



George Washington – America's First President

George Washington is best known as America's first president. But he was much more than that. He fought against and **defeated** the British army in the **War of Independence** (1775 - 1783) and he helped to write the American **constitution**.

As a boy, Washington had an exciting life. He worked on his parents' **plantation** and learned how to plant **tobacco** and grow **crops**. He also loved to **explore** the **wilderness**, hunt for food and sleep in the open.

At an early age Washington became a **surveyor** and helped new **settlers** buy land. When he grew older, he became a **soldier** and fought with the British against the French and the Indians.

When Great Britain started to collect more and more **taxes** from the **settlers** war broke out between the American **colonists** and British soldiers. George Washington became **commander** of the American army.

Washington had many problems during the war. The British had more soldiers and **weapons**. Winters were cold and long. Many soldiers left him, and his **troops** didn't have enough clothes.

When Washington surprised the British army at Yorktown, Virginia almost 8,000 British soldiers gave up. The British king started to lose interest in the **colonies** and in 1783 the war ended. Washington and his **soldiers** had won America's **independence**.

In the following years George Washington and many other leaders helped to write a **constitution** for the new country. In 1789, Washington was **elected** as the country's first president. Nobody was against him. He didn't want a second **term**, but his friends **convinced** him that he was the best person for his country. In 1797, at the age of 65, Washington went back home to his farm. He died on December 14, 1799.

No other American has become more famous than George Washington. The nation's capital was named after him. Many towns, streets, lakes and parks have his name. Even a state is called Washington. His **portrait** is on **stamps** and the one-dollar **bill**.



George Washington - America's first president

Image : [Portrait by Gilbert Stuart](#), Public Domain



Abraham Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln was one of the greatest presidents in American history. He helped end **slavery** and stopped America from breaking apart in the **Civil War** (1861 - 1865). He was also the first president to be murdered in office.

Lincoln grew up in Kentucky in the early 19th **century**. During his childhood his family moved to Indiana and then to Illinois. As a young man, Lincoln was tall and thin. He had dark skin, and his hair was black. He did all kinds of work, like cutting wood or **ploughing** the fields and growing corn.

In Illinois, Abe started to get interested in **politics**. He was a great speaker and people liked to listen to him. Lincoln started studying **law** and became a successful **lawyer**.

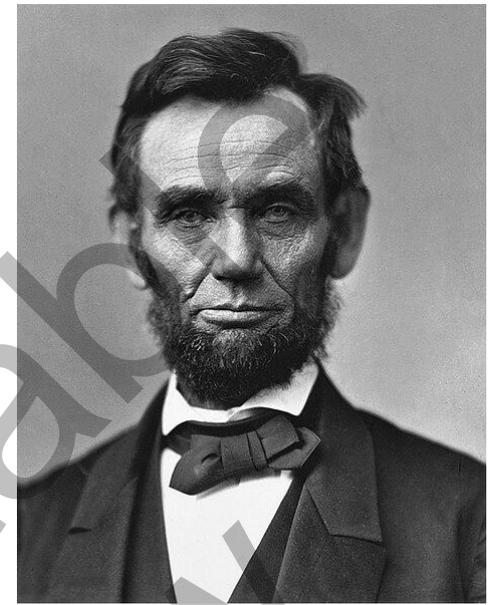
In 1860 Abraham Lincoln won the **presidential election** for the Republican party. It was a time of **crisis** in America. **Slavery** was a big problem. The Southern states needed **slaves** to work on their big farms and the people in the North were against slavery.

In 1861 the American Civil War started. The Southern states broke away from the North and formed their own army. It became the bloodiest war in American history.

On January 1st 1863, Lincoln **declared** that all slaves in America were free. But nothing really changed for them. They kept on working for white **landowners** in the southern states for the next **decades**.

As the war went on, the Northerners won many **battles** - the most famous one was at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. On April 9th, 1865, the South gave up and the war was over. Five days later Lincoln **attended** a theatre performance in Washington. Shortly after 10 o'clock he was shot in the head by John Booth, a famous actor. Lincoln died a few hours later.

Many people say that Lincoln was America's most important president. He ended slavery and helped America stay one country.



Abraham Lincoln - 16th president of the USA

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Franklin D. Roosevelt



Franklin D. Roosevelt in his wheelchair in
1941

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Franklin D. Roosevelt was the only president who was **elected** four times, and he **served** his country for 12 years. He died 83 days after he started his fourth **term**.

As a young man Roosevelt became **crippled** by **polio**. He could not stand or move his legs. His muscles were also damaged that he spent most of his life in a **wheelchair**. When many people thought that this illness would end his political **career**, Roosevelt became President for the first time in 1933.

At that time, America **suffered** from a bad **depression**. Many people had lost their jobs and families didn't have enough to eat. Roosevelt started a new programme called the New Deal. The **government** spent lots of money to create new jobs - it built roads, bridges, new schools and did other important things to help the **population**.

America's people saw that **FDR** could do a lot for his country and they **elected** him for a second time in 1936.

When Roosevelt started his third **term** in office in 1941, Europe was at war. At first, he wanted America to stay out of World War II but when Japanese planes **attacked** Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941, the USA **declared war** on Japan and Germany.

Roosevelt's health was already very bad when he started his fourth term in January 1945. He met with the leaders of Great Britain and Russia, Churchill and Stalin, at Yalta . There the three leaders planned the final **attacks** on Germany and talked about how they would **divide** the country after the war. Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945.



John F. Kennedy



John F. Kennedy - America's first Roman Catholic president

Image: [Cecil Stoughton, White House](#),
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John F. Kennedy was the youngest man who has ever been **elected** President of the United States. His **term** ended after two years and ten months when he was shot to death in Dallas, Texas.

Kennedy came from an Irish family that left Europe during the 1840's . In America the Kennedys became rich and JFK's father was a **politician** and millionaire. After John had studied **politics** at Harvard University, he joined the US Navy and was **commander** of a boat during World War II. He became a war hero and was **honoured** because he **rescued** the **crew** of his boat when it was bombed by Japanese airplanes.

In the 1940s Kennedy's political **career** began. He became a member of the House of Representatives and later a Senator in his home state of Massachusetts. In 1960 Kennedy won the race for the White House and

became the first Roman Catholic president of the USA. People liked him because he was good-looking and rich. He was a young, **dynamic** American and he had an attractive wife, Jacqueline.

Kennedy had many things to do during his short **presidency**. He helped African Americans in their fight for **equal rights**. He also sent US **advisors** to Vietnam because the Communists **threatened** to take control of it. JFK promised to put a man on the moon before the Soviets. His main problem, however, was Cuba. In 1961 the Soviet Union put **missiles**, which could attack the US, on the island. When Kennedy **threatened** to start a war, the Russians **removed** their missiles.

On November 22, 1963 JFK's **presidency** ended when he rode in his open car through the streets of Dallas, Texas. Bullets hit him in the back of the head. He was **rushed** to hospital, but doctors couldn't save his life. Shortly afterwards he died, and Vice President Lyndon Johnson became President.

A few hours after the murder Lee Harvey Oswald was **arrested**, because he was in the building from which the shots came. The police were sure that Oswald was the murderer. A few days later, Oswald himself was killed. The **assassination** is still a mystery today. First, it was thought that Oswald acted alone, but today many people think that there were more people **involved** in Kennedy's murder.