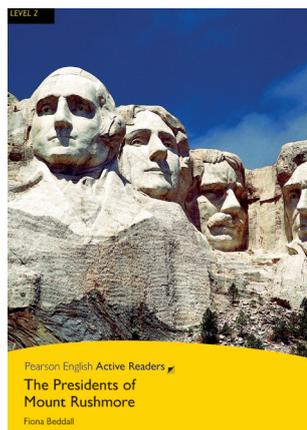


# The Presidents of Mount Rushmore

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## Summary

**Introduction:** On Mount Rushmore in the U.S.A., we can find one of the world's most famous sculptures. It shows the heads of four important American presidents who helped to shape the development of the U.S.A. as a country. It was originally the idea of a South Dakotan state historian called Duane Robinson. In 1923, he asked the sculptor Gutzon Borglum if he would like to do the sculpture. Gutzon liked the idea but at first, there was no money. Then, four years later, the American president Calvin Coolidge heard about the plan and he said the government would pay for it. So in 1927, Borglum and his team of 400 workers began the long, hard job of creating the sculpture. They had many problems with money and the weather and in 1941, Borglum died. Fortunately, his son Lincoln was able to continue the work, completing the sculpture eight months after his father's death. Nowadays, the sculpture attracts about 3,000,000 visitors every year.

**Chapter 1:** George Washington was the first president of the U.S.A. He was born in 1732 in Virginia before the U.S.A. existed as a country. At that time, Virginia was one of thirteen British colonies. Washington grew up as part of a farming family that had many slaves. As a young man, he became a soldier and he fought for the British against the French. After that, he lived a quiet life with his wife and children until the Americans became angry with the things the British government were doing and a war began. Washington led the American soldiers with success at first, but eventually they found that the British were too strong for them. They really needed help and after five years of fighting, the French sent soldiers, ships, and money to America. They helped the American soldiers to win the war and in 1783, the British colonies got their independence and the U.S.A. was born. The new U.S. government was called Congress, but after only a

short time, they had problems. They needed a stronger government with more power and a president. So, 132 congressmen voted for a president and they all chose the same person, George Washington. Washington went on to be president for eight years and during this time, he made some very important decisions that would affect the future of the U.S.A. Firstly, the country would pay the president. Secondly, the president would not belong to a political party. Thirdly, the president wouldn't live in any of the existing state capitals because this would make that state seem more important. He would live in a new place in a new city and so The White House was built in a new city which is now known as Washington, D.C. And lastly, after eight years of being president, Washington was ready for a quiet life. Now nobody can be president for more than eight years.

**Chapter 2:** Thomas Jefferson was the third American president. He was born in 1743 in Virginia. His family also had a farm and slaves. He studied law at college and after, he became a lawyer and a politician in Virginia's colonial government. During the war of Independence with Britain, Jefferson wrote down some of the most important ideas for the Declaration of Independence.

These words are now famous all over the world. After his wife died, Jefferson moved to Paris but he returned home in 1789 to work in the U.S. government. Disagreements in the government led to the birth of two political parties. Jefferson became the leader of one of them and this made Washington very angry. Jefferson left the government but returned when he was voted in as president in 1801.

Soon after, he bought a lot of land in North America from Napoleon, making the U.S.A. a much bigger country. He won a second election but things didn't go so well for him because he stopped Americans from trading with Britain and France and many Americans lost a lot of money. In 1808, he left politics and started a new kind of college with a very important library.

**Chapter 3:** Abraham Lincoln was U.S. president from 1861 to 1865. He was born in Kentucky in 1809 but he moved north to Indiana when he was eight. His family was poor but Lincoln studied in his free time. When he was a young man, he worked for a store and he had to travel south. There, he saw slaves for the first time. He thought that their lives were very sad. Later, he studied law and became a local politician and then a lawyer. Lincoln became important in the U.S.A. when he entered into an argument about slavery. He wanted to

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pass laws to stop the new states from having slaves. In 1860, he was entered for the presidential elections by the Republican Party. The people in The South were very angry because they wanted to keep their slaves and they didn't agree with Lincoln. Seven states left the U.S.A. and became an independent country called the Confederate States of America. They elected a different president and a war between the two sides started. At first, things didn't go very well for The North but eventually, they won and slavery was abolished. Lincoln had won a second presidential election shortly before the end of the war and he planned to help The South and to rebuild a united country. However, he was shot and killed by an angry man from The South before he could do it.

**Chapter 4:** Theodore Roosevelt, or Teddy, as he was often known, was president between 1901 and 1909. He was born into a rich family in 1858 in New York. He studied at Harvard University and became a writer and local politician. After his wife and mother died tragically on the same day, he moved to the Dakotas. After a time, he married again and returned to the city. He fought in the U.S. army against the Spanish and became a famous and popular soldier.

He became president in 1902 after the previous president, McKinley, was shot and killed. Roosevelt made the role of president more important than the role of Congress, changing U.S. politics forever. He also helped the poor and tried to protect the environment. He was responsible for the building of the Panama Canal and he won a Nobel Peace Prize for helping to stop fighting between Russia and Japan. When he helped a young bear while out shooting, he got the name of "Teddy," thus creating the name "teddy bear" for the now well-known children's toy. In his later life, he traveled extensively in Africa and Brazil. He died in 1919, leaving the U.S. as one of the most powerful countries in the world.

**Chapter 5:** Americans can visit many places to remember their presidents. In Washington, D. C., there is the Washington Monument, once the tallest building in the world, the Jefferson Memorial, and the Lincoln Memorial. And in the middle of the Potomac River, you can find Theodore Roosevelt Island. In New York, you can see Washington Arch and in St. Louis, there is a monument to Jefferson called Gateway Arch. Back in Washington, D.C., there is the Lincoln Book Tower in the theater where Lincoln was shot and a sculpture of Roosevelt can be found in the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

### Background and themes

**History of the U.S.A.:** Through the stories of these four presidents, we can see how the roots of the U.S.A. lie in thirteen British colonies. After independence, it began to grow but then its power and strength were threatened during the civil war and the country was nearly split in two. Finally, it emerged as an extremely powerful and large united country similar to the one we know today.

**Importance of leadership:** Each of the presidents described in this book played an important part in shaping the U.S.A.. They all had strong personalities and charisma and this meant they could influence the way the U.S.A. developed. Washington was really the father of all American politics. Jefferson was responsible for the initial growth of the country.

Lincoln was important for his role in the civil war and Roosevelt defined the role of modern Presidents today.

**Slavery:** One of the most important issues in the history of the U.S.A. was the use of slaves from Africa on farms and plantations. This practice is now seen to be completely inhumane but at the time, many people fought to maintain it. Lincoln played a key role in the abolition of slavery but it wasn't really until many years later that black Americans gained equality in the U.S.A. after a long, hard fight against racial discrimination.

### Discussion activities

#### Before reading

- 1 Pair/group work:** Put the students in pairs to brainstorm five words they associate with the U.S.A.. Get feedback from the class and write all the words on the board. Add some of your own if you like. Then, individually, students choose one of the words and write a definition of that word. Have students walk around the classroom reading out their definitions to each other and guess the word.

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#### Before reading

- 2 Discuss:** Write the word *sculpture* on the board and elicit / teach the meaning. Now put students in small groups to discuss the following questions: *Are there any sculptures of famous people where you live or in your country? What sculptures in other countries do you know about? What other ways do we remember famous people?*

#### After reading

- 3 Discuss:** Ask students who paid for the sculpture (the government) and then put them in small groups to answer the following questions: *Is it a good idea for governments to spend money on things like sculptures?*

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*What other things does the government usually pay for? Which of these things are the most and the least important?* Get feedback from the class and have a vote to find the three most important things.

- 4 **Pair work:** Remind students that Mount Rushmore is very popular with visitors. Ask them to discuss in pairs what other places people often visit when they travel to the U.S.A. Get feedback and write some of the tourist attractions on the board, adding some of your own. Then divide the class into small groups and give each group a tourist attraction. Get them to do some research on the Internet about the attraction and then each group gives a short presentation to the rest of the class. The class could vote to choose the most interesting attraction.
- 5 **Write:** Ask students to imagine they have just visited Mount Rushmore. Tell them to write a postcard home. Tell them to include information about the weather, what they did there, and their impressions of the sculpture.

### Chapter 1

#### After reading

- 6 **Research:** Remind students that Britain had thirteen colonies in America. Find out if they know which other places were British colonies and write them on the board. Add some others and then ask students to choose one of these places and do some research to find out about when and how they won independence.
- 7 **Pair work:** Tell the students to imagine they are in charge of making the presidential rules for a new country. Refer them to the questions that Washington had to answer on pages 10 and 11. Put them in pairs to decide their own answers. Get feedback from the class and try to reach a consensus.
- 8 **Game:** Elicit the name of the capital of the U.S.A. (Washington, D.C.). Now put students in teams to do a "capitals of the world" quiz. Read out the following countries and students write the names of the capital cities on a piece of paper: Germany, Sweden, Argentina, Colombia, Kenya, Egypt, Japan, Thailand, South Africa, Poland.
- 9 **Research:** As a follow up to the game in 8, give each team one of the capital cities and ask them to find out some information on the Internet about that city. Each team must then write three true sentences about that city and three false ones. Students read out their sentences to the rest of the class, who have to guess which ones are false.

### Chapter 2

#### After reading

- 10 **Pair work:** Write the following on the board: *Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness*. Explain the meaning and the fact that the Declaration of Independence says all men have the right to this. Put students in pairs and ask them to make a list of the things people need to live a long life, be free, and feel

happy. Get feedback from the class and try to reach a consensus.

### Chapter 3

#### Before reading

- 11 **Pair work:** Tell students that in the next chapter, they will read about an important war in the U.S.A. Put them in pairs to brainstorm reasons for wars and get feedback from the whole class.

#### After reading

- 12 **Discuss** Remind students that Lincoln wanted to stop slavery but that he also thought there could be no equality between black and white people. Now put students in small groups to discuss these questions: *Is there equality between people of different colors in your country? And between men and women? What about the rest of the world? Do we still need to fight for equality? How?*
- 13 **Research:** Ask the students what Lincoln's attitude to black people was and elicit an answer. Explain that it took many more years for black people to get equality in the U.S.A. Ask students to do some research about black people's fight for equality in the 1950s and 1960s.

### Chapter 4

#### After reading

- 14 **Write and guess:** Write *Teddy Roosevelt was born in a poor New York family* on the board and elicit which word is wrong (rich not poor). Now get students to write a sentence from Chapter 4 changing one of the words. Get the whole class to walk around the classroom, reading out their sentences so that other students can guess the mistake.
- 15 **Discuss:** Remind students that Roosevelt wanted to help poor Americans and look after the environment. Then put them in small groups to discuss the following questions: *Does the government do enough in your country to help the poor? Do rich countries do enough to help poor countries? What problems are there with beautiful places and wildlife in the world today? Do governments do enough to help? Do you do anything to help?*

### Chapter 5

#### After reading

- 16 **Write:** Tell students to choose a famous, historical person from their own country and write a short biography including information about where and when they were born, their early life, important achievements, and their later life.
- 17 **Game:** Divide the class into four teams and give each team the name of one of the four presidents mentioned in the book. Ask them to write ten questions about their president. Now have a class quiz. Each group reads out their questions and the other teams must write their answers on a piece of paper. The team with the most correct answers in the end is the winner.