

# presidents of the *United States of America*



**Benjamin Harrison &  
William McKinley**



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# **presidents** of the *United States of America*

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# Benjamin Harrison

"I served as the  
23rd President of  
the United States  
and strongly  
supported  
America's  
veterans."







# Become a Presidential Historian by Solving This Puzzle

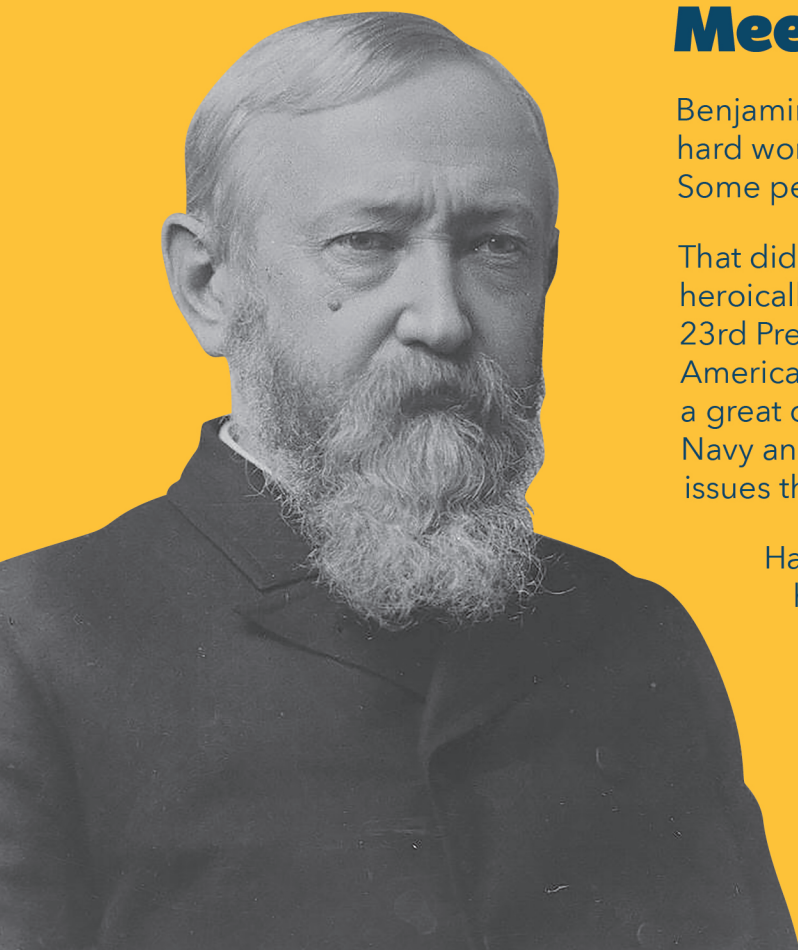
In this book, you'll learn all sorts of facts about Benjamin Harrison's amazing life and accomplishments. But there's still one last thing we need to know about him.

Benjamin Harrison had an unusual pet. We need your help to find out what kind of animal it was and what it was named. 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.

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



## Meet Benjamin Harrison

Benjamin Harrison was a very serious person. He was a hard worker and didn't enjoy socializing very much. Some people found him cold and unfriendly.

That didn't stop him from achieving success. He served heroically during the Civil War and rose to become the 23rd President of the United States. Even though many Americans have forgotten about him, he accomplished a great deal as president. He strengthened **A**merica's Navy and signed laws to address many economic issues the country was facing.

Harrison also has a special place in American history as the only grandson of a president to also serve as president.

We might not remember much about Harrison now, but he did play an important role as America **g**rew into a world power.





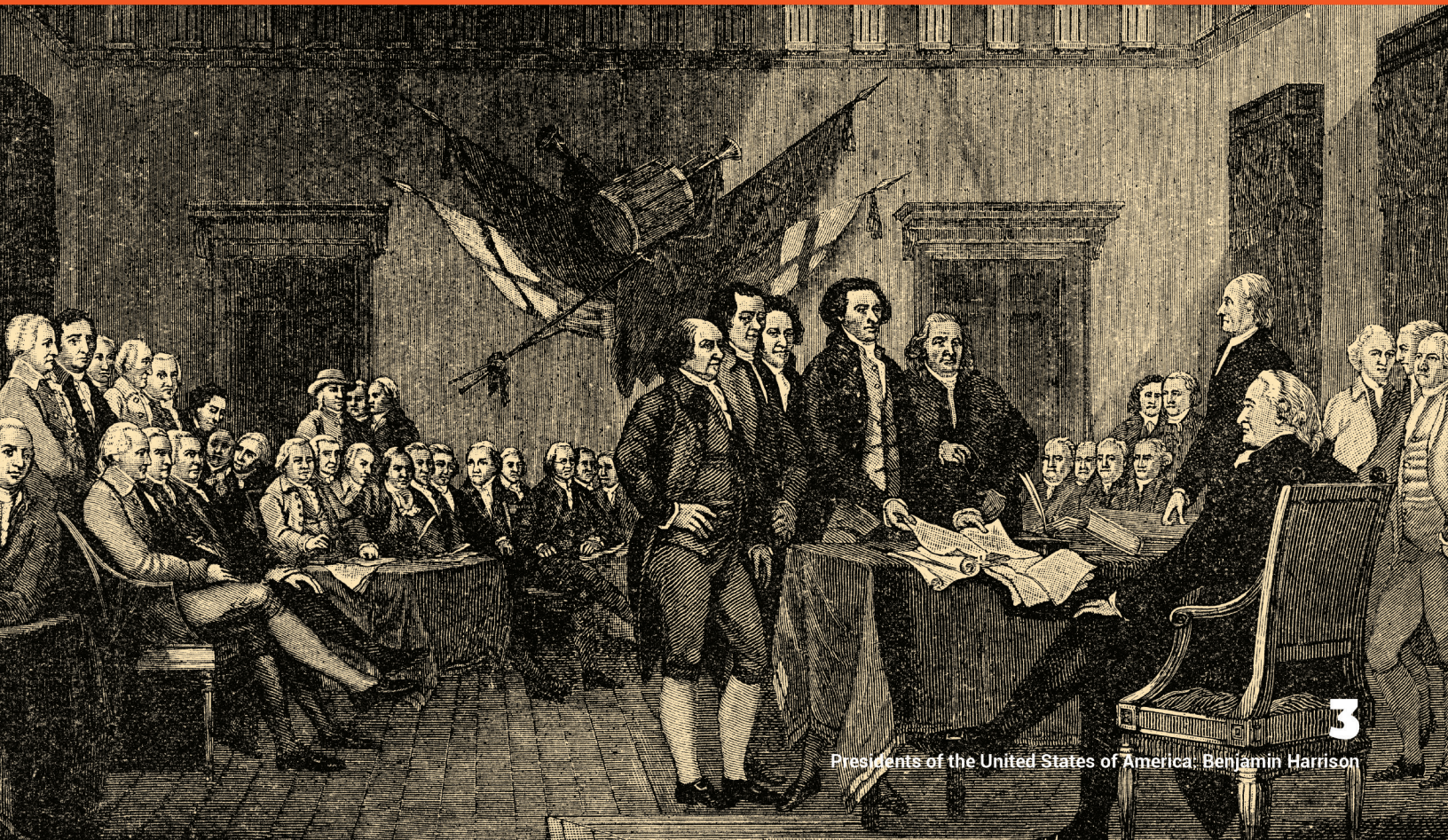
## Young Benjamin

Benjamin Harrison was born on August 20, 1833, in North Bend, Ohio. He was the second child of John and Elizabeth Harrison. Young Benjamin was born into one of America's most prominent families. His great-grandfather, Benjamin Harrison V, was a Founding Father who had signed the Declaration of Independence. His grandfather, William Henry Harrison, served as the ninth President of the United States. His father, John, would go on to serve as a congressman from 1853 to 1857.

Young Benjamin grew up on the frontier and spent much of his childhood hunting, fishing, and taking care of livestock. He loved reading and was educated by private tutors. He went on to attend a prep school in Cincinnati named Farmer's College, and then Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Benjamin was an excellent student and graduated in 1852.

## Interesting Facts

- He is (as of 2023) the only grandson of a president to also become president.
- He was a member of the Republican Party.
- He was nicknamed the "Human Iceberg" because of his cold personality.
- He is the only president (as of 2023) from Indiana.
- He was the last Civil War general to serve as president.
- As president, he set aside 22 million acres of land as forest reserves and established Sequoia, Yosemite, and General Grant National Parks.
- He is the earliest president whose voice has been recorded.
- Electricity was first installed in the White House during his term.





## Early Career

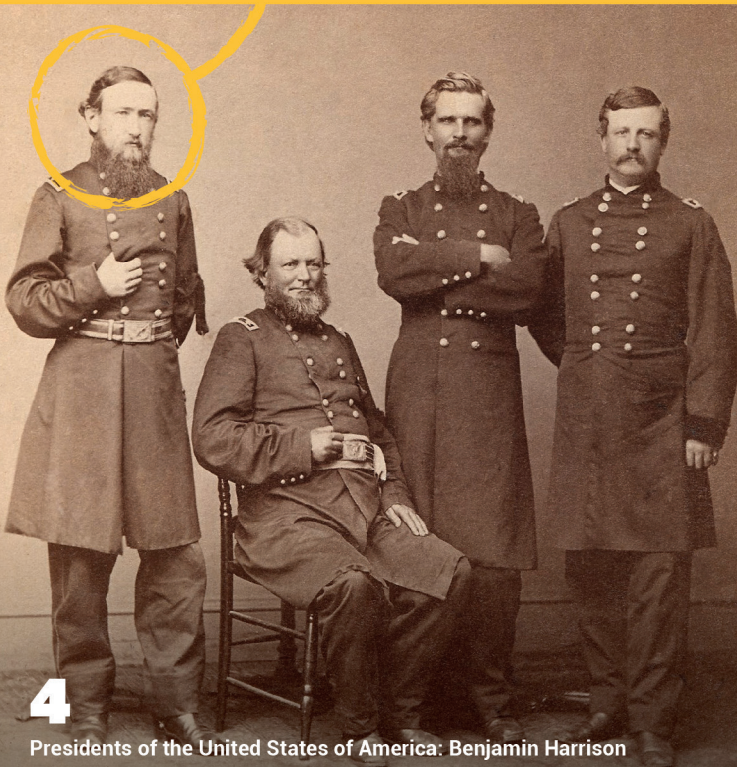
By this time, Harrison had fallen in love with a woman named Caroline Scott, the daughter of a minister. They got married in 1853 and eventually had two children, Russell and Mary.

Harrison embarked on a career in law, moving with his wife to Indianapolis, Indiana. He also worked as a **court reporter** for the Supreme Court of Indiana.

Harrison found himself getting more and more involved in politics. He was a devout Christian and believed that it was good for Christians to get involved in government so they could serve others. He joined the Republican Party and, in 1860, campaigned for its presidential candidate, Abraham Lincoln.



### Harrison in the Civil War



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Presidents of the United States of America: Benjamin Harrison

## The Civil War

Harrison served during the Civil War, eventually rising to become a brigadier general. He fought courageously under General William Tecumseh Sherman in several battles during the **Atlanta campaign**. Although Harrison could be tough on his soldiers, he earned a reputation for being a strong leader. Sherman later praised him for his "foresight, discipline and a fighting spirit."





## Rise to Power

### Quote

"I have long since made up my mind that with God's blessing and good health, I would succeed."  
- September 1854

After the war, Harrison picked up from where he left off, practicing law and staying involved in politics. He ran for governor in 1872 and 1876 but lost both times. He participated in the 1880 Republican National Convention and supported **Ohio** Congressman James A. Garfield in that year's presidential election.

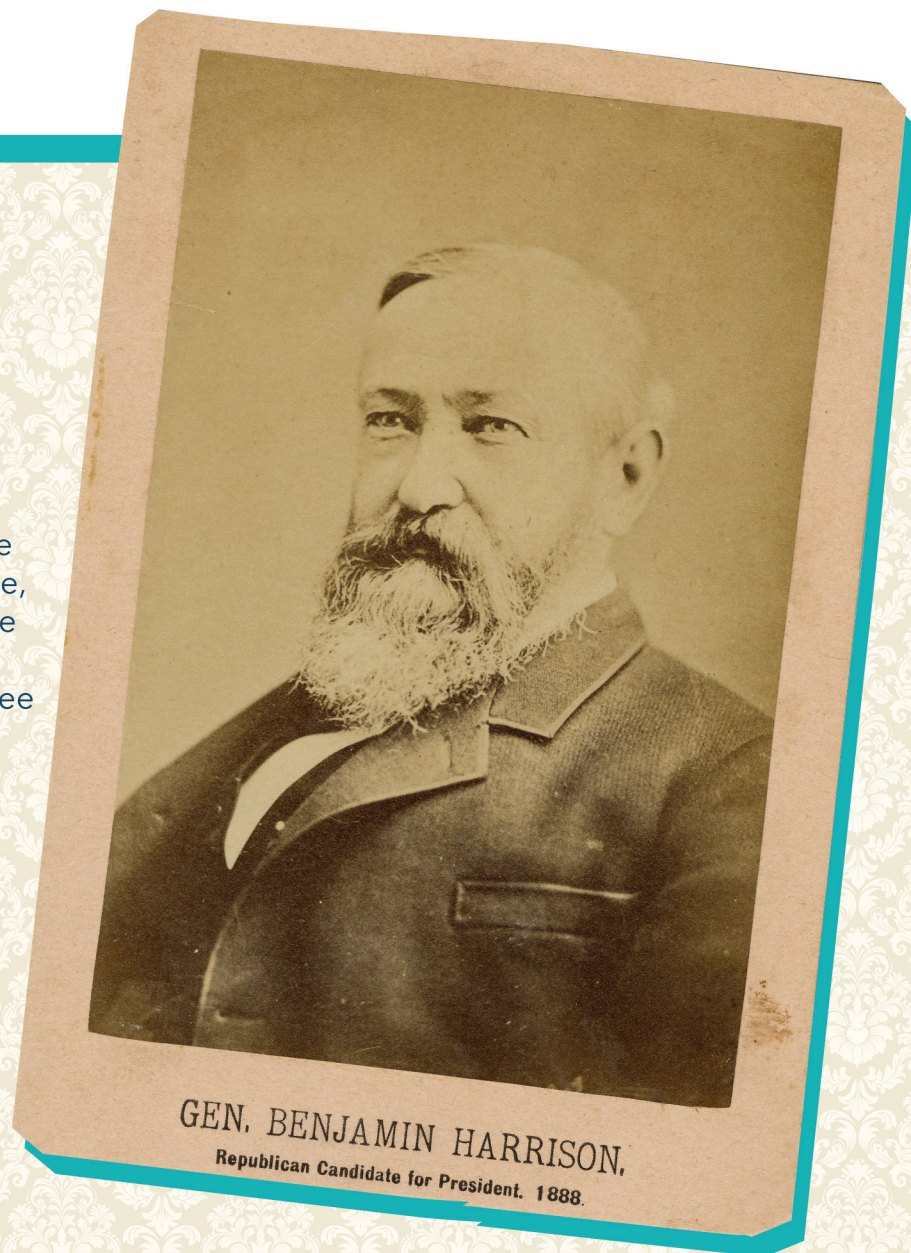
Harrison finally won political office when he was chosen for the U.S. Senate, representing the state of Indiana. He took office in 1881 and spent his term fighting to provide **pensions** for Civil **War** veterans, strengthening the Navy, and implementing **civil service reform**. He also opposed the **Chinese** Exclusion Act, which ended all immigration from China.

## The 1888 Presidential Election

Harrison lost his Senate seat **i**n 1887. He refused to be discouraged and, this time, sought the highest office in the land: the presidency. He faced Maine Senator James G. Blaine, the Republican nominee from four years **s** earlier who had lost to Democrat Grover Cleveland.

At the Republican Convention that summer, Harrison defeated Blaine for the nomination. New York **k** politician Levi P. Morton was selected as his running mate.

Harrison faced incumbent President Cleveland in the general election. Although Cleveland won the popular vote, Harrison won the presidency in the **Electoral College**, 233 to 168.





# President

Harrison got a lot accomplished as president in a short period of time. He signed the McKinley **Tariff**, which raised rates on goods imported into the United States. He believed that this would protect American companies from foreign competition. He signed the Sherman Antitrust Act, which allowed the government to **prevent** companies from acting as **monopolies**. He also allowed more Americans to obtain pensions.

Harrison accomplished this all in 1890, but he didn't stop there. He called on Congress to protect the **voting rights** of black Americans, but the people's representatives failed to cooperate. Lastly, Harrison worked hard to strengthen the **Navy** so the country would be recognized as a world power.

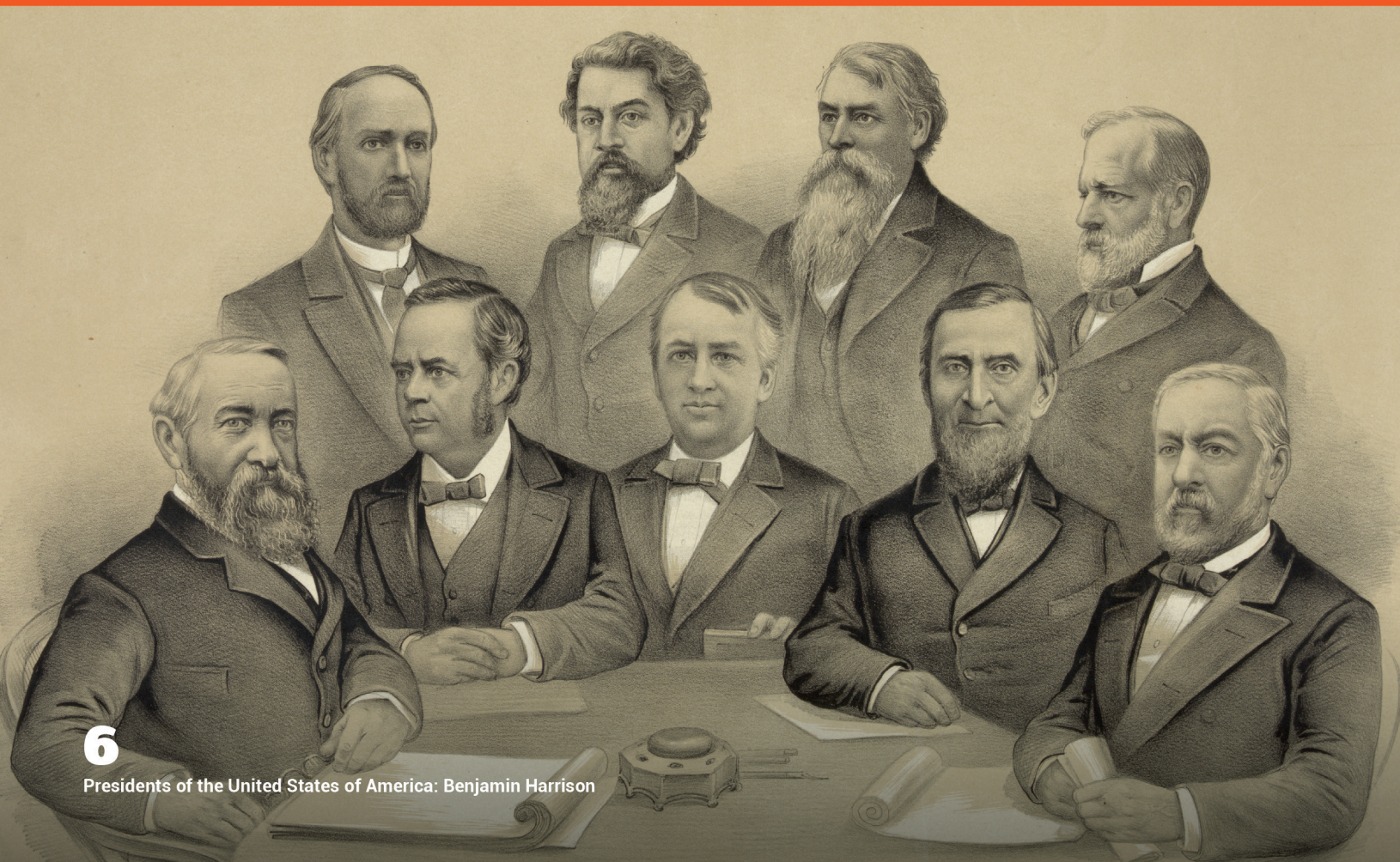
Even though Harrison was proud of these accomplishments, many people felt that he had made the federal government too powerful. They were very mad about the tariff because it made basic goods more expensive. In addition, they were concerned that his policies on pensions cost too much money. When Harrison ran for re-election in 1892, he lost to his old rival Grover Cleveland. Even worse, Harrison's wife, Caroline, died of tuberculosis during the campaign.

## Quote

*"When and under what conditions is the black man to have a free ballot? When is he in fact to have those full civil rights which have so long been his in law?"*

*- December 1889*

Harrison and his Cabinet



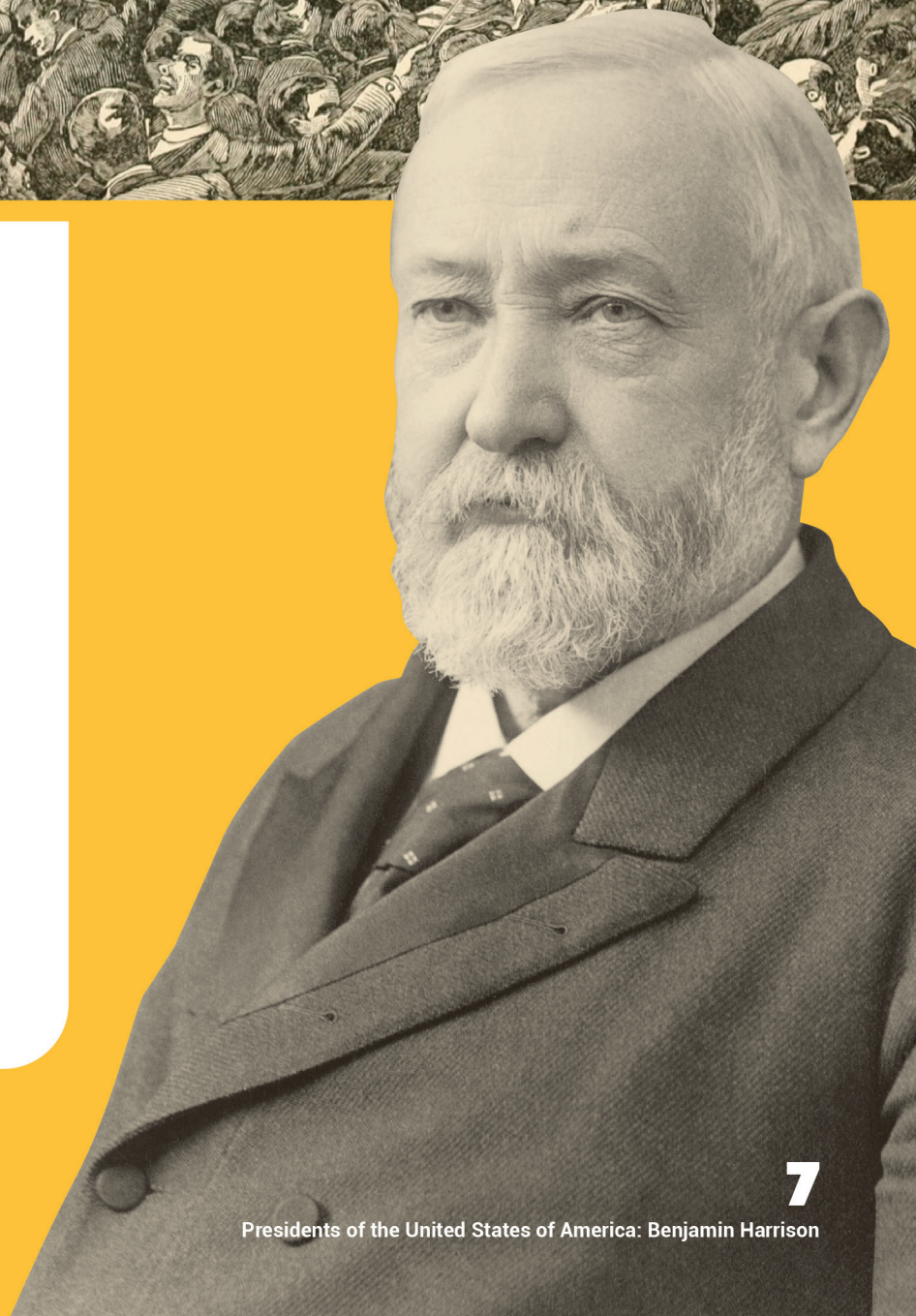




## The Human Iceberg

Harrison was a busy man and didn't have much time for socializing. He was known to be stiff and serious, and he didn't enjoy having conversations with other people. Some felt that he had a cold personality. He was even given the nickname the "Human Iceberg."

He was, however, a great public speaker. He could inspire people with his words, even when he spoke **extemporaneously**. This ability served him well throughout his political career.





## Quote

*"The general condition of our country is one of great prosperity. The blessing of God has rested upon our fields and upon our people."*  
- September 1892

## Retirement

Harrison went back home to Indianapolis, Indiana. He stayed active as a lawyer and even gave public lectures where he discussed important political issues. He also enjoyed playing with his grandchildren.

In 1896, Harrison married a second time, this time to a woman named Mary Dimmick. They had one child, a daughter named Elizabeth.

Harrison performed one last act of public service when he helped negotiate a dispute between the United Kingdom and Venezuela in 1898. He was hailed as an elder statesman.

On March 13, 1901, he died of pneumonia at his home in Indianapolis at the age of 67.

## Legacy

Benjamin Harrison is remembered mostly for being the first grandson of a president to become president himself. He is the only president to have lost his re-election campaign to the same person he had originally beaten to win the presidency.

Like many one-term presidents, Harrison is often considered a failure. This, however, isn't completely fair. Harrison was quite successful, passing many important pieces of legislation. By strengthening the Navy, he helped prepare the United States for the dominant role it would play in the 20th century. He also deserves credit for calling on Congress to protect the civil rights of black Americans.

Not everyone believes that the legislation Harrison signed helped the country. Some people believe that his tariffs raised prices for everyday Americans and his pension policies were too expensive. Still, Harrison deserves to be remembered for being an important and effective American leader in the 19th century.





# Writing Activity

President Harrison accomplished a lot in a short amount of time, but he was particularly passionate about supporting veterans. What issue or topic are you passionate about, and what can you do to support that cause?

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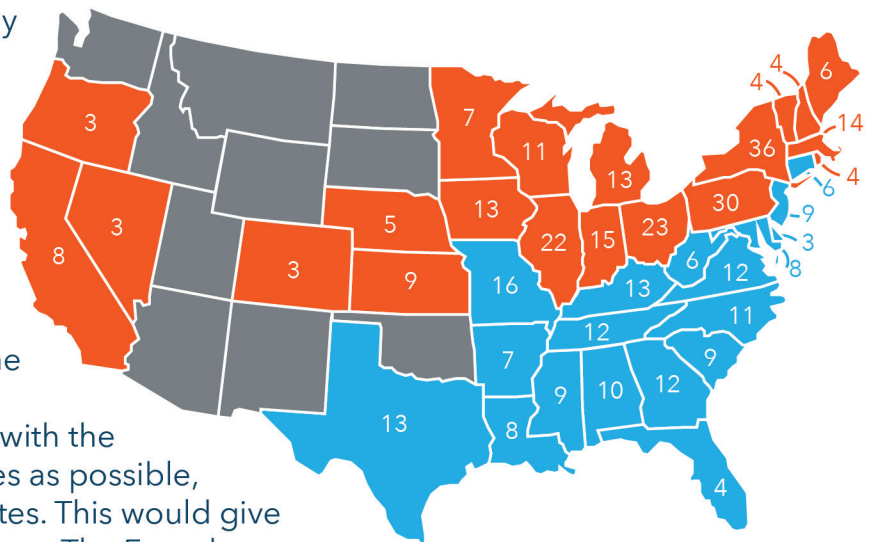
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## What's Up with the Electoral College?

Benjamin Harrison became president by winning the Electoral College, but he did not win the popular vote. How can you be president when more people voted for the other candidate? This might seem unfair, but it is part of a system that ensures fairness in elections.

The Founding Fathers worried that, if the winner was based on popular vote, candidates would only go to the states with the largest populations to win as many votes as possible, and ignore all of the less populated states. This would give states with large cities an unfair advantage. The Founders created the Electoral College, which ensured that presidential candidates had to get support from all across the country—not just the most populated states. In 1888, Benjamin Harrison lost the popular vote by a slim margin but won more states than Cleveland, which meant he had more support around the country.



|             |                                                 |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <div></div> | <b>Cleveland</b>                                |
|             | 168 electoral votes,<br>5,539,118 popular votes |
| <div></div> | <b>Harrison</b>                                 |
|             | 233 electoral votes,<br>5,449,825 popular votes |





## Glossary

**Court Reporter:** The person who documents what is said during a court proceeding.

**Atlanta Campaign:** A series of battles during the American Civil War that took place in Georgia and around Atlanta in 1864. General William T. Sherman led the Union armies against the Confederate forces throughout the campaign. Sherman's victories played a major role in the Union's ultimate victory.

**Pension:** A regular payment made to support someone during their retirement.

**Civil Service Reform:** Government laws and actions in the late 19th and early 20th century that were intended to reduce corruption in the federal government and allow for public officials to be hired based on their abilities and merit.

**Electoral College:** The group of people that, according to the U.S. Constitution, elect the President and Vice President of the United States.

**Tariff:** A tax on something being bought or sold to a customer in another country. Many people believe that, by taxing items imported from other countries and making them more expensive, Americans will, instead, buy those same items from companies in the United States. They believe that this helps American companies from foreign competition.

**Monopoly:** A situation where there is a single seller with no competition in the market. Many people believe this is harmful because the single seller can charge high prices on consumers and unfairly prevent other companies from competing.

**Voting Rights:** The ability to participate in choosing the individuals who lead the country. This is usually done by selecting candidates on an official ballot.

**Navy:** A branch of the United States Armed Forces that is trained to operate at sea. They usually have warships and other supporting vessels.

**Extemporaneously:** Performed with little or no advance preparation.

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## Answers

**BENJAMIN HARRISON'S PET:**  
A GOAT NAMED OLD WHISKERS



# William McKinley



"I was the  
25th President of  
the United States  
and led America  
to victory in the  
Spanish-American  
War."





# Become a Presidential Historian by Solving This Puzzle

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

McKinley had a pet, but we need to find out its name and what kind of animal 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.

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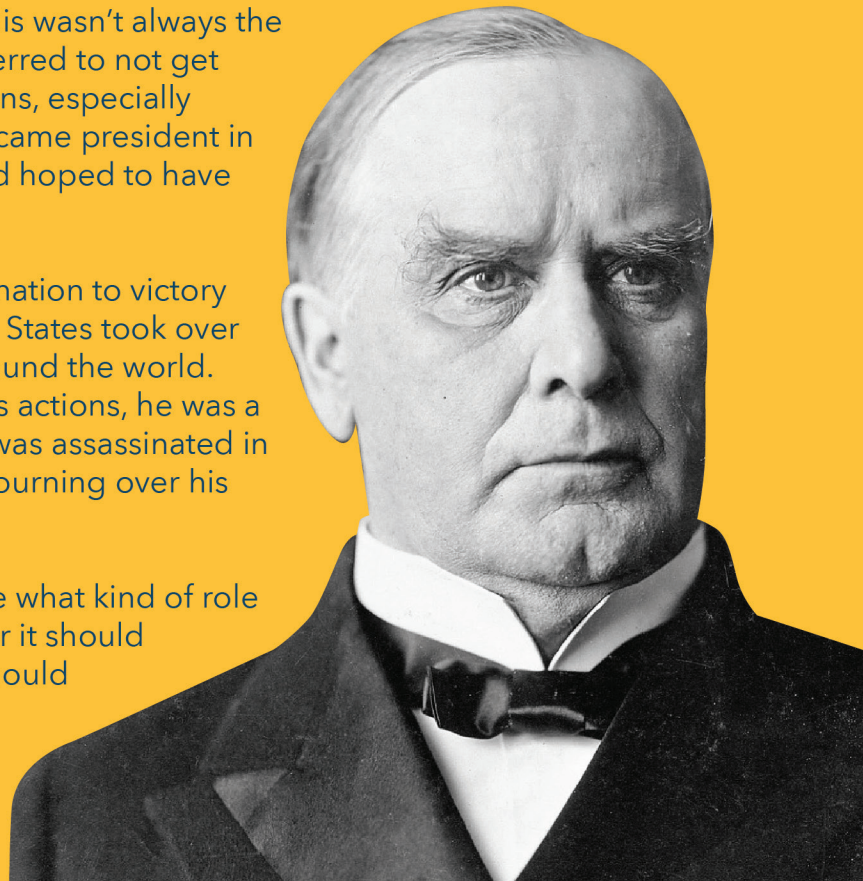
Once you've solved this puzzle, you'll be a  
true PragerU Kids presidential historian!

## Meet William McKinley

Today, the United **St**ates plays a very important role in the world and has many relationships with other countries, but this wasn't always the case. Before the 20th century, Americans preferred to not get involved in what was happening in other nations, especially foreign wars. By the time William McKinley became president in 1897, the United States was a rising power and hoped to have more influence beyond its own borders.

McKinley fulfilled those hopes by leading the nation to victory during the **S**panish-American War. The United States took over Spain's colonies and had control over land around the world. Although not everyone agreed with McKinley's actions, he was a very popular and respected leader. When he was assassinated in 1901, the American people went into deep mourning over his **de**ath.

To this day, people in the United States debate what kind of role their country should play in the world—whether it should be involved with **foreign affairs** or, instead, should avoid them and focus on its own problems. Through his actions, McKinley helped ensure that America made its presence felt **a**round the globe for decades to come.





# Young William

William McKinley was born on January 29, 1843 as the seventh of nine children in Niles, Ohio to William Sr. and Nancy Allison McKinley. William Sr. owned a small workshop for casting iron and raised his children to have a strong work ethic. Nancy instilled in them a strong religious faith, which William would carry with him for the rest of his life.

In the 1840s and 50s, America's southern states had millions of slaves, but the McKinleys' religious beliefs led them to oppose slavery. Young William, however, was focused on other things—he spent much of his childhood fishing, hunting, swimming, and horseback riding. He also attended a Methodist school in Poland, Ohio, where he was a hardworking student. William developed a love for reading, public speaking, and debating. He even became president of the school's debate club. When he was 16, William traveled to Meadville, Pennsylvania, where he enrolled in Allegheny College. However, he eventually left college because he couldn't afford the tuition. Instead, he went back to Poland and worked as a postal clerk and as a teacher.



## Interesting Facts

- He was the first to be inaugurated in the 20th century.
- He was a member of the Republican Party.
- He was the first president whose inauguration was filmed.
- He was the first president to ride in an automobile.
- He was the only president serving from 1869 to 1913 that didn't have a mustache or a beard.
- He was the third president to be assassinated.
- He was featured on the \$500 bill.
- Denali, the highest mountain peak in North America, was known as Mount McKinley (named after President McKinley) from 1917 to 2015.





# Civil War

The **A**merican Civil War began on April 12, 1861. McKinley joined the war effort and enlisted as a private in the 23rd regiment, Ohio Volunteer Infantry. Commanding his regiment was another Ohioan, Major Rutherford B. Hayes. Hayes became a personal mentor to McKinley, and they worked closely together during the war.

McKinley fought courageously several times under enemy fire during his **m**military service. He participated in the Battle of Antietam, one of the deadliest of the war. At the Battle of Berryville in Virginia, he kept fighting even though his horse was shot under him. The U.S. Army promoted McKinley to brevet major for "**gallant** and meritorious services."

## Quote

*"Let us keep always in mind  
that the foundation of our  
Government is liberty."  
- December 1900*





# Rise to Power

When the war ended, McKinley decided to become an attorney. He studied at Albany Law School and passed the bar in 1867. He settled in Canton, Ohio and began a law practice. At a picnic in 1869, he met a lovely young woman named Ida Saxton and married her two years later. They had two daughters, Katherine and Ida, but tragically, both died in their childhood. Ida (McKinley's wife) was so heartbroken by their deaths that her health declined, and she began having regular **seizures**. McKinley spent the rest of his life caring for her needs, which won the admiration of everyone who knew them.

During the war, McKinley voted for President Abraham Lincoln and became a strong supporter of his Republican Party. In 1876, McKinley's close friend Rutherford B. Hayes was elected President of the United States. That same year, McKinley decided to get involved in politics and won his election to the U.S. Congress. McKinley rose to become the chair of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee, which handles taxes and the federal

budget issues, where he supported tariffs to boost American businesses. In 1890, he helped pass a law called the McKinley **Tariff**. Unfortunately, the tariff angered voters when it made consumer goods more expensive. They voted McKinley out of office that same year.

McKinley, however, wasn't through with politics. He ran for Governor of Ohio in 1891 and won. As governor, McKinley worked to resolve issues between business owners and workers and to protect children from unfair labor practices. At the time, Ohio was a very important state, and its governors were often considered potential presidential candidates. In June 1896, William McKinley won the Republican nomination for president and defeated Democratic candidate William Jennings Bryan in the general election that November.



## Quote

"The American flag has not been planted on foreign soil to acquire more territory but for humanity's sake."  
- as quoted in a 1900 campaign poster





# President

When William McKinley became president in 1897, European countries were conquering land in Asia and Africa and building **empires** in what was called **colonization**. Many Europeans argued that through colonization, the people of these colonized territories could be lifted up to be more **civilized**. At the time, America had been a rising power in the world but did not have colonies like the European countries. This changed under President McKinley.

Cuba is an island near the United States and was once a colony under Spain. For many years, the Spanish had oppressed the people of Cuba, and in 1895, the Cubans revolted against the Spanish, and violence broke out on the island. McKinley hoped that the situation could be solved peacefully, especially since many Americans had business ties and property in Cuba. He sent the U.S. battleship *Maine* to a Cuban harbor to protect U.S. citizens and property. In February 1898, a mysterious explosion destroyed the *Maine*, killing 266 Americans. When a report came out blaming the Spanish for the explosion, the United States declared war.

President McKinley led the United States to an overwhelming victory over the Spanish empire and took over its colonies and territories, such as Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. Along the way, the U.S. military also took over the independent kingdom of Hawaii.

## Quote

"War should never be entered upon until every agency of peace has failed; peace is preferable to war in almost every contingency."

- March 1897

With its victory, America was now a major world power. Like the Europeans, McKinley also hoped to civilize people in America's colonies. Not everyone, however, was happy about these decisions. They felt that, since the United States had fought against British colonialism during the Revolutionary War, it shouldn't act like Europe and have colonies.

Americans argued passionately about the war. These arguments got even more heated when the people of the Philippines rebelled against U.S. control of their country. This sparked the Philippine-American War, which featured brutal fighting and lasted from 1899 to 1902. Many people in the United States felt that their country should stop trying to control the Philippines and the other colonies.





# A Modern Commander-in-Chief

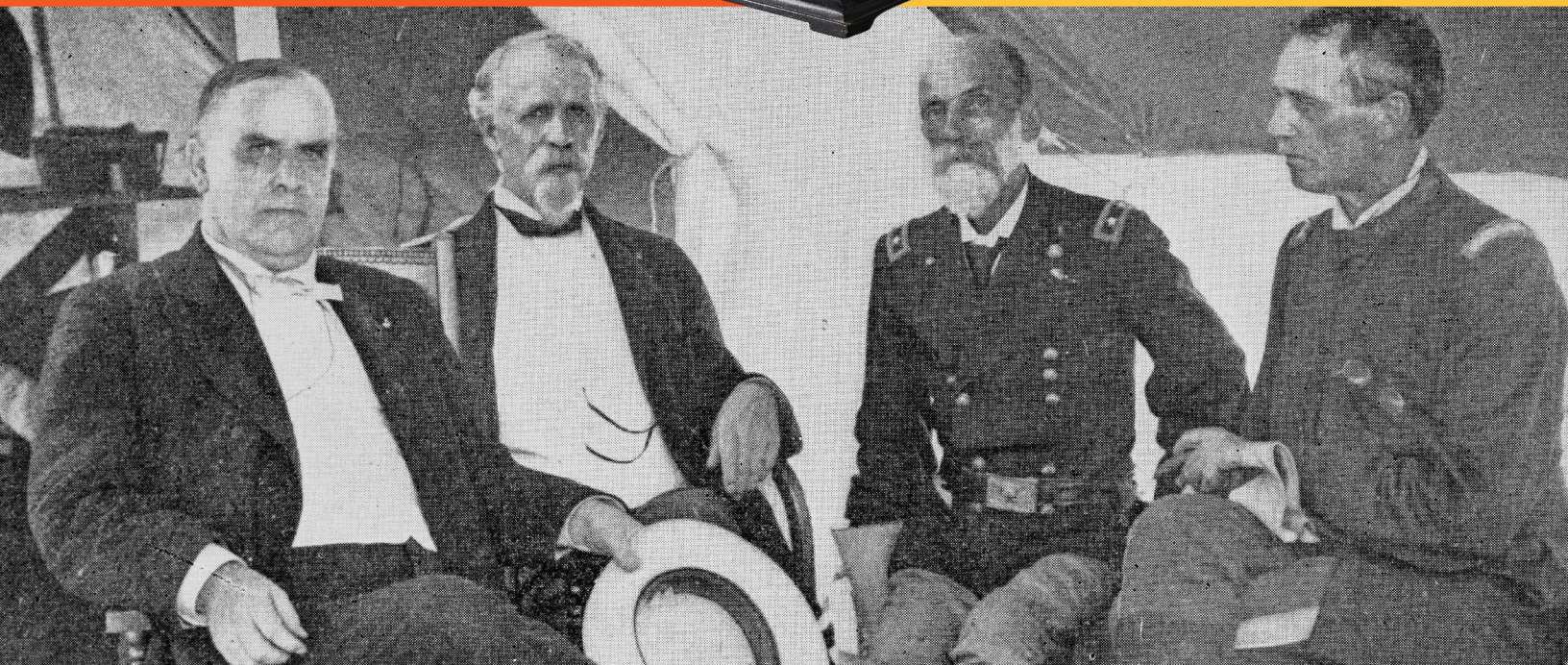
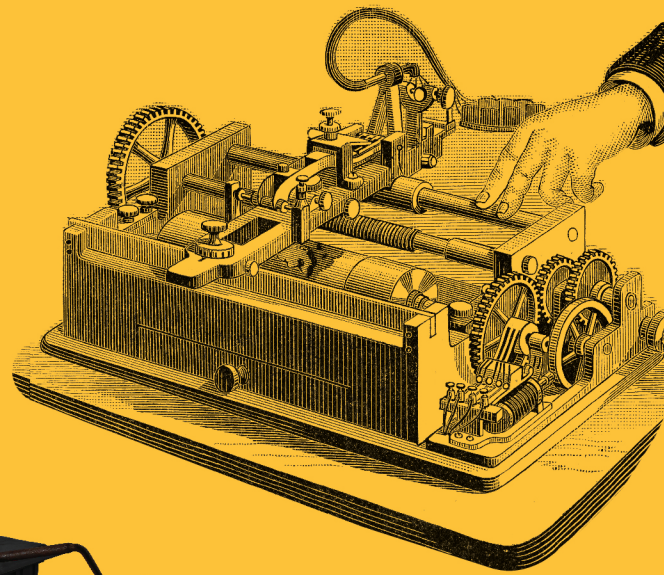
Prior to the Spanish-American War, the United States hadn't fought a major war in over 30 years (the Civil War). Since then, warfare had advanced technologically and allowed McKinley to lead as no other president had led before. He ran the military effort out of a war room in the White House, where he had 20 telegraph lines and 15 telephone lines to send out messages to American generals in Cuba and to the leaders of European countries. McKinley also used a **gramophone** to send messages to his aides. In previous wars, it took days, if not weeks, for world leaders to communicate with their generals; by 1898, McKinley's messages could travel thousands of miles in less than half an hour.



Left: Gramophone  
Right: Telegram machine

## Quote

"Our growing power brings with it temptations and perils requiring constant vigilance to avoid."  
- December 1900



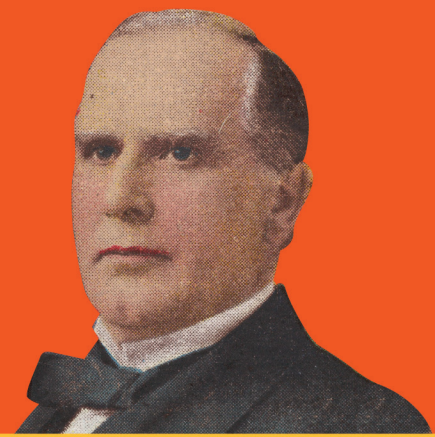


# Assassination

Despite the controversy of the wars, most Americans loved President McKinley for defeating the Spanish and also because of his devotion to his wife. The voters re-elected McKinley to a second term in 1900.

Unfortunately, one troubled young man, Leon Czolgosz, who had radical **anarchist** beliefs, blamed McKinley for his own problems. On September 6, 1901, during an event called the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, Czolgosz approached President McKinley and shot him. When the crowd began to beat Czolgosz down, McKinley had compassion on him and told them to stop.

For a few days, many hoped that the president would recover. Unfortunately, McKinley's wound became infected, and he died on September 14, 1901 at the age of 58. The nation was shocked at his assassination and lamented losing such a popular leader. McKinley's vice president, Theodore Roosevelt, took the oath of office to become the 26th president.



## Legacy

In the 20th century, the United States dominated the world stage. During World War II and the Cold War, it saved millions of lives around the world by defeating fascism and communism. By increasing America's influence abroad, President McKinley laid the foundation for it to take on new, global responsibilities.

These decisions were controversial. Many during McKinley's time and since believe that the United States acted hypocritically during the **S**panish-American War because it claimed to support freedom but ruled over colonies. These critics, however, fail to take into account that other European countries such as Germany and a rising Asian power, Japan—countries that did not support freedom—could have easily taken over Guam, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Hawaii. McKinley's supporters argued that the people in those territories were better off under American rule and would eventually be free.

Although the Philippine-American War remains a bloody and **t**ragic moment in history, McKinley did hope U.S. **occupation** would benefit the inhabitants of the new colonies. McKinley's presidency shows that powerful countries often have to make very difficult choices that smaller countries rarely face.



# Fun Facts

How much do you know about Guam, Cuba, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines?

## Hawaii

**Language:** Olelo Hawai'i and English

**Population:** 1.42 million

**Nickname:** The Aloha State

**Fun Facts:**

- Hawaii was the 50th state to join the United States.
- The state of Hawaii is made up of about 136 islands.
- There are only 12 letters in the Hawaiian alphabet: A, E, I, O, U, H, K, L, M, N, P, W.



## Puerto Rico

**Language:** Spanish and English

**Population:** 3 million

**Nickname:** Island of Enchantment

**Fun Facts:**

- Puerto Rico's Arecibo Observatory housed the world's largest telescope from 1963 to 2016.
- Puerto Ricans use the U.S. Dollar.
- Puerto Rican food is influenced by the mix of Taíno Indian, African, and Spanish heritage.



## Cuba

**Language:** Spanish

**Population:** 11.33 million

**Nickname:** Pearl of the Antilles

**Fun Facts:**

- On New Year's Eve, people burn human-sized dolls for good luck in the coming year.
- Salsa, a common type of music and dance in Latin America, originated in Cuba.



## Guam

**Language:** Chamorro and English

**Population:** 169,000

**Nickname:** Island of Warriors

**Fun Facts:**

- Guam is nicknamed the place "Where America's day begins."
- Since Guam is located on the other side of the International Dateline, it is the first place where the sun rises on U.S. soil.
- Guam is often said to be shaped like a footprint.

## Philippines

**Language:** Filipino and English (Filipino is based on Tagalog)

**Population:** 109.6 million

**Nickname:** Pearl of the Orient

**Fun Facts:**

- Ube ice cream, a common dessert, gets its purple color from Ube, a purple sweet yam.
- Over 100 languages are spoken in the Philippines.





# Writing Activity

During McKinley's presidency, America got more involved in foreign affairs.

What are the pros and cons of getting involved with other countries?

Should America focus only on its own problems or not?

Write down your thoughts.

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# Glossary

**Foreign Affairs:** Anything having to do with a country's relationships with other countries.

**Gallant:** Brave or heroic.

**Seizure:** Brain activity that often causes the body to shake uncontrollably.

**Tariff:** A tax on something being bought or sold to a customer in another country.

**Empire:** A group of territories or countries ruled by a single authority, often an emperor or empress.

**Colonization:** The act of taking over and controlling a territory and the people in that territory.

**Civilize:** To help a society become more advanced, educated, and sophisticated.

**Gramophone:** A device from the late 19th and early 20th centuries that could record and play sounds and music.

**Anarchist:** A person who believes there should be no government authority anywhere in the world.

**Occupation:** To take possession of an area, country, or territory, often by force.

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## Answers

**MCKINLEY'S PET:**  
A PARROT NAMED WASHINGTON POST

William McKinley's tomb in  
Canton, Ohio





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