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Date _____

President Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt

Three years before the American Civil War one of the country's most beloved presidents was born in New York City on October 27, 1858. Theodore Roosevelt compressed a great deal of life into his short sixty one years. Politician, Statesman, Conservationist, and President of the United States Theodore's early years were racked with health issues and a body weakened by asthma.

Living in the family home in New York City, young Teddy was considered too weak for regular school so his parents hired private tutors for him. He was extremely brilliant and obsessed with a fascination for all things about nature. He even called his own bedroom the "Roosevelt Museum of Natural History." Even though he showed a great aptitude for learning "T.R." was still in very poor physical condition. His father even put an entire gymnasium in one room of their very large home to help his son gain strength.

The young Roosevelt was obsessed with overcoming his frail body and worked daily to build up his physique. He even took up boxing. Entering into Harvard University in 1876, he was both scholarly and outstanding in boxing. One of his early efforts as a writer resulted in a book titled "The Naval War of 1812." His work was so well regarded that it was required reading at the United States Naval Academy.

Planning to become an attorney, Teddy enrolled in Columbia University. But while he was still at Harvard, in 1880, he met the beautiful Alice Lee the daughter of a prominent Boston banker. Married when he was twenty two and she three years his younger, Theodore Roosevelt was far too energetic for the boring study of the law. He decided to enter into the world of politics. At this time in history politicians were held in low regard. Teddy's friends thought he was foolish.

First elected to the New York State Assembly in 1881, Theodore Roosevelt was unceasing in his efforts to eliminate corruption. Elected twice more, Teddy Roosevelt seemed to have everything going his way. But just four years after marrying his beloved Alice, she and tragically Teddy's mother, died on the very same day. His wife was in the process of giving birth to their daughter who would also be named Alice. Such a loss was more than he could bear. He left for the great area that one day would comprise the states of North and South Dakota. He was at first thought of as a "city dude" but soon the cowboys on the ranches where he worked took on a different point of view of the young Mr. Roosevelt. He would often go hunting on horseback for long treks in the wilderness. He never shied away from any task.

It took two full years before "T.R." felt he could return to his home. In 1886 he ran for the position of New York City Mayor but lost. Having overcome his grief, he married childhood friend Edith Carow. By the year 1889 Teddy was named to the U.S. Civil Service Commission. He worked vigorously for six years stamping out useless patronage jobs. In '95 the now well known Teddy Roosevelt went to work on the New York City Police Board as its President.

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President Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt (Cont'd)

Boundless in energy and always looking for ways to end corruption he soon made again a name for himself as a crusader for honesty and decency in public service.

William McKinley was the U.S. President in 1897 and he appointed "T.R." to the post of Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Dynamic and influential, Teddy forged ahead in his efforts to have America become a force in the world for peace and justice. When the battleship "Maine" mysteriously blew up in the Cuban harbor of Havana in 1897, America declared war on Spain. The ever bold Roosevelt sent an order to Admiral Dewey to be prepared to attack the Spanish fleet in the Philippines if America were to enter into war with Spain, called the Spanish-American war. As a result, the Spanish controlled Philippine Islands were attacked by the U.S. Navy.

However, Roosevelt was not satisfied to be a high ranking bureaucrat in the midst of the war. Always ready for action, "T.R." resigned his position and volunteered to serve in the U.S. Cavalry. He entered the unit as a Lieutenant Colonel. He personally brought many of his influential friends into the regiment and also rallied groups of cowboys from as far away as Texas to be a part of the cavalry. While Teddy Roosevelt is passionately remembered for his famous cavalry charge up San Juan Hill, it is historical fact that the initial charge for which he is remembered was in reality Kettle Hill. The entire war with Spain continued for only a few weeks. When Roosevelt returned home he was a highly regarded hero for his exploits.

By 1899 "T.R." was just forty one years of age and was elected as Governor of New York State. He championed the causes of workers for shorter work weeks, better working conditions for women and children, and safer overall conditions. He even brought about the regulation of utility companies so that all people receive fair rates for water and electricity. But his greatest achievement was to have signed into law a bill that finally required corporations to pay taxes on their profits.

As the next national election approached in 1900, Theodore Roosevelt was selected to be the Vice Presidential candidate to run with President McKinley for his second term. However, his time as the Vice President was not even a year in length when McKinley was assassinated. Becoming the President on 14 September 1901, "T.R" was to be the president that many Americans feared was too much of a reformist. He was the youngest individual to ever hold the office of President of the United States. To the office Teddy Roosevelt brought his unceasing energy and his desire to improve the lives of those less fortunate. He also brought with him his family of playful and happy children. He was often seen chasing his five youngsters around the White House. Edith was ever at his side.

President Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt (Cont'd)

As President he fought to break up the huge trusts that had formed in the late 19th century. These included oil corporations, railroad monopolies, tobacco interests, and most certainly the coal mining industry. He threatened this last group with taking over the coal mines if the owners did not settle the strike called by the workers who wanted better wages and better conditions. President "T.R." was easily re-elected to a second term. He then set to work to improve the meat packing industry to provide more sanitary products by having a federal inspection system.

Roosevelt led the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act which helped to insure the quality of medicines. Other actions by the famous president included orchestrating the country of Panama to become free from Columbia. Supporting the Panamanian people's overthrow of the Columbians, they formed their own country and ultimately agreed to a treaty with America that allowed for the ten year long building program of the Panama Canal. Some felt the president had used too much pressure in forcing the Columbians out of the area to allow the canal to be built.

William Howard Taft ran for President at the end of Teddy Roosevelt's second term winning quite easily. The now retired President set out on an African safari, funded by the Smithsonian Institution, with his son Kermit. His explorations and findings were legendary and he wrote his famous book *African Game Trails*. He was an original member of the Boone and Crockett Club of New York, known around the world for keeping records about game animals.

However, Taft did not do what the vibrant Roosevelt felt needed to be done for the country. So in 1912 Roosevelt ran against both the Republican Taft and the Democratic candidate Woodrow Wilson. Forming a third party known formally as the Progressive Party "T.R." and his ever present enthusiasm caused him one day to remark: "I'm feeling like a Bull Moose!" Shortly thereafter the party's nickname became the Bull Moose Party. The former President, running as a third party candidate, was so popular that he actually received more votes than Taft. He is the only third party candidate to receive such voter support. But this split the Republican vote and allowed the Democratic candidate Woodrow Wilson to become the President.

Always known for his boundless energy, President Roosevelt passed away on January 6, 1919. Remembered for his doubling of the nation's park system and holding out over 100 million acres of forests to be protected from commercial sale, Theodore Roosevelt was the epitome of a conservationist. His great legacy of reformist efforts brought safety, dignity, and decent wages to millions of Americans. Theodore Roosevelt was selected as one of the pivotal presidents of the United States immortalized on the great stone monument in South Dakota known as Mount Rushmore.

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President Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt Questions

1. As a young man what was Theodore Roosevelt's relationship with the U.S. Naval Academy?
 - a. He attended the U.S. Naval Academy
 - b. He graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy
 - c. He wrote a book used at the U.S. Naval Academy
2. Where was the Roosevelt Museum of Natural History located?
 - a. New York City
 - b. Chicago
 - c. Boston
3. Teddy Roosevelt spent two years in North and South Dakota because
 - a. He was not elected as Mayor of New York City
 - b. His wife died
 - c. He wanted to experience cowboy life
4. What was Teddy Roosevelt's role in the Spanish-American War?
 - a. He was Assistant Secretary of the Navy
 - b. He was a Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Cavalry
 - c. Both a. and b. above
5. When Teddy Roosevelt was Governor of New York he championed the cause of
 - a. Pure medicines
 - b. Better working conditions
 - c. National Parks
6. Teddy Roosevelt first became president
 - a. By a landslide election
 - b. Because President McKinley was assassinated
 - c. As the candidate of the Progressive Party
7. In 1912, three men ran for president. Who became President?
 - a. Teddy Roosevelt of the Progressive Party
 - b. William Taft of the Republican Party
 - c. Woodrow Wilson of the Democratic Party
8. President Teddy Roosevelt is immortalized
 - a. On the Mount Rushmore National Monument
 - b. With a statue in the Lincoln Memorial
 - c. With a bust in the Capitol Rotunda

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President Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt Answers

Multiple Choice

1. c.
2. a.
3. b.
4. c.
5. b.
6. b.
7. a.
8. a.