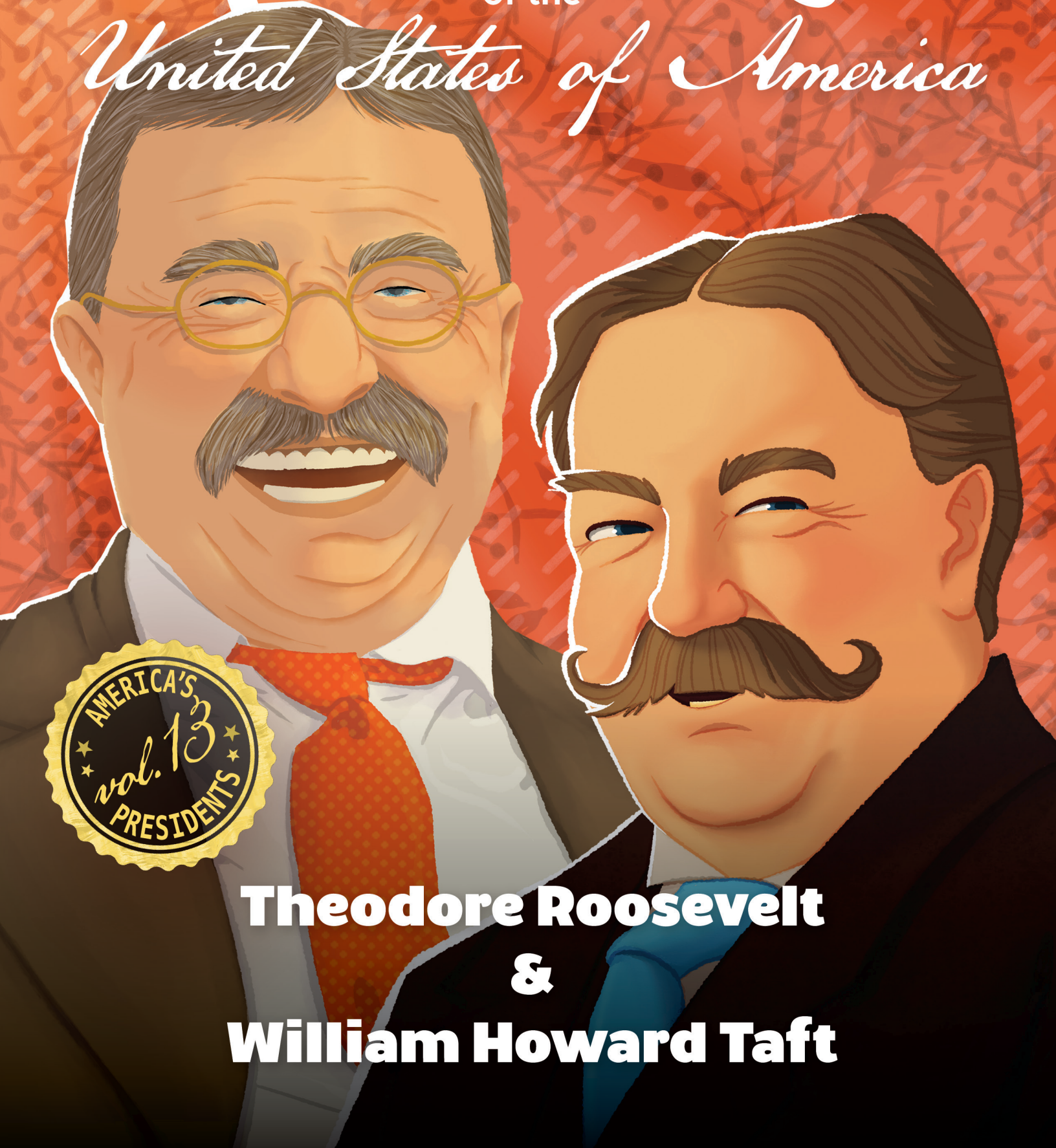


# presidents

of the

*United States of America*



**Theodore Roosevelt**

**&**

**William Howard Taft**



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Published by PragerU

15021 Ventura Boulevard #552

Sherman Oaks, CA 91403

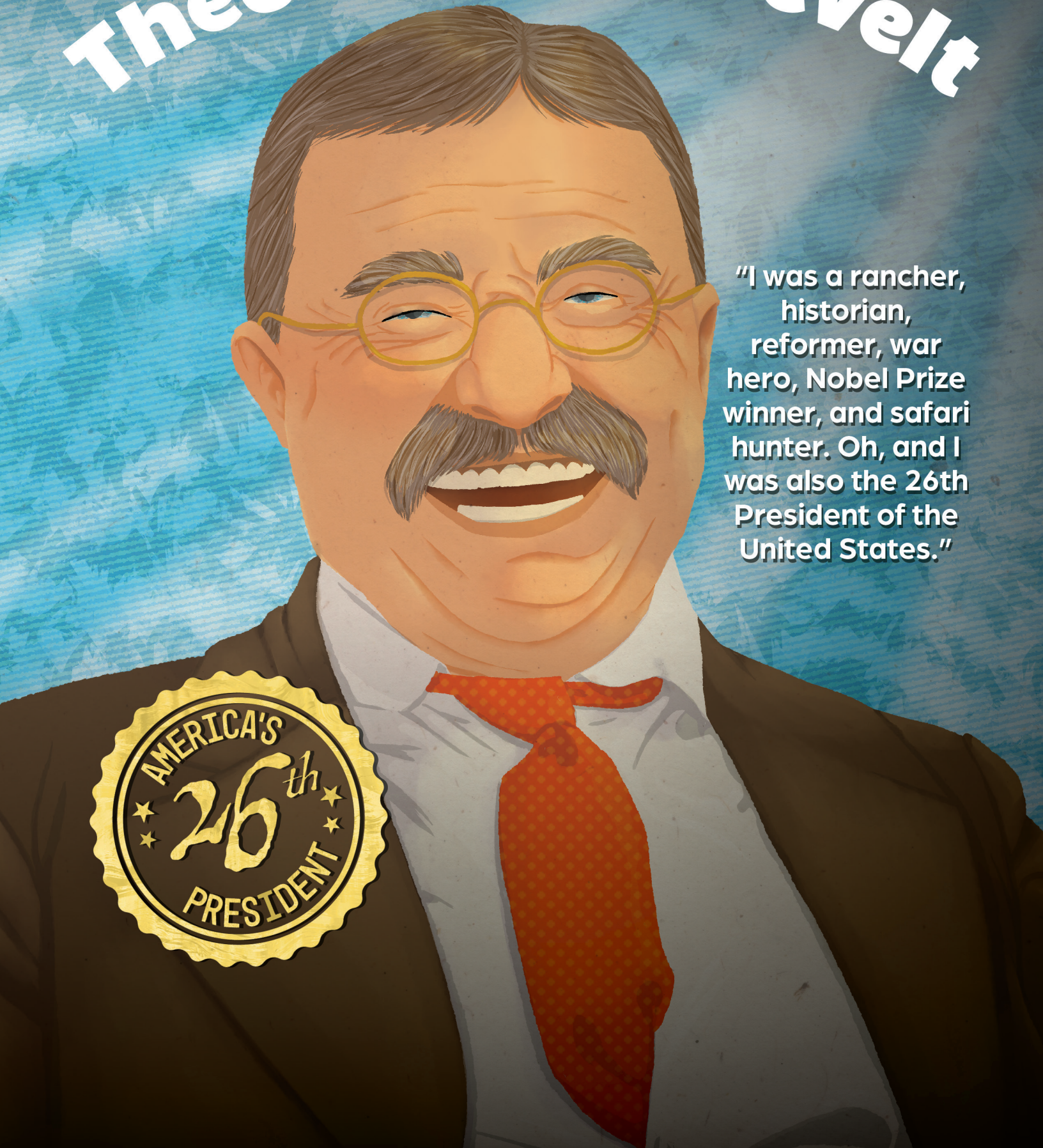


# presidents of the *United States of America*

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# Theodore Roosevelt



"I was a rancher, historian, reformer, war hero, Nobel Prize winner, and safari hunter. Oh, and I was also the 26th President of the United States."



# Become a Presidential Historian by Solving This Puzzle

In this book, you'll learn all sorts of facts about Theodore Roosevelt's amazing life and accomplishments. But there's still one last thing we need to know about him: his favorite food. We need your help to find out what it was. Your task is to 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!

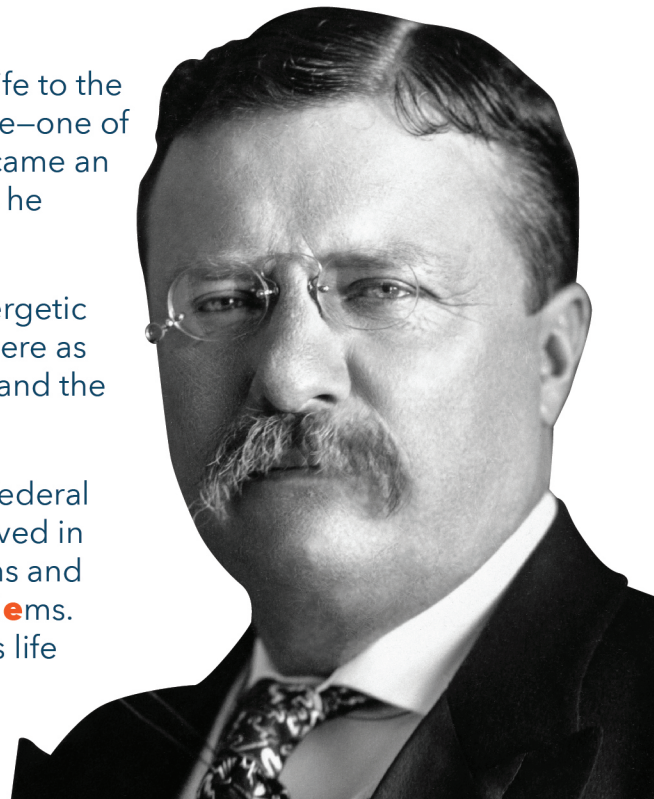
## Meet Theodore Roosevelt

Have you ever wanted to go on an adventure? So did Theodore Roosevelt. He loved learning about animals, so he traveled to South America in 1913 to go hunting and to observe wildlife. He and his team braved rainstorms and mosquitos throughout their voyage. Roosevelt even caught malaria but survived.

This trip was just one of many examples of Roosevelt living life to the fullest. In many ways, Roosevelt's whole life was an adventure—one of great triumphs and terrible tragedies. Along the way, he became an author, a cowboy, a war hero, and a political leader. In 1901, he became the youngest man to become president—at age 42.

Roosevelt was one of the most brilliant, charismatic, and energetic presidents in American history. In addition, few presidents were as colorful as Roosevelt. He and his family owned tons of pets, and the White House during Roosevelt's presidency was like a zoo.

Roosevelt forever changed the United States. He made the federal government more powerful, and he got America more involved in world affairs. Some have criticized Roosevelt for these actions and believe that they resulted in many of America's current problems. Still, Roosevelt was a man of incredible achievement, and his life continues to inspire people today.



# Young Theodore

Theodore Roosevelt was born on October 27, 1858 to a wealthy family in New York City. His father, also Theodore, was a prominent businessman, and his mother, Martha, was a Southerner from Georgia. Young Theodore was the second of four children. He spent much of his childhood sick in bed and suffered from asthma. These challenges, however, only fueled his desire to overcome them. As a teenager, he began lifting weights and performing gymnastics. Eventually, he would take up rowing, wrestling, and even boxing. He eventually developed a strong and healthy physique and became a believer in the "**Strenuous Life**." He strongly believed in the virtues of **masculinity** and hard work.

Young Theodore wasn't just physically strong—he was highly intelligent and loved to learn about the world. He became fascinated with animals and took up **taxidermy** as a hobby. He eventually collected enough animals to open up a "Roosevelt Museum of Natural History" in his own home. He also loved studying history. He and his family traveled around the world, giving Theodore a greater understanding of other peoples and cultures.

In 1876, Theodore began attending Harvard University. Unfortunately, tragedy struck when, in 1878, his father passed away from a stomach ailment. This left Theodore devastated. He later said that his father was "the best man I ever knew."



## Interesting Facts

- He was, at 42 years old, the youngest president to take office (as of 2023).
- He was a member of the Republican Party.
- He was famously nicknamed "Teddy" Roosevelt and often referred to as "TR."
- His favorite motto was, "Speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far."
- He was the first president to win the Nobel Prize.
- He is the only president (as of 2023) to win the Medal of Honor.
- He was the first president to ride in an airplane.
- He was the first president who, after taking office after the death of his predecessor, was elected to his own term.
- He drank about a gallon of coffee every day.
- He was fifth cousins with President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

## Early Career

The year 1878, however, wasn't all bad for Roosevelt. He also met a lovely young woman named Alice Hathaway Lee, the daughter of a prominent banker. They fell in love and got married in 1880.

While at Harvard, he also began writing a book on the War of 1812, with a focus on the U.S. Navy's actions during that war. The book was published in 1882 under the title *The Naval War of 1812*. Roosevelt was now a respected historian at the age of just 24.

During this time, the Gilded Age, the country was very prosperous. At the same time, however, many people were using positions of power and influence in government and business for selfish gain. Roosevelt wanted to do something about it, so he ran for New York State Assembly as a Republican. He won the election and served from 1882 to 1884. As an assemblyman, he fought hard against corruption.

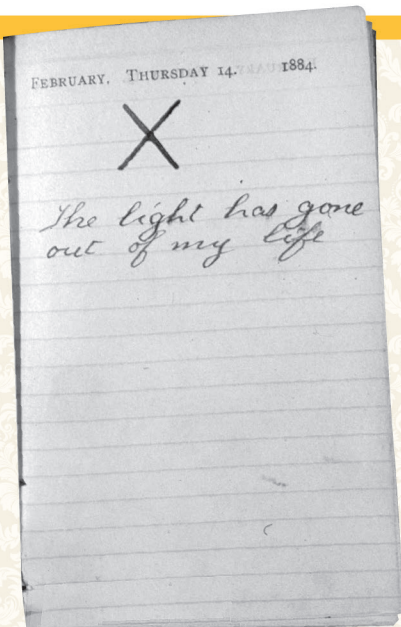


Alice Hathaway Lee

## Quote

*"Success... counts for nothing compared to the success of the man in winning the one woman who is all the world to him."*

*- May 1906*



## The Worst Day of His Life

The future looked bright for Roosevelt. Things got even better when Alice became pregnant with their first child. Their daughter was born on February 12, 1884, and they named her Alice Lee Roosevelt. Unfortunately, the pregnancy was hard on Roosevelt's wife. She began suffering from kidney failure. To make matters worse, Roosevelt's mother, Martha, was also suffering from typhoid fever.

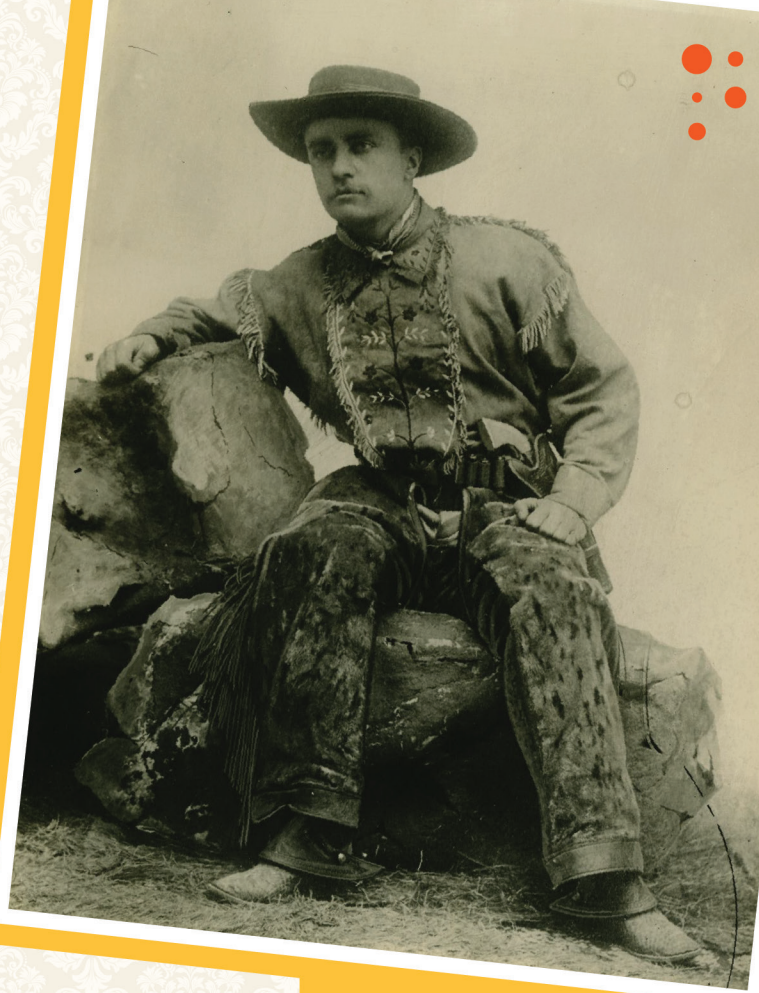
Two days later, on February 14—Valentine's Day—Martha died. Several hours later, his wife Alice died in his arms. Roosevelt had lost his mother and wife on the same day. He wrote a giant "X" in his diary for that day, with the words, "The light has gone out of my life."

## Rancher

Roosevelt was crushed and heartbroken. He was a widower at the age of 25. Grief-stricken, Roosevelt needed a change of scenery. He asked his sister to take care of his daughter for a while so he could leave New York. He traveled far out west to the **Dakota Territory**.

While he was there, Roosevelt transformed himself from a New York aristocrat to a cowboy. He bought two ranches and spent the next couple of years riding out on the range, herding cattle, and hunting grizzly bears. He even became a deputy sheriff. When a group of thieves stole his boat, Roosevelt chased them down and arrested them.

Roosevelt loved being outdoors. When the severe winter of 1886-87 wiped out most of his cattle, however, he knew it was time to return home.



## Reformer

Roosevelt reconnected with a childhood friend of his—a woman named Edith Kermit Carow. They got married in December of 1886 and would eventually have five children together.

It didn't take long for Roosevelt to get back into the swing of things. He continued his writing career, eventually publishing several biographies and a successful series titled *The Winning of the West*.

He also jumped back into public office. President Benjamin Harrison appointed him to the **Civil Service Commission**, an opportunity Roosevelt used to fight corruption in the federal government.

In 1895, Roosevelt was put in charge of the New York City Police Board. Again, he fought corruption and incompetence. He spent many nights walking around New York City, surprising police officers and making sure that they were on duty and not fooling around. Roosevelt's work cleaning up the civil service and the New York police earned him a reputation as one of the country's most famous **reformers**.

## Quote

"It is not the critic who counts... The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena... who spends himself in a worthy cause."  
- April 1910



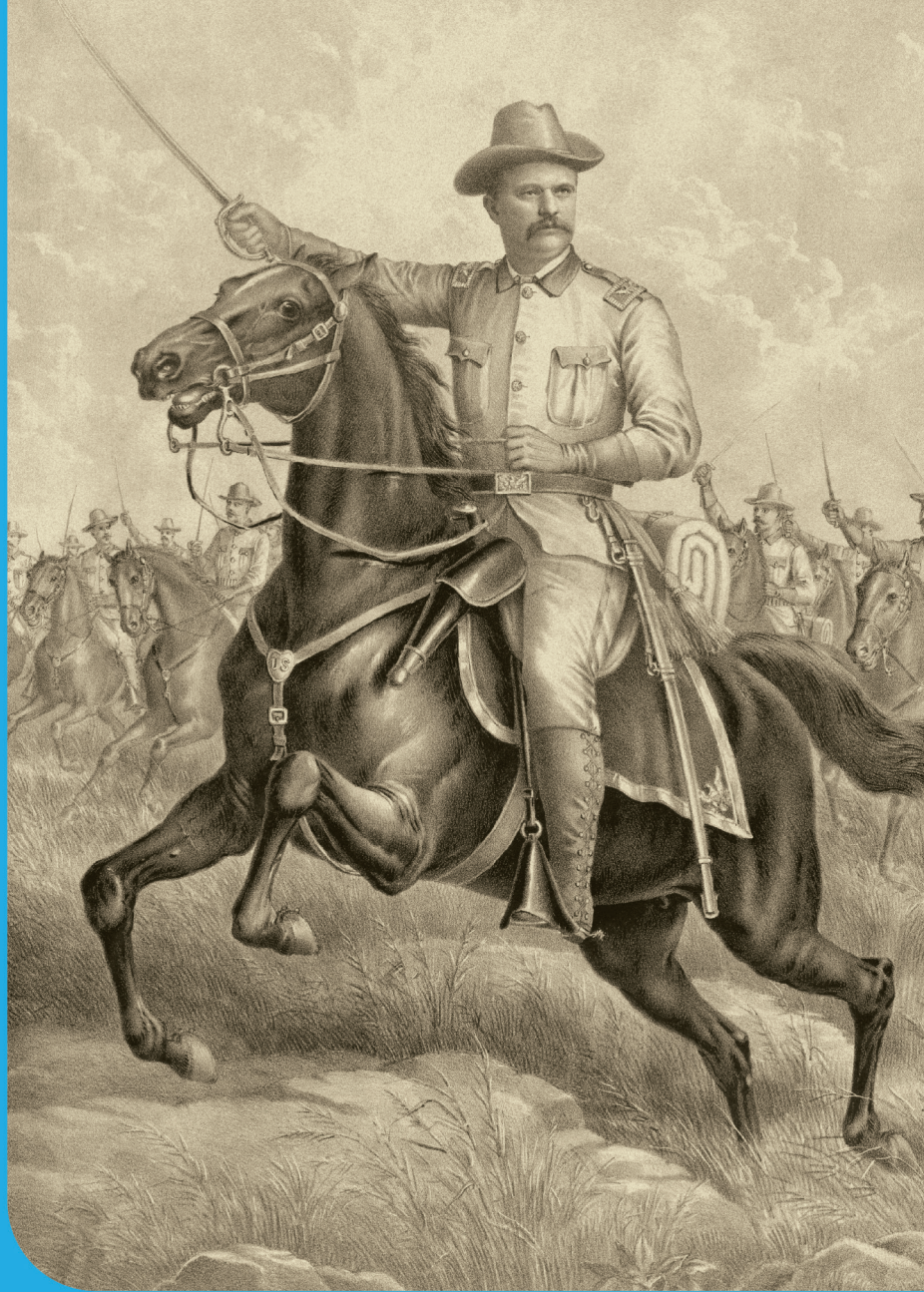
## War Hero

Roosevelt's career occurred right when the United States was becoming a world power. It already had the strongest economy on the planet. In the 1890s, he read the book *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History* by Alfred Mahan, which convinced Roosevelt that America needed a powerful **navy** to take its rightful place in the world.

Roosevelt got his chance to **turn** his ideas into reality when the new Republican President William McKinley appointed him as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy in 1897. When the **Spanish-American War** broke out in 1898, the patriotic Roosevelt saw it as an opportunity for America to grab some colonies and earn the respect of the world.

Roosevelt, however, didn't want to spend the war sitting around at a desk in Washington, D.C. Instead, he traded in his suit for a uniform, raised a regiment of soldiers, and headed down to Cuba to fight. Roosevelt was given the **rank** of colonel, and his regiment would become known as the "**Rough Riders**."

On July 1, 1898, he led his men at the Battle of San Juan Hill, where they braved enemy fire and defeated the Spanish. Roosevelt loved combat so much that, during the battle, he yelled, "Holy Godfrey, what fun!" Two bullets grazed him in the elbow and on the hand, and Roosevelt later showed off his scars with pride.



## Quote

*"A soft, easy life is not worth living... We must dare to be great; and we must realize that greatness is the fruit of toil and sacrifice and high courage."  
- October 1898*



## Rise to Power

Roosevelt returned to America a war hero, which made him a strong candidate for public office. The Republicans chose him as their candidate for Governor of New York. At the time, the Republicans were divided into two groups: the **progressives** and the conservatives. Since Roosevelt was a reformer, he was considered a progressive. He won the election in the fall of 1898 and became governor the following year.

As governor, Roosevelt implemented many progressive policies, such as taxing publicly-owned companies, especially those that provided gas, water, and electricity.

The conservatives in New York were unhappy with Roosevelt's actions, so in the 1900 election, they figured out a way to get rid of him. They got Roosevelt chosen as President McKinley's running mate in the 1900 presidential election. The vice presidency, after all, was a position with little power. In the fall of 1900, McKinley and Roosevelt easily won the election.

Roosevelt was now the Vice President of the United States, but his tenure wouldn't last long. On September 6, 1901, President McKinley was shot by an anarchist named Leon Czolgosz. McKinley died on September 14. Roosevelt was now the 26th President of the United States.



# President

Theodore Roosevelt is often called the first “modern” president. He brought an energy and vigor to the presidency that no one had ever seen before. He also believed that, since America was now a strong world power, it needed a strong government to address certain issues. He used the federal government to break up massive corporations, also known as **trusts**, because he felt they were making it hard for smaller businesses to compete. These actions earned him a reputation as a “trust buster.” He signed several laws that allowed the government to regulate businesses, such as how much railroad companies could charge for shipping or how clean food needed to be when it was packaged. Roosevelt called his program the “Square Deal,”—which he believed was making the economy more fair for everyone.

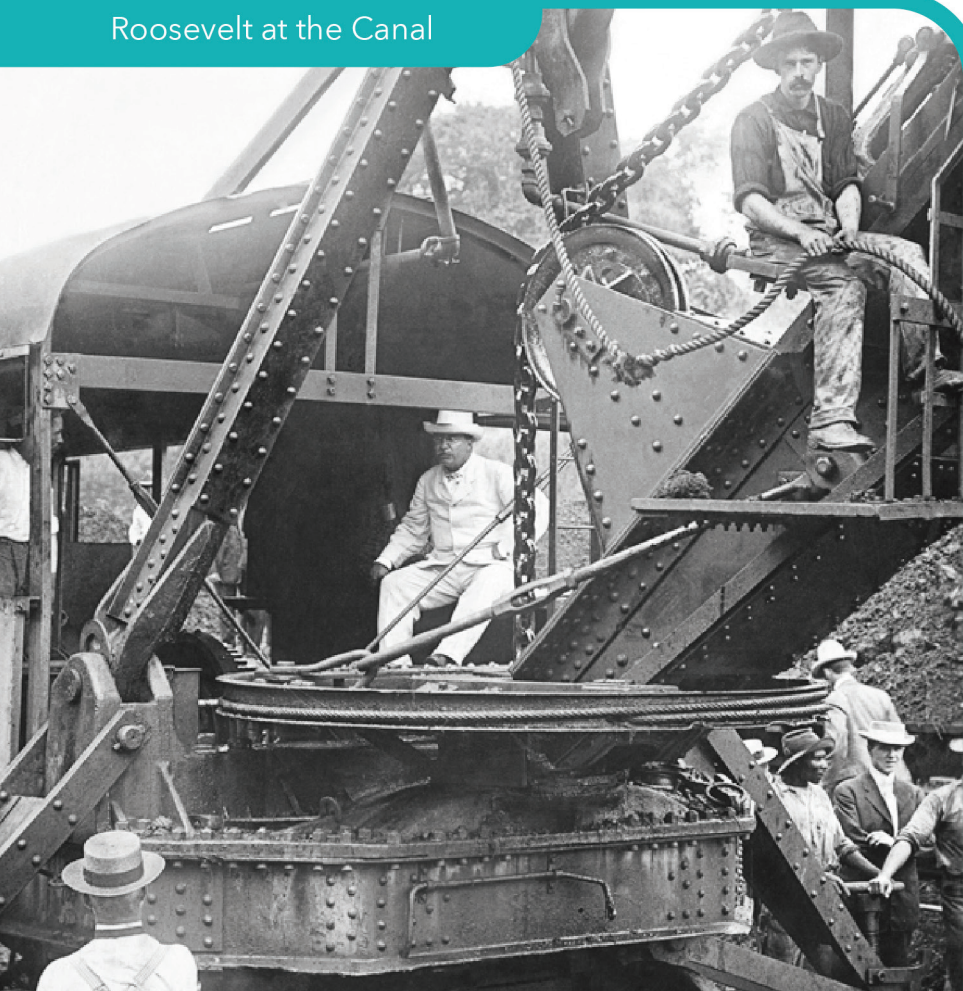


Roosevelt loved the outdoors and wanted to preserve as much land in America from development as possible. He issued executive orders creating 150 new national forests and protecting 230 million acres of land.

Even though many people felt Roosevelt was too aggressive and had expanded government too much, most Americans loved him. He was elected to his own term in 1904.

Roosevelt was also one of the earliest presidents to believe America had to become more involved in world affairs. Even though most Americans believed that their nation should stay out of international issues, Roosevelt got involved in several crises, including ones in Venezuela, Japan, and Morocco. He helped negotiate the end of the Russo-Japanese War, which earned him a **Nobel Peace Prize**. He strengthened America’s Navy so it could act decisively in the world, building the **Great White Fleet**. He also worked hard to get the **Panama Canal** built, which reduced the amount of time needed for ships to travel in the Western Hemisphere.

Roosevelt at the Canal





## A Zoo in the White House

Roosevelt and his family loved animals. In fact, when he was president, they kept all sorts of animals: a lizard, a bear, a macaw, a hen, a rooster, a hyena, an owl, a rabbit, a pony, a badger, dogs, horses, pigs, and snakes. His son Quentin once terrified a group of senators when he accidentally dropped several snakes during an important meeting.

## The Teddy Bear

Teddy bears are one of the most famous stuffed toys of all time. Did you know that it was all thanks to Theodore Roosevelt? On November 14, 1902, President Roosevelt was hunting near Onward, Mississippi when his assistant got the idea to tie a bear to a tree so that Roosevelt could shoot it and count it as a "kill." The president, however, believed this was unsportsmanlike and refused to shoot it.

When the story spread across the country, Americans praised Roosevelt for not shooting the bear. A store owner from Brooklyn, Morris Michtom, soon began selling toy stuffed bears commemorating the incident and named it "Teddy's Bear." They were a hit and soon became known as the "Teddy Bear."



## Quote

*"I stand for straight Americanism unconditioned and unqualified, and I stand against every form of hyphenated Americanism... All I ask of the immigrant is that he shall be physically and intellectually fit, of sound character, and eager in good faith to become an American citizen."*

*- May 1916*



## Assassination Attempt

On October 14, 1912, Roosevelt was delivering a speech in Milwaukee, Wisconsin as part of his 1912 presidential campaign. A man named John Schrank approached him and shot him with a revolver. The bullet went through his chest, narrowly avoiding his lung. Chaos broke out, and bystanders wrestled Schrank to the ground. Roosevelt exclaimed, "I have just been shot, but it takes more than that to kill a Bull Moose!" Despite having an open bullet wound, Roosevelt refused to seek medical care until finishing the speech 90 minutes later. He ended up recovering from the assassination attempt.







## Retirement

Roosevelt promised to not run again for president in 1908. That year, his hand-picked successor William Howard Taft was elected to succeed him. Immediately after leaving office, Roosevelt went on a huge safari in Africa where he and his team killed thousands of animals. Many of them were sent to the Smithsonian Institution. He later also explored South America.

Roosevelt was unhappy with President Taft's policies, so he ran against him in the 1912 presidential election as a member of the Progressive Party. It was also nicknamed the "Bull Moose Party." During this time, Roosevelt supported many radical progressive policies, such as universal healthcare. His campaign split the Republican vote, handing the election to Democrat Woodrow Wilson. Many Republicans blamed Roosevelt for the loss.

When America entered World War I in 1917, Roosevelt volunteered to fight personally, but President Wilson refused. Roosevelt was angered at Wilson's decision. Even worse, Roosevelt's son Quentin died in 1918 while serving in World War I.

Exhausted after a lifetime of strenuous activity and devastated by his son's death, Roosevelt's health began to decline. He died on January 5, 1919 at the age of 60. When the news of his death reached his son Archibald, he wrote, "The old lion is dead."



## Quote

*"Every man holds his property subject to the general right of the community to regulate its use to whatever degree the public welfare may require it."  
- August 1910*



## Legacy

Theodore Roosevelt's life story continues to amaze people. Indeed, it is hard not to marvel at his great accomplishments. Americans were so impressed by him that they included him with legendary Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln on Mount Rushmore.

Roosevelt's life is the stuff of legend, and his impact on America is undeniable. He took office at a time when America was becoming a stronger player on the world stage. Roosevelt felt that this required a stronger government. He succeeded in making the presidency and

the government more powerful. Some, however, believe that this allowed future presidents to make government so powerful that it took away freedom from the American people. When Roosevelt ran for president in 1912, he supported radical policies that would have raised taxes very high on everyday Americans.

While there is fair criticism about some of Roosevelt's policies, his life story will continue to inspire his fellow countrymen. We still have much to learn from his belief in masculinity, patriotism, and hard work.





## Glossary

**Strenuous Life:** Theodore Roosevelt's life philosophy, in which he argued that Americans, individually and as a country, should embrace hard work, masculinity, and rugged living. He believed that this would allow Americans to achieve greatness and keep them from getting lazy.

**Masculinity:** Characteristics that describe what it means to be a man, such as strength, courage, independence, leadership, and assertiveness.

**Taxidermy:** The art of preparing and preserving the skins of animals and of stuffing and mounting them in lifelike form.

**Dakota Territory:** A territory of the United States (from 1861 to 1889) that composed much of what is now North and South Dakota.

**Civil Service Commission:** A federal government agency created in the 1870s that was created to reduce corruption and ensure government employees were chosen by their qualifications and not their connections.

**Reformer:** Someone who plans or supports changes to a system, law, or organization to make it, as they see it, more modern or effective.

**Navy:** The part of a country's military that is trained to operate at sea. Navies usually have warships and other supporting vessels.

**Spanish-American War:** A conflict between the United States and Spain that took place in 1898. The United States won the conflict overwhelmingly and acquired several of Spain's territories.

**Rough Riders:** The nickname of Theodore Roosevelt's volunteer cavalry regiment during the Spanish-American War. The regiment fought in the battles of Las Guasimas, San Juan Hill, and the Siege of Santiago.

**Progressive:** A person who believes in replacing the Founding Fathers' principles with new ideas and a more powerful government.

**Trust:** A combination of powerful business interests or companies with significant influence over the market.

**Nobel Peace Prize:** One of five Nobel prizes established by inventor Alfred Nobel. The Prize is awarded annually (starting in 1901) for those who have "done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations..." It is one of the most well-known awards in the world.

**Great White Fleet:** A group of U.S. Navy battleships which President Roosevelt ordered to travel around the world from 1907 to 1909. The fleet was, at the time, the most powerful fleet that ever circled the globe.

**Panama Canal:** An artificial 51-mile-long waterway in Panama that connects the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Construction on the canal began in 1904 and was completed in 1914. It significantly reduced the time needed to travel between the two oceans.

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## Answers

**ROOSEVELT'S FAVORITE FOOD:**  
FRIED CHICKEN AND GRAVY

# William Howard Taft

"I served as the 27th President of the United States and am the only person to have been president and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court."





# Become a Presidential Historian by Solving This Puzzle

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

President Taft owned two cows, and we need your help to find out what their names were! 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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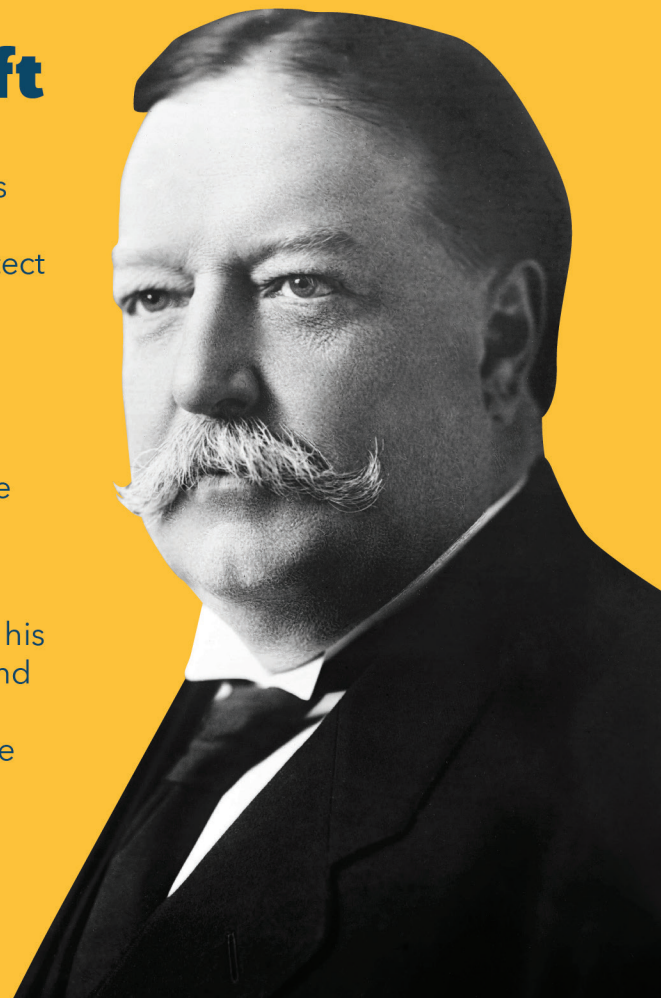
Once you've solved this puzzle, you'll be a true PragerU Kids presidential historian!

## Meet William Howard Taft

Have you ever loved something so much that you were willing to dedicate your whole life to supporting it? That's how William Howard Taft felt about the **Constitution**. He spent his entire career doing everything he could to protect the Constitution and obey its principles. He did this as a lawyer, a judge, and as president.

**M**ost Americans remember Taft for being the heaviest president. At one point, he weighed about 350 pounds. There is even a myth that he got stuck in the White House bathtub. That myth, **h**owever, isn't true.

Taft deserves much more than to be remembered for his weight. He was a man of principle who never wavered in his belief in the **C**onstitution. He had an impressive career and is the only person in American history to serve as the President of the United States and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. No one else has served in these two positions—perhaps the most prestigious and important offices in the United States.



# Young William

William Howard Taft was born on September 15, 1857. He was the second of Alphonso and Louise Taft's five children. Young William was an active child. He loved baseball and was a pretty good second baseman.

William looked up to his father. Alphonso Taft was a loyal Republican and a brilliant lawyer. He eventually became a judge and a member of President Ulysses S. Grant's Cabinet (as Secretary of War and Attorney General). Alphonso instilled in young William a respect for the Constitution, and the two spent hours talking about the law.

William attended Yale University, where he won the heavyweight wrestling championship and was known as an excellent debater. He graduated in 1878, second in his class. He then attended Cincinnati Law School, graduating in 1880.



William Howard Taft in high school

## Interesting Facts

- He is the only person (as of 2023) to have served as the President of the United States and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.
- He was a member of the Republican Party.
- He served as the Governor of the Philippines prior to becoming president.
- He was the first president to throw out the ceremonial first pitch at a baseball game.
- He is one of two presidents laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery (the other being John F. Kennedy).



President William Howard Taft Memorial Grave

## Early Career

In the first few years of his career, he worked as a local **prosecutor** and a tax collector. In 1884, he saw something that he would never forget: after a jury in Cincinnati refused to hang a criminal, a large mob erupted in anger and burned down the local courthouse. Taft was appalled, and he forever feared mob rule. He felt that the Constitution provided the best system to prevent mob rule in the United States since it allowed Americans to deal with their disagreements peacefully.

Around this time, he met a teacher named Helen Herron, who was nicknamed Nellie. She was a strong-willed woman and even rejected his marriage proposal twice. For Taft, the third time was a charm, and they got married in June 1886. They eventually had three children.

The following year, Taft was appointed as a judge on the Ohio Superior Court at the age of just 29. His career continued to take off. President Benjamin Harrison then appointed him as the U.S. **Solicitor General** in 1890. Taft was very effective in this role and ended up arguing 18 cases before the nation's highest court—the **Supreme Court**—and winning 16 of them. During this time, he became friends with another young public official, the Civil Service Commissioner Theodore Roosevelt.

In 1892, Taft returned to Ohio to serve as a federal judge for the Sixth Circuit. Taft loved being a judge, and he also served as a professor at Cincinnati Law School. Taft dreamed one day of becoming a judge on the Supreme Court.

### Quote

*"Our international policy is always to promote peace."  
- March 1909*





## Philippine Governor

Taft's life took a completely new direction when, in 1900, President William McKinley asked him to go to **the Philippines**. The United States had just won the Spanish-American War and had taken over several Spanish territories, including the Philippine islands. Although the Americans and the Filipinos had fought against each other in an ugly conflict, McKinley believed that Taft, as a judge, could help establish a respect for the law on the lush, tropical islands. Taft reluctantly agreed, serving as Governor of the Philippines from 1901 to 1903.

The islands were a major change of scenery for Taft, but he successfully helped smooth over relations with the Filipinos. He treated the Filipinos with respect, built the country's infrastructure, and helped prepare them for **self-government**. When the new president, Theodore Roosevelt, tried to bring Taft back home, the Filipinos demanded that Taft remain as governor.



## Rise to Power

Taft ended up returning to the United States to serve as Roosevelt's Secretary of War. Taft did a great job managing the War Department. Although Taft still dreamed of a job on the Supreme Court, Roosevelt had other plans. The president, who had taken office in 1901, was planning to leave the White House in 1909. He chose Taft as his successor for the 1908 presidential election. He hoped that Taft could continue his **progressive** policies. Nellie also preferred that her husband serve as president, rather than on the Supreme Court.

With the support of such a popular president as Roosevelt, Taft easily won the Republican nomination for president. He faced Democratic candidate William Jennings Bryan. That fall, Taft defeated Bryan with ease, becoming the 27th **P**resident of the United States.

## President

Taft served as president with integrity. He **had** a firm belief that the president must abide by the Constitution and respect the limits of his power. As president, Taft continued many of Roosevelt's policies. Like Roosevelt, he busted several **trusts**, believing that **monopolies** were harmful to the economy. He also supported **conservation**, and he set aside 8.5 million acres of land for federal protection. Taft's supporters pointed **out** that he busted more trusts than Roosevelt did. Unlike Roosevelt, however, he carried out these policies according to the process in the Constitution—by getting Congress's support rather than just making the law himself. This angered Roosevelt and his followers.

At the time, many progressives wanted Taft to be more aggressive like Roosevelt. Taft also didn't like being a political leader, giving speeches, and rallying support. For many Americans, Taft seemed more like a judge than a president.



## Quote

*"We are all imperfect.  
We can not expect  
perfect government."  
- May 1909*

# 1912 Presidential Election

Roosevelt was disappointed in Taft's policies. He challenged Taft for the Republican nomination in 1912. This angered Taft, and their friendship deteriorated. When Taft secured the nomination, Roosevelt started his own party, the Progressive Party, and ran as a third-party candidate. Meanwhile, the Democrats nominated another progressive, New Jersey Governor Woodrow Wilson.

The 1912 election was unusual because it featured an ex-president (Roosevelt), an **incumbent** president (Taft), and a

future president (Wilson). Roosevelt ran as a radical progressive, advocating for policies like universal healthcare and judicial recall: the ability of the voters to overturn a judge's decisions. Taft believed that this went against the principles of the Constitution. The Founding Fathers protected judges from what the people wanted, so they could focus instead on what the law says.

Roosevelt's campaign ended up splitting the Republican vote, handing Wilson the election. Taft finished third in the popular vote and Electoral College.



## Baseball Fan

William Howard Taft was a lifelong baseball fan. He played baseball in his youth and started the presidential tradition of throwing the first pitch at a baseball game, which he did during a game in 1910 between the Washington Senators and the Philadelphia Athletics. His half-brother Charles even owned the Chicago Cubs and the Philadelphia Phillies.

According to legend, Taft also started another tradition by accident. During a game in Pittsburgh in 1910, Taft got up to stretch during the 7th inning. The crowd, mistakenly thinking Taft was getting up to leave, got up too out of respect but was surprised to see him sit down again. This is supposedly how the "7th inning stretch" was born.





## Retirement

Although Taft was disappointed at the election result, he was glad to be out of the presidency. During his time in the White House, he had ballooned to 350 pounds. After leaving office, he went down to 270 pounds.

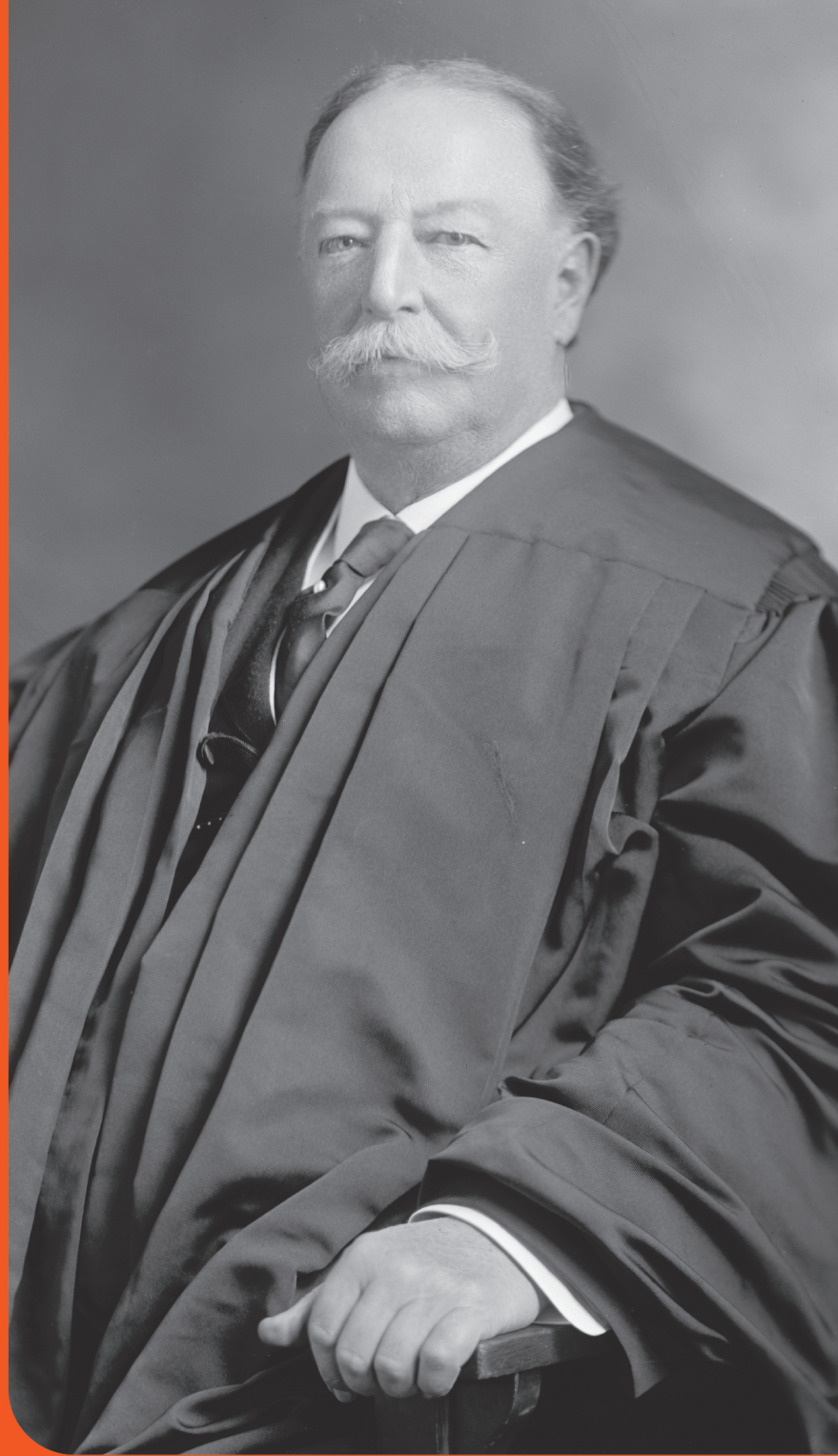
Taft got back to what he loved the most: the law. This time, he taught the law as a professor at Yale. The students loved learning from a former president.

## Chief Justice

Taft finally attained his dream job when President Warren G. Harding appointed him the 10th Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in June 1921. Taft wrote, "Next to my wife and children... [the Court] is the nearest thing to my heart in life. The truth is, I don't remember I was ever president."

Taft worked hard to establish the Court as a government branch equal to the executive and legislative branches. He worked to make it more efficient in delivering opinions and got the **Supreme Court Building** built. Originally, the Court met in the U.S. Capitol, where Congress assembled, but now it had its own home. Most importantly, in every case that came before the Court, Taft made sure to rule based on what he believed the Constitution said.

Taft was truly in his element, but it would not last forever. He suffered heart attacks in 1924 and 1926. With his health declining, he retired from the Court in February 1930. He died on March 8, 1930, at the age of 72.



## Quote

*"Next to the right of liberty, the right of property is the most important individual right guaranteed by the Constitution."  
- 1913*

# The Taft Dynasty

America has many political dynasties, such as the Adamses, the Roosevelts, the Kennedys, and the Bushes. William Howard Taft is the most famous figure in another one of America's greatest dynasties. His father, Alphonso Taft, was a prominent Republican who served in Ulysses S. Grant's Cabinet. His son, Robert A. Taft, served as a senator and was a major leader among conservatives in the mid-20th century. One of his grandsons, Robert Taft Jr., served as a congressman and senator, while another, William Howard Taft III, was a diplomat. His great-grandson, William Howard Taft IV, has also served in government, including as acting Secretary of Defense and Ambassador to NATO.



Taft's son, Robert A. Taft

## Quote

*"I am a man of peace and don't want to fight. But when I do fight I want to hit hard."  
- May 1912*



## Legacy

You could argue that the two most important people in the United States are the president and the Chief Justice. Remarkably, Taft has been the only person to attain both positions. He deserves to be remembered for this amazing feat.

Sadly, most Americans only remember him because of his weight. They forget that Taft was a well-respected public figure who was a brilliant legal thinker, a highly effective administrator, and a man of integrity.

It is true that he was not a skilled politician. He didn't enjoy giving speeches or convincing congressmen and senators to support his policies. This meant he wasn't the most effective president.

Still, Taft was an important American figure and did his best to defend the principles of the Constitution. During his lifetime, many progressives did their best to ignore the Constitution. Taft was one of the few brave men who fought for it and for the rights that it promises the American people.



# Glossary

**Constitution:** The supreme law of the United States. It was drafted by many of the Founding Fathers during the Constitutional Convention from May to September 1787, and it took effect the following year. It lays out the structure of the federal government and, through the Bill of Rights, ensures that Americans' basic rights are protected.

**Prosecutor:** A person, often a lawyer, who officially accuses someone of committing a crime by bringing a case against that person in a court of law.

**Solicitor General:** The legal representative of the U.S. government for cases argued before the Supreme Court.

**Supreme Court:** The highest court in the United States and the head of the judicial branch in the federal government. The Court consists of nine associate justices, the highest ranking of which is the Chief Justice. The Court's main job is to interpret the Constitution and laws in the event of a legal dispute.

**The Philippines:** A country consisting of a group of islands in Southeast Asia. The islands were a colony of Spain from the 1500s to 1898 until the United States acquired them during the Spanish-American War. The United States granted the Philippines independence in 1946.

**Self-Government:** A government where the people in an area, region, state, or country govern themselves and are not controlled by any other outside government.

**Progressive:** A person who believes in replacing the Founding Fathers' principles with new ideas and a more powerful government.

**Trust:** A combination of powerful business interests or companies with significant influence over the market.

**Monopoly:** A situation where there is a single seller with no competition in the market. Many people believe this is harmful because the single seller can charge high prices on consumers and unfairly prevent other companies from competing.

**Conservation:** Policies during the late 19th and early 20th centuries that aimed to protect nature, wildlife, and natural resources in the United States.

**Incumbent:** The person who is currently holding an office or position.

**Supreme Court Building:** The building in Washington, D.C., that houses the Supreme Court. It was built from 1932 to 1935.

## Sources

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## Answers

NAMES OF TAFT'S COWS:  
MOOLY WOOLY AND PAULINE



# Writing Activity

President Roosevelt lived an admirable, inspiring life despite many tragedies.

**What stands out to you about his life, character, or leadership?**

**How would you respond if faced with similar circumstances?**

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It took President Taft most of his career to finally land his dream job as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, where he could protect and preserve the U.S. Constitution.

**What is your dream job and why are you passionate about it?**

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