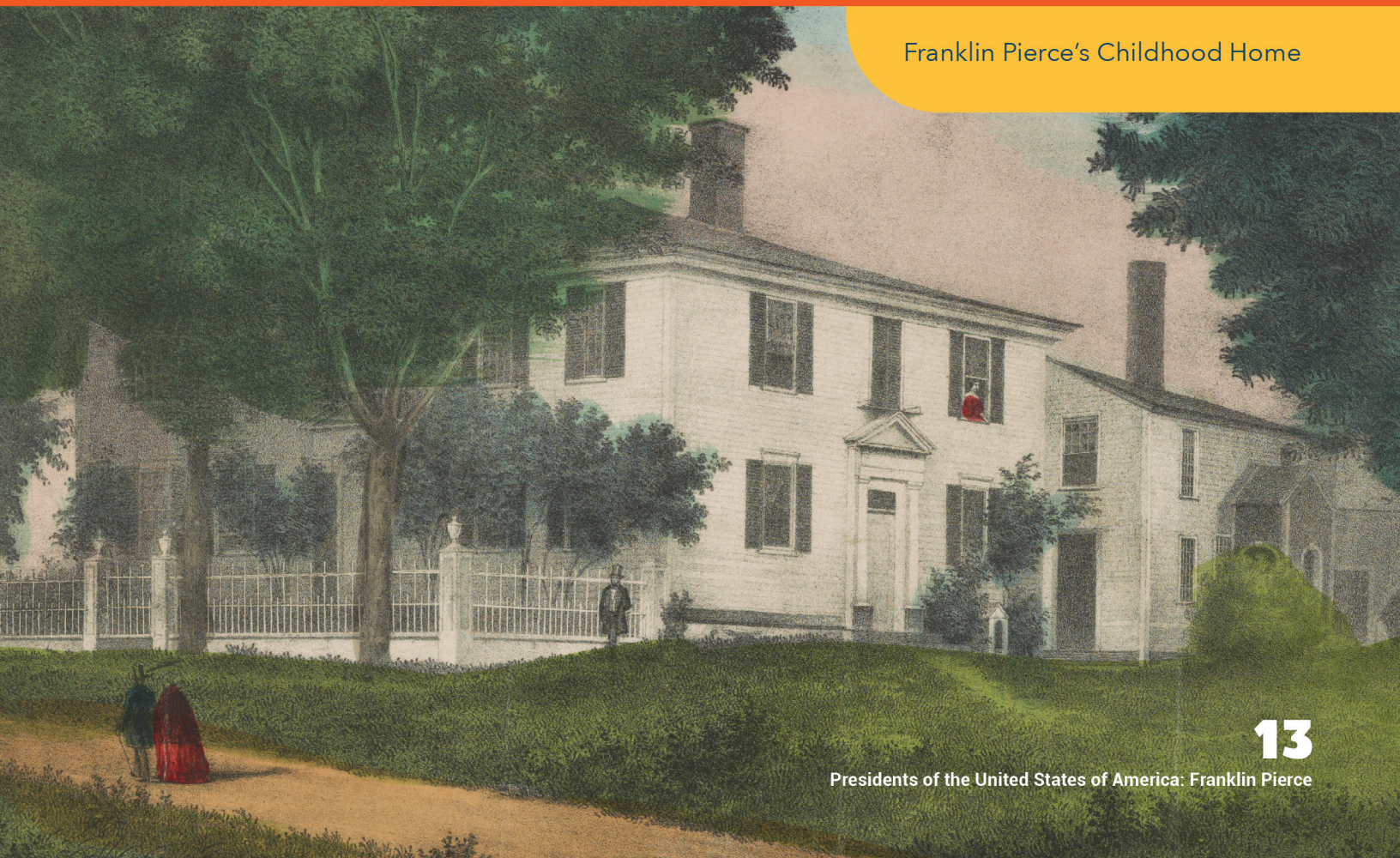
Young Franklin loved the outdoors and spent much of his childhood swimming, fishing, and ice skating. It was very easy to like Franklin—he was a sweet, polite boy. He attended local schools and, at the age of 12, was sent to a private academy.

When Franklin was 15, he began attending Bowdoin College in Maine. One of his classmates was Nathaniel Hawthorne, who had a talent for writing. Franklin enjoyed social life in college and had a lot of fun with his friends. He also developed strong public speaking skills.

Interesting Facts

- He is the only president from the state of New Hampshire (as of 2023).
- He was a member of the Democratic Party.
- He was a classmate and lifelong friend of the famous writer Nathaniel Hawthorne (author of *The Scarlet Letter*).
- His good looks earned him the nickname “Handsome Frank.”
- He delivered his entire inaugural address from memory, without reading from a script or notes.

Franklin Pierce's Childhood Home



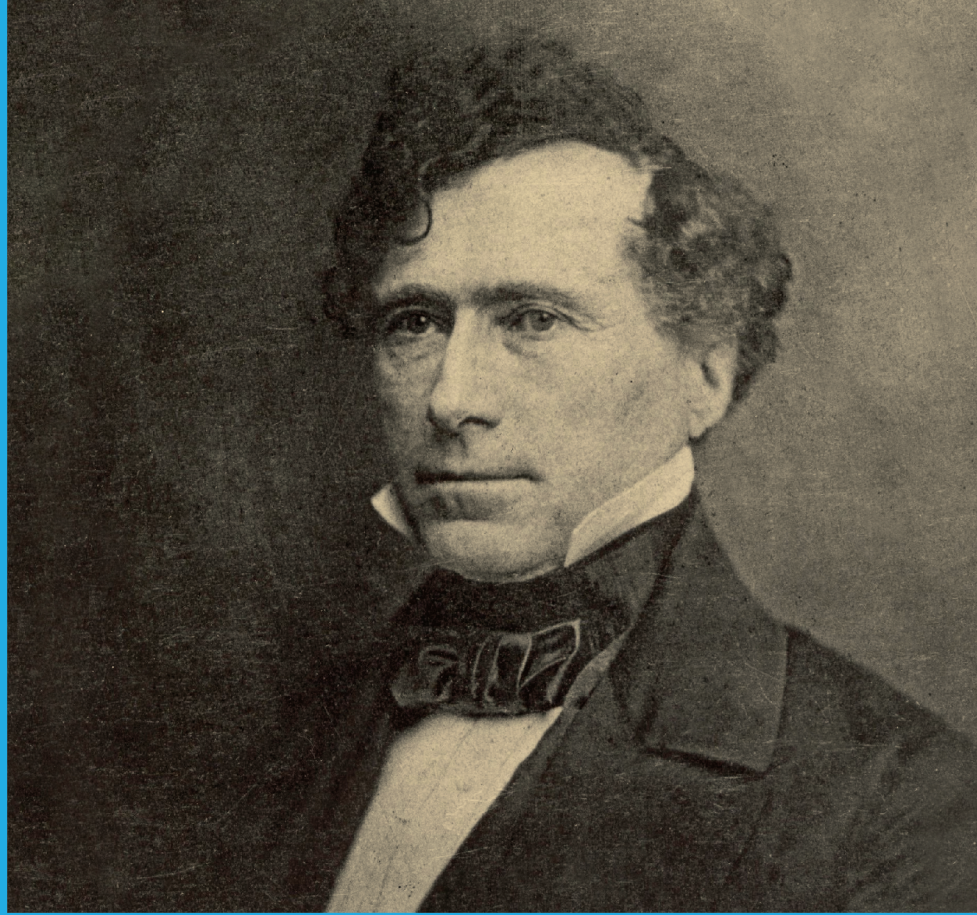
Early Career

Pierce's skills made him a natural in politics. He was a strong supporter of President Andrew Jackson and his vision of a more democratic country. Like Jackson, Pierce believed the common man, not the elites, should govern. Pierce was elected as a Democrat in New Hampshire's House of Representatives in 1829 at the age of 24. Three years later, Pierce was elected to the U.S. Congress, where he served until 1842, first as a representative and then as a senator.

During this time, he married a shy, devout woman named Jane Appleton, the daughter of Bowdoin College's president. They would have three children. Sadly, none of them would live to adulthood.

While in Congress, Pierce strongly opposed the **abolition** movement. Even though he was a Northerner, he was close to many Southern politicians who wanted to expand slavery.

Pierce and his wife didn't enjoy Washington, and they left the Senate to go back home to New Hampshire. For the next several years, Pierce was one of the top lawyers in the state. At the time, many people watched court cases as a form of entertainment. Pierce's speaking abilities attracted large audiences.



Quote

*"I rely confidently on the patriotism of the people."
- December 1855*



Mexican-American War

After the Mexican-American War broke out in 1846, President James K. Polk commissioned Pierce as a brigadier general in charge of 2,000 soldiers. Hoping for military glory, Pierce led his men to join forces with General Winfield Scott on Mexican territory. At the Battle of Contreras in August 1847, however, Pierce suffered a major leg injury when he fell off of his horse. As a result, he missed his chance to become a true war hero. Some of his political opponents would later criticize him for acting cowardly, even though the injury was just an unfortunate accident.



1852 Presidential Election

Despite Pierce's disappointing war experience, he was still a prominent political leader in New Hampshire. By the 1850s, the country was divided over the issue of slavery, with many Northerners hoping to prevent its spread into the new territories won during the war. By contrast, Southerners hoped slavery would expand. The Democratic Party had strong support in the pro-slavery South, but they realized that if they nominated a Northerner, they might be able to win over new voters and take the presidency.

Franklin Pierce was the Democrats' dream candidate because he was a Northerner who agreed with them on slavery. These types of politicians were called "**doughfaces**." The Democrats nominated him for the presidency in 1852 to oppose his old commander Winfield Scott, the Whig Party's candidate. In November, Pierce won the presidency by a comfortable margin.



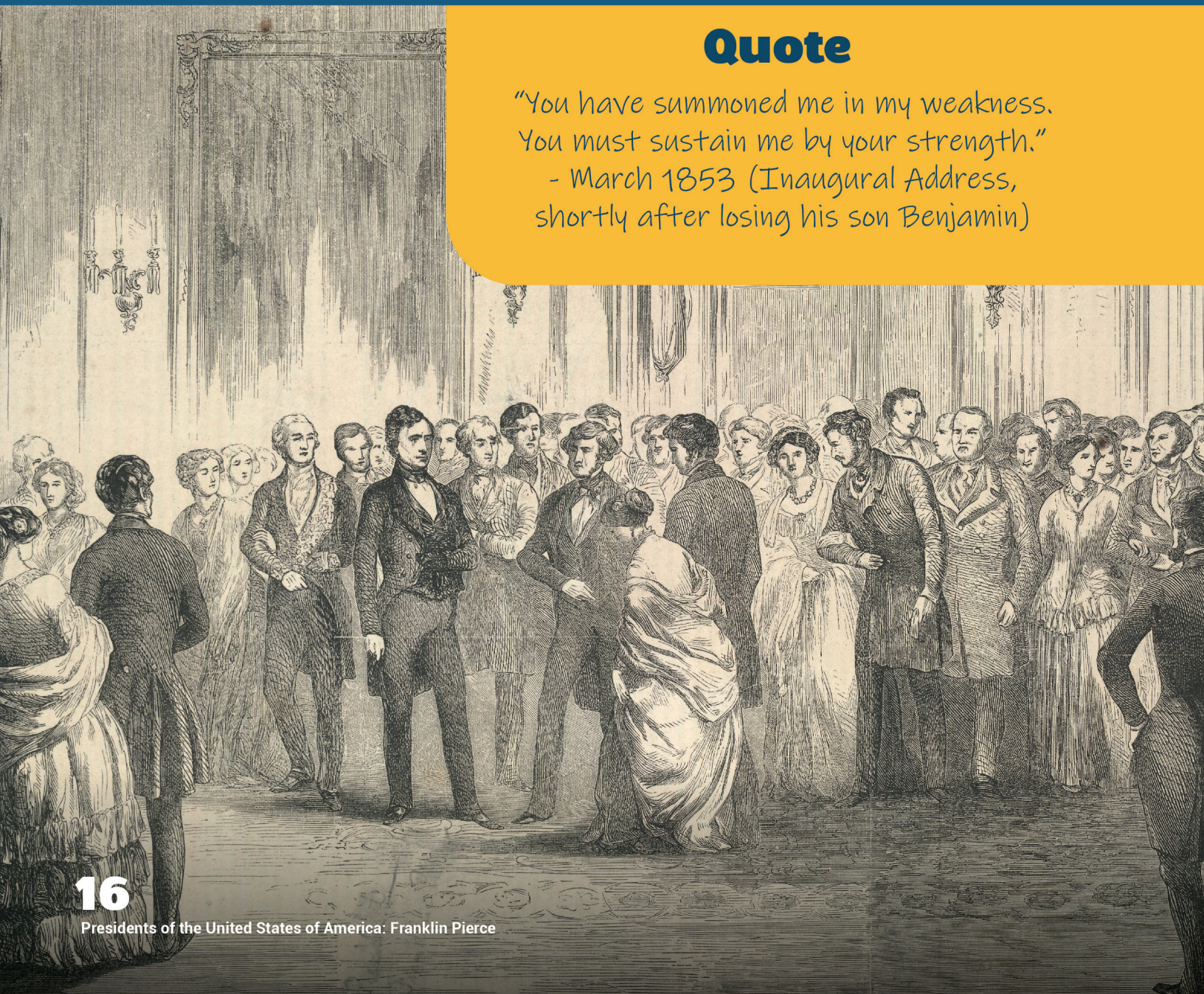
Tragedy for the First Family

In January of 1853, a couple months after the election and before inauguration day, the Pierces suffered a devastating loss. After they and their 11-year-old son Benjamin boarded a train in Massachusetts, their car derailed and tumbled over. Pierce and his wife survived, but Benjamin was killed.

Both parents were heartbroken, but Pierce had to carry on since he was about to become the nation's leader. Meanwhile, Jane spent most of her husband's presidency as a **recluse** in the White House.

Quote

*"You have summoned me in my weakness.
You must sustain me by your strength."
- March 1853 (Inaugural Address,
shortly after losing his son Benjamin)*



President

Slavery was the biggest issue of Pierce's presidency. Back in 1820, Congress banned slavery in a large part of the Midwest United States. Southerners, and Pierce, supported removing the ban, but the President feared that if he signed a bill, he would lose popularity in the North. Instead, he hoped the **Supreme Court** would settle the issue and allow slavery across the country.

Illinois Senator Stephen Douglas interfered with Pierce's plan when he proposed the **Kansas-Nebraska Act**, which would allow the people in the territories to decide whether to allow slavery. This idea, called **popular sovereignty**, meant the ban from 1820 was over. Although Pierce would have preferred the issue settled by the Court, he signed it into law. This enraged people who opposed slavery.

When the Midwestern territory of Kansas began holding elections, pro- and anti-slavery forces moved in and fought for control. Pierce supported the pro-slavery activists. Soon, violence broke out in the state, and the conflict would become known as **Bleeding Kansas**. It was a glimpse of what was to come in the future Civil War.

Pierce's support for slavery and the violence in Kansas destroyed his popularity. The Democrats rejected him as their nominee in 1856 and, instead, chose James Buchanan, who won the election that fall.

Quote

*"With the Union my best and dearest earthly hopes are entwined."
- March 1853 (Inaugural Address)*

KANSAS-NEBRASKA ACT, 1854.





Retirement

When Pierce's term ended, he and Jane moved out of the White House and back to New Hampshire. When the Civil War broke out in 1861, Pierce was torn. He felt the North had provoked the war, but he also hoped the **Union** would be preserved. He also opposed Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, freeing the slaves in the South. Some Northerners believed that Pierce was no better than a traitor.

These were hard times for Pierce. In December of 1863, his wife Jane died of **tuberculosis**. Over the next few years, Pierce's health declined. He died on October 8, 1869 in Concord, New Hampshire at the age of 64.

Legacy

Slavery was the most difficult issue in the early history of the United States. No American leader at the time was able to find a solution and unify the nation behind it. Ultimately, a terrible civil war would be fought to settle the matter.

Franklin Pierce is often criticized by historians for failing to prevent the war. Perhaps the issue was so complicated that no leader could have done so. Still, Pierce's consistent support for slavery can't be ignored. Although Pierce believed that his decisions would keep the nation together, most historians argue that he wasn't able to meet the challenges of the moment.



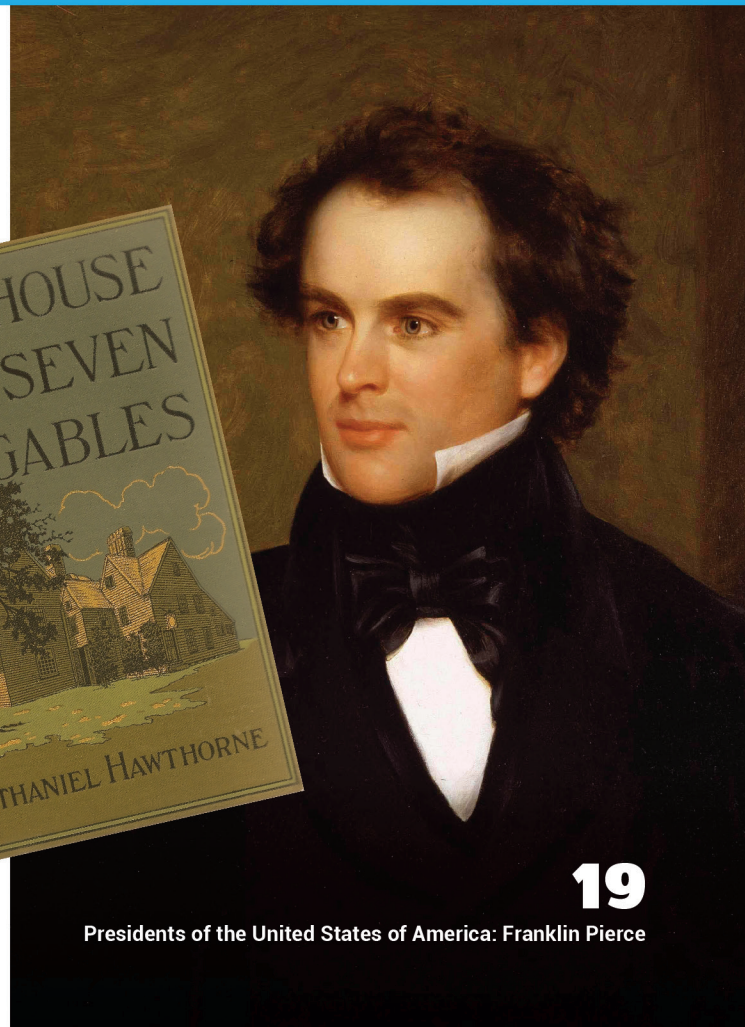
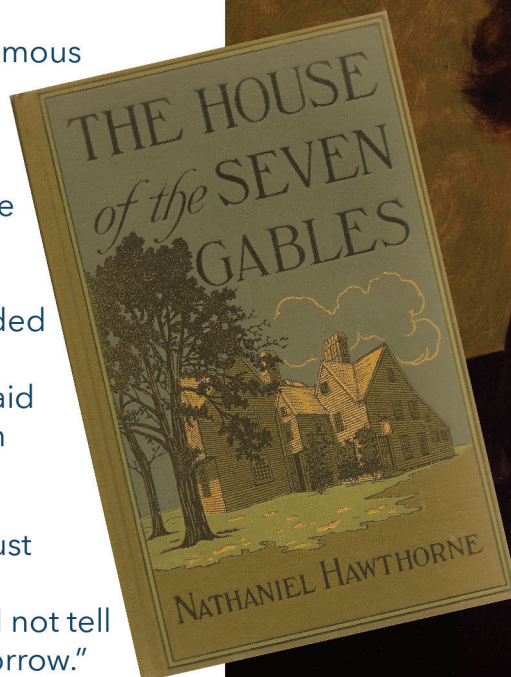
Writing Activity

Throughout Pierce's life, he experienced joy and sadness, success and failure. We all experience ups and downs during our lives. How do you work through difficult times? How can you encourage others going through difficult times? Make a list of practical steps or words of advice.

Friends to the End

While he was a student at Bowdoin College, Pierce became close friends with Nathaniel Hawthorne—the future author of the famous books *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of Seven Gables*. Throughout the ups and downs of life, they remained lifelong friends. When Pierce ran for president, Hawthorne wrote a biography of him to promote his campaign. As president, Pierce rewarded Hawthorne by appointing him as a diplomat to Great Britain, a job that paid the author well and allowed him much time to write.

When Hawthorne died in May 1864, just months after Jane's death, Pierce was devastated, writing to a friend, "I need not tell you how lonely I am and how full of sorrow."



Glossary

Civil War: A war between citizens of the same country.

Valley Forge: The location of the Continental Army's camps in the winter of 1777-78 during the American Revolution. Due to the lack of food and supplies, the winter at Valley Forge is remembered as a time of great suffering for the army.

Abolition: To end or stop something. In the 19th century in the United States, it referred to the elimination of the institution of slavery.

Doughface: A term used in the 19th century in America to describe a Northern politician who supported positions popular in the South, especially the expansion of slavery throughout the country. This was because Southerners saw those politicians as moldable, or able to be manipulated and controlled like dough.

Recluse: A person who lives a solitary life and avoids other people.

Supreme Court: The highest court in the United States and the head of the judicial branch in the federal government. The court consists of nine associate justices, the highest ranking of which is the Chief Justice. The Court's main job is to interpret the Constitution and laws in the event of a legal dispute.

Kansas-Nebraska Act: A law in 1854 that allowed people living in the territories of Kansas and Nebraska to decide whether to have slavery there. It was based on the idea of popular sovereignty. The law angered people who were against slavery and contributed to the start of the Civil War.

Popular Sovereignty: The idea from the 1850s in the United States that people should have the choice to allow slavery in the territory in which they live.

Bleeding Kansas: Violence that broke out in the territory of Kansas in the 1850s between people supporting and opposing slavery.

Union: The United States government during the Civil War that fought to prevent the Confederate states from seceding.

Tuberculosis: A bacterial disease that affects the lungs.

Sources

Baker, Jean H. "Franklin Pierce." *Miller Center, University of Virginia*, <https://millercenter.org/president/pierce/>. Accessed 31 October 2022.

Holt, Michael F. *Franklin Pierce: The American Presidents Series: The 14th President, 1853-1857*. Times Books, 2010.

Images: Getty Images, WikiCommons, FreePix

Answers:

WHAT FRANKLIN PIERCE USED
INSTEAD OF THE BIBLE:
A LAW BOOK



NOTES



A series of 20 horizontal lines for writing notes, contained within a white rounded rectangle on an orange background.

READY FOR MORE?

Experience all the **FREE CONTENT**
PragerU Kids has to offer!



STREAM FREE SHOWS ON YOUR TV OR TABLET

Download our FREE mobile or TV app to stream every PragerU Kids show! Or, watch any time at PragerUkids.com.



ENJOY HOURS OF FREE SHOWS

Browse over 300 educational videos for K-12, including game shows, cartoons, and inspiring reality shows.



EXPLORE WHOLESOME STORIES & AMAZING HISTORY

Download free e-books at PragerUkids.com or purchase printed copies on Amazon.



FREE RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS & PARENTS

Supplement your child's viewing experience with lesson plans & worksheets that meet educational standards.

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!



Experience Fun, Interactive,
and Educational Content at
PRAGERUKIDS.COM