

This book belongs to:

---

# A Kid's Guide to Portraits of the Presidents *from the National Portrait Gallery*



Smithsonian  
*National Portrait Gallery*

F Street at Eighth, NW  
Washington, DC 20560  
[www.npg.si.edu](http://www.npg.si.edu)

This guide is funded by the  
National Portrait Gallery's  
Paul Peck Fund for Presidential Studies.



# Welcome

to the exhibition "Portraits of the Presidents from the National Portrait Gallery." Located in Washington, D.C., the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery collects, exhibits, and interprets portraits of Americans who have made important contributions to America's history and culture. Among these Americans are the Presidents. The President of the United States holds the most important political job in the country. As leader of our country, he (and one day she) has many jobs and a lot of responsibility. As of 2001 forty-two different men have been President. You will have the chance to see at least one

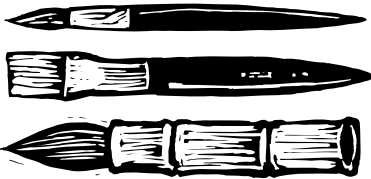
portrait of each President in this exhibition.

A portrait is a likeness of a person in any medium, and includes paintings, sculptures, photographs, drawings, prints, videos, and films. As you walk through the exhibition, you will see examples of nearly all of these types of portraits. Each portrait type or medium uses different materials to create the image, and each may give you a different feeling about the sitter.

The questions and activities in this brochure are designed to help you look closely at the portraits and to learn something new about portraiture and the Presidents.

**Have fun and look carefully!**

**Look** for different media and materials used to make the portraits in this exhibition. As you find them, write the name of the President and the artist in the spaces below and circle the material(s) used to create the portrait.



Painting:  
President \_\_\_\_\_

Artist \_\_\_\_\_

Material:  
tempera          oil          panel  
canvas          ivory          other



Sculpture:  
President \_\_\_\_\_

Artist \_\_\_\_\_

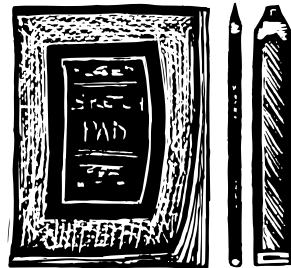
Material:  
marble          gold          plaster  
limestone      bronze          other



Photograph:  
President \_\_\_\_\_

Artist \_\_\_\_\_

Material:  
film          glass negative      paper  
daguerreotype      other



Print or drawing:  
President \_\_\_\_\_

Artist \_\_\_\_\_

Material:  
pastel          charcoal          paper  
chalk          ink          other

## Whom Do You Know?

Some Presidents may be better known to you than others. See how many Presidents you can recognize without reading the labels. Write your number here. \_\_\_\_\_

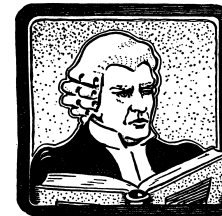
Have you seen any of these portraits of Presidents before?

yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

Where? \_\_\_\_\_

**Look** at facial expressions. Which expression(s) do you most often see? Circle all that apply:

serious          thoughtful          happy  
friendly          intimidating



As you look at different portraits, think about the time period in which the sitter was President. Are there any clues in the portrait that will help you get to know more about his time? (Hint: Look at hairstyle, clothing, objects in the background.)

**Look** at the clothing or style of dress. Is it formal or informal? How has men's clothing changed over the years? Find a portrait and name the President and the dates of his presidency for each of the following articles of clothing.

ruffled shirt

short coat

black bow tie

epaulets or shoulder boards

red striped or patterned tie

Before the invention of the camera and the growth of the mass media, a painted, sculpted, drawn, or printed portrait was one of the few ways in which Americans could see what their Presidents looked like. With modern technology, most Americans can see an image or likeness of the President every day. Name two places where you can often look to see a portrait of the current President.

## Military

service has been an important part of many Presidents' careers. The American people have often elected an individual who was a war hero or

who led the military during a major battle or war. Find three Presidents whose success in battle led to the presidency. As you find them, write their names in the spaces below and the war in which they served.

President \_\_\_\_\_

war \_\_\_\_\_

President \_\_\_\_\_

war \_\_\_\_\_

President \_\_\_\_\_

war \_\_\_\_\_



How many of them are wearing a military uniform? \_\_\_\_\_

Why do you think they chose to have their portraits painted while they were in uniform? Check all that apply.

The uniform was more comfortable.

The portrait was made before the sitter became President, and the uniform is what he wore every day.

He liked the way it looked.  
 other \_\_\_\_\_

Why do you think Americans have often elected a successful military leader as President?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Find** the portraits of the Father of Our Country. Who is he?

\_\_\_\_\_

Which of these portraits is the one you most often think about when you think of this President?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Look** at the painting by Rembrandt Peale. Have you seen other portraits of Washington?

yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

Where? Check all that apply:

history book  dollar bill

classroom  other \_\_\_\_\_

George Washington had different jobs before he was President. By looking at the portraits, can you determine one job he had before he was President? What was it?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Find** the portraits of the first father and son who were each elected President. Who were they?

\_\_\_\_\_

Which was the father and which was the son?

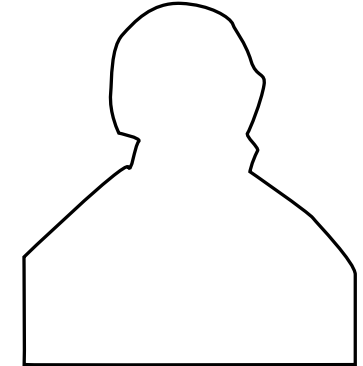
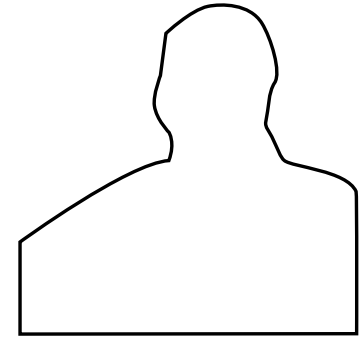
\_\_\_\_\_

Note any similarities in their features.

\_\_\_\_\_

Compare what they are wearing. Fill in the details of their clothing on the portrait outlines at right.

\_\_\_\_\_



Thomas Jefferson was one of the most multifaceted Presidents. His accomplishments include being an inventor, architect, and statesman, as well as author of the Declaration of Independence. During his presidency, he doubled the size of the United States by making the Louisiana Purchase. This portrait of Thomas Jefferson was part of a portrait exchange with his friend John Adams and was painted before he became President. Although some of Jefferson's friends thought that this painting was well done artistically, they questioned the

likeness because they did not usually see his face "in repose [quiet]."



Do you exchange portraits of yourself with friends? What kinds of portraits do you exchange?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Find** the portraits of the President who was the hero of the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812. He also won the presidency in 1829 with great popular support. In one portrait he is wearing his military uniform. The other is a sculpture. Who was he?

---

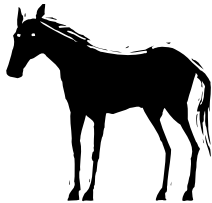
---

**Compare** the two portraits. If you were Andrew Jackson, which of the two portraits would you choose to be remembered by? Why?

---

---

When James K. Polk was running for President, he was considered a “dark horse” or unlikely candidate. President Polk accomplished all of his campaign promises for his presidency—reducing tariffs, creating an independent treasury system, settling the Oregon boundary dispute with Great Britain, and acquiring California—in one term. Although he could have run for and probably won a second term, Polk had promised that he would be a one-term President.



Do you think he made a good decision when he kept his promise not to run again? \_\_\_\_\_ Why?

---

---

**Find** the portraits of the President who wrote the Emancipation Proclamation. He also made a famous speech that began, “Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” Who was this President?

---

---

How many different portraits of him do you see?

---

---

Which portrait do you think best captures the image of this President? Why?

---

---

---

---



Find the two life masks. How do these portraits differ from the others?

---

---

Abraham Lincoln found the process of letting wet plaster dry on his face, followed by a skin-stretching removal procedure, “anything but agreeable.” In one case when the plaster did not come off easily, the artist asked President Lincoln to stretch his facial muscles. As he did, the plaster mold broke. The artist caught the pieces and glued them back together.

How would you feel if you had the same procedure done?

---

What are some of the changes you see in Lincoln’s face from the first to the second life mask?

---

---

---

**Look** at the portrait of Lincoln by George P. A. Healy. What title would you give this portrait?

---

Which portrait of this President that you see here do you like the best, and why?

---

---

---



Ulysses S. Grant was a hero of the Civil War. He led the Union forces to victory over the Confederate forces. His successes on the battlefield and popularity with the people made him an obvious choice for President in 1869.

Can you find General Grant in the painting *Grant and His Generals* by Ole Peter Hansen Balling? What makes him stand out from the other generals in this picture? What is he *not* wearing that most of the other generals are wearing?

---

If this painting were to come to life, what do you think might happen next?

---

---

---

Do you think this painting was painted from life?

yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

Why or why not?

---

---

---

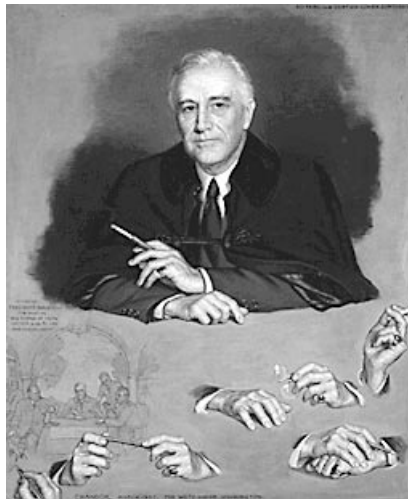
Grover Cleveland has the distinction of being the only President who did not serve his terms consecutively. Known for his honesty, he was the



first Democrat elected President after the Civil War. He sat for this painting two years after his second presidential term ended. When asked if he liked the portrait, President Cleveland replied, "As for my ugly mug, I think the artist has 'struck it off' in great shape."

What part of the body is the "ugly mug"?

---



Franklin Delano Roosevelt served four terms as President. After his presidency, the Constitution was amended so that no President could serve for more than two terms, which had been a precedent set by George Washington. Franklin Roosevelt's presidency began when the country was in the middle of the Great Depression. He implemented

many social programs designed to help the country out of the Depression. Franklin Roosevelt was also President when World War II began, but he died four months before the war finally ended.

As you might have guessed, this is not a finished portrait. The artist is experimenting with different pairs of \_\_\_\_\_

**Describe** the pair you would choose to include.

---

---

---

---

After serving only five weeks as Vice President, Harry Truman was sworn in as President when Franklin Roosevelt died. President Truman was known for his ability to make difficult decisions and take responsibility for them. A sign on his desk said, "The buck stops here." Deciding to drop the atomic bomb on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a way of bringing World War II to an end was one of those enormous decisions President Truman had to make.



The artist, Greta Kempton, made several portraits of Truman, but she began this one in 1948, put it away, and did not finish it until 1970. She described this painting in this way: "the president is holding some documents and looking rather pensively into the future." She also said, "he had expressive blue eyes, clear cut features and the kind of fair skin that reflects the light."

Do you see those things in this painting?

---

Ms. Kempton is one of two women portraitists in this exhibition. You can find the other female artist in the group of portraits of John F. Kennedy. Who is she?

---

**Find** the three portraits of John F. Kennedy. Each portrait makes a different statement about the President's feelings. Assign a "feeling" to each of them.



Portrait 1

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ →



Portrait 2



Portrait 3

\_\_\_\_\_

Handsome, young, and modern in his outlook, John F. Kennedy held promise for change. During his term, the United States signed the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty with Great Britain and the Soviet Union, the Peace Corps was started, and landing a man on the moon became a priority when the Space Exploration Program began. Kennedy's presidency was cut short when he was assassinated in November of 1963.

These Kennedy portraits are different from the other portraits in the exhibition. Choose one and explain how it is different.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Lyndon Johnson became President after John F. Kennedy was assassinated. He had spent many years in politics as both a congressman



**Find** each object in the portrait and draw a line to match it to one of President Johnson's jobs.

*History of the United States* book

Senator

United States Capitol

Lieutenant commander in the navy

Lapel pin representing the Silver Star medal

Teacher

and senator, but he had also served in the navy and had been a teacher early in his career. If you look carefully, you can see some of the clues to Johnson's life included in this portrait.

Gerald Ford came to the vice presidency and presidency under

unique circumstances—he was not elected to either office. President Richard Nixon chose him for Vice President when his first Vice President, Spiro Agnew, resigned from office. Later, when President Nixon resigned from office, Gerald Ford succeeded him as President. Imagine having a conversation with this President.

What questions would you ask him?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_





Jimmy Carter was a farmer and also the governor of the state of Georgia. He came to Washington, D.C., to try and change the way things were done. One of his greatest accomplishments was negotiating a peace agreement between Israel and Egypt.

**Look** at his portrait. In what room of the White House do you think he is standing?

- Red Room      Green Room
- Oval Office    East Room

How many other portraits can you find in this painting? \_\_\_\_\_

A statue of the symbol of the Democratic Party is sitting on the desk. What is it?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Find** the portraits of Ronald Reagan and George Bush.

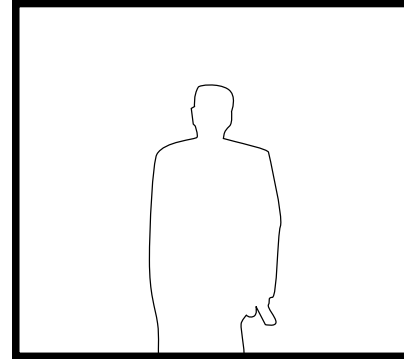
Before Ronald Reagan was elected President, he was a sports announcer, movie actor, and governor of California. He enjoyed the outdoors, particularly horseback riding. Known as the "Great Communicator," he had an ability to make people feel at ease. He worked with Congress to pass legislation that he thought would help the country financially. He also believed that a strong military was important even in peacetime.

George Bush was a navy pilot during World War II, a Texas oilman, a congressman, ambassador to the United Nations, the U.S. representative to China, director of the C.I.A., and Ronald Reagan's Vice President before he was himself elected President. During his term, legislation passed that guaranteed the rights of disabled people; the Cold War with the Soviet Union also ended. After Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, President Bush sent troops to that region in Operation Desert Storm.



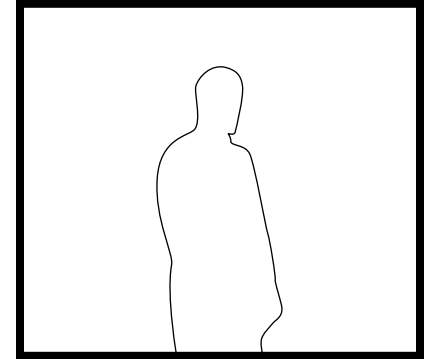
Neither portrait includes many clues about either President. What are some of the things you might put in portraits of Presidents Reagan and Bush?

Ronald Reagan



\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

George Bush



\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Put** the following portraits in chronological order, according to the Presidents' dates of birth.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Gerald Ford                      \_\_\_\_\_ Chester A. Arthur
- \_\_\_\_\_ James Monroe                      \_\_\_\_\_ Calvin Coolidge



Gerald Ford



Chester A. Arthur

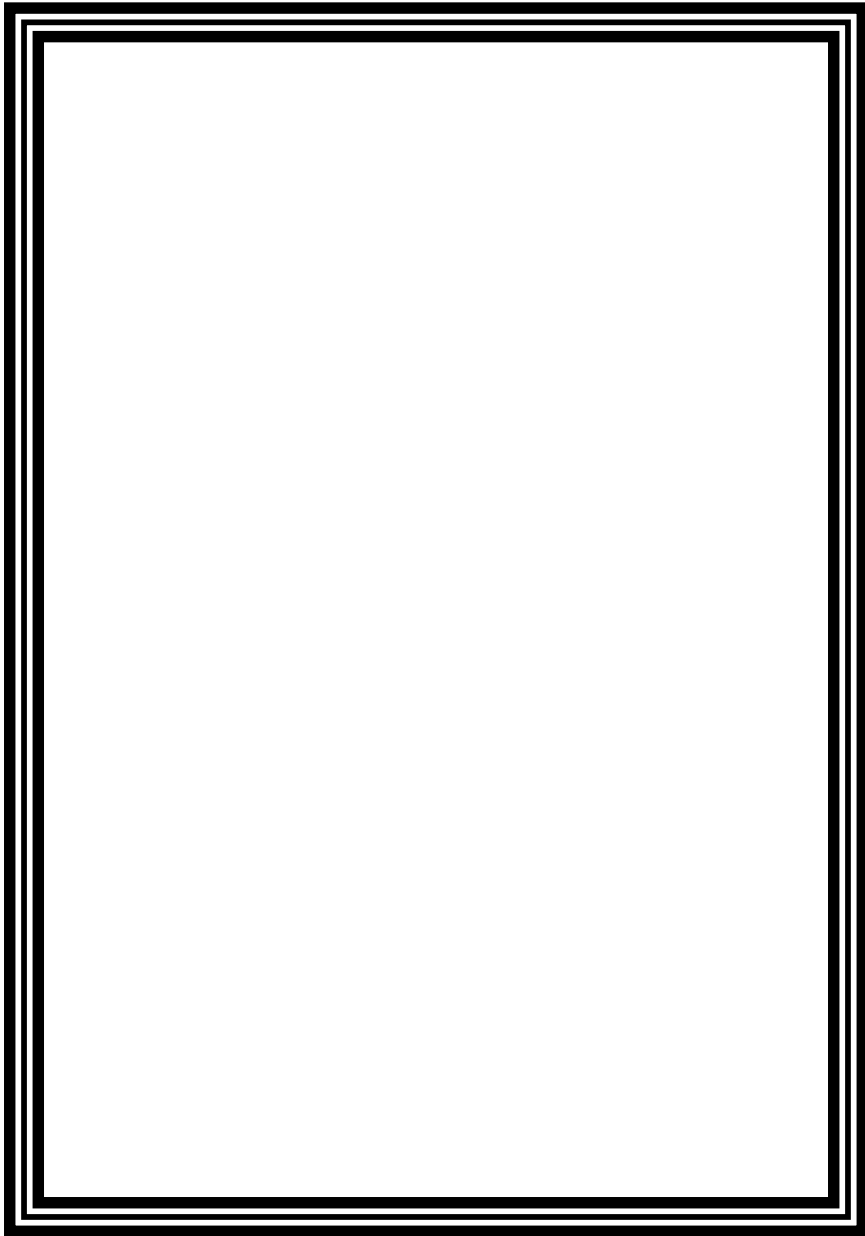


James Monroe

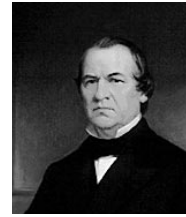


Calvin Coolidge

Who will be the next President?  
Draw a portrait of him or her.



Match the President to his portrait



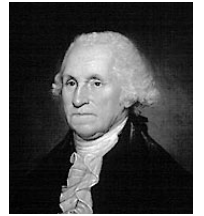
George Washington



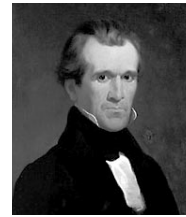
Franklin D. Roosevelt



Andrew Johnson



Lyndon B. Johnson



Abraham Lincoln



Dwight D. Eisenhower



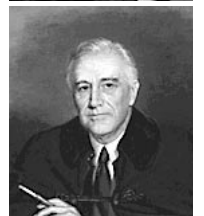
Ronald Reagan



John F. Kennedy



William Clinton



George Bush



James K. Polk



Ulysses S. Grant

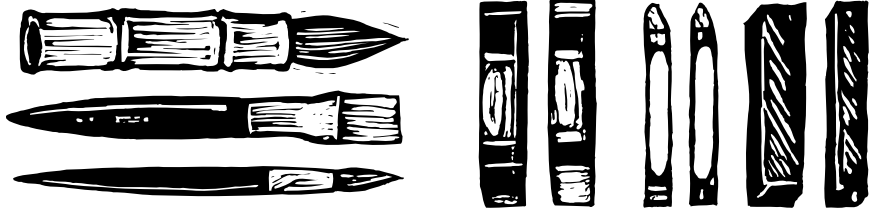
If you were having your portrait created, which medium would you choose? Why?

---

---

---

---



What would you like included in the portrait to help people looking at it know more about you?

---

---

---



When you get home, try creating different kinds of portraits: photographs, paintings, drawings, or sculptures. Find a friend who would be willing to pose for you. Experiment with different poses. Should the person stand or sit; smile or look serious; dress casually or formally? Should the person hold anything?

# Thank you

for visiting "Portraits of the Presidents from the National Portrait Gallery." Today you have learned about portraiture and the United States Presidents. You can learn more about the Presidents by visiting your library or using the Internet. To learn more about portraits at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery, visit the museum's Web site at [www.npg.si.edu](http://www.npg.si.edu).