

# presidents of the *United States of America*

**"I was the Father  
of the Constitution  
and served as the  
4th President of  
the United  
States."**



**James Madison**





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# Become a Presidential Historian by Solving This Puzzle

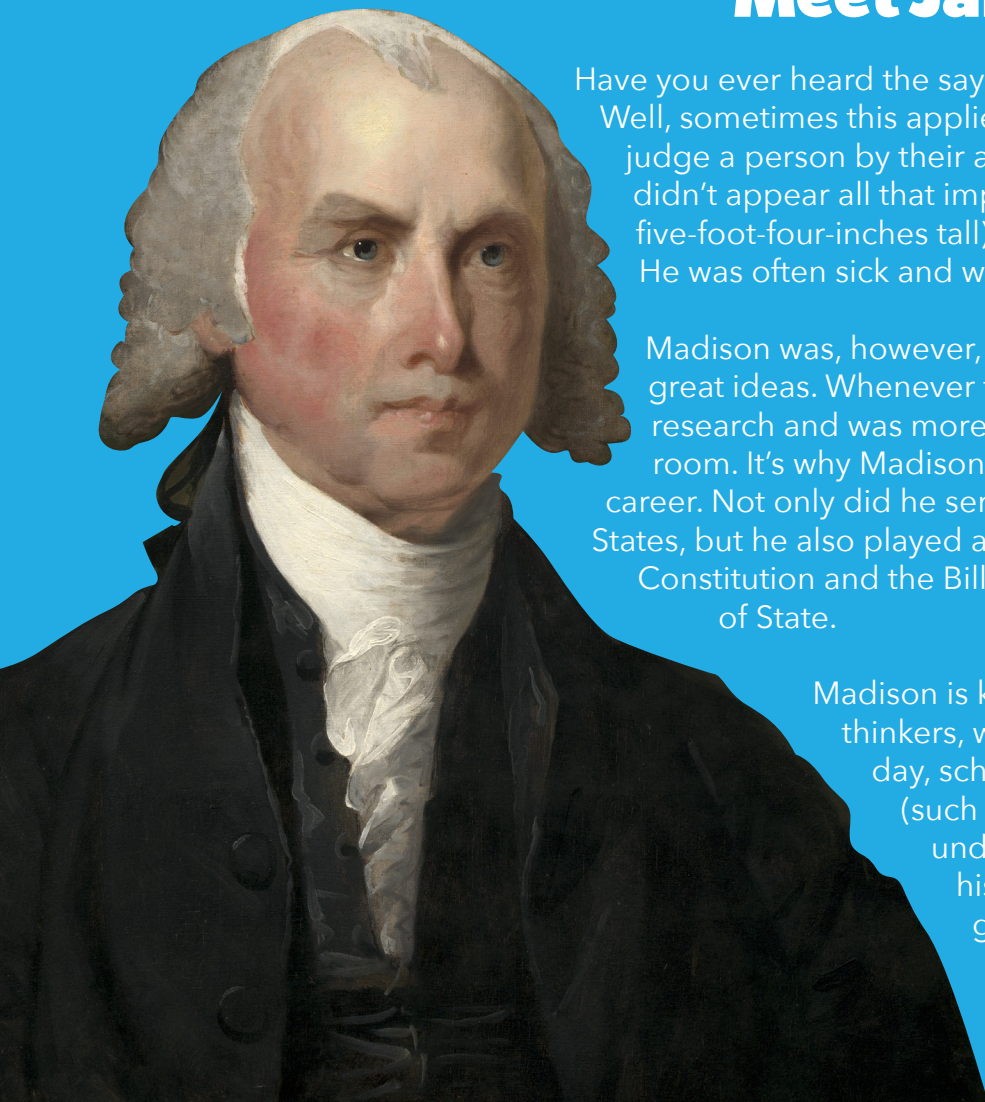
In this book, you'll learn all sorts of facts about James Madison's amazing life and accomplishments. But there's still one last thing we need to know about him.

Madison attended the College of New Jersey, but it was renamed many years later. What is its current name? You can help us uncover the answer! Hidden in the text are bolded letters. Read this book carefully to find them and fill the letters into the blanks below in the order they appear.

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Once you've solved this puzzle, you'll be a true PragerU Kids presidential historian!

## Meet James Madison



Have you ever heard the saying "don't judge a book by its cover"? Well, sometimes this applies to people—sometimes, you can't judge a person by their appearance. For many, James Madison didn't appear all that impressive. He was short (just five-foot-four-inches tall) and weighed just about 100 pounds. He was often sick and wasn't known as a great speaker.

Madison was, however, a brilliant man, full of knowledge and great ideas. Whenever there was a major debate, he did more research and was more prepared than anyone else in the room. It's why Madison was so successful throughout his career. Not only did he serve as the fourth President of the United States, but he also played a major role in the drafting of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights and served as the Secretary of State.

Madison is known as one of America's great thinkers, when it came to political issues. To this day, scholars and lawyers study his writings (such as the Federalist Papers) to better understand the Constitution. As a result of his critical role in creating our system of government, Americans remember Madison today as the "Father of the Constitution."



# Interesting Facts

- He wrote 29 of the 85 *Federalist Papers* essays.
- He was a member of the Democratic-Republican Party.
- Although Madison initially opposed the Bill of Rights, he decided to support it, wrote it, and fought successfully to ratify it.
- Five-foot-four inches tall, he is the shortest president in American history. He also weighed about 100 pounds.
- He is the first president to ask Congress for a declaration of war.
- He and his wife Dolley often served ice cream to guests during White House events.
- His face briefly appeared on rare \$5,000 bills.

# Young Jemmy

James Madison was born on March 16, 1751 in Port Conway, Virginia. He was the oldest son of James Madison Sr. and Nelly Conway. His father was a Virginia planter and his mother was the daughter of a wealthy tobacco merchant. James would eventually have 11 younger siblings, although five of them would die before reaching adulthood. Their family owned thousands of acres and dozens of enslaved servants.

James Sr. and Nelly gave young James the nickname "Jemmy." Unfortunately, young Jemmy was often sick, suffering from **seizures** throughout his childhood. That, however, didn't stop him from spending a lot of time playing with his brothers and sisters in the outdoors. They rode horses and played in the fields and forests of the family plantation.

Jemmy also loved to read and learn about the world. At a local boarding school, he studied math, geography, and philosophy, while picking up Latin, Greek, and French. It was clear to everyone that he was very smart, and when it came time to go to college in 1769, Jemmy decided to leave Virginia and enroll at the College of New Jersey. He finished all of his coursework in just two years, graduating in 1771.







## Early Career

Madison considered becoming a lawyer, but he wasn't really excited about it. His mind was elsewhere. At the time, the American colonists were protesting against unjust taxes imposed by the British government. In April 1775, war broke out between the Americans and the British. One year later, on July 4, 1776, representatives in the Continental Congress published the Declaration of Independence, announcing that the United States was a new, free nation. Madison hoped to play an important role in these earth-shaking events.

He didn't have to wait long. From 1774 on, Madison served in several positions in the Virginian government, where he helped draft the state's constitution and fought for the right of every American to practice the religion they believed in.

During this time, Madison became close friends with the Governor of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson—the man who was famous for

drafting the Declaration of Independence. From then on, Madison would be Jefferson's closest advisor.

In 1780, Virginia chose Madison to be a delegate to the Continental Congress, the highest legislature in the United States. Madison was, at the age of 29, the youngest delegate in the Congress. It was here where Madison learned the art of politics—especially how to persuade his colleagues to support certain laws. He also gained a reputation for being very well informed and well prepared for debates, emerging as a major leader in Congress. He left the Continental Congress in 1783. That same year, the British officially gave up, ending the war and leaving the United States an independent nation.

After the war, Madison served in the Virginia House of Delegates, where he continued to support religious freedom. He led the fight against laws that favored any religion or church.

## Father of the Constitution

Throughout the War for Independence, James Madison saw how the weak federal government failed to perform its basic functions, such as raising money to support the Continental Army. At the time, the states were governed by the **Articles of Confederation**. Madison believed that the Articles allowed the states to have too much power, which they used to act in ways that benefited them, rather than the country as a whole. Also, Congress couldn't pass any laws without the support of nine out of 13 states, which made it very difficult to get anything done. Madison felt that, had the federal government been more effective, it could have

coordinated the country's resources better, supplied the army, and won the war sooner. This also meant less American soldiers would have died in the war.

Even after the war, the United States faced many economic and political problems, such as inflation and massive debt. Also, it couldn't enforce any of its laws or raise money. When an uprising broke out in Massachusetts in August 1786 led by Daniel Shays, the federal government stood powerless to enforce law and order. Many feared the new nation would collapse into 13 separate states, vulnerable to its enemies.

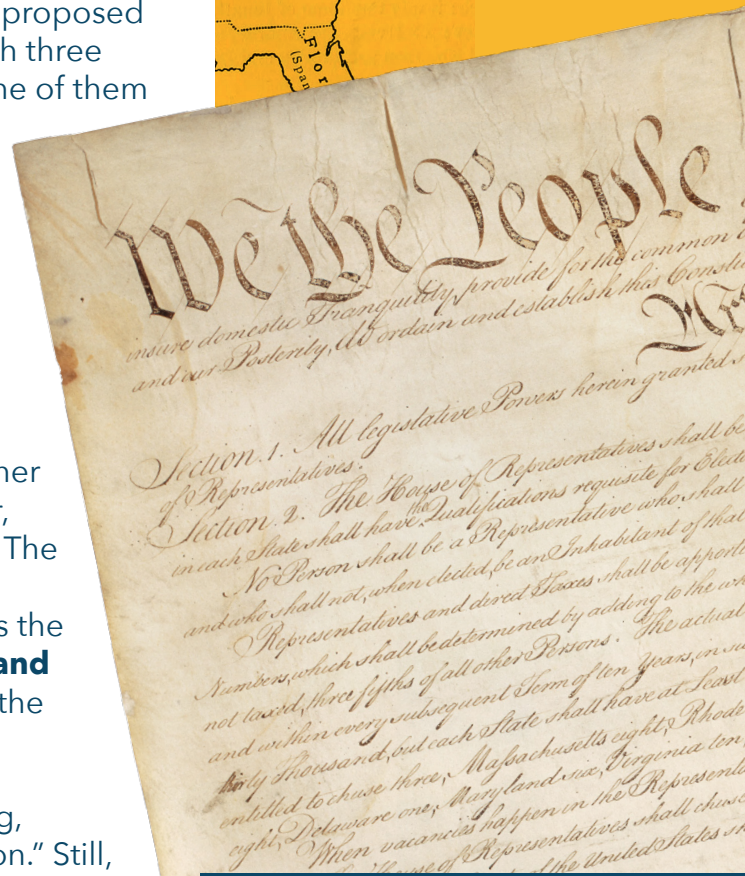
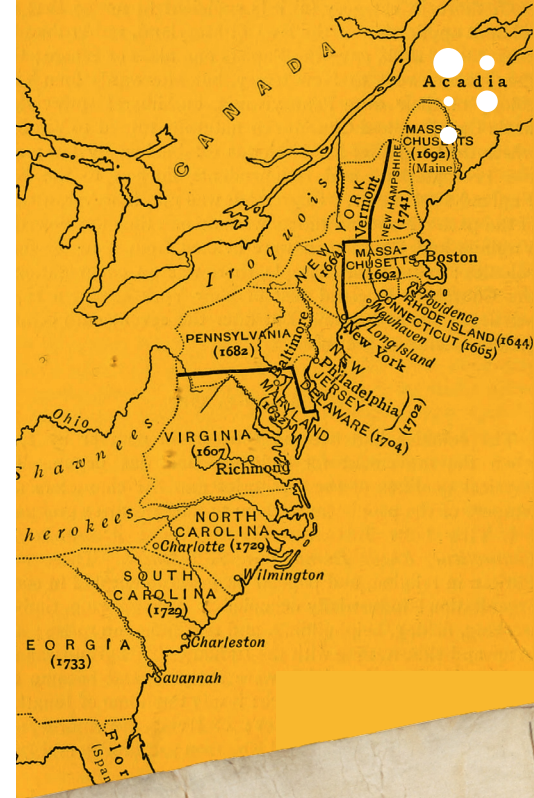


James Madison believed that the solution was to make changes to the Articles of Confederation—maybe even get rid of it and create a new constitution. He had a powerful ally: the hero of the Revolution, George Washington. He, like Madison, believed that a more effective federal government was needed to address the nation’s problems. They, and other national leaders, worked together to convene the **Constitutional Convention** in Philadelphia from May to September 1787. Their goal was to get rid of the Articles and create a new system of government.

Soon after the Convention began, the delegates elected George Washington as its presiding officer. Many other famous leaders attended, such as Benjamin Franklin and Alexander Hamilton. Prior to the Convention, Madison had spent months in his library studying different systems of government throughout world history to come up with the best system for the United States. He proposed a new constitution that included a federal government with three branches that would check and balance each other so none of them would become too powerful. Historians would later call Madison’s proposal the **Virginia Plan**.

From then on, the delegates debated Madison’s proposal and considered others as well. Madison emerged as a major leader at the Convention in favor of giving the federal government enough powers to be more effective. He also took notes of what many of the delegates said, so that future generations would know what happened. Everyone had a different opinion, and it wasn’t clear whether they could come to an agreement. They realized, however, that for the good of the country, they had to compromise. The final draft of the Constitution wasn’t exactly like Madison’s Virginia Plan, but it had many of the same features, such as the three branches of government and the system of **checks and balances**. On September 17, 1787, the delegates signed the new **Constitution of the United States**.

Since Madison played such an important role in its drafting, Americans remember him as the “Father of the Constitution.” Still, there was much work left to do. The Constitution’s supporters still needed to convince the states to ratify the document, so it could be made the law of the land. Madison collaborated with Alexander Hamilton and John Jay to write several essays, now known as the **Federalist Papers**, to convince the American people to support ratification. To this day, historians consider the *Federalist Papers* to be one of the greatest political documents in American history. Thanks, in large part, to their efforts, the states ratified the Constitution, officially making it law in June of 1788.



## Quote

“The people are the only legitimate fountain of power.”  
- February 1788



# The New Government

The new Constitution created a new government, establishing the offices of President and Vice President, Congress, and the Supreme Court. From 1788 to 1789, the voters elected George Washington and John Adams as the new president and vice president. Madison was elected as a congressman from Virginia. When Washington appointed advisors for his administration, he chose Madison's friend Thomas Jefferson as Secretary of State and Alexander Hamilton as Secretary of Treasury.

As a congressman, Madison worked hard to pass the **Bill of Rights**, which protected Americans' fundamental rights, such as freedom of speech and worship, from the federal government. It is one of his most important legacies.

Also around this time, Madison met a lovely, charming woman named Dolley Payne Todd who had recently been widowed. Although he was 17 years older than her, they married on September 15, 1794.

Even though they had worked closely with Hamilton for several years, Jefferson and Madison began disagreeing with him on many issues. Hamilton had worked to establish a national bank, which Jefferson and Madison felt expanded the power of the federal government too much. They also disagreed on many foreign policy issues. Both groups began supporting newspapers to attack the other side. Soon, they created political parties in support of their policies—Jefferson and Madison created the Democratic-Republican Party and Hamilton created the Federalist Party.

## Quote

*"Wherever the real power in a Government lies, there is the danger of oppression."  
- October 1788*





George Washington hoped to keep the country unified, but it was too late—America's political system was now a two-party system.

This division continued when Washington retired after two terms in 1797 and John Adams became president. Adams, like Hamilton, was a Federalist, and Jefferson and Madison worked to oppose his policies. In 1800, Jefferson ran for president and defeated Adams in the election. He then appointed James Madison as Secretary of State, the most important Cabinet position. Now Jefferson and Madison were the two most powerful Americans in the country.

Together, President Jefferson and Secretary Madison worked hard to strengthen the United States. Madison helped the president complete the Louisiana Purchase from France, which allowed the United States to acquire a large amount of territory that doubled its size. It was Jefferson's greatest achievement as president.

Unfortunately, they also took actions that left America weaker. When Britain and France went to war, the Jefferson Administration imposed an embargo, making it illegal for Americans to trade with either country. Although this was meant to weaken Britain and France, it hurt America's economy even more. Also, they tried to save money by getting rid of America's naval ships and replacing them with weaker **gunboats**. These issues would come back to haunt Madison later on.

Following Washington's example, President Jefferson served two terms as president and decided to retire. In 1808, Madison ran for president and defeated his opponent, Federalist Charles Cotesworth Pinckney with 122 electoral votes to 44. James Madison was now the fourth President of the United States.

## Dolley

With his light build, James Madison was easy to overlook, but no one could ever forget his wife Dolley. She was three inches taller than he was and, unlike him, she was lively and **vivacious**. During their marriage, Dolley hosted lavish parties with some of the most important officials in the country. She befriended the wives of important American politicians and foreign diplomats. As a result, she became the country's top **socialite** and had a lot of influence over very powerful people.

Her most famous moment occurred during the War of 1812. When the British attacked Washington, D.C. and burned down the White House in 1814, Dolley instructed her enslaved servant Paul Jennings to save a large and famous portrait of George Washington from destruction. Thanks to her and Jennings, the portrait was spared and hangs in the White House today.





# President

When he took office, President Madison immediately faced the same issue his predecessors faced: staying out of the war between Britain and France. Like them, he found this difficult to do. For years, Napoleon was in charge of France and had conquered much of Europe. Both Britain and France attacked American ships on the high seas to prevent them from trading with the other side. Even worse, British naval officers would take over American ships and force their sailors to serve in the British Navy—a practice called impressment.

By 1812, Americans had had enough. **T**hey felt disrespected and Madison decided it was time to defend the country's honor. In June of 1812, he got Congress to declare war on Great Britain. The War of 1812 had begun and James Madison was America's first official wartime president.

Unfortunately, Madison's support for Jefferson's weak gunboat navy left the nation's coastline vulnerable to attack.

Madison won re-election in the fall of 1812, but America suffered defeat after defeat, losing much of its western territories (acquired from the Louisiana Purchase). Even worse, in August of 1814, the British arrived in America's capital, Washington, D.C., and burned down the Capitol building and the White House. The Madisons fled in humiliation.

Still, the Americans found a way to win a few miraculous victories in Lake Erie, on the Thames River, and in New Orleans. Through these victories, Generals Andrew Jackson and William Henry Harrison became national heroes. Patriotism and pride swelled across the country and many considered this war America's "Second War of Independence."

By the fall of 1814, both sides realized that more fighting wouldn't solve everything, so they negotiated to end the war. They signed a treaty ending the conflict in December of 1814. Madison completed his second term and retired in March 1817. The American people had elected Secretary of State James Monroe to succeed him.



## Quote

*"The advice nearest to my heart and deepest in my convictions is that the Union of the States be cherished and perpetuated."*

*- December 1830*



# Retirement

The Madisons moved back to their home in Montpelier, Virginia. He spent most of his time managing his plantation and enslaved servants. He also served causes that he believed in, such as helping his friend Thomas Jefferson set up the University of Virginia and helping to found the American Colonization Society. Through the Society, Madison hoped that America would abolish slavery over time. He also felt that both black people and white people would be better off living separately and supported resettling black people in Africa. This, he believed, would be the best result for both black people and white people.



Madison lived to 85 years old, eventually suffering from **rheumatism** and liver failure. He died on June 28, 1836 at his home in Montpelier, Virginia.

## Quote

*"If men were angels, no government would be necessary."  
- February 1788*

## Legacy

When it comes to the Founding Fathers, most Americans remember George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson. James Madison might not be as famous as them, but he has left a major legacy for the United States. He was one of the most important leaders during the drafting and ratification of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Through this role, he had a great deal of influence in creating the system of government we have today. As Secretary of State, he helped President Thomas Jefferson double the size of the United States by completing the Louisiana Purchase. He led the United States for two terms as its fourth president.

Madison was America's first wartime president. Although he was always well prepared for legal and constitutional debates, he was less prepared as commander in chief during the War of 1812. The war was a disaster and almost cost the United States its independence. It took several miraculous victories by leaders like Andrew Jackson to save the country.

Despite this, James Madison's overall contributions make him one of America's greatest and most important Founders. He helped create a government strong enough to be effective while also respecting the rights of its citizens—one that allowed America to prosper and become the freest, most powerful nation in the world.

# Glossary

**Seizure:** Brain activity that often causes the body to shake uncontrollably.

**Articles of Confederation:** An agreement between the original 13 United States that created an early system of government for the new nation. It was drafted in 1777 and came into effect in 1781. Since it created an ineffective government, the Founders drafted and adopted a new constitution to replace it.

**Constitutional Convention:** A meeting that took place from May to September 1787 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where many of the Founding Fathers debated and drafted the Constitution of the United States. During the Convention, James Madison emerged as a major leader in determining what system of government was created.

**Virginia Plan:** James Madison's initial proposal for a constitution during the Constitutional Convention. His plan called for making the federal government more effective and giving it three branches: the legislative, the executive, and the judicial. Madison had to compromise with other delegates, and there were major differences between his plan and the final Constitution. Still, Madison's proposal was a major influence at the Convention.

**Checks and Balances:** A system in which different branches of government share power and can prevent each other from taking certain actions. This system is designed to prevent any one branch from becoming too powerful.

**Constitution of the United States:** A document that has been the supreme law of the United States since 1788. It established a federal government with three branches under the principle of checks and balances. James Madison played such an important role during its drafting and ratification that he is known as the "Father of the Constitution."

**Federalist Papers:** A series of 85 articles and essays published from 1787 to 1788 that argued in favor of ratifying the U.S. Constitution. James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay wrote the essays. Historians consider them very important documents that help explain details about the Constitution.

**Bill of Rights:** The first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution, which were ratified in 1791. They are often considered the most important amendments and protect the basic rights of American citizens, such as freedom of speech and worship and the right to bear arms and to be tried by jury. Madison played a key role in drafting and ratifying it.

**Gunboats:** Small, fast ships with guns that operate mainly near coastlines.

**Vivacious:** Charming, attractive, and full of life.

**Socialite:** A person who is well known in society and fond of social activities and entertainment.

**Rheumatism:** A disease that involves pain in the joints and muscles.

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## Answers:

CURRENT NAME OF COLLEGE  
MADISON ATTENDED:  
PRINCETON



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