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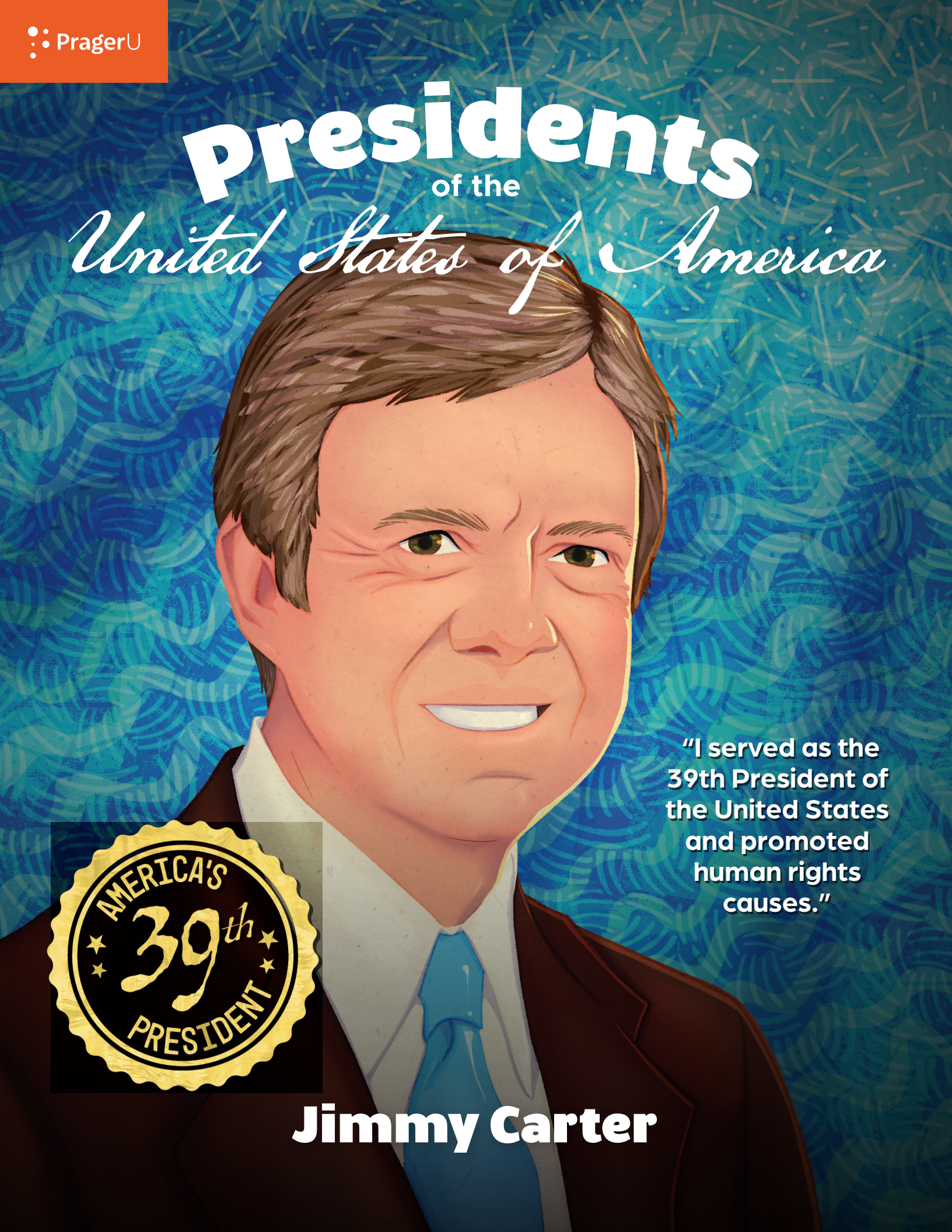
Presidents of the United States of America



"I served as the 39th President of the United States and promoted human rights causes."

Jimmy Carter



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Become a Presidential Historian by Solving This Puzzle

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

The Secret Service had a codename for President Carter. We need your help to find out what it was. 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 in the letters in the blanks below in the order they appear.

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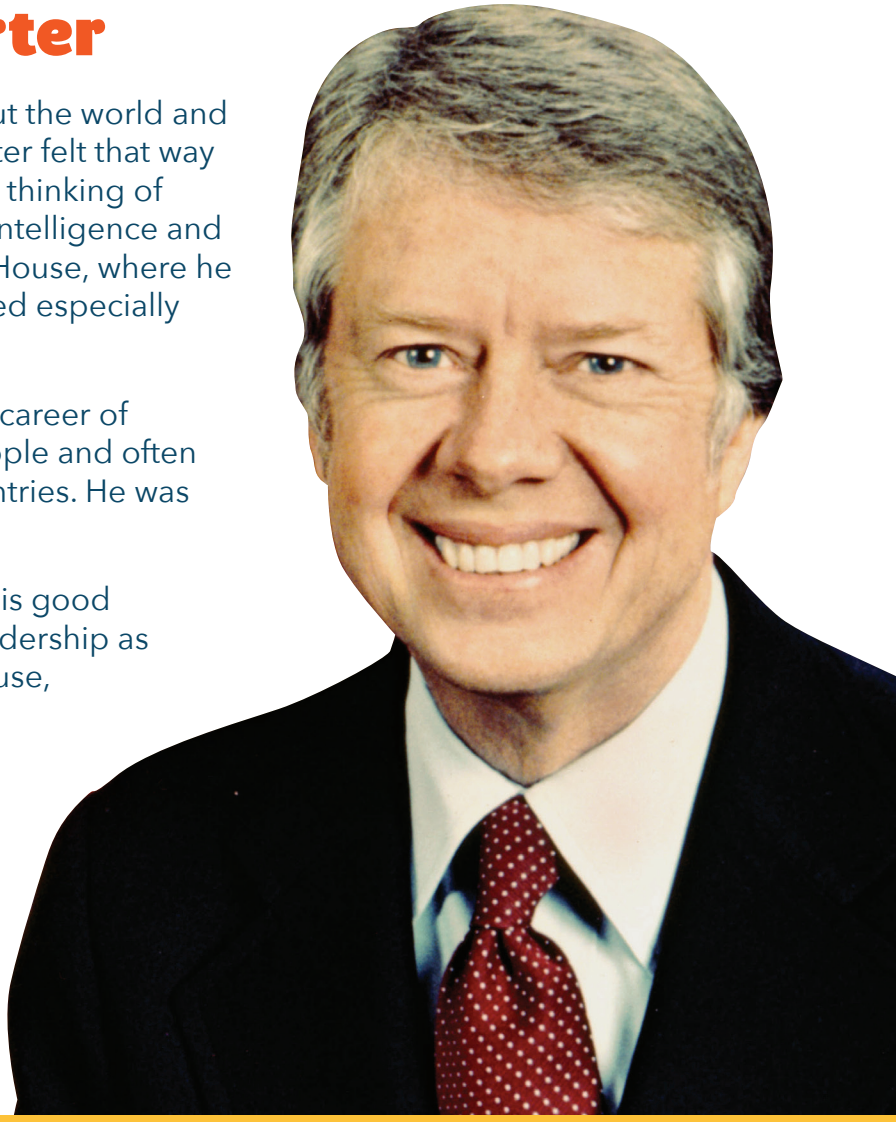
Once you've solved this puzzle, you'll be a true PragerU Kids presidential historian!

Meet Jimmy Carter

Have you ever met someone who cared about the world and wanted to make it a better place? Jimmy Carter felt that way and spent much of his life serving others and thinking of ways to solve the world's problems. Carter's intelligence and abilities carried him all the way to the White House, where he served as America's 39th president. He worked especially hard to promote **human rights.**

Even after Carter left office, he continued his career of service. He helped build homes for poor people and often traveled abroad to bring peace to other countries. He was even awarded with the **Nobel Peace Prize.**

While most Americans recognize Carter for his good intentions, they were disappointed by his leadership as president. **D**uring his tenure in the White House, the United States faced several crises, as well as the threat of communist aggression from the **Soviet Union**. Many felt that Carter wasn't tough enough to handle these situations. His life story teaches us an important lesson: having good intentions is not always enough to make the world a better place.



Young Jimmy

James Earl Carter, Jr. was born on October 1, 1924, in the small farming town of Plains, Georgia. He was the oldest of James Earl, Sr. and Lillian Carter's four children. James Sr. was a peanut farmer and store owner, and Lillian had been a nurse but stayed home to raise the kids.

The Carter family lived a frugal life—their house had no electricity or indoor plumbing. Young Jimmy helped his family sell produce from the family farm in the town square. Even at a young age, he developed a strong business sense—by the time he was 13, Jimmy was making money by renting out several homes to local families.

He was also a very good student, and in 1941, he graduated as the valedictorian of his high school.

Jimmy Carter with his basketball team



Interesting Facts

- He is the only president (as of 2024) who was born in Georgia.
- He is a member of the Democratic Party.
- He is the first president to be born in a hospital.
- He is the first president born after World War I.
- Before entering political office, he was a peanut farmer.
- He is the only president (as of 2024) to have graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy.
- He is the third president to win the Nobel Peace Prize.
- He has had (as of 2024) the longest retirement of any president, at 43 years.
- He is (as of 2024) the longest-lived president, at 99 years.
- He and his wife Rosalynn are the longest-married presidential couple in American history (77 years).

The Navy

Carter began attending the **U.S. Naval Academy** in Annapolis, Maryland, in 1943—right in the middle of World War II. He graduated in the top ten percent of his class in 1946, the year after the war ended.

That same year, he married an attractive young woman named Rosalynn Smith. Although she had turned down his first marriage proposal, Carter remained persistent, and she accepted his second proposal. They eventually had four children.

After graduating, Carter went on to earn the rank of lieutenant and helped the Navy develop **nuclear-powered submarines**—a dangerous line of work. Carter was also studying nuclear physics at a nearby college. He planned to become a naval engineering officer.

Carter had an exciting career ahead of him. He was about to join the crew of the newly-built *Seawolf* submarine when, in 1953, everything changed: his father died of cancer.

It was a heartbreaking loss for him and his family. Also, Carter's career had forever altered: the family needed him to come home and run the farm. Instead of working in a submarine, he resigned his commission and, along with Rosalynn and their kids, returned to Plains, Georgia.









Quote

"Human rights is the soul of our foreign policy, because human rights is the very soul of our sense of nationhood."
- December 1978

Rise to Power

Some people might have been upset at changing careers, but Carter didn't waste time thinking about what might have been. He took control of the family peanut farms and, through hard work, turned them into profitable businesses by 1960.

During this time, the South went through dramatic changes. For almost a century, black Americans had suffered from unfair and discriminatory **Jim Crow laws** that kept them segregated away from white Americans. Civil rights activists, however, were fighting back against these laws so that all Americans, regardless of race, would be treated equally.

Although Carter had grown up in the segregated South, he hated racism and supported equal rights for all. When the White Citizens Council–a group supporting segregation–invited and pressured him to join, he refused (the only white male in Plains to do so).

Meanwhile, Carter became a major figure in his community. He served on the boards of local hospitals and libraries and chaired the county board of education. He was also a devout Christian and served as a deacon and Sunday school teacher at Plains Baptist Church.

Carter's success led him to consider a run for political office. In 1962, he was elected as a Democrat to the Georgia Senate. He served two terms in the state senate and even ran for governor in 1966 but failed to win the nomination.

Governor

Carter ran for Governor of Georgia again in 1970. This time, he downplayed his views supporting black American rights, which helped him win the election. As governor, however, he said in his inaugural address that "the time for racial discrimination is over." He then called for an end to segregation and gave many black Americans jobs in the state government.

Carter proposed many liberal policies, such as making new environmental rules and increasing funding for government-run education. He also reorganized the state government to become more efficient.

Despite these successes, many state legislators found him hard to work with–they felt Governor Carter was too stubborn and unwilling to compromise.



A Country in Crisis

Carter's term as governor ended in 1975, and he set his sights on an even higher office: the presidency. Most Americans didn't know who Jimmy Carter was, but the more they learned about him, the more they liked him.

By this time, the American people were desperate for change. Over the past decade, they had seen many of their leaders assassinated, experienced the horror of the Vietnam War, and endured the drama of the **Watergate Scandal**. In 1974, as a result of the scandal, Richard Nixon became the first president to resign. The people were exhausted from all of the drama. Even worse, they felt that many of their leaders had lied to them during the war and the Watergate Scandal. People lost trust in Washington, D.C. politicians and wanted to try something new.

Quote

"In a nation that was proud of hard work, strong families, close-knit communities, and our faith in God, too many of us now tend to worship self-indulgence and consumption. Human identity is no longer defined by what one does, but by what one owns."
- July 1979



The 1976 Presidential Election

For millions of voters, Jimmy Carter seemed like a breath of fresh air. They hoped this devout Christian with a big smile would restore honesty in the White House. After all, he promised he would never lie to the American people. Carter seemingly came out of nowhere to win the Democratic nomination in the summer of 1976 and selected Minnesota Senator Walter Mondale as his running mate.

Carter faced Republican President Gerald Ford in the general election. Ford had previously been vice president but rose to the top job when Nixon resigned. Carter and Ford took part in three presidential debates–the first since the 1960 election. In November, Carter won a close race, becoming the 39th President of the United States.

President

President Carter had high hopes for his presidency. It was the **Cold War**, and America faced a great enemy—the communist Soviet Union. Carter, however, wanted to change America's strategy. He was an **idealistic** man and wanted to focus more on human rights. As president, he urged the leaders of other countries to respect the rights of their citizens.

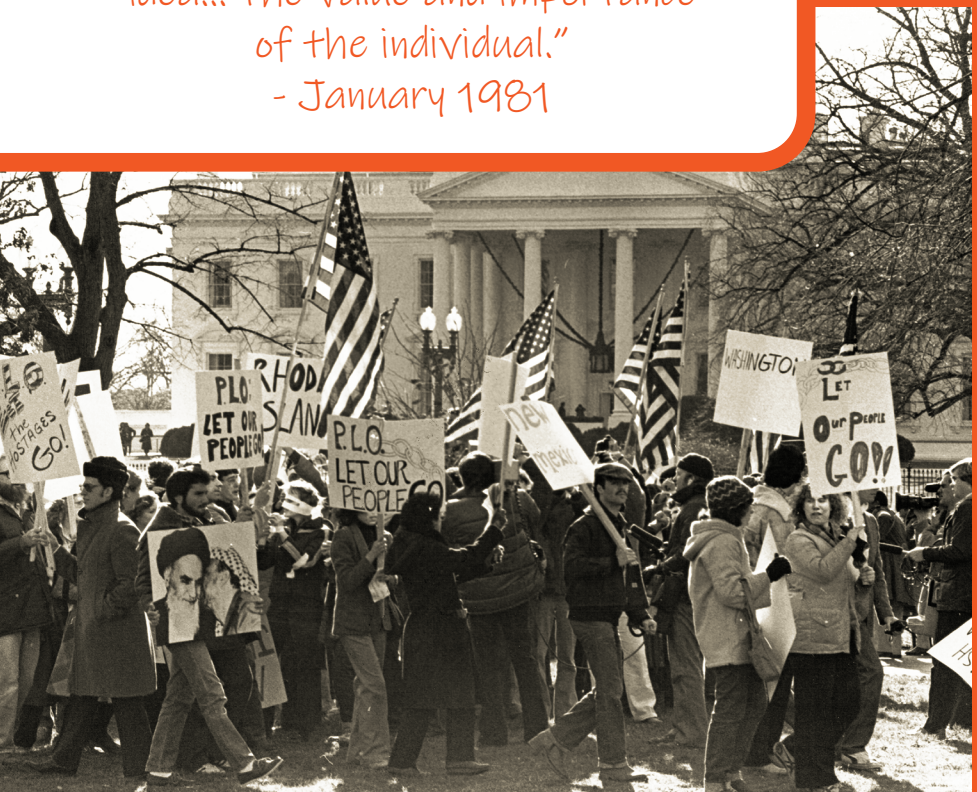
Carter was also concerned about the Middle East. Ever since Israel was established in 1948, it has had very tense relations with its neighbors, such as Egypt, and even fought wars against them. In September 1978, Carter brought Israel leader Menachem Begin and Egyptian leader Anwar Sadat together at the presidential retreat in Camp David. He got the two leaders to sign a historic treaty, the **Camp David Accords**, which created peace between their nations. It was the high point of Carter's presidency.

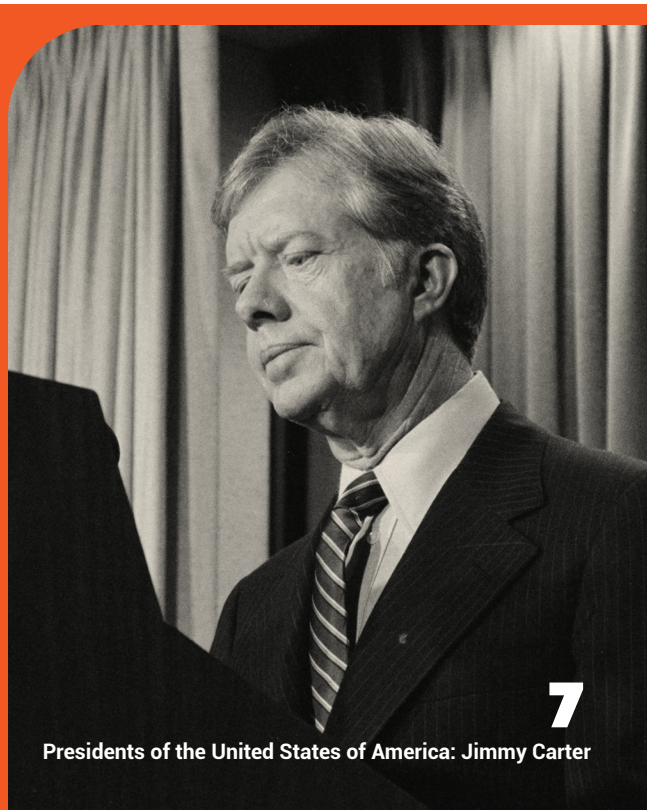
Quote

"Ours was the first nation in the history of the world to be founded explicitly on such an idea... the value and importance of the individual."
- January 1981

The rest of Carter's presidency, however, was full of crises. The nation's economy suffered from **inflation**—especially high gas prices. In 1979, a new Islamic government that hated the United States took over in Iran. In November of that year, a group of Iranian college students took over the U.S. embassy in the capital, Tehran, and held 52 Americans hostage. The situation would be known as the **Iran Hostage Crisis**. Carter ordered a military rescue effort called "Operation Eagle Claw," but it fell apart when a series of mechanical problems and accidents led to one of the helicopters crashing. It was an embarrassing failure that resulted in the deaths of eight American servicemen.

Then, in December of 1979, America's great foe, the Soviet Union, invaded **Afghanistan**. The world seemed to be spinning out of control, and the United States' enemies seemed to be on the march. The American people felt Carter wasn't tough enough to stand up to their enemies and sought new leadership. In the 1980 presidential election, Republican candidate Ronald Reagan defeated Carter in a landslide, winning 44 out of 50 states.





Retirement

In 1981, Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter returned to their home in Georgia. His 1980 election loss was difficult, but Carter was determined to make the most of his retirement. In 1982, he started the Carter Presidential Center at Emory University, which continues his advocacy for human rights. He also worked closely with **Habitat for Humanity** to build and repair homes for the less fortunate.

Carter also spent much of his time writing several books. He even went on diplomatic missions for subsequent presidents to places like South Africa, Sudan, and North Korea. For his efforts, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002. Although Carter was not a popular president, many people around the world came to respect him for his lifelong record of service.

The longer Carter lived, the more presidential records he broke. In September 2012, he broke the record for the longest retirement of any president. In March of 2019, he became the longest-lived president. In October of that year, he and Rosalynn became the longest-married presidential couple ever. Sadly, Rosalynn passed away in November 2023. Carter himself continues to live in his hometown, Plains.



Quote

"The fundamental force that unites us is not kinship or place of origin or religious preference. The love of liberty is a common blood that flows in our American veins."
- January 1981

Legacy

Most Americans respect Carter for having his heart in the right place and wanting to do what he felt was right. Some believe that Carter is one of the best ex-presidents America has ever had since he stayed active and continued to serve others after leaving the White House. However, the admiration for Carter's activities in retirement stands in contrast to the disappointment many felt about his presidency.

Few people doubt that Carter meant well when he tried to make human rights an important part of American foreign policy. He didn't realize, however, that the best way to make the world a better place was to make the United States a strong, powerful country. When America is strong, its enemies will have less reason to misbehave and treat their own people poorly. Instead, Carter appeared weak in the face of threats from the Soviet Union and even from a group of Iranian students who had taken Americans hostage. His foreign policy did little to actually improve human rights around the world.

Carter's life story teaches us that America must always combine good intentions with wisdom and strength.

Writing Activity

Write about a time when an idea or goal didn't turn out how you hoped. What do you think you could have done differently, or how can you improve to do better next time?



Answers

JIMMY CARTER'S CODENAME:
DEACON

Glossary

Human Rights: The benefits everyone deserves, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, or religion. It often includes the freedom to pursue life, liberty, and happiness, and to express yourself and worship as you please.

Nobel Peace Prize: One of five prizes established by inventor Alfred Nobel. The Peace Prize is awarded annually (starting in 1901) to those who have "done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations…" It is one of the most well-known awards in the world.

Soviet Union: A country that existed from 1922 to 1991 that oppressed its people and tried to spread its communist system around the world.

United States Naval Academy: The U.S. Navy's top military academy, which provides undergraduate education and training to students who will become commissioned Navy or Marine Corps officers. It is located in Annapolis, Maryland. Jimmy Carter received his degree from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1946.

Nuclear-Powered Submarines: A watercraft capable of operating underwater and powered by a nuclear reactor. The United States began developing nuclear-powered submarines in the 1940s and 1950s.

Jim Crow Laws: A series of oppressive laws in the United States, particularly in the Southern states, enforced from the late 1800s until the mid-1900s, which legalized the separation of races in all public facilities and social interactions under the doctrine of "separate but equal." They were eventually overturned through the civil rights movement.

Watergate Scandal: A political controversy from 1972 to 1974 that resulted in Richard Nixon's resignation from the presidency. The scandal began when members of a group called the Plumbers were arrested for burglarizing the Democratic Party headquarters in the Watergate Hotel. President Nixon tried to cover up the fact that his administration had ties to the Plumbers. When a tape recording was released revealing Nixon's cover-up, Congress prepared to impeach him. Nixon resigned on August 9, 1974.

Cold War: The conflict between America, which was free, and the Soviet Union, which was a communist dictatorship, that lasted from the 1940s to the late 1980s.

Idealistic: Forming or pursuing ideals, especially unrealistically.

Camp David Accords: Agreements negotiated in the presidential retreat at Camp David in Maryland in September 1978. President Jimmy Carter facilitated the negotiations between Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. The accords were a major breakthrough and resulted in peace between the two enemy nations after three decades of conflict.

Inflation: When things you buy, such as food, clothes, and other products, are more expensive.

Iran Hostage Crisis: An event involving a group of Iranian students who took over the U.S. embassy in Iran in 1979 and held 52 American personnel hostage for over a year. The crisis was the result of a revolution in Iran which toppled the pro-American government and replaced it with Islamic leadership hostile to the United States. A failed rescue attempt in 1980 led Americans to lose faith in President Carter's leadership.

Afghanistan: A country located in Central and South Asia with a predominantly Muslim population. It has been the site of numerous foreign invasions. In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan to prop up a communist-friendly government.

Habitat for Humanity: A non-profit organization founded in 1976 to build homes for the less fortunate.

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