

presidents of the *United States of America*

"I served as
the 20th
President of
the United
States and
fought for
equal rights
for all."



James A. Garfield



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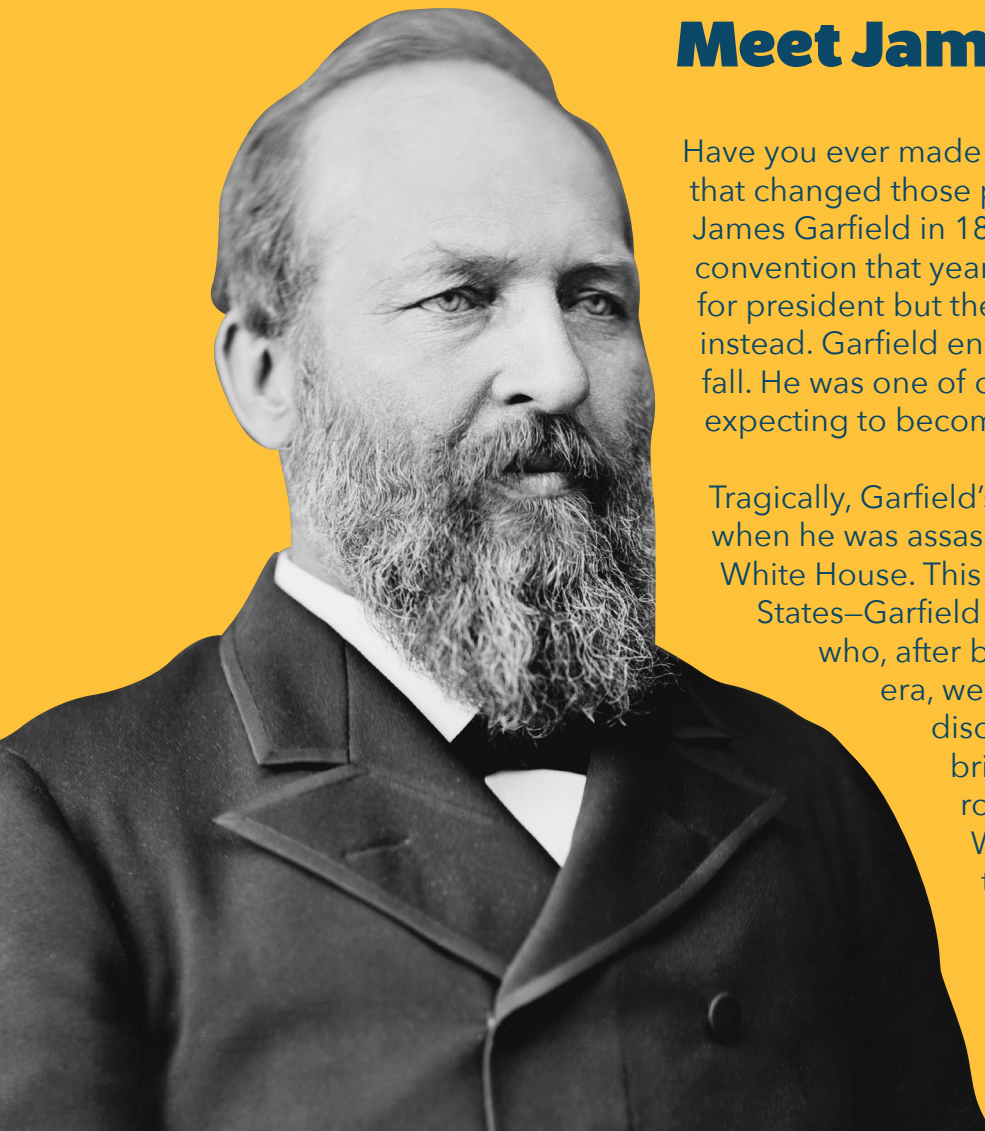
Become a Presidential Historian By Solving This Puzzle

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

Garfield had a pet, but we need 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 James A. Garfield

Have you ever made plans but then something happened that changed those plans? That's exactly what happened to James Garfield in 1880. He went to the Republican convention that year to support his friend, John Sherman, for president but the party chose him as their candidate instead. Garfield ended up winning the presidency that fall. He was one of our few presidents who wasn't actually expecting to become president when he did.

Tragically, Garfield's life took another unexpected turn when he was assassinated shortly after moving into the White House. This was an unfortunate loss for the United States—Garfield cared deeply about African-Americans who, after being liberated during the Civil War era, were facing new forms of violence and discrimination in the South. He was also a brilliant and highly intelligent man who rose from poverty all the way to the White House. Some historians believe that, had he lived, Garfield might have been able to do more to help African-Americans against those who treated them unfairly.

Young James

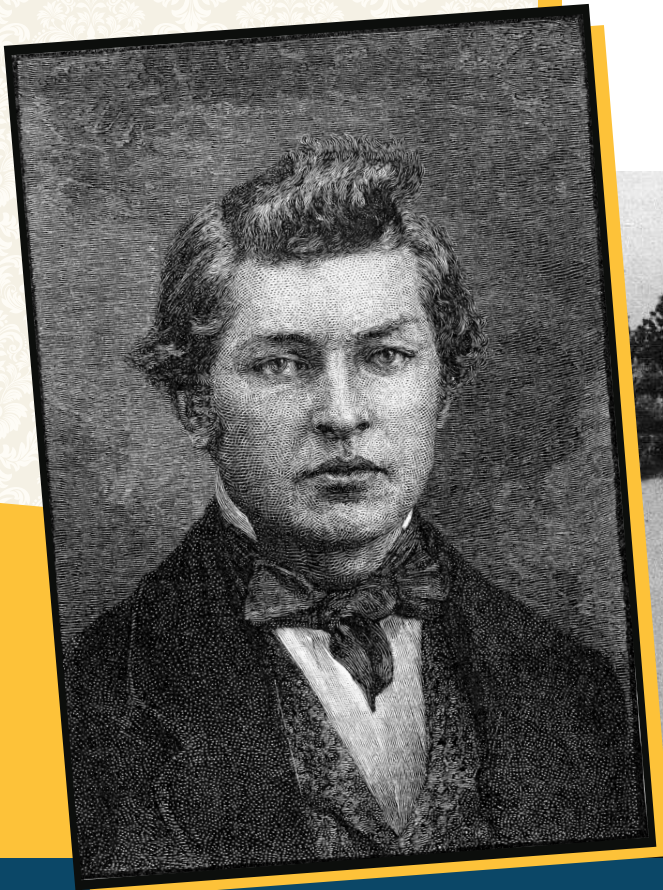
James Garfield was born to Abram and Eliza Garfield on November 19, 1831 in Cuyahoga County, Ohio. Little James was the youngest of five children and grew up in a poor household. When he was still an infant, his father died, so he spent much of his childhood working hard on a farm to support his family. He loved being outdoors but he also enjoyed reading adventure novels. He dreamed of one day traveling around the world as a sailor.

When James was 16, he got a job guiding mules that pulled boats on the Ohio and Erie Canal. One day while he was working, he fell into the canal over a dozen times and even caught malaria. Thankfully, he recovered and, thanks to this experience, he was determined to get an education. He worked as a carpenter and teacher so he could afford to attend Geauga Academy. From 1851 to 1854, he studied at the Eclectic Institute in Chester, Ohio, where he supported himself as a school janitor. He then studied at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts.

After graduating from Williams College in 1856, he went back to the Eclectic Institute to teach Greek and Latin. He was such a good teacher that, one year later, the Institute named him school president.

Right: James A. Garfield as a teenager.

Far right: Mules pulling a boat down a canal in Ohio (1895).



Interesting Facts

- He was the second president to be assassinated.
- He was a member of the Republican Party.
- He was the first president to be elected to the White House directly from the U.S. House of Representatives.
- He was the first left-handed and **ambidextrous** president.
- He was fluent in Latin and Greek.
- He was very intelligent in mathematics and once published a proof of the **Pythagorean theorem**.





Early Career

In 1858, Garfield married Lucretia Rudolph, who he had met when they were students. They had seven children. Garfield was a very busy man—he became an ordained Christian **minister** and was studying to be a lawyer.

Garfield also got involved in politics. He was elected to the Ohio Senate as a Republican in 1858. At the time, the country was divided over whether to allow slavery to expand into new American territories. Garfield was strongly antislavery and he supported Abraham Lincoln's run for the presidency in 1860.

After Lincoln was elected, the Civil War broke out in 1861. Garfield joined the Union Army and rose to become a major general. He fought bravely in the battles of Shiloh and Chickamauga, sometimes coming under enemy fire.

Quote

"Ideas outlive men; ideas outlive all earthly things."
- August 1880



Rise to Power

In 1862, Ohio voters elected Garfield to the U.S. House of Representatives. Although he didn't want to leave the field of battle, Lincoln convinced him to take his seat in Congress. Initially, Garfield was a staunch **Radical Republican** who wanted to take harsh measures against the enemy Confederates, such as confiscating their property. At times, Garfield felt President Lincoln wasn't focusing enough on ending slavery.

Garfield ended up serving nine terms in Congress and, over time, he began working more and more with both Democrats and Republicans. He also softened towards the Confederates and hoped that, after the war ended, the country could be unified. Many people saw Garfield as a figure that could bring together politicians who had different views. At the time, the Republican Party had divided into two sides: the "**Stalwarts**," who supported protecting the rights of African-Americans and maintaining the system of **patronage**, and the "**Half-Breeds**" who wanted to end patronage and enact **civil service** reform.

Like the Stalwarts, Garfield supported protecting the rights of black Americans, but like the Half-Breeds, he supported some reform measures. Garfield rose to become the Republican minority leader in the House and worked hard to keep the party unified.

Quote

"The elevation of the negro race from slavery to the full rights of citizenship is the most important political change we have known since the adoption of the Constitution of 1787."
- March 1881





1880 Election

In June 1880, the Republicans held their convention in Chicago, Illinois to choose their candidate for president. Congressman Garfield went to the convention hoping that his fellow Ohioan and Secretary of Treasury John Sherman would get the nomination. When Garfield gave a **speech** in support of Sherman, the delegates were so impressed by his speaking skills that they forgot all about the Treasury Secretary. They felt that Garfield would be a better candidate and made him the

nominee. Garfield himself was surprised when the delegates selected him.

Since Garfield supported some **reform** and had support from Half-Breeds, the **d**elegates wanted to unify the party and chose a Stalwart: Chester A. Arthur from New York. The Democrats chose Civil War General Winfield Hancock and Congressman William English. That fall, Garfield and Arthur defeated them in a **v**ery close election.

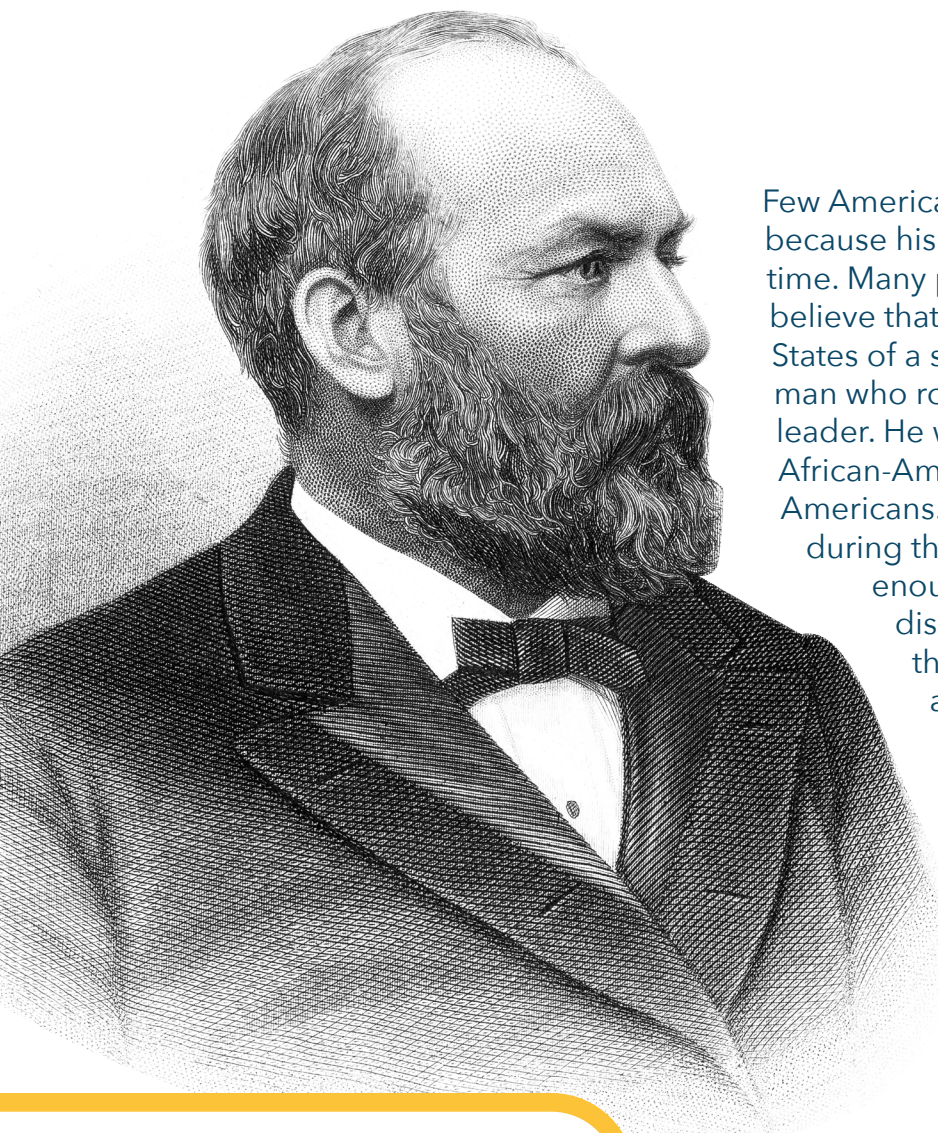
Assassination

When Garfield became president in March 1881, he started challenging the Stalwarts by appointing a Half-Breed, William H. Robertson, to one of the most important patronage positions in the country—the collector of the Port of New York. Many felt that this showed Garfield would be a strong supporter of reform. Sadly, Garfield didn't have time to do much else. On July 2, 1881, President Garfield was at the Baltimore and Potomac train station in Washington, D.C. when a man named Charles Guiteau shot him

in the back. Guiteau, who had emotional problems, was mad at Garfield for not giving him a job.

Garfield lived for two more months but, eventually, his wound became infected and he died on September 19, 1881 at the age of 49. The nation was shocked that, in less than 17 years, it had lost two presidents to **assassination**. His vice president, Chester A. Arthur took the oath of office to become the 21st president.





Legacy

Few Americans today remember James A. Garfield because his presidency lasted only a short period of time. Many people who have studied his life, however, believe that his assassination robbed the United States of a strong president. Garfield was a brilliant man who rose from poverty to become a national leader. He was very principled and felt that African-Americans deserved the same rights as white Americans. Many historians criticize the Presidents during the era of **Reconstruction** for not doing enough to protect black Americans from discriminatory laws in the South. It's possible that, had Garfield lived, he may have been able to fight against unjust Southern laws and given African-Americans greater opportunities. Perhaps this might have improved racial relations into the 20th century.

Since Garfield was killed so early during his term, we will never know how effective he might have been as president. We do know, however, that he was an impressive and principled man who overcame great challenges to reach the nation's highest office.

Quote

"It is the high privilege and sacred duty of those now living to educate their successors and fit them, by intelligence and virtue, for the inheritance which awaits them."
- March 1881



Family photo of Mrs. Garfield and grandchildren in 1906.

Garfield's Goals



Garfield sought equality and _____ as a politician. Fill in the blanks to find out what else he worked for.

Able to use both hands equally well.

1

When a politician appoints or hires a person to a government job as a reward for their loyalty.

2

The employees of the government who serve in permanent positions and are generally not appointed by politicians.

3

The time in American history from the end of the Civil War in 1865 to 1877.

4

A rule in mathematics that can be used to calculate the length of a side in a triangle.

5 **theorem**

Garfield sought equality and _____ as a politician.

ANSWERS ON PAGE 10

Timeline Challenge

Can you put together a timeline of Garfield's life and accomplishments?
Place the following events in order. Bonus: Write the year of each accomplishment.

Garfield marries Lucretia
Garfield is elected as president
Civil War ends

Garfield graduates from William's College
Garfield joins the Union Army
Garfield is elected to Ohio Senate

1831

1881



Garfield
born

ANSWERS ON PAGE 10

Garfield
dies

Glossary

Ambidextrous: Able to use both hands equally well.

Pythagorean Theorem: A rule in mathematics that can be used to calculate the length of a side in a triangle.

Minister: A person who performs religious (usually Christian) ceremonies.

Radical Republican: A group within the Republican Party during and after the Civil War that strongly supported African-American rights and the use of patronage. Many Radical Republicans were strong Stalwarts.

Stalwarts: A group within the Republican Party after the Civil War that strongly supported African-American rights and the use of patronage. Many Stalwarts were Radical Republicans.

Patronage: When a politician appoints or hires a person to a government job as a reward for their loyalty. Many people felt patronage led to the appointment of corrupt and unqualified people to government jobs. Others, however, felt that the most corrupt people in the government were members of the civil service and patronage allowed public officials to remove them.

Half-Breeds: A group within the Republican Party after the Civil War that opposed patronage and supported civil service reform (the way the federal government hired its employees).

Civil Service: The employees of the government who serve in permanent positions and are generally not appointed by politicians.

Reform: To make changes to a system or process to improve it.

Assassination: The killing of an important person, especially a country's leader.

Reconstruction: The period in American history after the American Civil War ended in 1865 until the late 1870s. The goal of Reconstruction was to rebuild the country, bring the former Confederate states back into the United States, and to assist the newly freed African-Americans in becoming U.S. citizens. Many historians believe that this period failed in its goals, since African-Americans continued to suffer under unjust laws.

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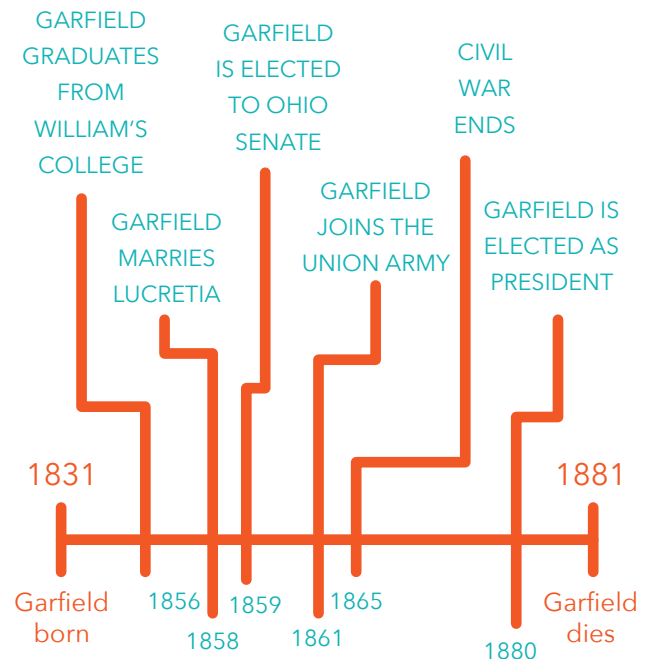
Images: Getty Images, WikiCommons

Answers

GARFIELD'S GOALS:

1. AMBIDEXTROUS
2. PATRONAGE
3. CIVIL SERVICE
4. RECONSTRUCTION
5. PYTHAGOREAN

GARFIELD SOUGHT EQUALITY AND AS A POLITICIAN. unity



GARFIELD'S PET: A DOG NAMED VETO

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