

U.S. Presidents Reference Library

Presidents I Admire

Updated: 25 November 2019

George W. Bush

Gerald Ford

- “We are here to say goodbye to a great man...America found a man whose character and leadership would bring calm and healing to one of the most divisive moments in our nation’s history.” President George W. Bush’s Eulogy for President Ford, 2 January 2007, National Cathedral, Washington, D.C.

- “Laura and I had the honor of hosting the Ford family for Gerald Ford’s 90th birthday. It was one of the highlights of our time in the White House. I will always cherish the last time I saw him, this past year in California. He was still smiling, still counting himself lucky to have Betty at his side, and still displaying the optimism and generosity that made him one of America’s most beloved leaders.” President George W. Bush’s Eulogy for President Ford, 2 January 2007, National Cathedral, Washington, D.C.

Bill Clinton

George H.W. Bush

- “Clinton said his friendship with his predecessor grew stronger over the years.”

- “Clinton added that his bond with Bush 41 was one of the great joys of his life.”

- See “George H.W. Bush remembered by 3 former presidents as ‘one of the best prepared’ in history (Fox News, 3 December 2018, Robert Gearty)
<https://www.foxnews.com/politics/george-h-w-bush-remembered-by-3-former-presidents-as-one-of-the-best-prepared-in-history>

Barack Obama

George H.W. Bush

- “America has lost a patriot and humble servant in George Herbert Walker Bush. While our hearts are heavy today, they are also filled with gratitude. Not merely for the years he spent as our forty-first President, but for the more than 70 years he spent in devoted service to the country he loved – from a decorated Naval aviator who nearly gave his life in World War II, to Commander-in-Chief of our Armed Forces, with plenty of posts along the way.”

- “George H.W. Bush’s life is a testament to the notion that public service is a noble, joyous calling. And he did tremendous good along the journey. Expanding America’s promise to new immigrants and people with disabilities. Reducing the scourge of nuclear weapons and building a broad international coalition to expel a dictator from Kuwait. And when democratic revolutions bloomed across Eastern Europe, it was his steady, diplomatic hand that made possible an achievement once thought anything but – ending the Cold War without firing a shot.”

- See “Statement on the Passing of President George H.W. Bush, Barack Obama, 30 November 2018. <https://twitter.com/barackobama/status/1068740570921738241?lang=en>

George H.W. Bush**Ronald Reagan**

- “Our friend was strong and gentle. Once he called America hopeful, big-hearted, idealistic, daring, decent and fair. That was America and, yes, our friend. And next, Ronald Reagan was beloved because of what he believed. He believed in America so he made it his shining city on a hill.”
- “The good book says humility goes before honor, and our friend had both, and who could not cherish such a man?”
- See “Eulogy for Ronald Reagan delivered by President George H.W. Bush at Ronald Reagan’s funeral at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., 11 June 2004.

Jimmy Carter**Gerald Ford**

- “Jerry and I frequently agreed that one of the greatest blessings that we had, after we left the White House during the last quarter-century was the intense personal friendship that bound us together.”
- “Our mutual respect, which I have described, blossomed into a valued personal friendship during our shared trip to attend the funeral of President Anwar Sadat in Egypt. We formed a personal bond while lamenting on the difficulty of unexpectedly defeated candidates trying to raise money to build presidential libraries.”
- See “Jimmy Carter Remembers Gerald Ford, CNN, 3 January 2007, https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/assets/documents/carter_ford.pdf

Franklin Roosevelt**Lyndon Johnson**

- “A most remarkable young man,” the President said shortly after he first met the twenty-eight-year-old congressman from the remote Texas hill country..” (FDR)
- “this boy could well be the first Southern President.” (FDR)
- “every time her husband came back from the White House, “he was on a sort of high.” (Lady Bird)
- See “Fdr and Lbj”, American Heritage, December 1984, Vol 36, Issue I
- <http://www.americanheritage.com/fdr-and-lbj>

Richard Nixon**Dwight Eisenhower**

- No matter how heated the arguments were, he was always then the coolest man in the room.
- Dwight Eisenhower was that rarest of men—an authentic hero.
- He was the humility of a man too proud to be arrogant.
- We salute Dwight David Eisenhower standing there in our memories, first in war, first in peace, and wherever freedom is cherished, first in the hearts of his fellow men.
- See, “Eulogy Dwight David Eisenhower” By President Richard M. Nixon, March 30 1969.

Jimmy Carter**Harry Truman**

- "My favourite president, and the one I admired most, was Harry Truman. When Truman left office he took the same position. He didn't serve on corporate boards. He didn't make speeches around the world for a lot of money." (The Guardian, 10 September 2011, Interview with Carole Cadwalladr).

George W. Bush**Franklin Roosevelt**

- "President Roosevelt brought his own advantages to the job. His resolve was stronger than the will of any dictator. His belief in democracy was absolute. He possessed a daring that kept the enemy guessing. He spoke to Americans with an optimism that lightened their task. And one of the saddest days of the war came just as it was ending, when the casualty notice in the morning paper began with the name, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Commander-in-Chief."

- George W. Bush address at the National World War II Memorial Dedication, 29 May 2004, National Mall, Washington, D.C.

- <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbww2memorial.htm>

Teddy Roosevelt**Franklin Roosevelt**

- "I am as fond of Eleanor as if she were my daughter; and I like you, and trust you, and believe in you. No other success in life—not the Presidency, or anything else—begins to compare with the joy and happiness that come in and from the love of the true man and the true woman." (Humanities, September/October 2014, Volume 35, Number 5, Meredith Hindley)

- <https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2014/septemberoctober/feature/politics-and-war-brought-teddy-roosevelt-and-franklin-delan>

Ronald Reagan**Calvin Coolidge**

- "always thought of Coolidge as one of most underrated presidents."

- "He [Coolidge] wasn't a man with flamboyant looks or style, but he got things done in a quiet way."

See "Ronald Reagan, An American Life (1990), p.244.

- Reagan placed Coolidge's portrait in the Cabinet Room of the White House.

- See "Calvin Coolidge Presidential Foundation" <https://www.coolidgefoundation.org/blog/calvin-coolidge-and-ronald-reagan/>

Theodore Roosevelt Abraham Lincoln

“...presidents have sought illumination in Lincoln’s legacy. Theodore Roosevelt as a young boy was said to have watched Lincoln’s funeral procession pass his grandparents’ house in New York. He considered the slain president “my great hero” and treasured a ring with a lock of Lincoln’s hair given to him by John Hay, the former Lincoln assistant who served as Roosevelt’s secretary of state.”

- See “Abraham Lincoln, the One President All of them Want to Be More Like”, by Peter Baker, The New York Times, 14 April 2005, White House Memo.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/15/us/politics/abraham-lincoln-the-one-president-all-of-them-want-to-be-more-like.html>

Abraham Lincoln Ulysses Grant

“ I do not remember that you and I ever met personally. I write this now as a grateful acknowledgement for the almost inestimable service you have done this country. I wish to say a word further. When you first reached the vicinity of Vicksburg, I thought you should do what you finally did—march the troops across the neck, run the batteries with the transports, and thus go below; and I never had any faith, except a general hope that you knew better than I, that the Yazoo expedition, and the like, could succeed. When you did get below, and took Port-Gibson, Grand Gulf, and vicinity, I thought you should go down the river and join Gen. [Nathaniel] Banks; and when you turned Northward East of the Big Black, I feared it was a mistake. I now wish to make the personal acknowledgement that you were right, and I was wrong.”

- See “Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant, Featured Book, John Y. Simon, *Lincoln and Grant* at <http://www.abrahamlincolnsclassroom.org/abraham-lincolns-contemporaries/abraham-lincoln-and-ulysses-s-grant/>, Lincoln to then Major General Ulysses S. Grant.

Donald Trump Andrew Jackson

- See “Trump cites Andrew Jackson as his hero – and a reflection of himself.” (The Washington Post, 15 March 2017, Jenna Johnson and Karen Tumulty)

James Monroe James Madison

- “Your view of the constitution, as to the powers of the Executive, in the appointment of public ministers, is in strict accord with my own, and is, as I understand, supported, by numerous precedents, under successive administrations. “

- “With best regards to Mrs. Madison I am dear Sir very sincerely yours”

(See, Letter to James Madison from James Monroe, 12 May 1822.
<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/04-02-02-0445>
National Archives, Founders Online)

John Adams

Thomas Jefferson

- “On January 1, 1812, Adams sent a short note to Monticello. Over the next 14 years, he and Jefferson would exchange 158 letters, writing for posterity as much as for each other.”

- “Even after Adams’ beloved Abigail died in 1818, and the two revolutionary patriarchs grew old and infirm, they continued writing to each other. ‘Crippled wrists and fingers make writing slow and laborious’, Jefferson wrote in 1823. ‘But while writing to you, I lose the sense of these things, in the recollection of ancient times, when youth and health made happiness out of every thing.’”

(See “Jefferson & Adams: Founding Frenemies” , History, 1 November 2016, Sarah Pruitt, <https://www.history.com/news/jefferson-adams-founding-frenemies>)

END

U.S. Presidents Reference Library