

# presidents of the *United States of America*

"I was the 10th President of the United States, and the first to take office after the death of a president."



**John Tyler**





# Become a Presidential Historian by Solving This Puzzle

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

President Tyler had a certain breed of dog for pets and we need to find out what breed it was. Your task is to help us uncover the answer! Hidden in the text are bolded letters. Read this magazine carefully to find them and fill the letters into the blanks below in the order they appear.



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

## Meet John Tyler

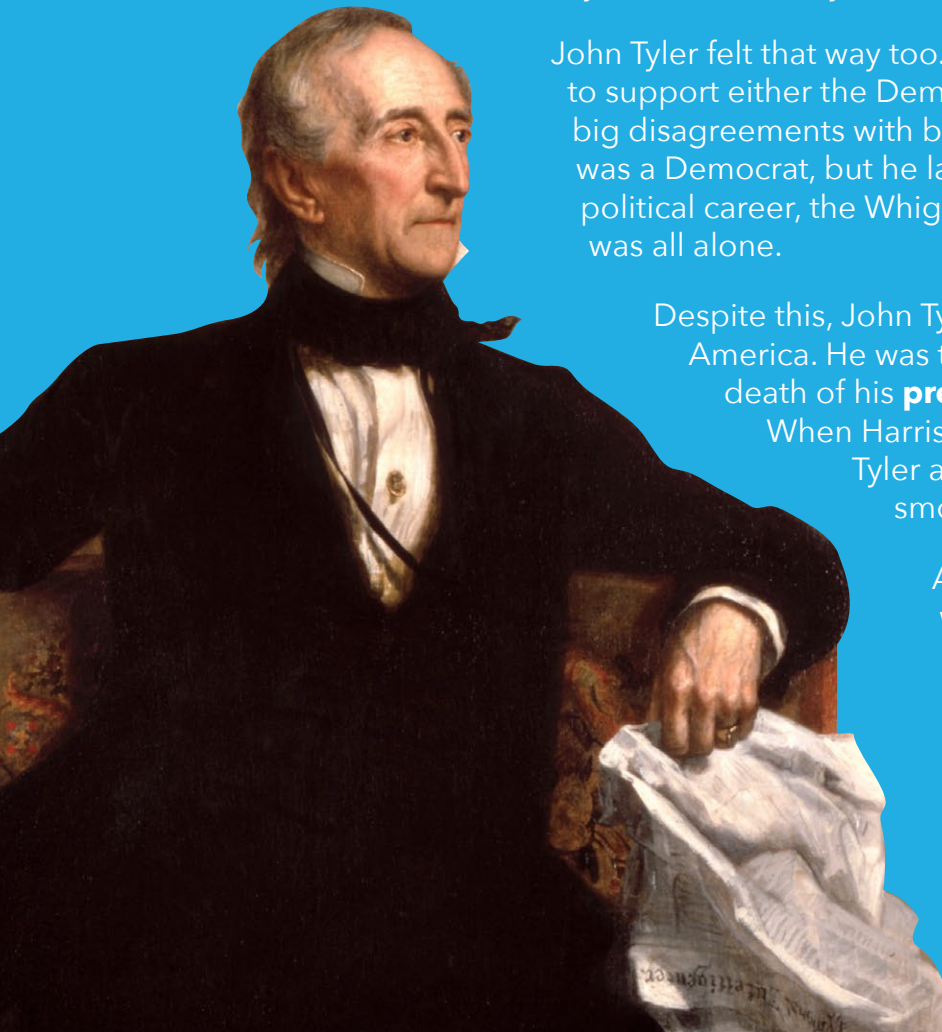
Have you ever felt like you didn't fit in with the people around you?

John Tyler felt that way too. During his time, most Americans chose to support either the Democratic Party or the Whig Party. Tyler had big disagreements with both. Early on **i**n his political career, he was a Democrat, but he later joined the Whigs. Near the end of his political career, the Whigs kicked him out of their party, and he was all alone.

Despite this, John Tyler made a major contribution to America. He was the first president to take office upon the death of his **predecessor**, William Henry Harrison.

When Harrison died, no one was sure what to do, but Tyler asserted strong leadership and ensured a smooth **transition**.

Although Tyler's career and presidency were full of ups and downs, he set an example for how to handle the death of a president - an example that guided American presidents long after he left office.



# Young John

John Tyler was born on March 29, 1790 in Charles City County, Virginia. He was the sixth of John and Mary Tyler's eight children. His father, the elder John, was a prominent Virginian who was close friends with Thomas Jefferson and would eventually serve as governor of the state from 1808 to 1811.

The Tyler family lived on a large plantation with thousands of acres and several enslaved servants. Tragedy struck the family in 1797 when Mary passed away. At the time, young John was just seven years old. He also spent much of his childhood sick, suffering from **respiratory** and stomach problems. Despite these difficulties, John was very smart, and went to the College of William and Mary at a young age, graduating in 1807 at the age of 17.



## Interesting Facts

- He was the first president who took office because of the death of his predecessor.
- He was a member of the Democratic Party early in his career, and was elected vice president as a member of the Whig Party, but was no longer welcomed in either party at the end of his career.
- His father was good friends with Thomas Jefferson.
- He had the most children (15) of any president.
- He was the first president to be widowed while in office.
- He joined the Confederate States of America during the Civil War.
- As of 2022, he has a grandson still alive.

## Quote

*"Wealth can only be accumulated by the earnings of industry and the savings of frugality."*  
- June 1841





## Early Career

Tyler began practicing law in 1809 and worked for a firm under Edmund **R**andolph, who had been George Washington's attorney general. He was, however, more interested in politics than in law. In 1811, Tyler won a seat in the Virginia House of Delegates at the age of 21. Two years later, he married a woman named Letitia Christian, who came from another prominent Virginia family. They would eventually have eight children.

## Trying to Fit In

In 1816, Tyler was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and moved to Washington, DC. He would eventually serve as governor of Virginia (like his father) from 1825 to 1827, and a U.S. senator from 1827 to 1836. Even though most people supported either the Democrats or the Whigs, he didn't fit **i**n well in either of the two parties. He agreed with the Democrats on certain issues, like opposing the **national bank** and **tariffs**, but like the Whigs, he didn't like Democrat President Andrew Jackson. His mixed feelings led him to first join the Democrats, and then join the Whigs.

Tyler also had mixed feelings about slavery. He believed having enslaved servants was wrong but he owned some himself. He also supported spreading slavery across the nation. He hoped that expanding it into America's western lands would somehow cause it to die off.

## Whigs vs. Democrats

Find out what Whigs and Democrats supported:

	Whigs	Democrats
<b>Tariffs</b>	✓	
<b>National Bank</b>	✓	
<b>Spending on Infrastructure</b>	✓	
<b>Strong Presidency</b>		✓
<b>States Rights</b>		✓

## Quote

*"I can never consent to being dictated to as to what I shall or shall not do."*

- April 1861

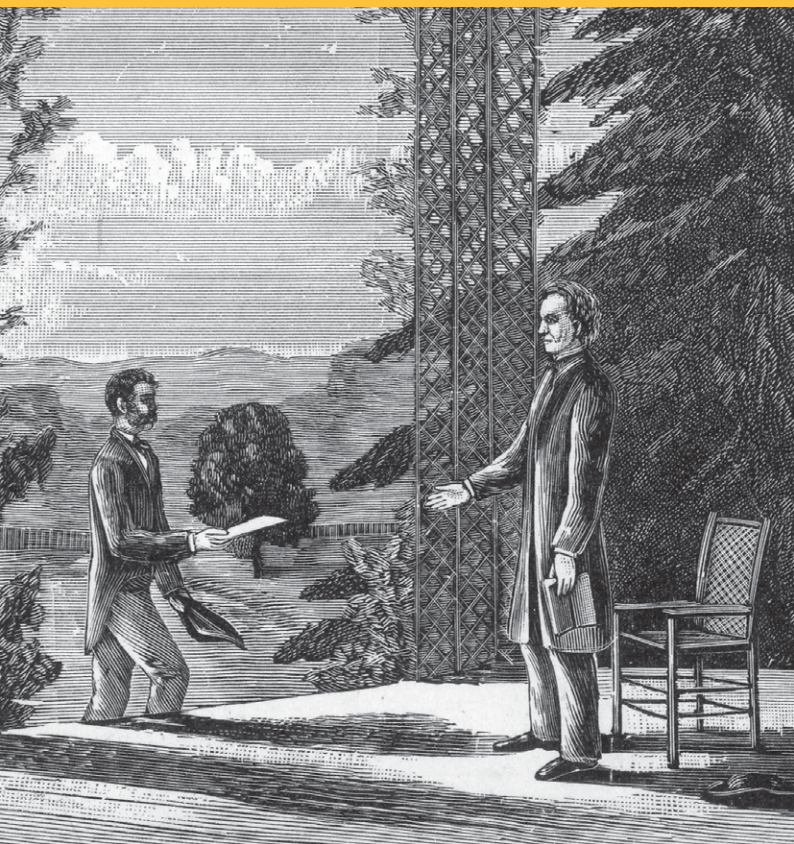


# Presidential Politics

Tyler was frustrated by his time in office and retired from the Senate in 1836.

Still, the Whigs hoped that Tyler could help them in presidential elections. Since Tyler was from Virginia, one of the biggest states, they believed that adding him as a vice presidential candidate could help them win a lot of votes. In the 1836 election, the Whigs nominated war hero William Henry Harrison as a presidential candidate, and Tyler as a vice presidential candidate. Although the Whigs lost that election to Martin Van Buren, they again nominated Harrison and Tyler in 1840.

Years earlier, Harrison had won a military battle near the Tippecanoe River, and was nicknamed "Old Tippecanoe." Since Tyler was Harrison's running mate, the Whigs' slogan in 1840 was "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too" – one of the most memorable campaign slogans of all time. This time, the Harrison-Tyler duo won the election.



## A Major Precedent

Both Harrison and Tyler took office on March 4, 1841. One month later, on April 4, something unexpected happened: President Harrison died of pneumonia. It was the first time in American history that a president died in office. It was a shocking event that no one was prepared for. The Constitution says that, when a president dies, the duties of the office "**devolve** on the Vice President." No one was sure what "devolve" meant. Some felt the vice president would only serve as acting president, not as the actual president. Others felt that the vice president would, indeed, be the president.

Tyler made his views clear: he believed that he was the actual president – just as much as Harrison, Van Buren, or any of his predecessors had been.

# President

Tyler's party, the Whigs, had an ambitious agenda. They and their leader, Senator Henry Clay, were excited when Harrison, the first Whig president, had won the election and hoped that Tyler would support their policies. They sent Tyler multiple bills to establish a national bank and raise tariffs. The new president, however, still didn't fit well in either party, including the Whigs. Even though he was considered a Whig, he disagreed with many of their policies and vetoed the bills over and over. This angered Clay and the Cabinet. Almost all of his Cabinet resigned in protest. Tyler's presidency fell apart.

Tyler also experienced personal tragedies. In September of 1842, his wife Letitia died of a stroke. Less than a year later, however, he began

courting a beautiful young woman named Julia Gardiner. Although he was thirty years older than her, they married in 1844. They would have seven children, giving him a total of 15 children.

As Tyler's term ended, he hoped to **salvage** his presidency by annexing Texas to the Union. Texas had won independence from Mexico in 1836. Many Americans, such as former President Martin Van Buren, opposed adding Texas because it was a slave state.

Still, Tyler was determined. His efforts paid off at the end of his term: Congress accepted Texas as a state and, on March 1, 1845, three days before Tyler left office, he signed a bill granting Texas **statehood**.

## Quote

"Let it, then, be henceforth proclaimed to the world, that man's conscience was created free; that he is no longer accountable to his fellow man for his religious opinions, being responsible therefore only to his God."  
- July 1826



## Tragedy and Love

On February 28, 1844, President Tyler was cruising on the ship U.S.S. *Princeton* down the Potomac River with many prominent government officials. During the ceremonial firing of the ship's guns, an accidental explosion killed several people including a New York lawyer named David Gardiner. At the time, President Tyler was romantically pursuing Gardiner's daughter, Julia. Gardiner's death left Julia devastated, but Tyler's presence was a great comfort to her. They married four months later. She became one of the most popular First Ladies in American history.





## Retirement

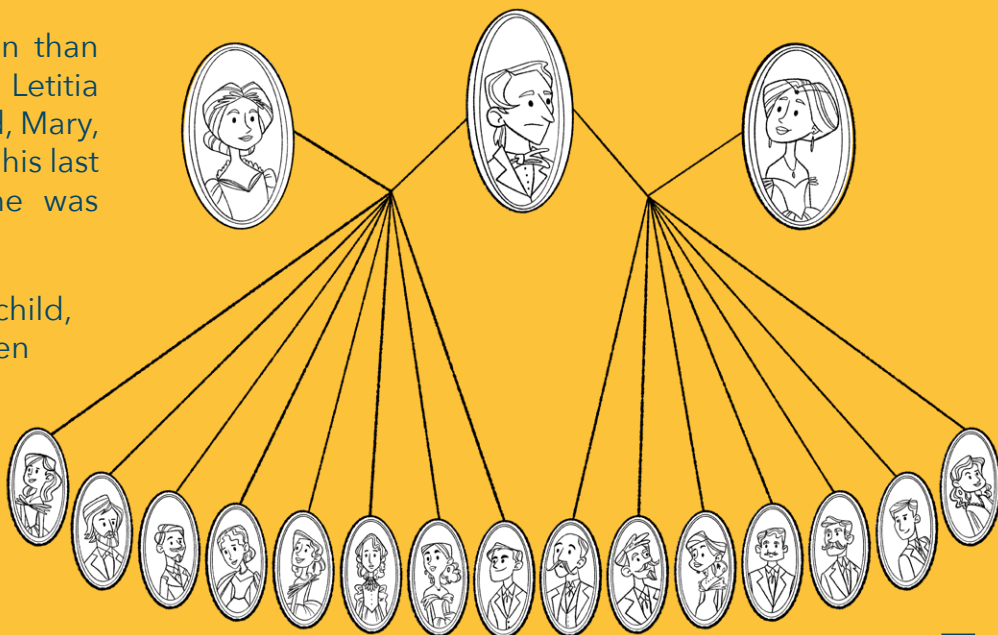
During the 1844 election, the Whig Party abandoned Tyler and chose Clay as its presidential nominee. The Democrats chose former Tennessee Governor James K. Polk, who would go on to defeat Clay for the presidency.

After his term ended, Tyler and his wife Julia moved back to Charles City County, Virginia. Fifteen years later, in February 1861, the Northern and Southern states were on the verge of civil war. Tyler led a Peace Conference in Washington, DC with Northern and Southern leaders in the hope of stopping the war, but it failed. When the Civil War broke out, Tyler joined the **secessionist** cause and was elected to the **Confederate** House of Representatives. His health, however, began to fail and he suffered from a cold and dizziness. On January 18, 1862, Tyler died at the age of 71 in Richmond, Virginia.

## Kids, Kids, and More Kids

No president has had more children than John Tyler, who had 15 (eight with Letitia and seven with Julia). Tyler's first child, Mary, was born when he was about 25, and his last child, Margaret, was born when he was about 70.

Tyler was about 63 when his 13th child, Lyon, was born. Lyon also had children late in his life – including a son named Harrison Ruffin Tyler – when he was 75 years old. As of 2022, Harrison Ruffin Tyler is still alive – the last of John Tyler's grandchildren.



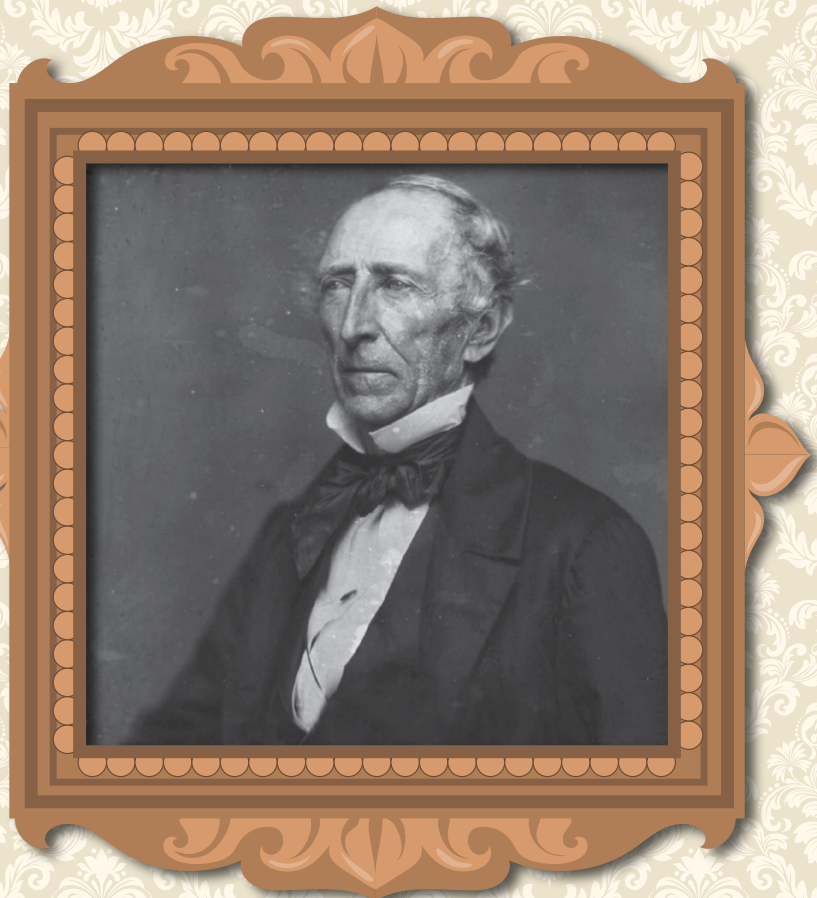
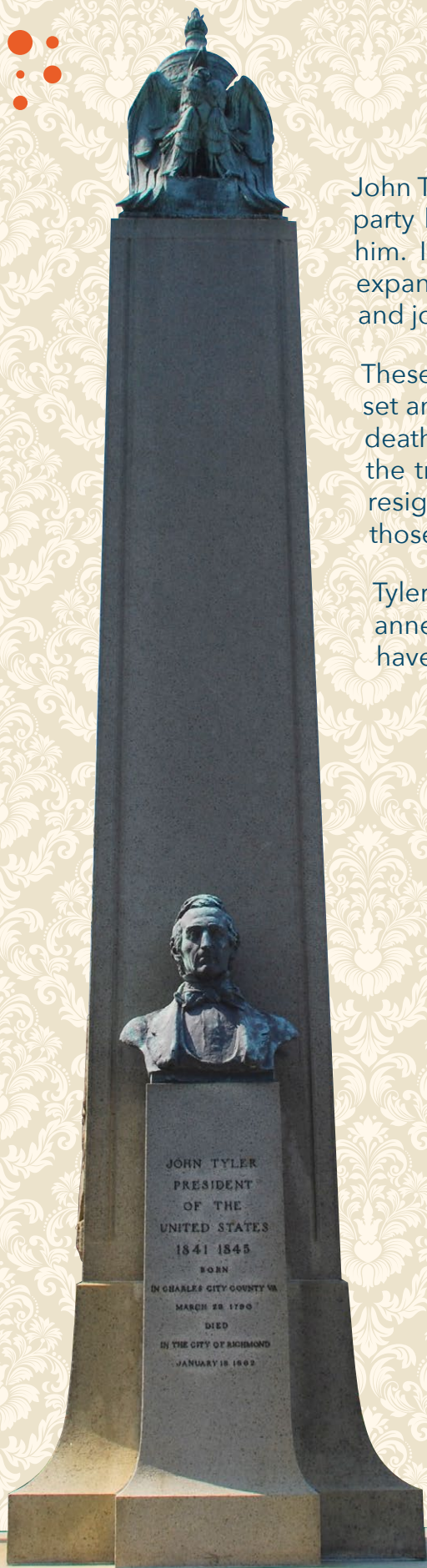


## Legacy

John Tyler's career was a rocky road – he had a difficult time deciding which party he supported and, by the time he retired, both parties had rejected him. In addition, many historians today criticize him for supporting the expansion of slavery, losing the support of his party during his presidency, and joining the Confederacy during the Civil War.

These are fair criticisms. It must be remembered, however, that he helped set an important **precedent**. By taking over the presidency after Harrison's death, he ensured that the government would smoothly transition despite the tragedy. Eight more presidents would leave office either by death or resignation. Thanks to Tyler's precedent, it was clear what would happen in those cases: the vice president would become the president.

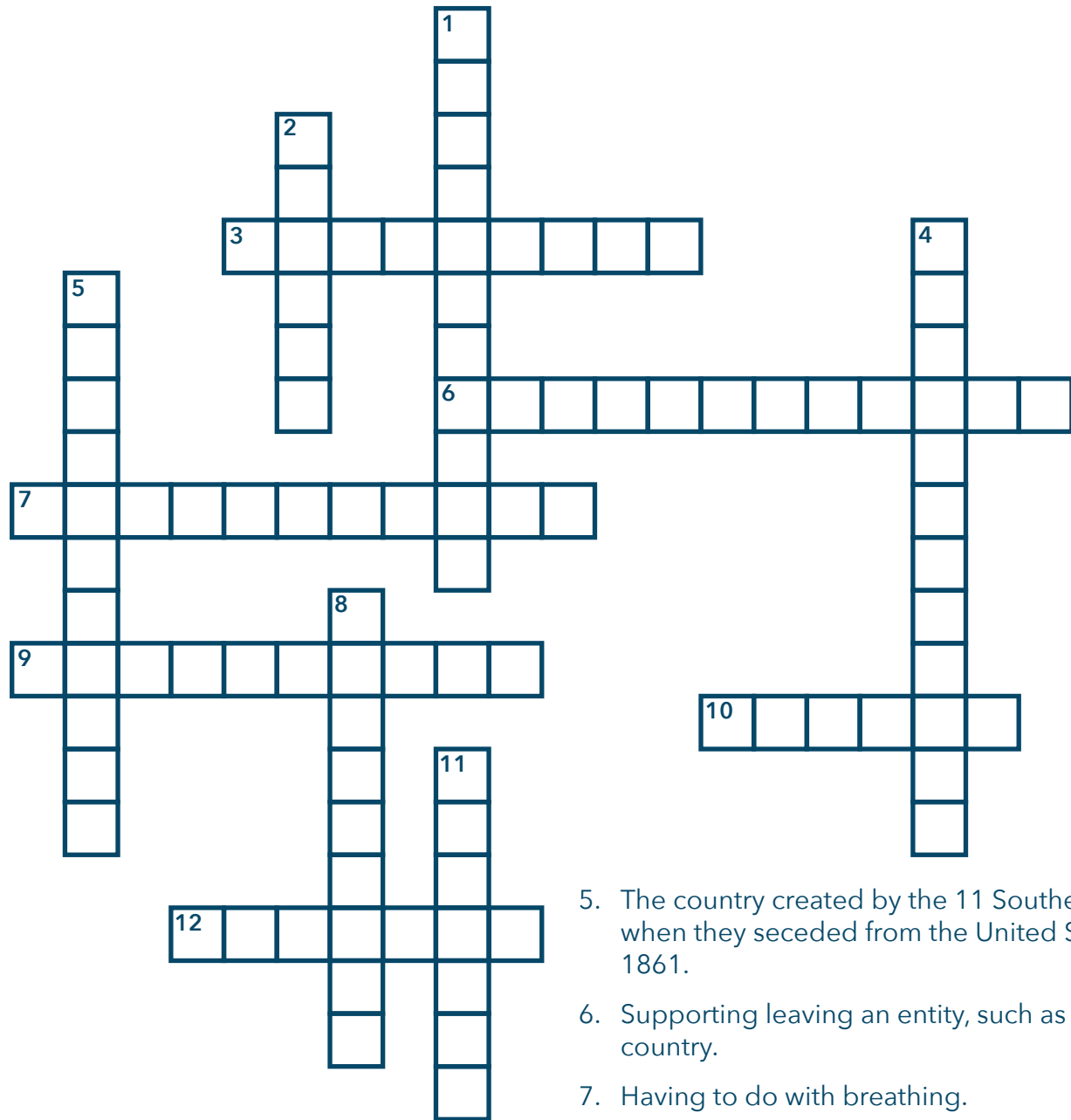
Tyler also made a major contribution to the United States by fighting to annex Texas to the Union. Although Tyler had his shortcomings, his actions have affected the nation long after his short tenure in the White House.







# Crossword



1. The person who held a job or office before the current holder.
2. A tax on something being bought from or sold to a customer in another country.
3. An event or action that serves as an example for similar situations in the future.
4. A financial institution created by the nation's government to manage the country's banking system and money supply.
5. The country created by the 11 Southern states when they seceded from the United States in 1861.
6. Supporting leaving an entity, such as a country.
7. Having to do with breathing.
8. The status of being a state in the United States.
9. The process of changing from one state to another.
10. A short, memorable phrase, often used in advertising or political campaigns.
11. To rescue or save from loss or disaster.
12. To transfer responsibilities from one person to another.

# Glossary

**Predecessor:** The person who held a job or office before the current holder.

**Transition:** The process of changing from one state to another.

**Respiratory:** Having to do with breathing.

**National Bank:** A financial institution created by the nation's government to manage the country's banking system and money supply.

**Tariff:** A tax on something being bought from or sold to a customer in another country.

**Slogan:** A short, memorable phrase, often used in advertising or political campaigns.

**Devolve:** To transfer responsibilities from one person to another.

**Salvage:** To rescue or save from loss or disaster.

**Statehood:** The status of being a state in the United States.

**Secessionist:** Supporting leaving an entity, such as a country.

**Confederate:** The country created by the 11 Southern states when they seceded from the United States in 1861.

**Precedent:** An event or action that serves as an example for similar situations in the future.

# Sources

Freehling, William. "John Tyler." *Miller Center, University of Virginia*, <https://millercenter.org/president/tyler/>. Accessed 7 September 2022.

May, Gary. *John Tyler: The American Presidents Series: The 10th President, 1841-1845*. Times Books, 2008.

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## Answers:

DOG BREED TYLER OWNED:  
IRISH WOLFHOUND

CROSSWORD:

