44 Facts About the U.S. Presidents - mental_floss on YouTube (Ep.52)

List Show
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Hi I'm John Green. Welcome to my salon and my fake fireplace. This is Mental Floss on YouTube.

1. And did you know that George Washington is considered by experts to be America's richest president? I mean, in today's terms, Washington's net worth was around 500 million dollars.

Anyway, that's the first of 44 facts about American presidents that I'm going to share with you today. One for each presidency. That's right, Grover Cleveland gets two facts.

[intro music]

2. Although of course these days you know him as a Founding Father, as a lawyer, John Adams defended the eight British soldiers involved in the Boston Massacre and he got six of them acquitted.

3. The Jeffersonia plant is actually named after Thomas Jefferson. Botanist Benjamin Smith Barton knew that Jefferson was interested in botany, so in 1792, he renamed the wildflower in honor of him.

4. James Madison's second cousin was American president Zachary Taylor.

5. The capital of Liberia, Monrovia, is named after James Monroe.

6. John Quincy Adams and his wife Louisa used the Harry Potter and Ginny Weasley method of baby naming. Their four kids were called George Washington Adams, John Adams the second, Charles Francis Adams, and Louisa Adams.

7. In 1835, a man named Richard Lawrence tried to assassinate Andrew Jackson. Lawrence's two separate pistols both misfired, then Andrew Jackson chased him away with a walking cane.

8. The first president to be born a citizen of the United States was Martin "Look at those sideburns" Van Buren. Although for the record, they weren't called sideburns at the time, they were called side whiskers. They wouldn't be known as sideburns until Civil War general Ambrose Burnside. Extra fact for you today on Mental Floss!

9. William Henry Harrison dropped out of the University of Pennsylvania Medical School and then went on to be a quitter as president as well because he died after just, like, a month in office.

10. John Tyler had the most children of any president - eight with his first wife and seven with his second wife for a grand total of fifteen kids.

11. When he was a baby, James K. Polk's parents intended to baptize him as a Presbyterian. But his father, Samuel Polk, wouldn't profess his own faith, which the ceremony required. Samuel got into a fight with the minister and the baptism never happened. James was baptized, however, later in life, as a Methodist. I mean, much later in life. It was on his deathbed.

12. Before he was president, Zachary Taylor had never voted.

13. Millard Fillmore's great-grandfather was a pirate.

14. Nathaniel Hawthorne and Franklin Pierce attended Bowdoin College together, which helps explains why Hawthorne later wrote the biography "The Life of Franklin Pierce," a boring subject for a very boring writer. I'm just kidding, I like *The Scarlet Letter*.

15. Anyway, James Buchanan never married, so his niece, Harriet Lane, took on the role of hostess for White House events. She developed a large art collection throughout her life, which she left to the government. The Smithsonian Institution knows her as the "First Lady of the National Collection of Fine Arts." She was also previously mentioned in a Mental Floss video for having married her cousin.

16. Abraham Lincoln, also pictured down there, had a son named Robert Todd Lincoln, who was not at Ford's Theater when his father was assassinated. BUT, he witnessed the assassinations of both James A. Garfield and William McKinley. Mark, I think that was technically two facts. Can I skip a president now? Can I skip Rutherford B. Hayes please or one of the Grover Clevelands? No? Okay. No. Apparently not.

17. A physician named Samuel Mudd bandaged up John Wilkes Booth's leg after Booth shot Lincoln. It was unclear what information Mudd had, but he was convicted of conspiracy to kill the president. In 1869, Andrew Johnson pardoned Dr. Mudd but the whole thing remains as clear as mud.

18. Legend has it that Ulysses S. Grant smoked somewhere between seven and twenty cigars a day. He's also the only president, so far, to die of cancer. It was throat cancer.

19. During the Civil War, four of Rutherford B. Hayes's horses were shot while he was riding them. I mean, not all four at the same time. No one can ride four horses simultaneously. You know what I meant. Oh, come on, Mark, I guess it's technically possible to ride four horses at the same time - shut up!

20. When James A. Garfield was shot, Alexander Graham Bell, who invented the telephone, tried to locate the bullet with a metal detector that he had invented. The invention was a failure, Garfield died.

21. And that brings us to Chester A. Arthur, who liked fashion, hence his nicknames "Gentleman Boss" and "Elegant Arthur." He allegedly owned over 80 pairs of pants.

22. During Grover Cleveland's first term, he got married in the White House. He married the 21 year old daughter of one of his former law partners. He was 49, and had known the girl since she was born. That's creepy.

23. In 1878, the body of Benjamin Harrison's father was stolen by grave robbers. It was recovered at the Ohio Medical School in Cincinnati and returned to its rightful spot.

24. In 1893, at the beginning of his second term, Grover Cleveland had a secret surgery to remove a tumor from the roof of his mouth which surgery turned out, of course, to be successful, as you already know because of the Ulysses S. Grant thing.

25. The TV shows *Glee*, *Freaks and Geeks*, and *The Wonder Years* all feature the same fictional high school: William McKinley High. Why? Well, according to Judd Apatow, who produced Freaks and Geeks, "We chose it because it was the only president's name which was legally clearable."

26. Teddy Roosevelt gave the White House its name in 1901.

27. Then, Roosevelt's successor, William Howard Taft, built the first Oval Office, before it was destroyed by a fire.

28. Did you know that there is a $100,000 bill? They were only made between December 18, 1934 and January 9, 1935. And only they were only created for use within the Federal Reserve Banks. But, if somehow you ever see Woodrow Wilson's face on a bill, you are about to be pretty rich.

29. Though JFK's assassination is most commonly associated with conspiracy theorists, Warren G. Harding's death has attracted some as well. His wife, Florence, was even accused of murdering him in the 1930 book, *The Strange Death of President Harding*.

30. Calvin Coolidge was born on the Fourth of July, which was the last interesting thing he ever did.

31. Herbert Hoover was sworn into office by William Howard Taft.

32. Franklin D. Roosevelt was the first president to fly in an airplane while in office. In 1943, he flew to North Africa to strategize with Winston Churchill about World War II. It took Roosevelt and company four days to get there because of all the stopping and refueling.

33. Harry S. Truman is the only president from the twentieth century or later who did not have a college degree.

34. Dwight D. Eisenhower loved to play golf so much that he was good friends with Arnold Palmer.

35. When John F. Kennedy applied to Harvard University, his father wrote a letter to the admissions dean describing JFK as "careless, but ambitious."

36. At one time, the entire First Family had the initials "LBJ": Lyndon B. Johnson, Lady Bird Johnson, Lynda Bird Johnson, and Luci Baines Johnson. (For the record, Lady Bird's real name was Claudia, but no one called her that because they didn't want to confuse Lady Bird, with, you know, the Claudia from *The Babysitter's Club*.)

37. Richard Nixon loved to play poker. In fact, when he ran for Congress, he even used poker winnings to finance his campaign.

38. Gerald Ford worked for a summer as a ranger at Yellowstone National Park when he was 23-years-old. He later referred to that time as "one of the greatest summers of my life."

39. In 1969, Jimmy Carter claimed he saw a UFO in Georgia. He never blamed aliens, but he said that he saw a green light in the sky appear and then disappear. That's usually called "the Gatsby."

40. During the fifties, Ronald Reagan had a lull in his acting career, so he spent some time doing stand up comedy.

41. There is a Japanese slang word, "Bushu-suru," which means "to do a Bush," or "vomit in public." This, of course, refers to when George H. W. Bush vomited at a dinner in Japan.

42. Bill Clinton played rugby when he was in graduate school at Oxford not inhaling.

43. George W. Bush is the only president to have completed a marathon. In 1993, he finished one in 3 hours and 44 minutes.

44. And finally, I return to my salon to tell you that Barack Obama and I had the same first job: scooping ice cream at Baskin-Robbins.

Thanks for watching Mental Floss here on YouTube, which is made with the help of all these nice people.

Each week we endeavor to answer one of your mind-blowing questions here at the end of the video. This week's question comes from dancegurl5505, who asks "Who is your favorite member of One Direction?" Well, Dance Gurl… It's Niall Horan. That's right, I'm a Niall-ator.

Thanks again for watching Mental Floss on YouTube and as we say in my hometown don't forget to be awesome.