

presidents of the *United States of America*

"I served as the
23rd President of
the United States
and strongly
supported
America's
veterans."



Benjamin Harrison



PragerU is redefining how people think about media and education. Watched millions of times every day, PragerU is the world's leading nonprofit with educational, entertaining, pro-American videos for every age. From intellectual, fact-based 5-Minute Videos and powerful personal storytelling to animated shows made just for kids—PragerU helps people of all ages think and live better.

PragerU Kids teaches history, civics, financial literacy, and American values to children across the K-12th grade spectrum. With kids shows, books, and educational resources for every grade, PragerU Kids offers content that parents and teachers trust and children love. Watch for free and learn more at PragerUkids.com.

All text and illustrations Copyright © 2024 Prager University Foundation.

All rights reserved, including the right of reproduction in whole or in part in any form.

PragerU is a registered trademark of Prager University Foundation.

Published by PragerU

15021 Ventura Boulevard #552

Sherman Oaks, CA 91403

Young Benjamin

Benjamin Harrison was born on August 20, 1833, in North Bend, Ohio. He was the second child of John and Elizabeth Harrison. Young Benjamin was born into one of America's most prominent families. His great-grandfather Benjamin Harrison V was a Founding Father who had signed the Declaration of Independence. His grandfather William Henry Harrison served as the ninth President of the United States. His father John would go on to serve as a congressman from 1853 to 1857.

Young Benjamin grew up on the frontier and spent much of his childhood hunting, fishing, and taking care of livestock. He loved reading and was educated by private tutors. He went on to attend a prep school in Cincinnati named Farmer's College, and then Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Benjamin was an excellent student and graduated in 1852.

Interesting Facts

- He is (as of 2023) the only grandson of a president to also become president.
- He was a member of the Republican Party.
- He was nicknamed the "Human Iceberg" because of his cold personality.
- He is the only president (as of 2023) from Indiana.
- He was the last Civil War general to serve as president.
- As president, he set aside 22 million acres of land as forest reserves and established Sequoia, Yosemite, and General Grant National Parks.
- He is the earliest president whose voice has been recorded.
- Electricity was first installed in the White House during his term.



Early Career

By this time, Harrison had fallen in love with a woman named Carolina Scott, the daughter of a minister. They got married in 1853 and eventually had two children, Russell and Mary.

Harrison embarked on a career in law, moving with his wife to Indianapolis, Indiana. He also worked as a **court reporter** for the Supreme Court of Indiana.

Harrison found himself getting more and more involved in politics. He was a devout Christian and believed that it was good for Christians to get involved in government so they could serve others. He joined the Republican Party and, in 1860, campaigned for its presidential candidate Abraham Lincoln.



Harrison in the Civil War



The Civil War

Harrison served during the Civil War, eventually rising to become a brigadier general. He fought courageously under General William Tecumseh Sherman in several battles during the **Atlanta campaign**. Although Harrison could be tough on his soldiers, he earned a reputation for being a strong leader. Sherman later praised him for his "foresight, discipline and a fighting spirit."



Rise to Power

Quote

"I have long since made up my mind that with God's blessing and good health, I would succeed."
- September 1854

After the war, Harrison picked up from where he left off, practicing law and staying involved in politics. He ran for Governor in 1872 and 1876 but lost both times. He participated in the 1880 Republican National Convention and supported Ohio Congressman James A. Garfield in that year's presidential election.

Harrison finally won political office when he was chosen for the U.S. Senate, representing the state of Indiana. He took office in 1881 and spent his term fighting to provide pensions for Civil War veterans, strengthening the Navy, and implementing civil service reform. He also opposed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which ended all immigration from China.

The 1888 Presidential Election

Harrison lost his Senate seat in 1887. He refused to be discouraged and, this time, sought the highest office in the land: the presidency. He faced Maine Senator James G. Blaine, the Republican nominee from four years earlier who had lost to Democrat Grover Cleveland.

At the Republican Convention that summer, Harrison defeated Blaine for the nomination. New York politician Levi P. Morton was selected as his running mate.

Harrison faced incumbent President Cleveland in the general election. Although Cleveland won the popular vote, Harrison won the presidency in the **Electoral College**, 233 to 168.



President

Harrison got a lot accomplished as president in a short period of time. He signed the McKinley **Tariff**, which raised rates on goods imported into the United States. He believed that this would protect American companies from foreign competition. He signed the Sherman Antitrust Act, which allowed the government to **prevent** companies from acting as **monopolies**. He also allowed more Americans to obtain pensions.

Harrison accomplished this all in 1890, but he didn't stop there. He called on Congress to protect the **voting rights** of African-Americans, but the people's representatives failed to cooperate. Lastly, Harrison worked hard to strengthen the **Navy** so the country would be recognized as a world power.

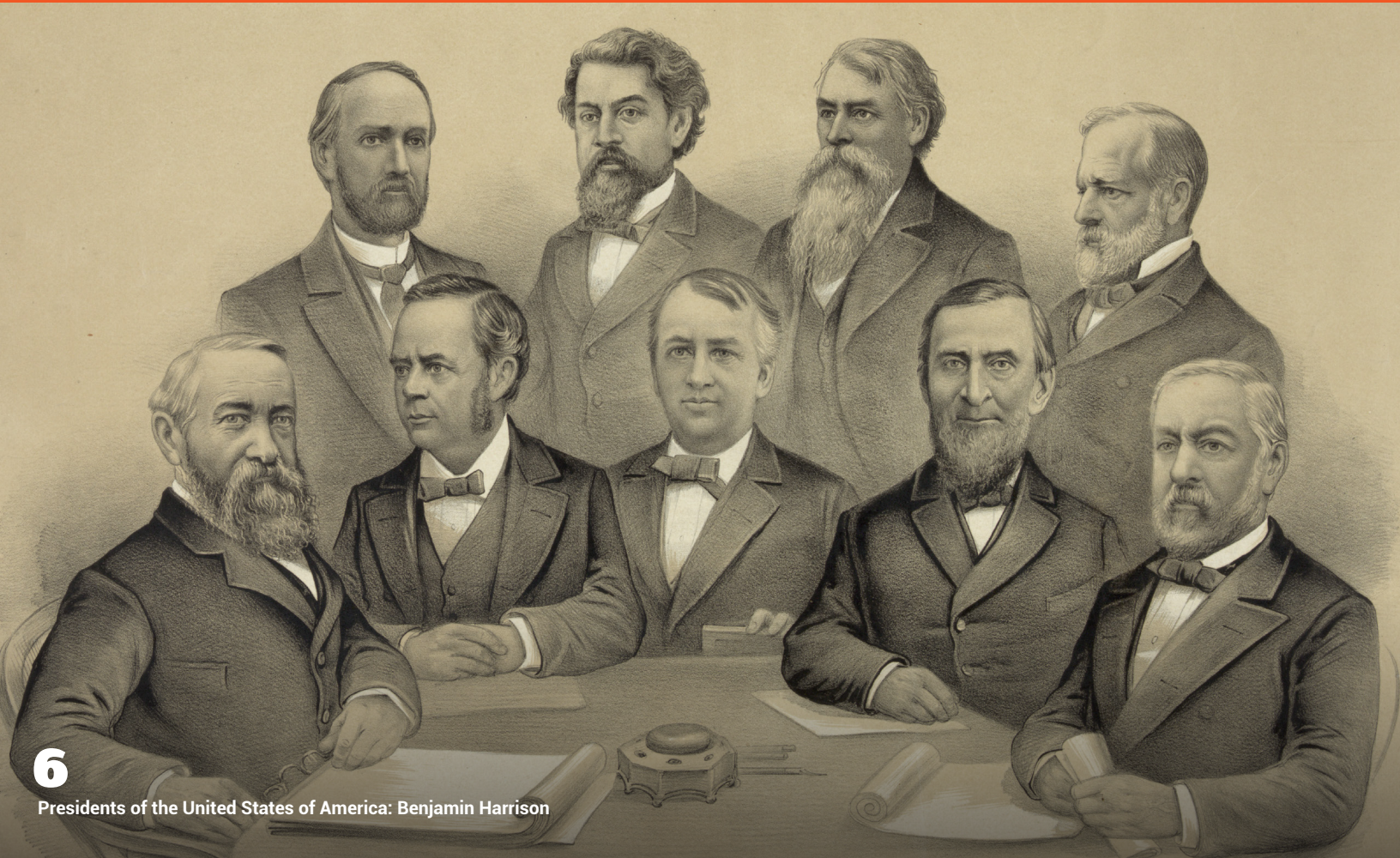
Even though Harrison was proud of these accomplishments, many people felt that he had made the federal government too powerful. They were very mad about the tariff because it made basic goods more expensive. In addition, they were concerned that his policies on pensions cost too much money. When Harrison ran for re-election in 1892, he lost to his old rival Grover Cleveland. Even worse, Harrison's wife Caroline died of tuberculosis during the campaign.

Quote

"When and under what conditions is the black man to have a free ballot? When is he in fact to have those full civil rights which have so long been his in law?"

- December 1889

Harrison and his Cabinet

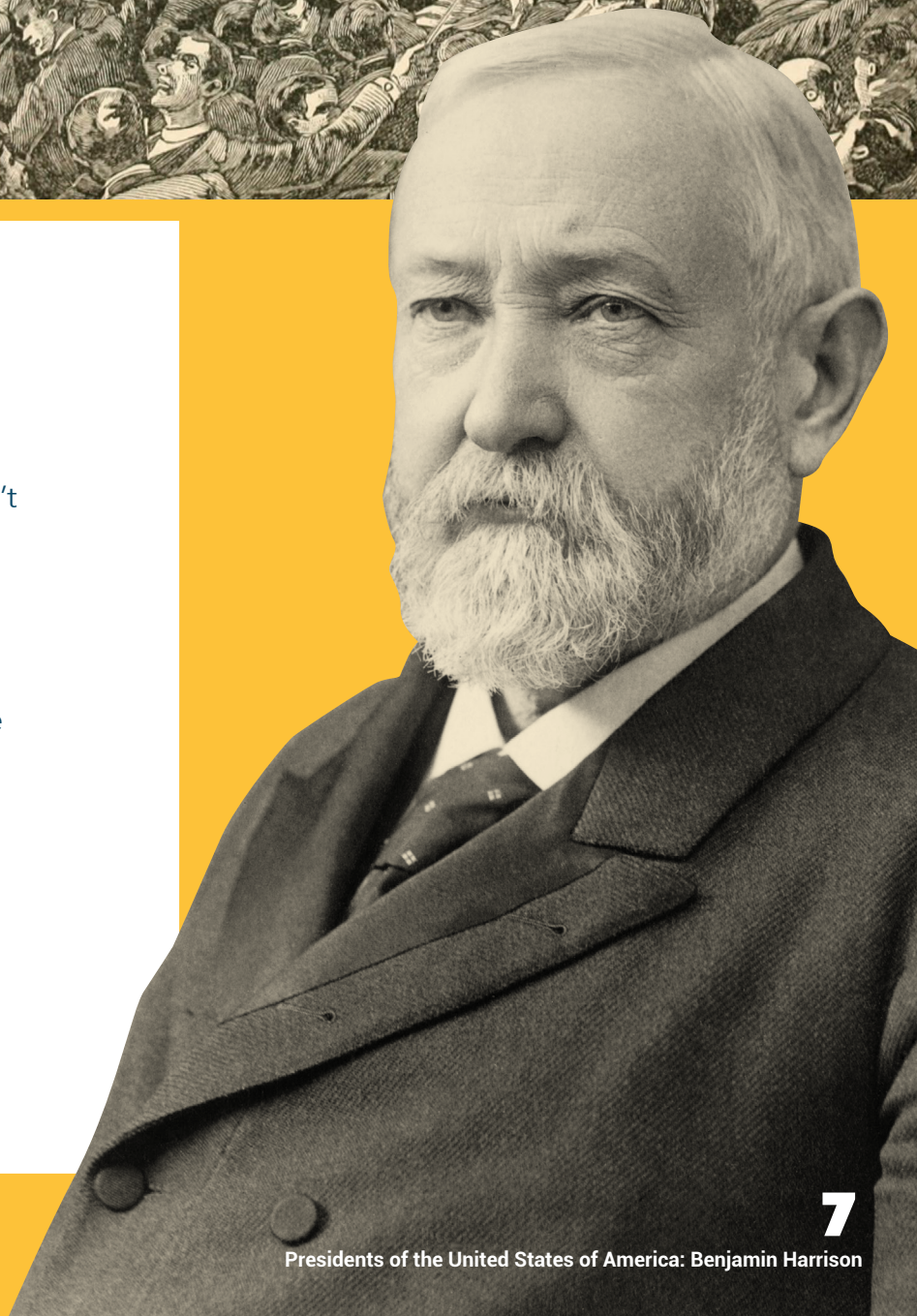




The Human Iceberg

Harrison was a busy man and didn't have much time for socializing. He was known to be stiff and serious, and he didn't enjoy having conversations with other people. Some felt that he had a cold personality. He was even given the nickname the "Human Iceberg."

He was, however, a great public speaker. He could inspire people with his words, even when he spoke **extemporaneously**. This ability served him well throughout his political career.



Quote

*"The general condition of our country is one of great prosperity. The blessing of God has rested upon our fields and upon our people."
- September 1892*

Retirement

Harrison went back home to Indianapolis, Indiana. He stayed active as a lawyer and even gave public lectures where he discussed important political issues. He also enjoyed playing with his grandchildren.

In 1896, Harrison married a second time, this time to a woman named Mary Dimmick. They had one child, a daughter named Elizabeth.

Harrison performed one last act of public service when he helped negotiate a dispute between the United Kingdom and Venezuela in 1898. He was hailed as an elder statesman.

On March 13, 1901, he died of pneumonia at his home in Indianapolis at the age of 67.

Legacy

Benjamin Harrison is remembered mostly for being the first grandson of a president to become president himself. He is the only president to have lost his re-election campaign to the same person he had originally beaten to win the presidency.

Like many one-term presidents, Harrison is often considered a failure. This, however, isn't completely fair. Harrison was quite successful, passing many important pieces of legislation. By strengthening the Navy, he helped prepare the United States for the dominant role it would play in the 20th century. He also deserves credit for calling on Congress to protect the civil rights of black Americans.

Not everyone believes that the legislation Harrison signed helped the country. Some people believe that his tariffs raised prices for everyday Americans and his pension policies were too expensive. Still, Harrison deserves to be remembered for being an important and effective American leader in the 19th century.



True or False?

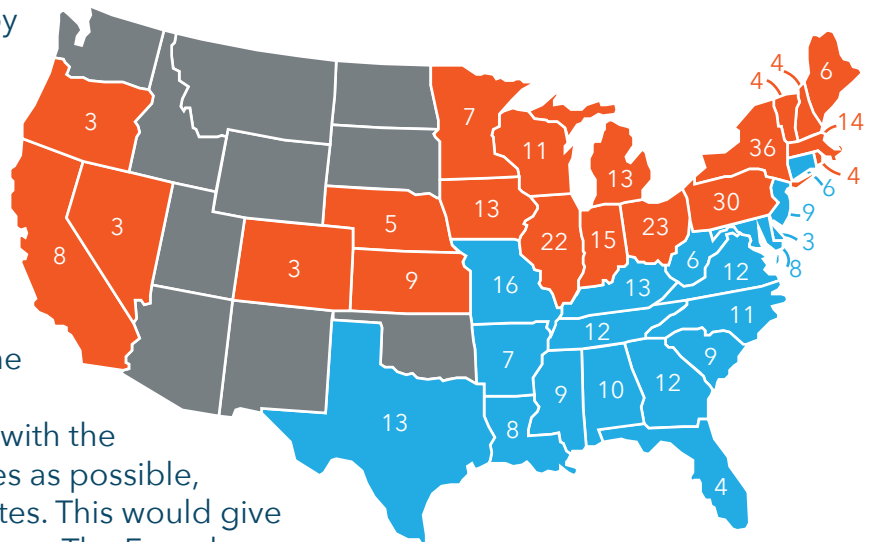
Decide if the following statements about Harrison's life are true or false.

- T F** Harrison's great-grandfather served as President of the United States.
- T F** Harrison fought for African-Americans to have the right to vote.
- T F** Harrison served three presidential terms.
- T F** Harrison had a cold personality but was very good at public speaking.
- T F** Harrison served in the Revolutionary War.
- T F** Harrison was praised for being a good soldier with great foresight and discipline.
- T F** Harrison strengthened the United States Navy.
- T F** Harrison was an architect before becoming president.

What's Up with the Electoral College?

Benjamin Harrison became president by winning the Electoral College, but he did not win the popular vote. How can you be president when more people voted for the other candidate? This might seem unfair, but it is part of a system that ensures fairness in elections.

The Founding Fathers worried that, if the winner was based on popular vote, candidates would only go to the states with the largest populations to win as many votes as possible, and ignore all of the less populated states. This would give states with large cities an unfair advantage. The Founders created the Electoral College, which ensured that presidential candidates had to get support from all across the country—not just the most populated states. In 1888, Benjamin Harrison lost the popular vote by a slim margin but won more states than Cleveland, which meant he had more support around the country.



- Cleveland**
168 electoral votes,
5,539,118 popular votes
- Harrison**
233 electoral votes,
5,449,825 popular votes

Glossary

Court Reporter: The person who documents what is said during a court proceeding.

Atlanta Campaign: A series of battles during the American Civil War that took place in Georgia and around Atlanta in 1864. General William T. Sherman led the Union armies against the Confederate forces throughout the campaign. Sherman's victories played a major role in the Union's ultimate victory.

Pension: A regular payment made to support someone during their retirement.

Civil Service Reform: Government laws and actions in the late 19th and early 20th century that were intended to reduce corruption in the federal government and allow for public officials to be hired based on their abilities and merit.

Electoral College: The group of people that, according to the U.S. Constitution, elect the President and Vice President of the United States.

Tariff: A tax on something being bought or sold to a customer in another country. Many people believe that, by taxing items imported from other countries and making them more expensive, Americans will, instead, buy those same items from companies in the United States. They believe that this helps American companies from foreign competition.

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.

Voting Rights: The ability to participate in choosing the individuals who lead the country. This is usually done by selecting candidates on an official ballot.

Navy: A branch of the United States Armed Forces that is trained to operate at sea. They usually have warships and other supporting vessels.

Extemporaneously: Performed with little or no advance preparation.

Sources

"About The President Benjamin Harrison Conservation Trust Fund." *Indiana Department of Natural Resources*, <https://www.in.gov/dnr/land-acquisition/about-the-trust/>. Accessed 16 December 2022.

"Benjamin Harrison." *Benjamin Harrison Presidential Site*, <https://bhpsite.org/learn/benjamin-harrison/>. Accessed 16 December 2022.

"Benjamin Harrison." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Benjamin-Harrison-president-of-United-States/>. Accessed 16 December 2022.

Calhoun, Charles W. *Benjamin Harrison: The American Presidents Series: The 23rd President, 1889-1893*. Times Books, 2005.

Spetter, Allan B. "Benjamin Harrison." *Miller Center, University of Virginia*, <https://millercenter.org/president/bharrison/>. Accessed 16 December 2022.

Images: Getty Images, WikiCommons, FreePix

Answers

BENJAMIN HARRISON'S PET:
A GOAT NAMED OLD WHISKERS

TRUE OR FALSE?

1. FALSE
2. TRUE
3. FALSE
4. TRUE
5. FALSE
6. TRUE
7. TRUE
8. FALSE

READY FOR MORE?

Experience all the **FREE CONTENT** PragerU Kids has to offer!



STREAM FREE SHOWS ON YOUR TV OR TABLET

Download our FREE mobile or TV app to stream every PragerU Kids show! Or, watch any time at PragerUkids.com.



ENJOY HOURS OF FREE SHOWS

Browse over 300 educational videos for K-12, including game shows, cartoons, and inspiring reality shows.



EXPLORE WHOLESOME STORIES & AMAZING HISTORY

Download free e-books at PragerUkids.com or purchase printed copies on Amazon.



FREE RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS & PARENTS

Supplement your child's viewing experience with lesson plans & worksheets that meet educational standards.

GUESS OR MESS

A PragerU Kids Game Show



WATCH NOW!



Test Your Knowledge of Our PragerU Kids Biography Books with This Fun and Messy Trivia Game Show for Kids!



Experience Fun, Interactive,
and Educational Content at
PRAGERUKIDS.COM