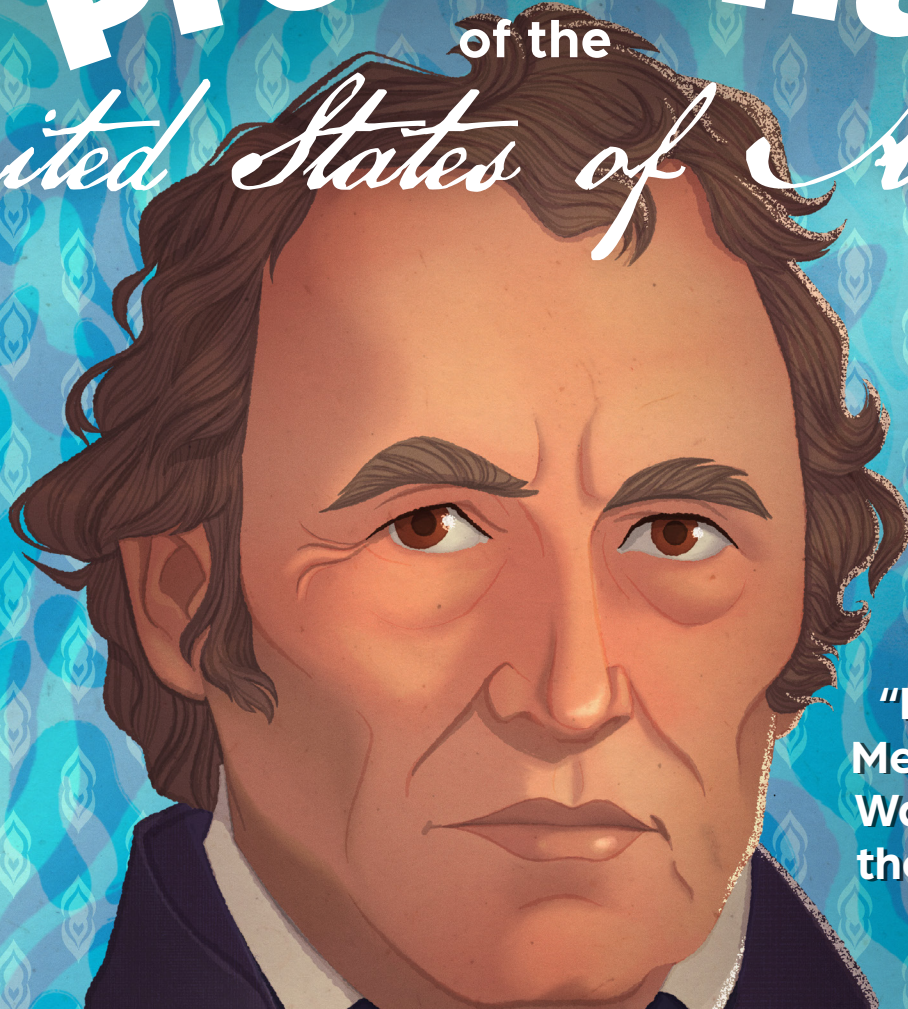
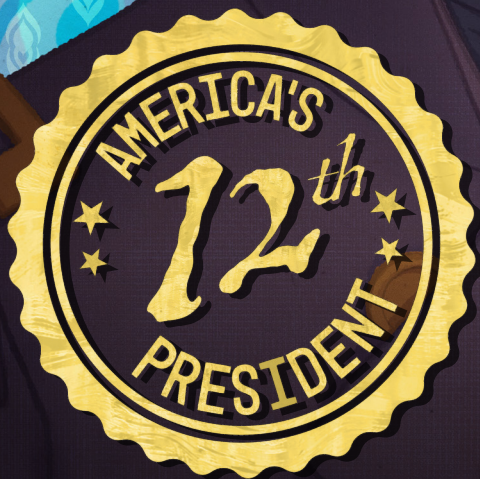


# presidents of the

# *United States of America*



**"I helped win the Mexican-American War and served as the 12th President of the United States."**



**Zachary Taylor**





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# Become a Presidential Historian by Solving This Puzzle

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

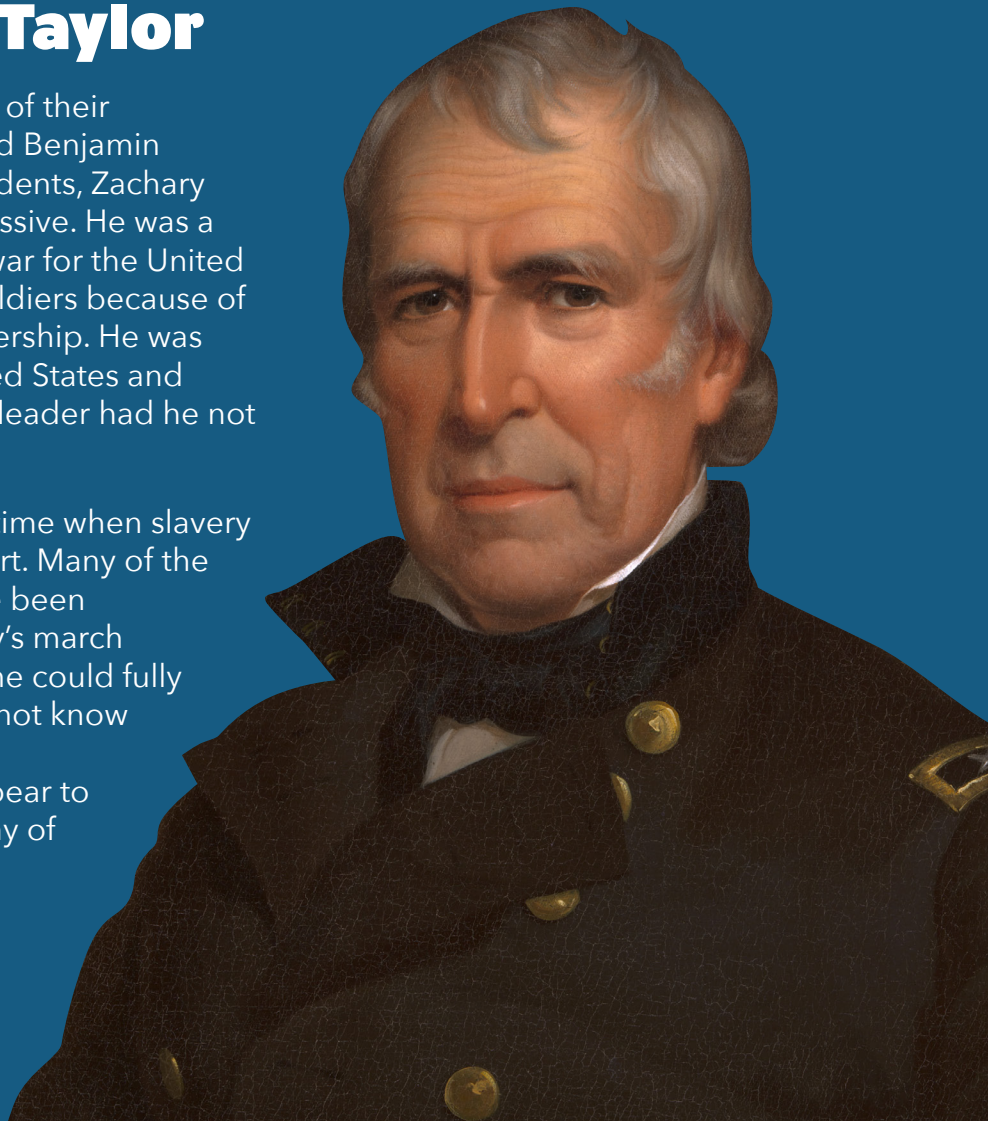
President Taylor once owned a horse that had previously performed in the circus. We need to know the horse's name. Your task is to help us uncover the answer! Hidden in the text are bolded letters. Read this book carefully to find them and fill the letters into the blanks below in the order they appear.

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

## Meet Zachary Taylor

Americans have forgotten about many of their presidents, such as Millard Fillmore and Benjamin Harrison. Of all of these **obscure** presidents, Zachary Taylor might be one of the most impressive. He was a successful general who helped win a war for the United States. He earned the respect of his soldiers because of his steady, down-to-earth style of leadership. He was elected the 12th President of the United States and might have been an effective national leader had he not died so soon into his term.

Taylor served in the White House at a time when slavery was threatening to split the nation apart. Many of the presidents who came after Taylor have been criticized for failing to stop the country's march towards Civil War. Taylor died before he could fully address the nation's divisions. We cannot know for sure if he would have been able to prevent the Civil War, but he does appear to have been a stronger leader than many of the presidents who came after him.

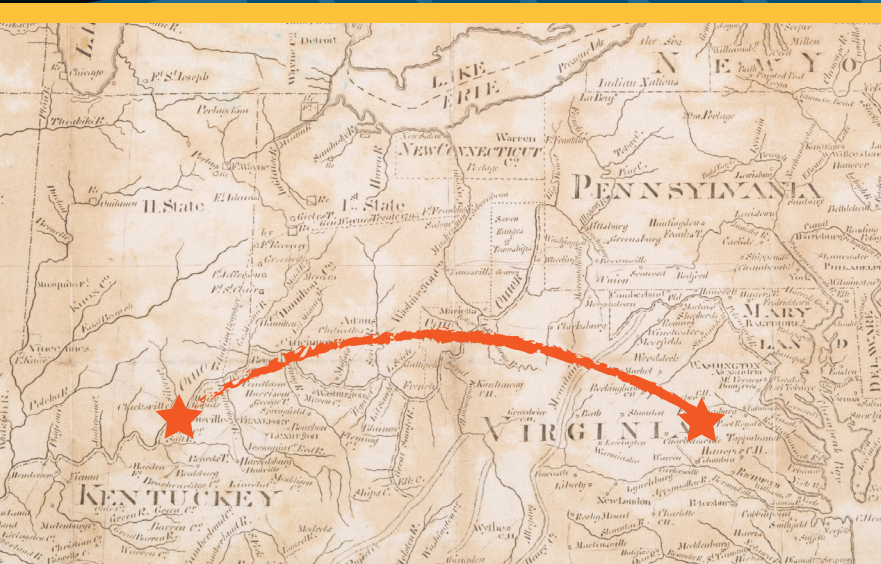




# Young Zachary

Zachary Taylor was born to a prominent family on November 24, 1784 in Orange County, Virginia. He was the third child of Richard and Sarah Taylor. His father Richard had served under General George Washington during the American Revolution, including in the pivotal Battle of Trenton. The Taylors moved to Louisville, Kentucky just before Zachary had his first birthday.

Young Zachary grew up in the wild **frontier** and eventually had seven siblings. By 1800, their family owned 10,000 acres and 26 enslaved servants. While Zachary wasn't a great student in school, he still learned the value of hard work on the family farm.



# Interesting Facts

- He was nicknamed “Old Rough and Ready” because he was a tough warrior who was willing to face the same hardships his soldiers endured.
- He was a member of the Whig Party.
- James Madison, the 4th President of the United States, was his second cousin.
- He was the first president to have served in no prior elected office.
- His daughter, Sarah Knox Taylor, married Jefferson Davis, the future President of the Confederate States of America, in 1835.
- He was the second president to die in office.





## Early Career

Ever since his youth, Taylor had been inspired by his father's service in the Revolution and wanted a military career of his own. In 1808, when he was 23, he joined the Army and received a commission as a first lieutenant. He also met Margaret Mackall Smith, who came from a prominent family in Maryland. They got married in 1810 and eventually had five daughters and one son. Sadly, two of their daughters died at a young age.

During the War of 1812, Taylor helped defend Fort Harrison in the Indiana Territory from an attack by Native Americans. Taylor was praised as a hero and awarded the rank of brevet major. For the next three decades, Taylor endured military life on the frontier. He was stationed in Wisconsin, Mississippi, Kansas, Louisiana, and many other states. He acquired large amounts of land in Kentucky, Louisiana, and Mississippi and became a wealthy man. He also fought Native Americans in the **Black Hawk** and Second **Seminole wars**. At the same time, he respected Native Americans and wanted to protect them from white settlers. Taylor's soldiers admired him because he didn't mind sharing in their hardships and struggles. They nicknamed him "Old Rough and Ready" because of his toughness and rugged appearance.



## Quote

*"My life has been devoted to arms, yet I look upon war at all times, and under all circumstances, as a national calamity, to be avoided if compatible with the national honor."*

*- April 1848*



# Mexican-American War

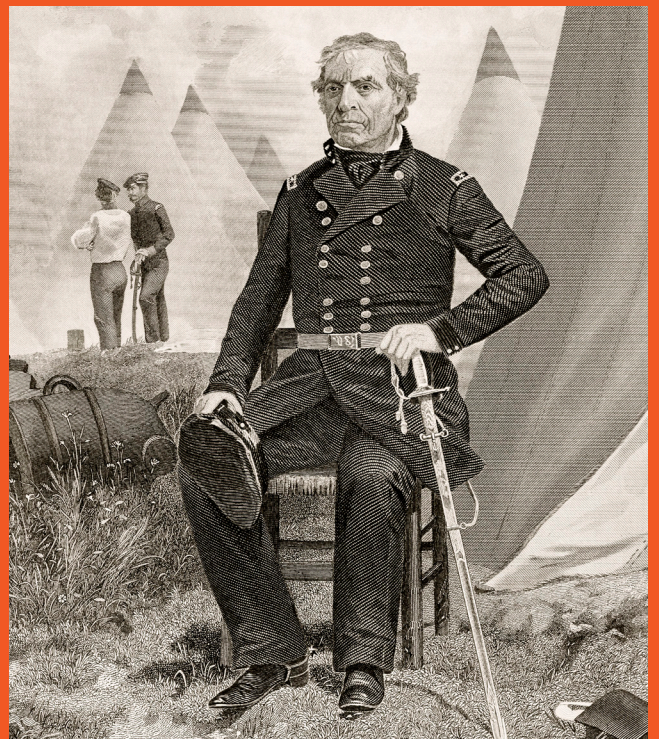
Zachary Taylor became famous across the country during the **Mexican-American War**. It all started in the spring of 1846, when President James K. Polk sent a force of about three and a half thousand men, led by Taylor, into territory near the Rio Grande River. Both Texas, which had just joined the United States, and the country of Mexico claimed the area as their own. Mexico considered Polk's move an act of aggression and, in April, its forces fired on Taylor's men. The war had effectively begun.

Soon, Taylor was made a major general and he and General Winfield Scott became the two greatest military leaders of the war. At the battles of Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, Monterrey, and Buena Vista, Taylor and his men were outnumbered by the enemy. In fact, at Buena Vista, they were outnumbered by a three-to-one margin. Despite this, Taylor and his army won every battle. By the fall of 1847, General Scott captured Mexico's capital, Mexico City. The United States had won a stunning victory.

The nation was thrilled by Taylor's unlikely victories. Soon, he was being compared to previous American military heroes, such as George Washington and Andrew Jackson. Future Civil War general and President Ulysses S. Grant later wrote of Taylor, "No soldier could face either danger or responsibility more calmly than he... He was known to every soldier in his army, and was respected by all."

## Quote

*"I have no private purposes to accomplish, no party projects to build up, no enemies to punish — nothing to serve but my country."  
- April 1848*





# 1848 Presidential Election

## Quote

*"The will of the people, as expressed through their representatives in Congress, ought to be respected and carried out by the Executive."*

*- April 1848*

Taylor's victories immediately made him a candidate for president. However, it wasn't clear which of the two parties—the Whigs or the Democrats—he supported, and he had no real political experience. He hadn't even voted in an election before. It turned out that there were things Taylor liked and disliked about both parties. Most of all, he believed that the power of the president should be limited and that Congress should take the lead in governing the country. This aligned him closer to the Whig Party, which nominated him as their candidate for president in 1848, along with former New York Congressman Millard Fillmore as his running mate. Taylor defeated Democratic Senator Lewis Cass in a close race that fall.

## Quote

*"In the discharge of these duties my guide will be the Constitution, which I this day swear to 'preserve, protect, and defend.'"*

*- Inaugural Address, March 1849*



## Campaign Poster

Suppose you were to run for class president. What would your campaign poster look like?

Design a campaign poster. You might try to use a powerful slogan or images to show who you are and what you stand for.

# President

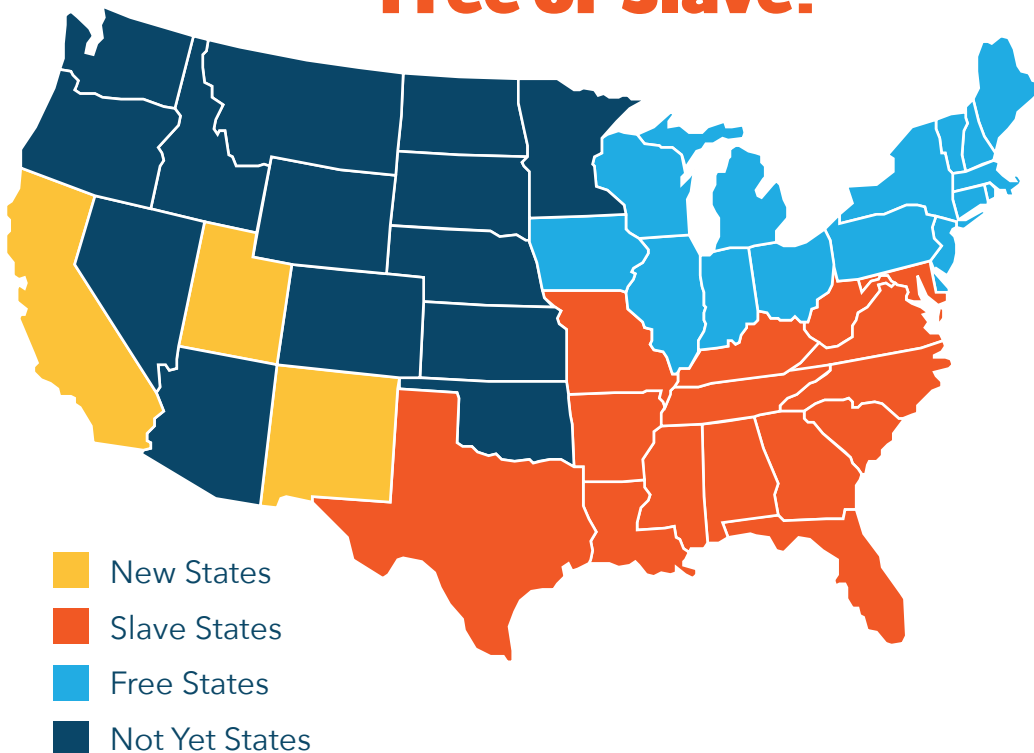


Zachary Taylor took the office as the 12th President of the United States on March 5, 1849. He spent most of his presidency dealing with the issue of what to do about the territories won during the Mexican-American War. At the time, the United States was composed of 30 states, 15 of which were **free states** and 15 of which were **slave states**. Meanwhile, Americans were debating whether slavery should be allowed in the new territories—many Northerners wanted slavery abolished while many Southerners wanted to expand slavery westward. Both sides worried that adding more states would tip the balance and give the other side more votes in Congress. Taylor decided to urge those in California and New Mexico, likely free states, to apply for statehood. Taylor's plan would add at least two free states to the **Union**, giving the free states more votes in Congress. Many were surprised

that Taylor, a slaveholder, would be willing to give the advantage to the free states, but he didn't think that slavery would work in the new territories as Southerners felt it did in the South.

Southerners were enraged and some began discussing leaving the Union. Taylor responded that he would hang those guilty of **secession**. His priority, above all, was to preserve the Union. Many people worried that a civil war would break out, and several leaders in Congress, especially Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and John C. Calhoun, debated about what to do. Clay came up with a compromise in January of 1850 which included admitting California as a free state and allowing the people in the New Mexico and Utah territories to decide whether to have slavery. Taylor strongly opposed the compromise.

## Free or Slave?



## Quote

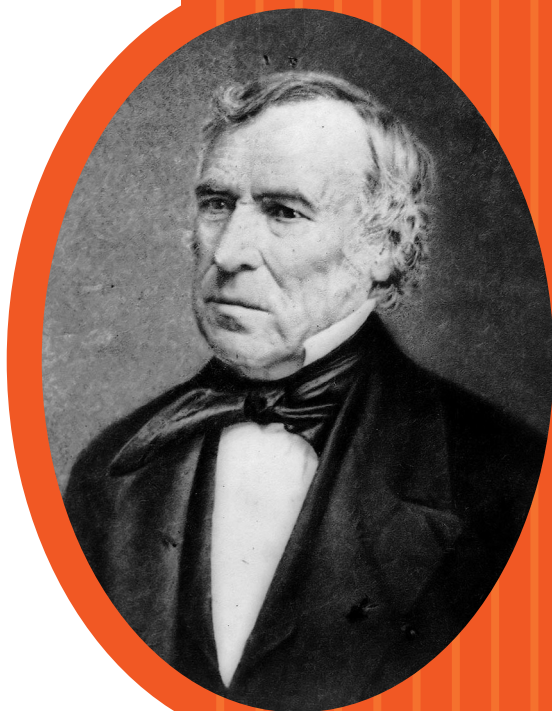
*“Attachment to the Union of the States should be habitually fostered in every American heart. For more than half a century, during which kingdoms and empires have fallen, this Union has stood unshaken... Whatever dangers may threaten it, I shall stand by it and maintain it.”*  
- December 1849





# Death of a President

In the middle of the controversy about slavery, Taylor attended Independence Day celebrations at the Washington Monument on July 4, 1850. It was a very hot day, and Taylor ate a lot of apples and cherries and drank ice-cold milk to stay cool. Soon, he began experiencing intense stomach pains. His condition worsened and, on July 9, 1850, he died in the White House at the age of 65. He was the second American president to die in office. Vice President Millard Fillmore succeeded him to the presidency. Fillmore reversed Taylor's policy and signed Clay's plan, which became known as the Compromise of 1850, into law.



## Word Search

O B G A O R F Z U F D R C Q M  
 T B K I L U R J X T U I M E S  
 B X S N G X O I P H J N X Z E  
 R X G C Q T N I M W O I A I T  
 T Z W T U Z T A J I C C I Q A  
 X O M A A R I J N A H E F X T  
 F K U Y K G E U N A X D K T S  
 A B P L F R R A R F B Y U F E  
 U R H O X J M Y D I A Q G F V  
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 P M R E R S E C E S S I O N L  
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 Q H C F K I N Y M M I Q B A O  
 S A H H X M C S Y O Y L X Q R  
 N P R E S I D E N T A M C U L

Free states  
 Slave states  
 Union  
 Secession

Arsenic  
 Taylor  
 Zachary  
 Soldier

Obscure  
 Frontier  
 Mexican-American  
 President

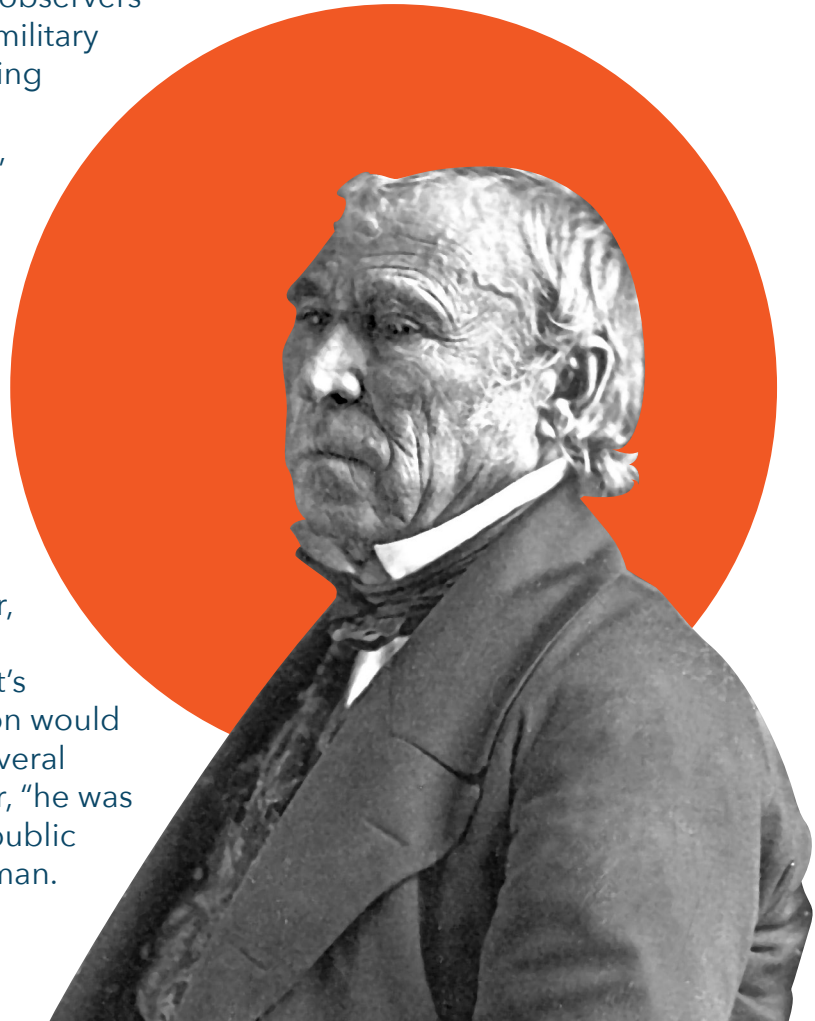
## Death By Poison?

Over a century after Taylor's death, in the 1970s, conspiracy theories spread that America's 12th president was actually poisoned to death and was, therefore, the first chief executive to be assassinated. University of Florida Professor Clara Rising claimed that slaveowners, angered by Taylor's opposition to the expansion of slavery, killed him with a fatal dose of **arsenic**. To determine if the theory was true, Taylor's descendants allowed his casket to be opened and his remains to be tested for poison. The medical results did find some arsenic in Taylor's remains, but it was about the usual amount in most adults. Although historians aren't sure what exact stomach ailment killed Taylor, they are confident he wasn't poisoned.

## Legacy

Like many obscure presidents, Zachary Taylor is often ignored, and even mocked, by modern day observers. These observers overlook Taylor's impressive achievements as a military leader, especially his heroic victories despite being outnumbered multiple times. Modern historians often rank him as a weak president. This ranking, however, is unfair since he served as chief executive for barely over a year and didn't have enough time to fully demonstrate his leadership skills. What we do know is that, unlike most of his successors, Taylor was a confident commander-in-chief, threatening to end the threat of secession, and taking a strong stance against the spread of slavery.

After Taylor died, his successor Millard Fillmore signed the 1850 Compromise, which temporarily delayed civil war. It did not, however, solve the issue of slavery. We will never know if Taylor would have prevented the Civil War, but it's possible that, had he not died in office, the nation would have been better off with his firm leadership. Several decades later, Theodore Roosevelt said of Taylor, "he was an able and gallant soldier, a loyal and upright public servant, and a most kindly, honest, and truthful man. His death was a greater loss to the country than perhaps the people ever knew."



## Peacemaker

President Taylor said that war should be "avoided if compatible with the national honor." Being a peacemaker means helping solve conflicts in a peaceful way. Think of ways you can be a peacemaker at home, at school, with your friends, and with strangers.



# Glossary

**Obscure:** Not well known or understood.

**Frontier:** An area that is not populated or well known, often in the wilderness.

**Black Hawk War:** A war in 1832 between the United States and its Native American allies against a group of Native Americans led by Black Hawk. Zachary Taylor, as well as Abraham Lincoln, served in this war. The United States and its allies won the war.

**Seminole wars:** A series of three wars that took place in Florida from 1816 to 1858 between the United States and several Native American tribes. Several presidents, including Andrew Jackson and Zachary Taylor, participated in the war. The United States ultimately won the war.

**Mexican-American War:** A war from 1846 to 1848 between the United States and Mexico. President James K. Polk and generals Zachary Taylor and Winfield Scott led the United States to an overwhelming victory.

**Free states:** A state in the United States prior to the Civil War in which slavery was illegal.

**Slave states:** A state in the United States prior to the Civil War in which slavery was legal.

**Union:** A term used to refer to the United States, with emphasis on how it comprises multiple states.

**Secession:** The act of leaving an organization or government.

**Arsenic:** A chemical element that can be poisonous to humans.

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## Answers:

THE NAME OF TAYLOR'S HORSE:  
APOLLO





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