

PRESIDENTS' DAY

RESOURCE TOOLKIT FOR AMERICAN SPACES

This Resource Toolkit is designed for programming at American Spaces to create a greater awareness of the role and history of the U.S. presidency.



Lansdowne portrait of George Washington
Painting by Gilbert Stuart

LESSON PLANS

- **Public Broadcasting Service**
This site contains 60-second videos of all past U.S. presidents, lesson plans on select presidents, activities, and resources on the powers of the U.S. presidency
- **Smithsonian Educational Resources** - This site contains several lesson plans, as well as interactive learn lab experiences

WHAT IS PRESIDENTS' DAY?

Presidents' Day is an official, national holiday that is celebrated on the third Monday of February in the United States. The holiday originated in the 1880s to honor George Washington, the country's first president. Although originally celebrated on February 22 -- George Washington's Birthday, in 1968, Congress passed the Uniform Monday bill, which moved several federal holidays (including Presidents' Day, Memorial Day, and Labor Day) to Mondays to give workers longer weekends.

Over time, Presidents' Day was also designated the holiday for honoring the country's sixteenth president Abraham Lincoln, and today is considered a holiday that honors all U.S. presidents.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of STATE
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

RESOURCES

Key Vocabulary

George Washington - Was commander of the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War and served two terms as the first U.S. President, from 1789-1797. As president, Washington realized that the new Constitution had to be made to work if democracy was to take root on American soil.

Abraham Lincoln - Was the 16th president of the United States and is regarded as an American hero for his role in preserving the Union by leading the north to victory in the American Civil War and for ending slavery in the United States.

Liberty - The state of being free within society from oppressive restrictions imposed by authority on one's way of life, behavior, or political views.

Presidential Powers - Gives authority to the President to propose legislation to Congress, submit the annual federal budget to Congress, sign or veto legislation passed by Congress, nominate executive branch officials and federal judges, serve as Commander in Chief of armed forces, negotiate treaties with other nations. For more see [here](#).

ShareAmerica

- [How much do you know about the American Presidents?](#)
- [The U.S. Presidents are memorialized in many ways](#)

Images

Portraits of U.S. Presidents

- [Library of Congress](#)
- [White House Images of Presidents](#): State Department Flickr Site

Fun Fact: 8 presidents were born in log cabins.



Abraham Lincoln
Painting by George Peter Alexander Healy

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. George Washington and Abraham Lincoln are both considered great leaders. What characteristics do you think they each possessed that made them so?
2. Both Washington and Lincoln espoused the importance of "liberty." What does liberty mean to you?

KANOPY FILMS

Kanopy Films are available for free through [eLibraryUSA](#) and can be screened at American Spaces or in closed online platforms. Consider showing one of these films for Presidents' Day.

- [The Modern Presidency: Tools of Power \(27 minutes\)](#) - This short film explains what has come to be called the "Institutional Presidency" and the growth of the office over the years.
- [George Washington](#) (45 minutes) - This documentary explores George Washington's role in the American Revolution, his path to the presidency, and his impact on American democracy.
- [Abraham Lincoln](#) (46 minutes) - This film chronicles Abraham Lincoln's unbreakable desire to preserve the United States and his role in ending slavery.
- [Thomas Jefferson](#) (45 minutes) - This video examines Jefferson's role as the author of the Declaration of Independence and the architect behind the largest territorial expansion in U.S. history.
- [Theodore Roosevelt](#) (43 minutes) - This documentary explores Roosevelt's role in preserving American's natural beauty and his impact on U.S. foreign policy.

ADDITIONAL READING AND VIEWING

- [The U.S. Presidents: The White House](#) - This site provides a list of all those who have served as President along with brief biographies of each.
- [The History of Presidents' Day](#): Voice of America Learning English Essay