

DISCOVER AMERICA

Teacher Guide



American Monuments and
American Exceptionalism:
Icons, Ideals, and Impact

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Key Themes

- American Exceptionalism
- Exploration and Expansion
- Innovation and Achievement
- Leadership and Vision
- Pioneering Spirit

Core Values

- Community
- Life
- Liberty



Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

- Discuss the significance of Mount Rushmore, the Gateway Arch, and the Golden Gate Bridge by understanding the historical and cultural reasons why these landmarks were created.
- Identify the key figures represented on Mount Rushmore (George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln) and describe their contributions to American history.
- Explain how perseverance and creativity played crucial roles in building major American landmarks like the Gateway Arch, Mount Rushmore, and the Golden Gate Bridge, and discuss how these monuments reflect American values and achievements.

Key Terms

- 0 1 **architect:** a person who designs buildings and other structures.
- 0 2 **engineering:** the field of designing and building things to solve problems or improve how things work.
- 0 3 **exceptional:** something or someone that is unusually good, outstanding, or superior.
- 0 4 **historian:** a person who studies, writes about, and interprets historical events, people, and trends.
- 0 5 **landmark:** a prominent and often well-known feature or structure that is easily recognizable and serves as a point of reference or symbol for a particular location.
- 0 6 **monument:** a special building or object made to remember and honor important people, events, or ideas.
- 0 7 **tram:** a type of vehicle that runs on tracks and is used for public transportation.
- 0 8 **wildlife refuge:** a protected area designated to safeguard animals, plants, and their habitats.

Introduction

TELL Students 📷✂️🖍️

Today, we are going to learn about some things in the United States that make it unique and special! To help us learn about these special things, we are going to create something fun together. We are going to make a “Special Stars” board! This is what we are going to do. I have a big poster board here that we are going to fill with stars. [Prepare a bulletin board or poster and star cut-outs for each student.] Each star is going to help us celebrate something wonderful about our country. I am going to give each of you a cut-out star. You may use crayons, markers, and stickers to decorate your star. On your star, you can draw or write something that you think is special about the United States. It could be our beautiful flag, a famous landmark like the Statue of Liberty, or anything else that you think makes our country great. A **landmark** is a prominent and often well-known feature or structure that is easily recognizable and serves as a point of reference or symbol for a particular location. **[Reference Landmarks Image.]** Landmarks can be natural features like mountains or rivers, or man-made structures such as buildings or bridges. They can be used to help people navigate or identify a specific area. I will be here to help you with your writing if you need it. When you are done decorating your star, we will put all of them on our “Special Stars” board. This will help us remember and celebrate some of the special things about our country. So let’s get started and make our board sparkle with all the wonderful things that make the United States special!

ASK Students

What is one special thing you added to our board that you think makes our country unique? Why is it important to you?

TELL Students 🗣️

In our country, we have many special things that make us unique, like our beautiful flag and amazing landmarks such as the Statue of Liberty. We are going to explore why these things are important and what makes our country special. We are fortunate to have so much beauty and greatness in the United States. In earlier lessons, we learned about the natural beauty God created in America and our responsibility to care for it. Today, we will learn about how our fellow Americans used their talents, creativity, and skills to build incredible landmarks that show what makes our country exceptional. **Exceptional** refers to something or someone that is unusually good, outstanding, or superior.

Introduction

TELL Students (continued)

Our journey begins in South Dakota, where we will start discovering some of these amazing American wonders!

ASK Students 📷

Look at this picture of Mount Rushmore. **[Reference Mount Rushmore Image.]** Can you tell me why you think these faces are carved into the mountain? What do you think makes Mount Rushmore special?

TELL Students

That is right! The faces carved into Mount Rushmore are of four of America's most important Presidents: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln. These Presidents are on Mount Rushmore because they helped shape our country and are celebrated for their leadership and values.

ASK Students

Can you remember the names of the four Presidents who are carved into Mount Rushmore? Why do you think these Presidents were chosen to be on the mountain? What special things did they do to help our country?

TELL Students 🔑

Mount Rushmore is very special because it is a huge and impressive monument that reminds us of these great leaders. A **monument** is a special building or object made to remember and honor important people, events, or ideas. It is located in the Black Hills of South Dakota and is really tall—about 5,725 feet high! Each President's face is 60 feet tall, which is as tall as ten grown-ups standing on top of each other. That is really big!

ASK Students

Why do you think the people who built Mount Rushmore made it so big?

TELL Students 📷🔑

The idea for Mount Rushmore started in the 1920s when a man named Doane Robinson, who...

Introduction

TELL Students (continued)

...was a historian for South Dakota, wanted to create a place that would attract visitors to his state.

[Reference Doane Robinson Image.] A **historian** is a person who studies, writes about, and interprets historical events, people, and trends. Creating Mount Rushmore was a challenge that took a lot of hard work and creativity.

ASK Students

What do you think made building such a big and special monument a challenge?

TELL Students

The Gateway Arch, also known as the St. Louis Arch, is another special American monument.

[Reference St. Louis Arch Image.] Located in Missouri, it is a giant, shiny, curved structure that stands 630 feet tall, making it the tallest arch in the world! It was built to honor the role of St. Louis as the gateway to the West. Building such a huge, unique shape took a lot of hard work and clever planning, just like creating Mount Rushmore. Today, we will explore why the Gateway Arch is so special and what makes it a remarkable example of American engineering and design.

Engineering is the field of designing and building things to solve problems or improve how things work. Engineers use math, science, and creativity to create useful objects, systems, and structures. Engineers work on a wide range of projects to make our lives easier and better through their problem-solving skills and technical knowledge.

ASK Students

What do you think makes the Gateway Arch a remarkable example of American engineering and design?

TELL Students

The Gateway Arch is special because it honors St. Louis as the gateway to the West and shows how amazing American engineering can be. Building such a unique and tall arch took a lot of planning and hard work to make sure it was safe and strong. Now let's talk about another

incredible American monument: the Golden Gate Bridge. **[Reference Golden Gate Bridge Image.]** This bridge is sometimes called "the bridge that couldn't be built" because it was a huge challenge to create.

Introduction

TELL Students (continued)

The Golden Gate Bridge stretches 1.7 miles across the Golden Gate Strait, connecting San Francisco to Marin County. Building a bridge over such a wide area of water and making it strong enough to withstand the winds, tides, and even earthquakes was a challenge. We will explore how this remarkable bridge was designed and built, and what makes it so special today. Let's watch another episode of Star Spangled Adventures to learn more!

WATCH

Star Spangled Adventures Cartoon [Ep. 35: America's Monuments](#)



Lesson

TELL Students

Think about what makes your city or town special. Do you have fun parks where you like to play, or big stadiums where you watch sports games? Maybe there are big fields where crops grow or animals live. Are there tall buildings that seem to touch the sky? Or a lot of stores, restaurants, and museums where you can explore and learn new things? We are very lucky to have so many amazing things in the United States. In our past lessons, we talked about the natural beauty of our country and how we need to take care of it. Today, we are learning about how people in America used their talents and ideas to create incredible landmarks that show how special our country is. Our adventure starts in South Dakota!

ASK Students

Which monument is in South Dakota?

TELL Students

Mount Rushmore is a special place that shows the faces of four important Presidents: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln. Each of these Presidents is on Mount Rushmore because they helped shape our country and they demonstrated important American values. George Washington was the first President of the United States. **[Reference George Washington Image.]** He was brave and led the country to freedom during the Revolutionary War. He set a good example for how Presidents should lead and how a President should pass their job to the next person.

ASK Students

Why do you think George Washington was chosen to be on Mount Rushmore? What was something special he did for our country?

TELL Students

That's right! George Washington was the first President of the United States. He is on Mount Rushmore because he helped lead our country to freedom and set a good example for future Presidents. Now, let's talk about another important leader on Mount Rushmore: Thomas Jefferson. **[Reference Thomas Jefferson Image.]** He wrote the Declaration of Independence, an important document adopted on July 4, 1776, that declared the colonies' independence from Britain.

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

He was the third President of the United States and also played a key role in negotiating the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. This deal, which involved buying a large territory from France, greatly expanded the size of the United States.

ASK Students

Who was the third President of the United States? What are two important things he did to help our country grow?

TELL Students

Next, let's talk about the third President on Mount Rushmore: Theodore Roosevelt. **[Reference Teddy Roosevelt Image.]** He was the 26th President of the United States and did some very important things for our country. Theodore Roosevelt helped build the Panama Canal, which is a large waterway that connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. **[Reference Panama Canal Image.]** This was a huge project that made it faster for ships to travel between the two oceans. He also worked hard to protect natural places in our country. Roosevelt created many national parks, forests, and wildlife refuges, so that future generations could enjoy the beautiful outdoors and have places to explore. A **wildlife refuge** is a protected area designated to safeguard animals, plants, and their habitats. It aims to provide a safe environment where wildlife can live without the threat of hunting, habitat destruction, or other human activities.

ASK Students

Theodore Roosevelt did a lot of important things as President. Can you remember one of the important projects he worked on? How did he help protect our natural places so people could enjoy them?

TELL Students

Now, let's learn about the fourth President on Mount Rushmore: Abraham Lincoln. **[Reference Abraham Lincoln Image.]** He was the 16th President of the United States and led the country during a very difficult time called the Civil War. Abraham Lincoln worked to end slavery and keep the country united. His leadership helped preserve the United States and made sure it remained a strong and free nation.

Lesson

ASK Students

Abraham Lincoln was the 16th President and helped the country during a tough time. How did he help our country? Why do you think Abraham Lincoln is on Mount Rushmore?

TELL Students

Abraham Lincoln worked hard to end slavery and kept the country together during the Civil War. The carving on Mount Rushmore was finished in 1941 after 14 years of hard work. Today, many people visit Mount Rushmore to see these four important Presidents and to remember the special things they did for our country. Mount Rushmore is a symbol of America's strength and the great examples set by these four important leaders. Now, let's learn about another amazing American monument.

ASK Students

What do you remember about Lewis, Clark, and Sacagawea?

TELL Students

Lewis and Clark, along with Sacagawea, explored the new land the United States got from the Louisiana Purchase. They started their journey in St. Louis, Missouri. Many years later, in 1935, people decided to build a monument in St. Louis to remember this exciting time of exploration in our country. Just like Mount Rushmore, this is another famous monument that tells a special story about our country. It is called the Gateway Arch, also known as the St. Louis Arch, and it is a symbol of a very important time in American history. **[Reference St. Louis Arch Image.]**

ASK Students

What is the name of the special monument in St. Louis that we are learning about? What does it encourage us to remember?

TELL Students

That is right! Lewis and Clark, along with Sacagawea, started their adventure from St. Louis after the United States got new land from the Louisiana Purchase. The special monument in St. Louis that helps us remember this exciting time is called the Gateway Arch, also known as the St. Louis Arch.

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

A famous architect named Eero Saarinen designed the Gateway Arch to represent this time of adventure and growth. An **architect** is a person who designs buildings and other structures. They plan how a building will look and how it will work. They draw pictures or create models of their designs and then work with builders to make sure their ideas become real buildings. **[Reference Architect Image.]** Building the Gateway Arch started in 1963 and was finished in 1965. It is 630 feet tall and shaped like a giant, shiny arch. You can even ride a tram up to the top and see the city below! A **tram** is a type of vehicle that runs on tracks and is used for public transportation. Trams are usually found in cities and travel along specific routes. They are similar to trains but are often smaller and can operate on streets. **[Reference Gateway Arch Tram Image.]** The Gateway Arch is a symbol of many brave and creative Americans. It reminds us of the amazing things we can do when we work together and dream big. Now, let's learn about another famous American monument. It is called the Golden Gate Bridge.

ASK Students

Can you guess what makes the Golden Gate Bridge so special and why it is an important symbol?

TELL Students

The Golden Gate Bridge is a remarkable example of how hard work and creativity can achieve the extraordinary. **[Reference Golden Gate Bridge Image.]** Stretching 1.7 miles across the Golden Gate Strait, it connects San Francisco with Marin County. Building such a massive bridge over a mile of water, while dealing with strong tides, winds, and the threat of earthquakes, seemed almost impossible. Yet, a team of engineers, architects, and construction workers led by Chief Engineer Joseph B. Strauss made it happen.

ASK Students

What are some challenges the builders of the Golden Gate Bridge had to overcome? How do you think they solved these problems?

TELL Students

Building the bridge was very challenging. Divers had to work in the cold ocean, and tall towers were built to support the bridge. **[Reference Golden Gate Bridge Workers Image.]**

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

These towers were the tallest in the world at the time! The workers faced dangerous conditions but were determined to complete this historic project. The Golden Gate Bridge officially opened in May 1937, and today, more than 2 billion cars have driven across it! Chief Engineer Strauss even wrote a poem about how the bridge was made to last forever. Just like the Gateway Arch and Mount Rushmore, the Golden Gate Bridge is a symbol of what we can achieve when we work together and dream big. These monuments remind us of our amazing history and the extraordinary things we can accomplish as a nation.

Let's watch an exciting Learn More with Liberty video to learn more!

WATCH

Learn More With Liberty: [Landmarks of America: Mount Rushmore, the Gateway Arch, and the Golden Gate Bridge!](#)





Exploring American Monuments

Objective

Students will review and reinforce their understanding of American symbols through interactive activities and hands-on exploration.

Materials Needed

- Large paper or poster board
- Pictures of Mount Rushmore, the Gateway Arch, and the Golden Gate Bridge
- Cut-out templates of symbols
- Play-Doh or clay
- Building blocks or toy figures
- Sticky notes or small cards
- Scissors and glue
- A small American flag for visual reference

Review

Briefly review the key points about each symbol from the earlier lesson. Discuss what makes Mount Rushmore, the Gateway Arch, and the Golden Gate Bridge special.

Interactive Stations

- **Mount Rushmore Station:** Set up a station with Play-Doh or clay and provide students with pictures of Mount Rushmore. Challenge them to use the Play-Doh to create their own version of the mountain or to create small figures to represent the Presidents. They can also use building blocks to create a model of Mount Rushmore.
- **Gateway Arch Station:** Provide building blocks or toy figures and challenge students to build their own arch similar to the Gateway Arch. Encourage them to discuss the arch shape and why it is important.
- **Golden Gate Bridge Station:** Give students cut-out templates of the Golden Gate Bridge and have them use glue and various materials (like fabric scraps, paper, or sticks) to create a 3D model of the bridge. They can also create boats with paper or other materials to place under their bridge.



Exploring American Monuments

Symbol Scavenger Hunt

Hide small pictures or models of the symbols around the room. Give students clues or riddles related to each symbol. For example, "I am tall and arch-shaped. You can find me in St. Louis!" Students will search for the symbols and discuss what they found.

Creation and Sharing

Have students gather at a central location and combine their creations on a large poster board or space to form a collaborative "American Symbols Wall." Encourage each student to talk about what they made and what they learned about each symbol.

Closing Activity

Finish with the fun, interactive song below. Use the suggested, simple hand motions and movements that relate to the symbols to keep the students engaged.



Exploring American Monuments



"American Symbols Song" (To the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")

Verse 1

Mount Rushmore's faces high,
On the mountain, in the sky.
Four Presidents you'll see,
Carved into the rock so free.
Mount Rushmore's faces high,
On the mountain, in the sky.

Chorus

Symbols, symbols, great and grand,
In our country, across the land.
Arch and bridge and mountain tall,
We love them all, we love them all!

Verse 2

St. Louis Arch, oh so tall,
Gateway to the West, we call.
Shaped like a giant curve,
In the city, it stands firm.
St. Louis Arch, oh so tall,
Gateway to the West, we call.

Hand motions:

- For Mount Rushmore: Use your hands to shape a mountain.
- For Gateway Arch: Form an arch shape with arms.
- For Golden Gate Bridge: Pretend to stretch out your arms like a bridge.

Verse 3

Golden Gate Bridge, painted red,
Spanning water, where boats are led.
In California's bay,
It's a bridge that's bright and gay.
Golden Gate Bridge, painted red,
Spanning water, where boats are led.

Chorus

Symbols, symbols, great and grand,
In our country, across the land.
Arch and bridge and mountain tall,
We love them all, we love them all!

(Repeat Chorus with hand motions)

This song will help reinforce the monuments students learned about while keeping the closing activity engaging and fun.

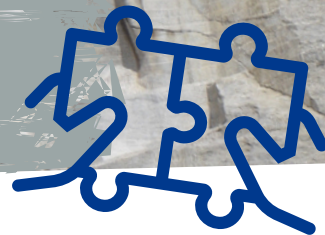


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Monument Matching and Creating



Objective

Students will independently match pictures of the three monuments with their names and create their own representations of the monuments using provided materials.

Materials Needed

- Pre-printed pictures of Mount Rushmore, the Gateway Arch, and the Golden Gate Bridge
- Name labels for each monument
- Construction paper in various colors
- Scissors (safety scissors or pre-cut shapes for younger students)
- Glue sticks
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Stickers or decorative items (optional)

Matching

Provide each student with a set of pictures of the three monuments and a set of name labels. Ask them to match each picture with the correct name label. They can use glue sticks to attach the names next to the pictures on a piece of construction paper.

Creating

- Provide each student with construction paper and various art supplies. Instruct them to choose one of the three monuments and create their own version of it using the materials provided. They can use crayons, markers, and stickers to decorate their creation.
 - For Mount Rushmore: Students can draw the mountain and use crayons to color the faces. Alternatively, they can create a collage using pre-cut shapes.
 - For the Gateway Arch: Students can use curved strips of construction paper or pre-cut arches to assemble their arch, decorating it with markers or stickers.
 - For the Golden Gate Bridge: Students can use strips of paper to create the bridge's towers and span, and then color or decorate it.

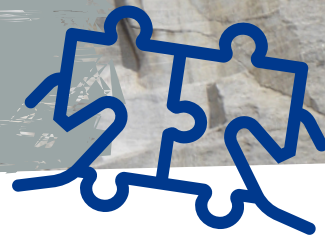


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Monument Matching and Creating



Show and Tell

If time allows, have a brief “show and tell” session where students can share their creations with the class and describe which monument they chose and what they learned about it.

This independent activity allows students to practice matching and to create their own interpretations of the monuments, reinforcing their learning while fostering creativity and fine motor skills.



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Resources

- <https://www.nps.gov/moru/learn/kidsyouth/how-big-are-the-heads.htm>
- <https://www.nps.gov/moru/learn/historyculture/carving-history.htm>
- <https://www.nps.gov/moru/learn/historyculture/the-workers.htm#:~:text=Over%20the%20fourteen%20year%20period,fatalities%20during%20the%20carving%20work.>
- <https://www.nps.gov/liho/learn/historyculture/housedivided.htm#:~:text=%22A%20house%20divided%20against%20itself,thing%2C%20or%20all%20the%20other.>
- <https://www.nps.gov/moru/learn/historyculture/memorial-history.htm>
- <https://www.nps.gov/moru/planyourvisit/index.htm#:~:text=Just%20over%20two%20million%20people%20visit%20Mount%20Rushmore%20each%20year.>
- <https://www.travelsouthdakota.com/trip-ideas/story/75-surprising-facts-about-mount-rushmore>
- <https://www.chicagotribune.com/2018/06/26/50-years-later-the-st-louis-arch-emerges-with-a-new-name-and-a-skeptical-view-of-western-expansion/>
- <https://www.nps.gov/jeff/planyourvisit/architect.htm>
- <https://www.nps.gov/jeff/planyourvisit/materials-and-techniques.htm>
- <https://www.goldengate.org/bridge/history-research/statistics-data/design-construction-stats/>
- <https://www.goldengate.org/exhibits/bridging-the-gate-the-beginning/>
- <https://www.goldengate.org/exhibits/working-under-water/>
- <https://www.goldengate.org/exhibits/worlds-tallest-bridge-towers/>
- <https://www.goldengate.org/bridge/history-research/statistics-data/faqs/>
- <https://www.goldengate.org/exhibits/all-in-a-days-work/>
- <https://www.goldengate.org/bridge/history-research/bridge-construction/joseph-strauss/>
- <https://www.goldengate.org/bridge/history-research/statistics-data/faqs/>
- <https://www.goldengate.org/bridge/history-research/bridge-construction/joseph-strauss/#poems>

Images

Landmarks



Credit: Canva Pro.

Mount Rushmore



Credit: Canva Pro.

Images

Doane Robinson



Credit: National Park Service

St. Louis Arch



Credit: Canva Pro.

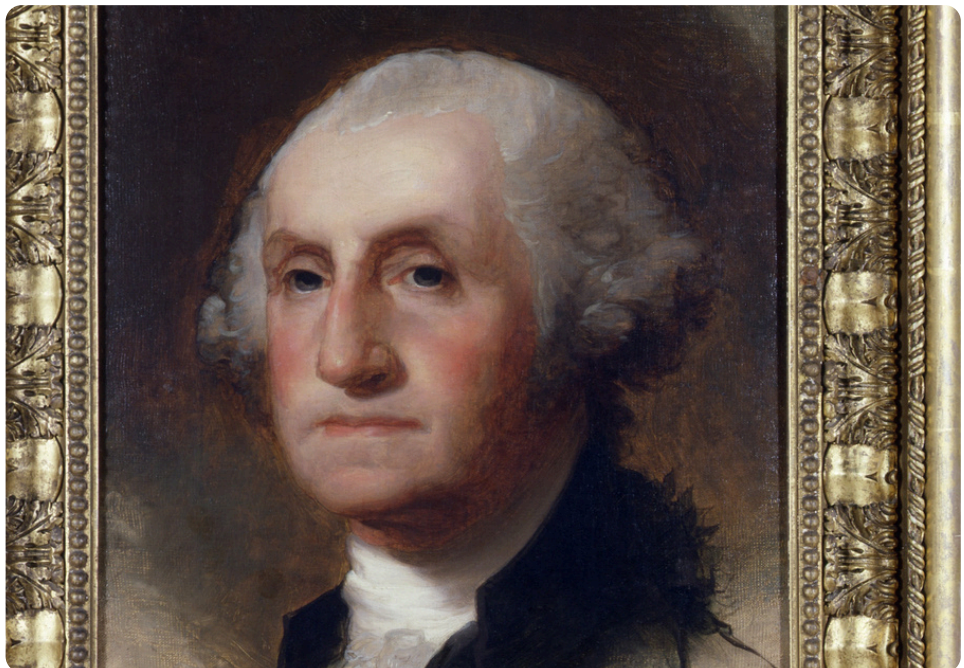
Images

**Golden Gate
Bridge**



Credit: Canva Pro.

**George
Washington**



Credit: Canva Pro.

Images

Thomas Jefferson



Credit: Canva Pro.

Teddy Roosevelt



Credit: Canva Pro.

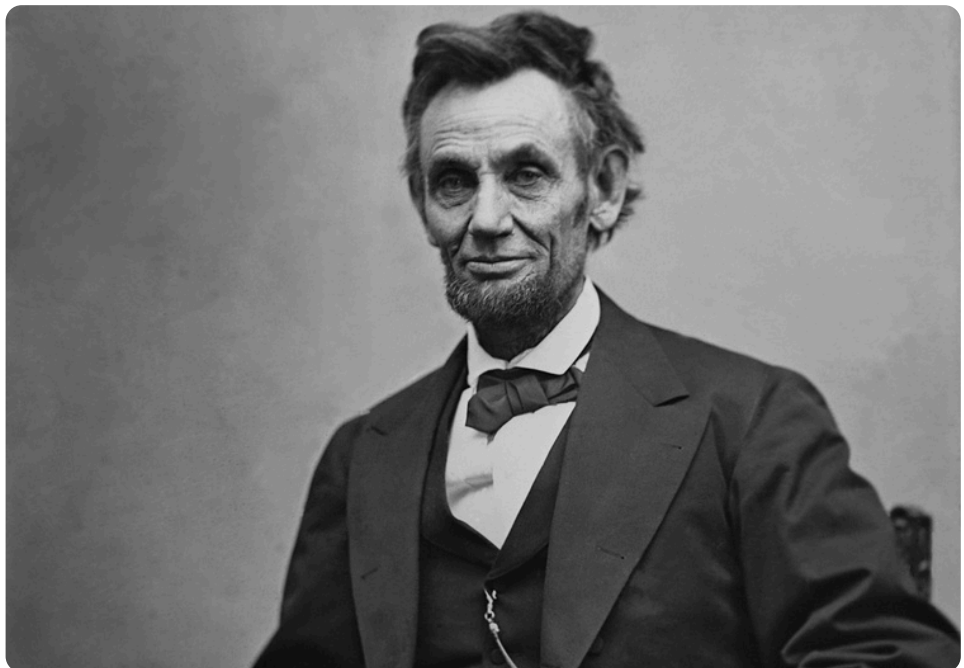
Images

Panama Canal



Credit: Canva Pro.

Abraham Lincoln



Credit: Canva Pro.

Images

Architect



Credit: Canva Pro.

Gateway Arch Tram



Credit: Wikipedia.

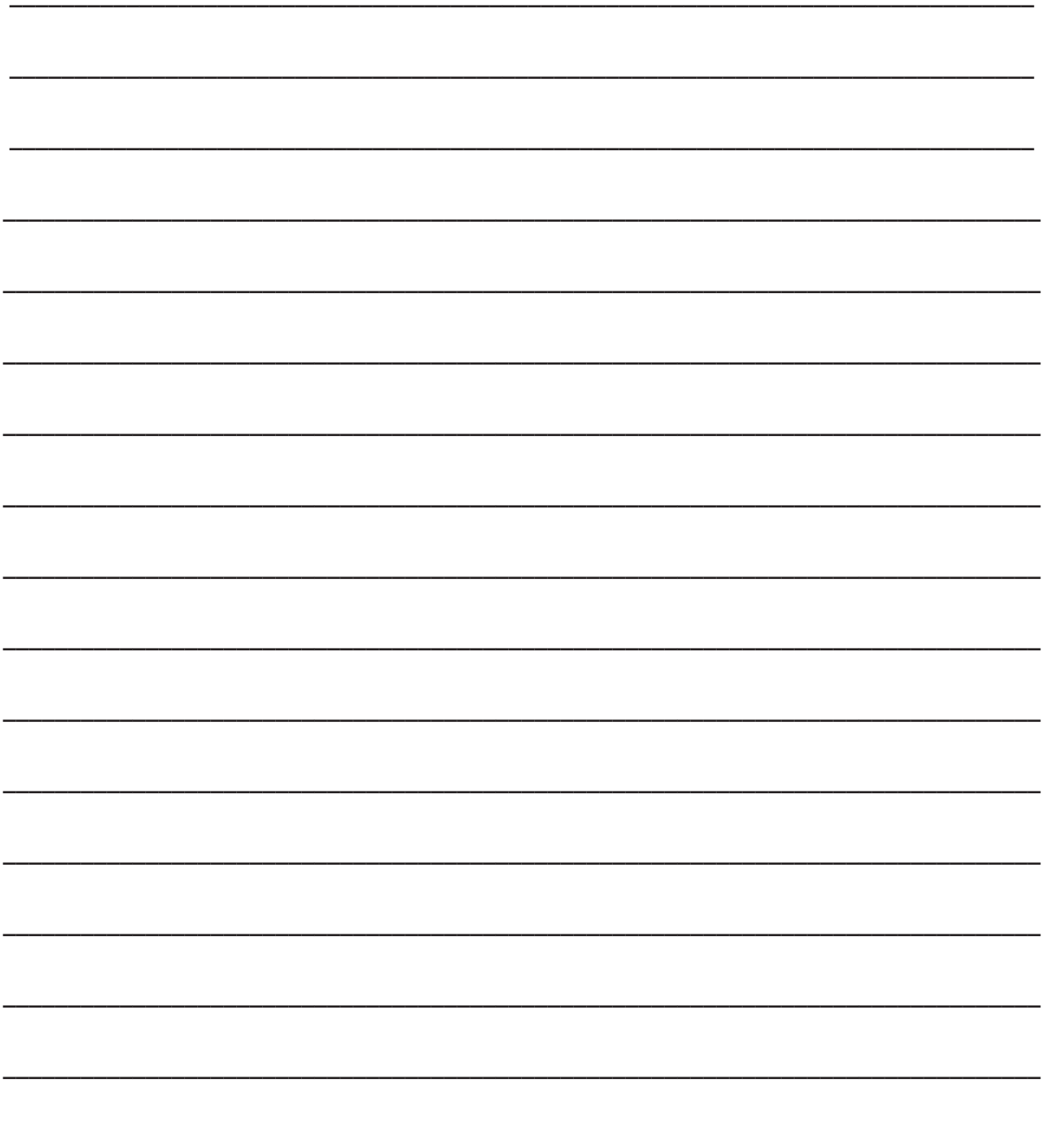
Images

Golden Gate Bridge Workers



Credit: Canva Pro.

Notes

A series of 18 horizontal lines for writing notes, arranged in a single column. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across most of the page width.