

## The Top 5 Greatest Presidents: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin D. Roosevelt

Charles River Editors



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The Founding Fathers have held a special place in American society since the nation gained its freedom, and many of them had become national heroes even before then. Over 200 years later, Americans still look with reverence to these men, often debating with each other what the Founding Fathers would think about a certain issue, or how they would judge a certain law or legislation. In many respects, these men have become icons, whose words, thoughts and deeds are rarely questioned. Every American is taught a pristine narrative of the life and legacy of George Washington and can easily recite the highlights and myths of Washington's life. Washington's Secretary of State and the 3rd president, Thomas Jefferson was instrumental in authoring the Declaration of Independence, laying out the ideological groundwork of the notion of states' rights, leading one of the first political parties, and overseeing the expansion of the United States during his presidency.

Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865) is one of the most famous Americans in history and one of the country's most revered presidents. Schoolchildren can recite the life story of Lincoln, the "Westerner" who educated himself and became a self made man, rising from lawyer to leader of the new Republican Party before becoming the 16th President of the United States. Lincoln successfully navigated the Union through the Civil War but didn't live to witness his crowning achievement, becoming the first president assassinated when he was shot at Ford's Theater by John Wilkes Booth on April 14, 1865.

When McKinley was assassinated in 1901, young Teddy Roosevelt was thrust into the presidency. Roosevelt's "Square Deal" domestic policies favored average citizens while busting trusts and monopolies. Teddy also promoted conservation as an environmental stance, while his "speak softly and carry a big stick" foreign policy is still an oft used phrase today. Teddy even earned a Nobel Prize during his presidency.

Teddy is on Mount Rushmore and might be America's greatest 20th century president, but if he's not it might be because of his own relative. Whether Franklin Delano Roosevelt was America's greatest 20th century president or not, there's no question that he was the most unique. A well-connected relative of Theodore Roosevelt, FDR was groomed for greatness until he was struck down by what was widely believed to be polio at the time. Nevertheless, he persevered, rising through New York politics to reach the White House just as the country faced its greatest challenge since the Civil War, beginning his presidency with one of the most iconic lines ever spoken during an inaugural address. For over a decade, President Roosevelt threw everything he had at the Great Depression, and then threw everything the country had at the Axis powers during World War II. Ultimately, he succumbed to illness in the middle of his fourth term, just before the Allies won the war.

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