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STUDY GUIDE: THE FIRST 20 PRESIDENTS

George Washington: First President **2 terms: 1798-1797**

Born: February 22, 1732 in Wakefield, VA

Death: December 14, 1799 at age 67.

Wife: Martha Custis

Occupation: Planter

Plantation Name: Mount Vernon

Military Career: Fought in the French and Indian War. Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War.

Most famous Revolutionary War Events:

1. Washington and his troops crossed the Delaware River on Christmas Day, 1776, to surprise a group of 1,400 Hessian soldiers.
2. The winter at Valley Forge 1777-1778.
3. Washington forced General Cornwallis to surrender at Yorktown in 1781 to end the fighting.

His Presidency:

Elected UNANIMOUSLY, with John Adams as Vice-President.

Age at Inauguration: 57

Inaugurated in Federal Hall (1789) in New York City, where the nation's first capitol was located.

Important Actions and Events During his Term:

1. Congress passed the Bill of Rights.
2. The Federal Court System was established.
3. The President's Cabinet was established. He chose Thomas Jefferson as the First Secretary of State, and Alexander Hamilton as the First Secretary of the Treasury.

4. The cornerstone for the new capitol in Washington D.C. was laid.
5. First U.S. census was authorized.
6. The following Governmental Departments were established: Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of War, Treasury Department, Post Office, Office of the Attorney General.

HE SERVED TWO TERMS AND RETIRED TO MOUNT VERNON IN 1789.

John Adams: Second President 1 term from 1797-1801

Born: October 30, 1735 in Braintree, Massachusetts

Death: July 4, 1826 at age 91

Wife: Abigail Adams

Occupation: Lawyer with a degree from Harvard

Home: Quincy, Massachusetts

Political Party: Federalist

Important Actions and Events During his Term:

1. Navy Department and Marine Corps were created.
 2. Amendment 11, limiting the powers of the federal courts, was passed.
 3. Congress established the Library of Congress.
 4. The capitol became Washington D.C., and he was the first president to live in the White House.
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Thomas Jefferson: Third President

2 Terms from 1801-1809

Born: April 13, 1743 in Shadwell, VA

Death: July 4, 1826 at age 83

Wife: Martha Jefferson

Occupation: Planter and Lawyer

Plantation Name: Monticello

Political Party: Democratic-Republican

Pre-Presidential Experience:

1. Delegate to the Continental Congress.
2. Writer of the Declaration of Independence
3. Governor of Virginia.
4. Secretary of State under George Washington.
5. Vice-President under John Adams.

Important Actions and Events During his Terms:

1. Louisiana Purchase from France for \$15 million.
2. Lewis and Clark sent to explore this purchase.
3. U.S. Military Academy was established.

4. Illinois Territory was established.
5. Amendment 12 passed, which provided that the President and the Vice-President be elected separately.
6. Robert Fulton's steamboat, the CLERMONT, made its first trip up the Hudson River.

THERE WAS NO FIRST LADY IN THE WHITE HOUSE DURING HIS TERMS. His wife had died before his presidency during childbirth.

James Madison: Fourth President

2 Terms from 1809-1817

Born: March 16, 1751 in Port Conway, VA

Death: June 28, 1836 at age 85

Wife: Dolley Madison, a VERY POPULAR FIRST LADY

Occupation: Lawyer with a degree from Princeton

Plantation Name: Montpelier

Political Party: Democratic-Republican

Pre-Presidential Experience:

1. He created the Constitution and urged its adoption.
2. Delegate to the Continental Congress.
3. Secretary of State under Jefferson.

Important Actions and Events During his Terms:

1. War of 1812 against Great Britain.
2. Burning of the White House during the war.
3. The Cumberland Road was started.
4. Francis Scott Key Wrote the "Star-spangled Banner."
5. The first saving banks were established at Philadelphia and Boston.

Dolley Madison was a popular hostess and First Lady. She hosted many parties and introduced his guests to ICE CREAM, a new desert.

After his second term, James Madison retired to his home in Montpelier, where he helped Jefferson found the University of Virginia, and was also active in the composition of a new Constitution for the state of Virginia.

James Monroe: Fifth President

2 Terms from 1817-1825

Born: April 28, 1758 in Westmoreland, VA

Death: July 4, 1831 at age 73.

Wife: Elizabeth Monroe

Occupation: Lawyer

Political Party: Democratic-Republican

Pre-Presidential Experiences:

1. Lieutenant during the Revolutionary War.
2. Fought with Washington at Valley Forge.
3. Delegate to the Continental Congress.
4. U.S. Senator from Virginia
5. Negotiated the Louisiana Purchase.
6. Governor of Virginia.
7. Secretary of State under Madison.

HE WAS ELECTED TO THE PRESIDENCY ALMOST UNANIMOUSLY, with an electoral vote of 231 to 1. (George Washington was the only president to be elected unanimously.)

Important Actions and Events During his Terms:

1. Spain ceded Florida to the United States.
2. First American Steamship, the SAVANNAH, crossed the Atlantic.
3. MONROE DOCTRINE: He declared that the United States would allow no foreign interference or colonization in the New World. He is best remembered for this doctrine.

John Quincy Adams: Sixth President

1 Term from 1825-1829

Born: July 11, 1767 in Braintree, MA

Death: February 23, 1848 at age 80.

Wife: Louisa Adams

Occupation: Lawyer with a degree from Harvard

Political Party: Democratic Republican

HE WAS THE SON OF THE 2ND PRESIDENT, JOHN ADAMS.

Pre-Presidential Experiences:

1. Secretary of State under Monroe.
2. Senator from Massachusetts.

HIS ELECTION WAS DIFFERENT THAN MOST. Four candidates ran for the election, none of which received a majority of the electoral votes. Adams was selected as President by the House of Representatives, but in actuality, Andrew Jackson received more electoral and popular votes.

Important Actions and Events During His Term:

1. The Smithsonian Institution was established.
 2. The Erie Canal was completed.
 3. The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad began to lay tracks.
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Andrew Jackson: Seventh President**2 Terms from 1829-1837**

Born: March 15, 1767 in Waxhaw District, SC in a log cabin.

Death: June 8, 1845 at age 78.

Wife: Rachel Jackson

Occupation: Planter and Lawyer

Plantation Name: The Hermitage (in Tennessee)

Political Party: Democratic

Military Career during the War of 1812:

1. Commanded the Defense of New Orleans against the British.
2. Led the troops against the Seminole Indians in Florida, which was then owned by Spain.
3. Became nicknamed "OLD HICKORY".

Pre-Presidential Experiences:

1. Senator of South Carolina.
2. Governor of South Carolina

Important Actions and Events During His Terms:

1. Black Hawk War was waged in Illinois against the Sauk and Fox Indians.
 2. The first American Made locomotive, "The Tom Thumb," began operation.
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Martin Van Buren: Eighth President**1 Term from 1837-1841**

Born: December 5, 1782 in Kinderhook, NY

Death: July 24, 1862 at age 80

Wife: Hannah Van Buren

Occupation: Lawyer

Estate Name: Lindenwald (in New York)

Political Party: Democratic

Pre-Presidential Experiences:

1. U.S. Senator
2. Governor of New York
3. Secretary of State under Jackson in his second term.

NICKNAMED "Little Magician" because of his skill in attaining political goals.

Important Actions and Events During his Term:

1. The Depression of 1837
 2. Charles Goodyear was issued a patent for the manufacture of rubber.
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William Henry Harrison: Ninth President

1 Term in 1841

Born: February 9, 1773 in Berkeley, VA

Death: April 4, 1841 at age 68

Wife: Anna Harrison

Occupation: Soldier

Political Party: Whig

FIRSTS FOR HARRISON:

1. He was the oldest president to be inaugurated at the age of 68. (Ronald Reagan later became the oldest at the age of 69).
2. He was the first president to die in office, dying only 32 days after his inauguration from pneumonia.
3. He held the shortest presidential term.

THERE WERE NO IMPORTANT EVENTS OR ACTIONS DURING HIS TERM.

John Tyler: Tenth President

1 Term from 1841-1845

Born: March 29, 1790 in Charles City County, VA

Death: January 18, 1862 at age 72

Wife: Letitia Tyler, who died in 1842.

Second Wife: Julia Tyler. They were married in the White House. (Between his Wives, he had 15 children.)

Occupation: Lawyer

Political Party: Whig

Pre-Presidential Experiences:

1. Senator from Virginia.
2. Vice-President under William Henry Harrison. Due to Harrison's early death in office, TYLER WAS THE FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT TO EARN THE OFFICE.

Important Actions and Events During His Term:

1. Samuel Morse invented the telegraph.
 2. He signed a treaty with China, who opened its ports to world trade.
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James Polk: Eleventh President

1 Term from 1845-1849

Born: November 2, 1795 near Pineville, NC

Death: June 15, 1849 at age 54

Wife: Sarah Polk

Occupation: Lawyer

Political Party: Democratic

HE IS BEST KNOWN FOR:

1. Settling the Oregon border by the treaty with Great Britain.
 2. The War with Mexico was waged during his term. The land in Texas, California, Nevada, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming were made into territories.
 3. Gold was discovered in California during his term.
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Zachary Taylor: Twelfth President

1 Term from 1849-1850

Born: November 24, 1784 in Montebello, VA

Death: July 9, 1850 at age 66

Wife: Margaret Taylor

Occupation: Soldier

Political Party: Whig

HE WAS THE FIRST MILITARY LEADER TO BE ELECTED PRESIDENT WITHOUT HOLDING ANY GOVERNMENTAL POSITIONS. He fought in the War of 1812, the Black Hawk War, the Florida Seminole War, and became a hero in the Mexican War of 1846. Because of his military successes, he was nicknamed "Old rough and Ready."

The main accomplishment during his term was the CLAY COMPROMISE, which admitted California to the U.S. as a free state.

Taylor died of a sunstroke just 16 months after taking office.

Millard Fillmore: Thirteenth President

1 Term from 1850-1853

Born: January 7, 1800 in Summerhill NY

Death: March 8, 1874 at age 74.

Wife: Abigail Fillmore

Occupation: Lawyer

Political Party: Whig

Fillmore, Vice-President under Taylor, became President upon Taylor's death.

Major Accomplishments During His Term:

1. Modernization of the White House and the start of a library in the White House.
 2. Passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, which made federal officials responsible for returning runaway slaves to their owners.
 3. Commodore Perry left for Japan to open that country to world trade.
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Franklin Pierce: Fourteenth President**1 Term from 1853-1857**

Born: November 23, 1804 in Hillsborough, NH

Death: October 8, 1869 at age 65

Wife: Jane Pierce

Occupation: Lawyer

Political Party: Democratic

BEST KNOWN FOR THE PASSAGE OF THE KANSAS-NEBRASKA ACT, which allowed new settlers in that area to vote whether or not to have slavery. The Su Canal was also opened to shipping, and the Gadsden Purchase was made, which helped acquire more territory from Mexico.

James Buchanan: Fifteenth President**1 Term from 1857-1861**

Born: April 23, 1791 in Cove Gap, PA

Death: June 1, 1868 at age 77

Wife: None, no first lady during his term

Occupation: Lawyer

Political Party: Democratic

Important Actions and Events During His Term:

1. THE DRED SCOTT DECISION was made by the Supreme Court, which said that Congress had no power to interfere with slavery.
 2. The Pony Express was started between St. Joseph Missouri, and Sacramento, CA.
 3. South Carolina seceded from the Union, and set up the Confederacy with six other states.
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Abraham Lincoln: Sixteenth President**1 Term from 1861 to 1865**

Born: February 12, 1809 in Hardin County, KY

Death: April 15, 1865 at age 56

Wife: Mary Todd

Occupation: Lawyer

Political Party: Republican: first Republican elected.

Important Actions and Events During His Term:

1. Civil War
2. The Emancipation Proclamation, issued by Lincoln, declared that the slaves in the Confederacy were free.
3. Dedication of the Gettysburg, PA battlefield with his Gettysburg Address.
4. Signing of the Homestead Act, which allowed settlers to have 160 acres of public land without cost.
5. Passage of the first draft law.

6. THE FIRST PRESIDENTIAL ASSASSINATION. Lincoln was shot by John Wilkes booth while watching a play in Ford's Theatre. He was buried in Springfield, IL.
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Andrew Johnson: Seventeenth President

1 Term from 1865 to 1869

Born: December 29, 1808 in Raleigh, NC
Death: July 31, 1875 at age 67.
Wife: Eliza Johnson
Occupation: Tailor
Political Party: Democratic

Johnson, the Vice-President under Lincoln, became president upon the assassination of Lincoln. JOHNSON NEVER ATTENDED PUBLIC SCHOOL, AND WAS SELF-TAUGHT. His wife later taught him to write.

Important Actions and Events During His Term:

1. The reconstruction of the South began.
 2. President Johnson dismissed Secretary of War, Stanton, from his cabinet without the consent of Congress. CONGRESS TRIED TO IMPEACH HIM. The House voted for impeachment, but the Senate lacked one vote for the 2/3 majority that was needed to remove the president from office.
 3. The 13th Amendment was added to the constitution, which abolished slavery.
 4. The 14th Amendment was added also, which made former slaves U.S. citizens.
 5. Secretary of State William Seward purchased Alaska from Russia.
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Ulysses S. Grant: Eighteenth President

2 Terms from 1869 to 1877

Born: April 27, 1822 in Point Pleasant, OH
Death: July 23, 1885 at the age of 63.
Wife: Julia Grant
Occupation: Soldier
Political Party: Republican

He graduated from West Point, fought in the Mexican War, and became the General for the Union forces in the Civil War, thus emerging as a national hero.

LITTLE OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE WAS ACCOMPLISHED DURING HIS TERM. The 15th Amendment was passed, which assured that all citizens had the right to vote, regardless of race or color.

Grant died from throat cancer. He had lost all his money and was near poverty at that time.

Rutherford B. Hayes: Nineteenth President

1 Term from 1877 to 1881

Born: October 4, 1822 in Delaware, OH

Death: January 17, 1893 at the age of 71

Wife: Lucy Hayes, known as “Lemonade Lucy”, because she did not allow alcoholic beverages in the White House.

Occupation: Lawyer

Political Party: Republican

Important Actions and Events During His Term:

1. The first phone was installed in the White House.
2. Reconstruction was ended, and troops withdrawn from the South.
3. Hayes attempted to appoint people to the governmental positions according to their qualifications.

James Garfield: Twentieth President

1 Term in 1881

Born: November 19, 1831 in Orange, OH

Death: September 19, 1881 at the age of 50.

Wife: Lucretia Garfield

Occupation: Lawyer

Political Party: Republican

GARFIELD WAS ASSASSINATED by CHARLES GUITEAU as he was waiting for a train in Washington. Guiteau had asked for a governmental position, but there was no position available to give him at the time.

Garfield held office for only 4 months. The American Red Cross was organized, but little else was accomplished.