

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 and the Golden Gate Bridge, and discuss how these monuments reflect American values and achievements.
- Describe the significance of key American landmarks, including Mount Rushmore, the Gateway Arch, and the Golden Gate Bridge, by exploring their history and purpose.
- Identify and explain the contributions of important American leaders and engineers in the creation of national monuments, such as the Presidents on Mount Rushmore and the engineers behind the Golden Gate Bridge.
- Understand simple concepts of engineering and historical significance related to the construction of monuments, such as the challenges of building large structures and the role of creativity and hard work.
- Define American exceptionalism.

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 **feat:** an achievement that requires great courage, skill, or strength.
- 0 5 **historian:** a person who studies, writes about, and interprets historical events, people, and trends.
- 0 6 **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 7 **monument:** a special building or object made to remember and honor important people, events, or ideas.
- 0 8 **precedent:** when something that happened before is used as an example or rule to follow in the future.
- 0 9 **tram:** a type of vehicle that runs on tracks and is used for public transportation.
- 1 0 **wildlife refuge:** a protected area designated to safeguard animals, plants, and their habitats.

Introduction

TELL Students

Today, we are going to explore some of the unique and special symbols and landmarks of the United States. You will choose a symbol or landmark, like the American flag or the Statue of Liberty, and use classroom resources to dive into its history and significance. Once you pick a symbol, you may use our school-approved websites or library books to research your topic. After researching, you will decorate a star cut-out that represents your chosen symbol and share what you have learned with the class. This activity will not only enhance your understanding of these important national icons but also improve your research and presentation skills. Let's get started and make our "Special Stars" board shine! 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 often hold historical, cultural, or architectural significance and can be used to help people navigate or identify a specific area. When you are done decorating your star, we will put all of them on our "Special Stars" board. [Prepare bulletin board or poster and necessary materials. Once all stars are on the board, have students present their star one at a time to the class.] This will help us learn about 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 symbol do you pick to represent America and American values? Why is it important to you?

TELL Students

In our country, we have many special things that make us unique, like our beautiful flag, our families, and amazing landmarks such as the Statue of Liberty. **[Reference Flag Image.]** We are going to explore why these things are so 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. Our journey begins in South Dakota, where we will start discovering some of these amazing American wonders!

Introduction

ASK Students

Why is Mount Rushmore special?

TELL Students

The faces carved into Mount Rushmore demonstrate four very important Presidents of the United States: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln. Each of these Presidents was chosen to be on Mount Rushmore because they did great things to help our country grow and improve. George Washington helped start our country and was our first President. Thomas Jefferson helped expand our country with the Louisiana Purchase. Theodore Roosevelt worked hard to protect our environment. Abraham Lincoln worked to keep our country together during a very hard time and helped end slavery. These Presidents are celebrated on Mount Rushmore because of their strong leadership and the strong American values they demonstrate.

ASK Students

Can you explain why these four Presidents were chosen to be on Mount Rushmore and how their significant contributions helped shape our country?

TELL Students

Mount Rushmore is a monument in the Black Hills of South Dakota, reaching an impressive height of approximately 5,725 feet. A **monument** is a special building or object made to remember and honor important people, events, or ideas. This significant landmark features the 60-foot-tall faces of four distinguished American Presidents, each one as tall as ten adults stacked on top of one another! It symbolizes the legacy and leadership of these great figures in American history.

[Reference Mount Rushmore Image.]

ASK Students

Why do you think the creators of Mount Rushmore designed it to be such a grand and remarkable monument?

Introduction

TELL Students 🔑

The idea for Mount Rushmore started in the 1920s when a man named Doane Robinson, who was a historian for South Dakota, wanted to create a place that would attract visitors to his state. A **historian** is a person who studies, writes about, and interprets historical events, people, and trends. But making Mount Rushmore was a difficult feat and took a lot of hard work and creativity. A **feat** is an achievement that requires great courage, skill, or strength. It often implies that the accomplishment is remarkable or extraordinary, highlighting the effort and expertise needed to achieve it.

ASK Students

Why was Mount Rushmore such a challenge?

TELL Students 📷🔑

The Gateway Arch, also known as the St. Louis Arch, is another important 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 and 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. **[Reference Engineering Image.]**

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.

Introduction

TELL Students (continued)

Now let's learn about another incredible American monument: the Golden Gate Bridge.

[Reference Golden Gate Bridge.] This bridge is sometimes called "the bridge that couldn't be built" because it was a huge challenge to create. 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 big feat of engineering. 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 enormous 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 demonstrate 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 significant national monument featuring the sculpted faces of four important American Presidents: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln. These leaders were selected for their monumental roles in shaping the nation and exemplifying foundational values. George Washington, the first President of the United States, is remembered for his courageous leadership during the Revolutionary War and for setting a precedent in the peaceful transition of presidential power. **[Reference George Washington Image.]** A **precedent** is when something that happened before is used as an example or rule to follow in the future. It is like setting a pattern that others can use to guide their own actions later on. Washington's legacy on Mount Rushmore symbolizes the enduring principles of leadership and democracy that guide our nation.

ASK Students

Why was George Washington included on Mount Rushmore, and what unique contributions did he make that significantly impacted our nation?

TELL Students

That's right! George Washington was the first President of the United States.

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

He was chosen to be on Mount Rushmore because he helped lead our country to freedom and set an example for how Presidents should lead and pass on their job to the next President. Now, let's learn about another important leader on Mount Rushmore: Thomas Jefferson. **[Reference Thomas Jefferson Image.]** He authored the Declaration of Independence, an important document that proclaimed the colonies' separation from British rule on July 4, 1776. Jefferson also played a crucial role in the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, a monumental agreement in which the United States acquired approximately 828,000 square miles of land west of the Mississippi River from France. This purchase, negotiated for \$15 million, effectively doubled the size of the United States, opening land for exploration and settlement. It included parts of 15 current U.S. states and two Canadian provinces. Jefferson was also the third President of the United States.

ASK Students

Who served as the third President of the United States, and what are two significant contributions he made to the nation's development?

TELL Students

Next, let's learn 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 easier for ships to travel between the two oceans. He also worked diligently to protect our natural environments. 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. **[Reference Wildlife Refuge Image.]**

ASK Students

What did Teddy Roosevelt do to help protect our natural environments?

Lesson

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.

ASK Students

Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President, navigated the nation through the Civil War; can you recall his significant accomplishments, and why do you think his leadership qualities make him a pivotal figure on Mount Rushmore?

TELL Students

Abraham Lincoln worked hard to end slavery and keep the country together during a very difficult time called the Civil War. The carving on Mount Rushmore was finished in 1941 after 14 years of hard work. Today, many people visit Mount Rushmore every year 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 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 new land acquired 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, and it is a symbol of a very important time in American history.

[Reference St. Louis Arch Image.]

Lesson

ASK Students

What is the name of the monument in St. Louis that celebrates the era of westward exploration in the United States?

TELL Students

That is right! The special monument in St. Louis that helps us remember this exciting time is called the Gateway Arch. **[Reference Gateway Arch Image.]** A famous architect named Eero Saarinen designed the Gateway Arch, also known as the St. Louis 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

What makes the Golden Gate Bridge so special and why is it an important symbol of America?

TELL Students

The Golden Gate Bridge is a remarkable example of how perseverance 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.

Lesson

ASK Students

How did the team of engineers, architects, and construction workers, led by Chief Engineer Joseph B. Strauss, overcome the challenges of strong tides, winds, and earthquakes to build the Golden Gate Bridge?

TELL Students

The team behind the Golden Gate Bridge, led by Chief Engineer Joseph B. Strauss, faced immense challenges due to the bridge's location and the natural conditions of the site. The bridge spans the Golden Gate Strait, a region notorious for its strong tides and frequent dense fog, which complicated construction efforts. Additionally, the area is prone to earthquakes. To overcome these hurdles, the team employed creative engineering techniques. They used flexible cables and designed the bridge to sway safely in the wind and during potential earthquakes. This flexibility allows the bridge to absorb and dissipate the energy from such natural forces rather than resist them rigidly, which could lead to structural failure. Building the bridge's two massive towers was another significant challenge, especially in the turbulent water. **[Reference Construction Workers Image.]** The construction of the south tower, in particular, required workers to dig through more than 100 feet of water and mud to secure the tower's foundation to the bedrock below. This was an extraordinary feat of engineering at the time and was crucial in providing the stability needed for such a large structure. Just like the engineers and builders of the Golden Gate Bridge faced and overcame their challenges, everyone encounters difficulties in their own lives, including you as students. Think about a time when you had to complete a difficult homework assignment, learn a new skill in sports, or even build a complex project for school.

ASK Students

What are some challenges the builders of the Golden Gate Bridge had to overcome? How did they solve these problems? Building the bridge took perseverance and teamwork, much like working through a tough math problem or improving in a sport. How did you keep going, and who helped you along the way?

TELL Students

Discussing these parallels can help you see that the skills needed to tackle engineering marvels like the Golden Gate Bridge—creativity, planning, perseverance, and teamwork—are the same skills you use in everyday life and learning.

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

Building the bridge was very challenging. Divers had to work in the cold ocean, and tall towers were built to support the bridge. These towers were the tallest in the world at the time!

[Reference Golden Gate Workers Image.] 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: [Building the Golden Gate Bridge!](#)



Multiple Choice Quiz

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Instructions: Please carefully read each question and answer set. Circle the correct answer.

1. Which of the following is a famous American landmark?
 - A) The Eiffel Tower
 - B) The Statue of Liberty
 - C) The Great Wall of China
 - D) Stonehenge
2. What does a landmark often symbolize?
 - A) A place to play
 - B) Something important in history or culture
 - C) A new movie coming out
 - D) A type of food
3. Why are we decorating stars in our class activity?
 - A) To create a night sky
 - B) To make a birthday card
 - C) To represent different symbols and landmarks
 - D) To use up extra art supplies
4. Which President is known for his role during the Civil War?
 - A) Theodore Roosevelt
 - B) Abraham Lincoln
 - C) Thomas Jefferson
 - D) George Washington
5. What important document did Thomas Jefferson write?
 - A) The Magna Carta
 - B) The Declaration of Independence
 - C) The Constitution
 - D) The Bill of Rights



Multiple Choice Quiz

6. What was the Louisiana Purchase?
 - A) A purchase of land from Mexico
 - B) A deal that doubled the size of the U.S.
 - C) A trade deal with Canada
 - D) A purchase of islands from Spain
7. Which President is celebrated for his efforts in environmental conservation?
 - A) Abraham Lincoln
 - B) George Washington
 - C) Theodore Roosevelt
 - D) John Adams
8. What challenge did builders face when constructing the Golden Gate Bridge?
 - A) Funding the project
 - B) Strong winds and earthquakes
 - C) Getting enough paint
 - D) Traffic problems
9. Why is Mount Rushmore considered an exceptional monument?
 - A) It features famous movie stars
 - B) It has the faces of four important U.S. Presidents
 - C) It is made of gold
 - D) It plays music
10. What is the Gateway Arch known as?
 - A) The Gateway to the East
 - B) The Gateway to the South
 - C) The Gateway to the West
 - D) The Gateway to the North
11. What did George Washington do that was significant?
 - A) Invented the light bulb
 - B) Led the country during the Revolutionary War
 - C) Built the first car
 - D) Wrote the first computer program



Multiple Choice Answer Key

Below is the answer key for the quiz questions provided:

1. Which of the following is a famous American landmark?

Correct Answer: B) The Statue of Liberty

2. What does a landmark often symbolize?

Correct Answer: B) Something important in history or culture

3. Why are we decorating stars in our class activity?

Correct Answer: C) To represent different symbols and landmarks

4. Which President is known for his role during the Civil War?

Correct Answer: B) Abraham Lincoln

5. What important document did Thomas Jefferson write?

Correct Answer: B) The Declaration of Independence

6. What was the Louisiana Purchase?

Correct Answer: B) A deal that doubled the size of the U.S.

7. Which President is celebrated for his efforts in environmental conservation?

Correct Answer: C) Theodore Roosevelt

8. What challenge did builders face when constructing the Golden Gate Bridge?

Correct Answer: B) Strong winds and earthquakes

9. Why is Mount Rushmore considered an exceptional monument?

Correct Answer: B) It has the faces of four important U.S. Presidents

10. What is the Gateway Arch known as?

Correct Answer: C) The Gateway to the West

11. What did George Washington do that was significant?

Correct Answer: B) Led the country during the Revolutionary War



The Great American Challenge Board Game

Objective

Students will learn about significant American landmarks, historical events, and cultural achievements to understand how these contribute to the concept of American exceptionalism.

Materials Needed

- Large poster board or several sheets of connected paper to create the game board
- Markers, crayons, and stickers for decorating
- Index cards for question and challenge cards
- Game pieces (could use coins, small toys, or cut-out paper figures)
- Dice

Setup Instructions

1. Create the Board:
 - Draw a winding path on the poster board with spaces labeled with different colors or symbols representing categories like "Landmarks," "Events," "People," and "Innovations."
 - Decorate the board with images of American flags, eagles, and other patriotic symbols.
2. Prepare the Cards:
 - Question Cards: Write questions related to American history, landmarks, important people, and cultural achievements. Each correct answer allows the player to move forward one space.
 - Challenge Cards: These cards can include small tasks like singing the first line of the national anthem, reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, or drawing a simple picture of an American symbol.
3. Game Rules:
 - Players take turns rolling the dice and moving the corresponding number of spaces.
 - When landing on a space, the player picks up a card matching the color or symbol of that space.
 - If the player answers a question correctly or completes a challenge, they stay on their spot; if not, they move back one space.
 - The first player to reach the end of the board wins.

Classroom Implementation

- Introduction: Explain the concept of American exceptionalism in simple terms—how America is unique in its history, culture, and values.



The Great American Challenge Board Game

Classroom Implementation (continued)

- Game Play: Divide the class into small groups and have each group play the game. Rotate around the room to assist with reading cards or explaining challenges.
- Discussion: After the game, discuss what the students learned about why many people view America as exceptional. Ask them to share which facts or challenges they found most interesting.

Extension Activities

- Students can create their own question and challenge cards as a homework assignment, researching facts about America.
- Organize a trivia day where students use their cards to quiz each other on what they've learned.

This board game activity not only makes learning about American exceptionalism fun but also encourages teamwork, creative thinking, and active participation in historical and education.

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

Flag



Credit: Canva Pro

St. Louis Arch



Credit: Canva Pro.

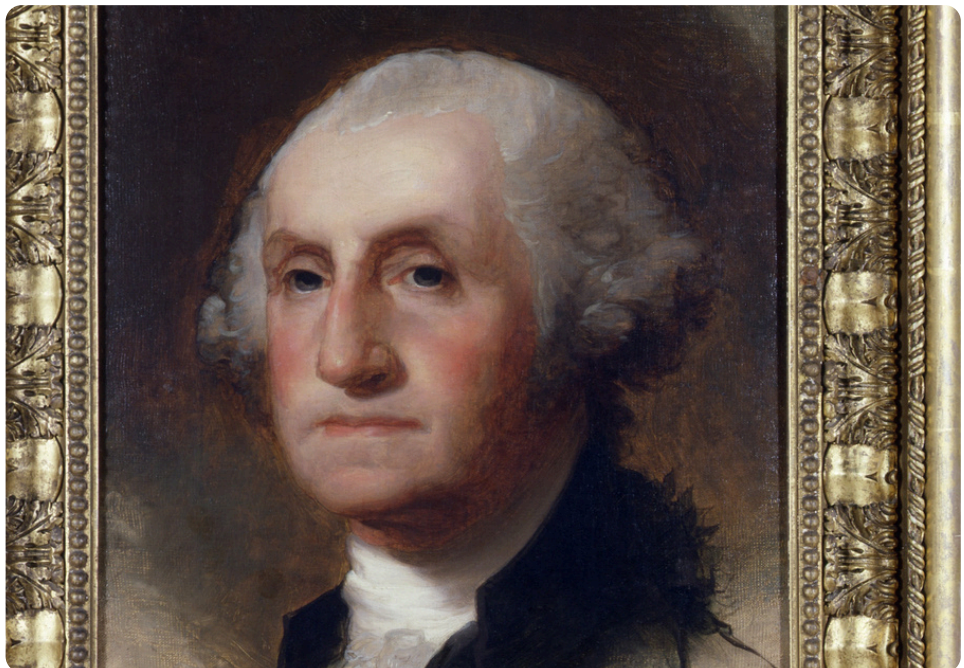
Images

**Golden Gate
Bridge**



Credit: Canva Pro.

**George
Washington**



Credit: Canva Pro.

Images

Thomas Jefferson



Credit: Canva Pro.

Teddy Roosevelt



Credit: Canva Pro.

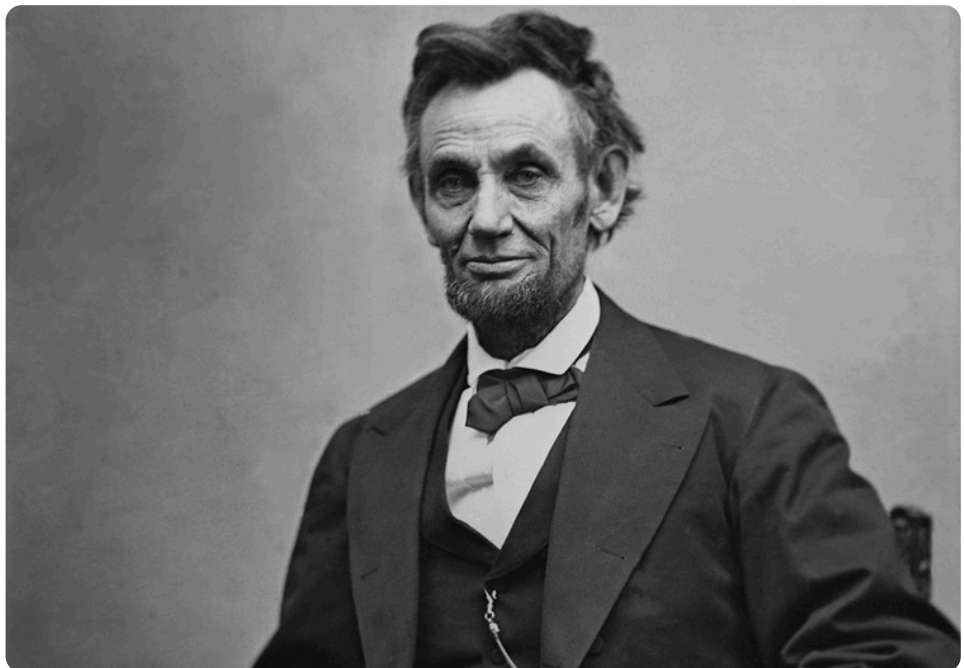
Images

**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.

Engineer



Credit: Canva Pro.

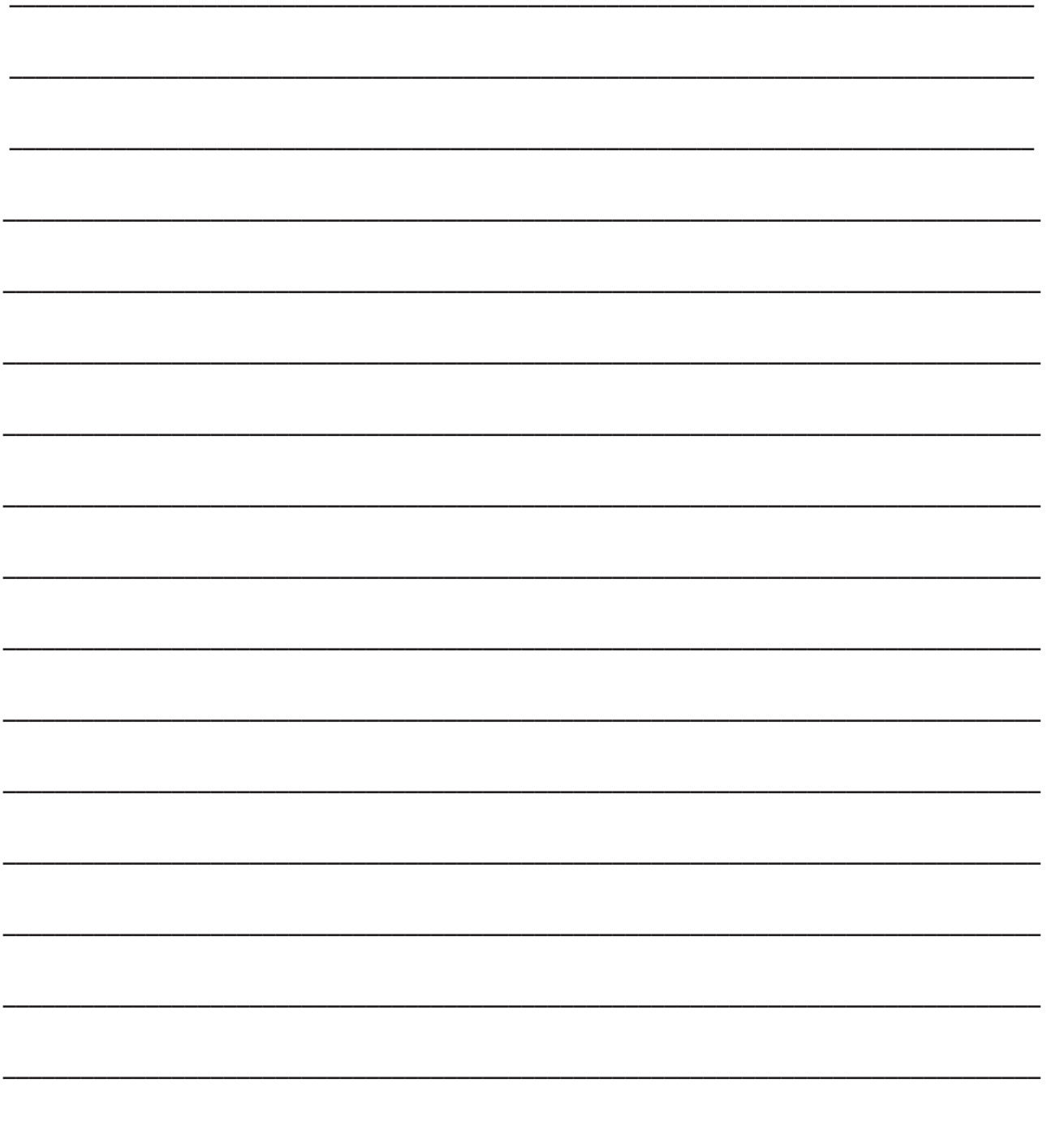
Images

Wildlife Refuge



Credit: Canva Pro.

Notes

A series of 18 horizontal lines for writing notes, arranged in a single column.