

Did you know?

Presidents' Day



The president who was only in office for one month, the one who resigned and the four incumbents who were assassinated in office: all US presidents are remembered on Presidents' Day which falls on the third Monday in February.

It's all down to the first president, George Washington, who was born on 11th February 1731 (or 22 February 1732, depending on whether you use the Julian or Gregorian calendar). After his death, his birthday was chosen to remember his contribution to the founding of the United States of America. This day became a federal holiday in 1870, and became a fixed holiday throughout the country in 1885 – added to the other four national holidays of New Year's Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving and Christmas. And it was the first day to celebrate the life of an American person. In the 1960's the day was fixed as the third Monday in February to include the birthdays of Washington and Abraham Lincoln. In 2019, Presidents' Day will fall on 18th February.

These days, most citizens enjoy the bank holiday weekend in the chilly month of February without the fireworks of the Fourth of July or the family turkey of Thanksgiving, but there are some special events, especially in Washington DC. Abraham Lincoln is celebrated at the Lincoln Memorial with a dramatic reading of the Gettysburg Address; an exhibition celebrating all former US presidents is held in the Smithsonian National Museum in Washington DC and there is a Presidents' Day Parade – the country's largest – in Alexandria, Virginia.

There are plenty of presidents to celebrate, but did you know that although Donald Trump is the 45th president of the United States of America, only 43 men have preceded him? No, it's nothing to do with an unknown woman (all presidents to date have been men) but with one man, Grover Cleveland, who was the 22nd president of the USA from 1885 to 1889 and the 24th president four years later. And President Cleveland appears in the record books for another reason: he was married to the youngest ever first lady: the 21-year-old Frances Cleveland.

So back to those earlier questions: Who was the president who was only in office for one month? The almost forgotten William Henry

Did you know?

Harrison, the 9th US president in 1841. Nixon resigned in 1974 and the four who were assassinated were: Lincoln (1865), Garfield (1881), McKinley (1901) and Kennedy (1963).

If you would like to use Presidents' Day in your lesson, then we have provided you with an activity at A1 level; see the **Teacher's Notes**.

Teacher's notes

Hidden presidents (Level A1 and above 5+ mins)

- Make a copy of **Hidden Presidents**, one for each student.
- On the board write: *Presidents' Day* and ask students if they know where and when this day is celebrated (in USA, the third Monday in February: 18 February 2019). Explain the history. (originally George Washington's birthday and then became federal bank holiday.)
- Explain that students are going to do a short exercise finding the names of presidents hidden in sentences.
- Write on the board: *The bus has already left.* Ask students if they can find the name of a president hidden in the sentence. Key: The **bus** has already left (Bush).
- Hand out the **Hidden Presidents** one to each student and ask them to work alone and then compare their answers with a partner.
- Check answers together in class.
- Ask students what they know about these presidents.

Key:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1 John's on his phone again. | 1 Johnson |
| 2 I'll eat rum pancakes. | 2 Trump |
| 3 That car terrifies me. | 3 Carter |
| 4 We travelled for days. | 4 Ford |
| 5 I'll do the washing tonight. | 5 Washington |
| 6 Don't rob a man. | 6 Obama |
| 7 They are a gang of thieves. | 7 Reagan |
| 8 I have port rum and gin! | 8 Truman |
| 9 Have they taken Ned yet? | 9 Kennedy |
| 10 Who overtook me in the car? | 10 Hoover |

Hidden Presidents

Find the names of ten US Presidents in these sentences.

| | Sentence | Name |
|----|------------------------------|------|
| 1 | John's on his phone again. | |
| 2 | I'll eat rum pancakes. | |
| 3 | That car terrifies me. | |
| 4 | We travelled for days. | |
| 5 | I'll do the washing tonight. | |
| 6 | Don't rob a man. | |
| 7 | They are a gang of thieves. | |
| 8 | I have port, rum and gin. | |
| 9 | Have they taken Ned yet? | |
| 10 | Who overtook me in the car? | |