

Name _____

Date _____

President Dwight Eisenhower

Dwight D. Eisenhower was the 34th President of the United States for two terms from 1953 through 1961. Eisenhower's life is another example of an ordinary poor boy growing up to become a famous military general during World War II and eventually the President of the United States. One of six brothers, Eisenhower was born on October 14, 1890 in Denison, Texas. His parents couldn't afford even to rent an apartment but were living in a rented room next to the railroad tracks.

In 1952, Eisenhower remarked, "I have found out in later years we were very poor. But the glory of America is that we didn't know it then. All we knew was that our parents – of great courage – could say to us, 'Opportunity is all about you. Reach out and take it.'" That doesn't mean that Eisenhower had instant success; he needed to work hard for his achievements. He graduated from high school in 1909 and was accepted at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York in 1911. While at West Point, Eisenhower did well in his studies and also played on the football team.

He graduated from West Point in 1915 and in 1916 he married Mamie Doud who was his wife for the rest of their lives. They lost one son who died at age three from scarlet fever but their other son John eventually went to West Point and had a military career like his father.

Eisenhower did not go overseas during World War I, which lasted from 1914 until 1918, but instead was stationed in the U.S. after which he served near the Panama Canal and in the Philippines rising in rank to lieutenant colonel. By then World War II was being fought against Adolf Hitler in Germany and Eisenhower returned to the United States in 1940. He commanded training exercises for U.S. troops in Louisiana and rose to the rank of brigadier general.

Meanwhile, Japanese planes attacked Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on December 7, 1941 and the U.S. entered the war. Eventually German troops advanced across Europe, conquered France and were threatening to invade Great Britain. In December, 1941 Eisenhower was given the important and difficult task of planning an invasion of France originating from England in order to drive the German troops out of France. By that time, the German army was at the peak of its strength and had succeeded in conquering territories including North Africa. The Allies, as the

Name _____

Date _____

President Dwight Eisenhower (Cont'd)

coalition of forces from the U.S., Great Britain and Russia were called, decided to drive the Germans out of Africa first. Eisenhower became a four-star general after he commanded a successful campaign against the Germans in North Africa that began in November, 1942. That campaign was just a glimpse of what was to come.

Eisenhower was given the title of Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Forces in Europe which meant he was in charge of all the generals and the entire operation of invading France from across the English Channel. The invasion involved more than 155,000 soldiers, 5,000 ships and boats and 12,000 airplanes and was called Operation Overlord. The invasion is known as D-Day and occurred on June 6, 1944 on the beaches of Normandy, France. The campaign was ultimately successful and the war ended in 1945.

Eisenhower was a hero in the United States and both Democrats and Republicans wanted to nominate him for President but he declined. Finally in 1952 he ran for President as a Republican. The famous slogan of the campaign was "I like Ike." Ike had been Eisenhower's nickname for a long time.

As President, Eisenhower is known for starting the interstate highway system that still exists today. Before Eisenhower's plan for highways, people drove on two-lane roads and many of these roads were winding and slow to travel. The interstate highway system provided straight four-lane highways with entrance and exit ramps to allow for smooth traffic flow. All the highways would be alike and connect the entire country together. Eisenhower's plan called for 42,000 miles of interstate.

Even though the U.S. and Russia had been allies during World War II, the Cold War with Russia began while Eisenhower was President. He authorized the construction of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and nuclear-powered submarines for defense of the country. At the same time, he opposed war.

Eisenhower was elected to a second term as President. In 1957, during his second term, he initiated Civil Rights legislation to protect the voting rights of blacks and all American citizens. Also in 1957 he sent U.S. Army troops to Little Rock, Arkansas to allow black students to be integrated into an all-white school.

Eisenhower served the United States for his entire adult life and retired to a farm in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. He died on March 28, 1969.

Name _____

Date _____

President Dwight Eisenhower Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. President Eisenhower was a graduate of the
 - a. U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis
 - b. U.S. Military Academy at West Point
 - c. U.S. Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs
2. The invasion of France launched across the English Channel during World War II was called
 - a. Operation Overlord
 - b. D-Day
 - c. Both a. and b. above
3. What was Eisenhower's title when he commanded the invasion of France?
 - a. Supreme Commander
 - b. Overlord
 - c. Five-star general
4. President Eisenhower's accomplishments include
 - a. The interstate highway system
 - b. Civil Rights legislation
 - c. Both a. and b. above
5. While Eisenhower was President, the Cold War started with what country?
 - a. Great Britain
 - b. Russia
 - c. France

Short Answer Questions

1. Explain the importance of the invasion of France on D-Day.
2. What is the long-lasting importance of the interstate highway system?
3. Look up the term Cold War. What does it mean?
4. List three important legacies from Eisenhower's presidency.
5. Eisenhower was a military man. Why do you think opposed war?

Name _____

Date _____

President Dwight Eisenhower Answers

Multiple Choice

1. b.
2. c.
3. a.
4. c.
5. b.

Short Answer

1. The invasion of France on D-Day eventually defeated the German army and ended World War II.
2. The interstate highway system still exists today and was responsible for connecting the entire United States.
3. Cold War means that there weren't any battles or fighting and that the U.S. and Russia were having a war of words and potentially threatening actions.
4. Select three from: interstate highway system; ICBMs and nuclear-powered submarines; Civil Rights legislation to protect voting rights; enforcement of integration
5. Individual response