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Presidents Day**By: Kennedy Aikey, Hailey Trimpey, and Caleb Clayton****Introduction:**

Across American History, many outstanding individuals have held the title of President of the United States. It is a distinction only a select few can claim, but some stand out as truly remarkable leaders. George Washington served valiantly as General of the Colonial Army in the founding of our country, later becoming our nation's first president—casting the mold of what America's premier leader should look like for his successors. Abraham Lincoln led our country through the Civil War, rejoined the Confederacy to the Union, issued the Emancipation Proclamation, and exemplified how even when all seems lost, we the people are able to form a more perfect union. Presidents Day is how the American people celebrate the birthdays of Washington and Lincoln, as well as honor the integrity of the office of the President of the United States of America.

Question #1 How did Presidents Day come about?

Prior to the establishment of the holiday, we know today as “Presidents Day”, the birthday of President George Washington was celebrated as a national holiday on February 22 in the United States of America. Declared a national holiday on January 31, 1879, it served as a reminder of one of the biggest figures of our nation's founding, and a sincere way to show appreciation for our nation's first president. The celebration of Washington's Birthday called for an exemption from a workday for federal office employees on February 22, expanding further to other businesses and institutions over time. It would inspire states to begin initiatives to celebrate the birthdays of other presidents, namely President Abraham Lincoln, and even the celebration of the office of the presidency as national holidays.

To adjoin all of these celebrations into a collective national holiday, a committee naming themselves the Presidents' Day National Committee was established in 1951. The holiday of Washington's birthday would be expanded upon on June 28, 1968, as Congress passed the Uniform Monday Holiday Act. Effective immediately beginning from January 1, 1971, the Act was intended, “to provide for uniform annual observances of certain legal public holidays on Mondays, and for other purposes”. Henceforth, the celebration of Washington's birthday was to occur on the third Monday of every February, as prescribed in section “A” of the act. Changes made to the holiday also began honoring the birthday of President Abraham Lincoln, whose birthday happened to fall on February 12, as well as the celebration of the American Presidency as a primary representative of our nation's leadership. With these provisions set forth, the holiday was adopted to honor both men in unison every third Monday of February. In further addressing the namesake of the holiday, Congress rejected changing the name to Presidents Day, as the act still identifies the holiday officially as “Washington's Birthday”. Nevertheless, the moniker of “Presidents Day” is marked on calendars and survives as the holiday by the American public.

Question #2 Who are considered to be our nation's *greatest* presidents?

It can be hard to distinguish who the great or best presidents of the United States are because everyone can have different opinions. However, regular surveys of those who study the presidency reveal that several individuals consistently stand out as remarkable. These include: Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, and Franklin D. Roosevelt. C-Span conducted a survey of professionals to try to have a better understanding of who the great presidents are and what makes them great. C-Span based their survey off of the president's abilities in the following areas, "Public Persuasion, Crisis Leadership, Economic Management, Moral Authority, International Relations, Administrative Skills, Relations with Congress, Vision/Setting an Agenda, Pursued Equal Justice for All and Performance Within the Context of the Times." They had found through their research that Lincoln, Washington, and FDR were at the top of their list. Other presidents are still considered to be great presidents, but these three seem to stick out the most.

Abraham Lincoln was a powerful leader, who had great ability to negotiate and govern. He was able to keep our nation together in the midst of the Civil War. Lincoln faced a number of hardships throughout his presidency, yet he had perseverance and was able to carefully navigate all of these issues. George Washington truly set the standard for all other United States presidents, because he had to do it first. Washington was a natural leader, and was well known for his drive and strong responsibility. Americans had great trust in Washington and he was able to deliver by staying very committed to the presidency. Franklin D. Roosevelt is known for his contributions to ending the Great Depression by introducing "The New Deal." FDR entered office during a trying time in America, but was able to use his presidential power to make a huge impact. Roosevelt was also challenged with dealing with the tension between Japan, Germany, and the United States. He was able to deal with all of these hardships by remaining transparent with the citizens through "fireside chats" and giving them hope for the future. Through these three men, we are able to see how much of an impact a president can have if they have strong leadership characteristics.

Question #3 Highlights of Ohio Presidents

Ohio is sometimes referred to as "Mother of Presidents." This is because eight United States presidents were from Ohio, seven of which were born there. These include William Henry Harrison, Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, James A. Garfield, Benjamin Harrison, William McKinley, William Howard Taft, and Warren G. Harden. Of these presidents, Grant, McKinley, and Taft were some of the most influential.

Ulysses S. Grant, the 18th president, was from Point Pleasant, Ohio. He left Ohio and his rural upbringing to attend West Point at the age of seventeen. Prior to his presidency, Grant was appointed lieutenant general and was entrusted with command over Union armies. He went on to become president in 1869 and was reelected in 1872. While he was best known for his

service as the Union general, during his time as president, Grant had success in ratifying the 15th Amendment and establishing the National Parks Service.

William McKinley, the United States' 25th president, was from Niles, Ohio. McKinley had several careers prior to entering the political world which included that of a teacher, attorney, prosecutor, and Civil War Major. McKinley came into office in 1897 and remained there until his assassination on September 14, 1901. During his time as president, McKinley led the U.S. to a victory in the Spanish-American War and raised protective tariffs in order to advance American industries that were harmed during the Depression of 1893.

William Howard Taft, the 27th president, was born in Cincinnati Ohio. After attending Yale, he returned to Cincinnati and served as the Dean of the University of Cincinnati. Taft served as president from 1909-1913 and is known for the passing of the 16th amendment along with its ratification in 1913 and establishing a postal savings system. Taft preferred law to politics and in 1921 he became the Chief Justice of the United States. This made him the only person to hold the highest positions in both the executive and judicial branches.

Conclusion:

Presidents Day remains a holiday practiced in honor of the birthdays of Washington and Lincoln every third Monday of February, but it transcends the celebration of two of our nation's finest presidents. It serves further as a means to celebrate all who have proudly served in the oval office of the President of the United States of America. The President holds a prominent position as leader of the nation and as a leader of the world. So many responsibilities fall upon this one individual and the individuals who make up their staff. As such, it is important to recognize the tough decisions and the profound sacrifices such people must make in their lives for the sake of benefiting the lives of others across the world.