

Looking at Language

Presidential Precedents

by Richard Lederer, Ph.D.

Can you name the youngest man ever to have served as president of the United States?

If your answer is John Fitzgerald Kennedy, you're not quite correct. Kennedy was, at the age of 43, the youngest man ever to have been elected president, but Theodore Roosevelt became president at 42, when William McKinley was assassinated. When TR's second term was over, he was still only 50 years old, making him the youngest ex-president. William Clinton is the next youngest, having left office at the age of 54.

What American presidents have been impeached?

If your answer includes Richard Nixon, you're wrong again. President Nixon resigned before any impeachment trial. Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton were tried under the articles of impeachment. Both were acquitted, but, still, they were both impeached.

Try your hand and mind at the following quiz of presidential firsts, onlys, and mosts:

1. Now that you know the identity of our youngest president, who was our oldest president?
2. Who was our tallest president?
3. Who was our shortest president?
4. Who was our fattest president?
5. Who was the first president to wear a beard?
6. Who was president for the shortest period of time?
7. What president had the greatest number of children?
8. Who was the only president for whom one of the 50 states is named?
9. Who were the only presidents for whom national capitals were named?
10. Who was the only president never to marry?
11. Who was the last president born in a log cabin?
12. Who were the only presidents to be married while in the White House?
13. Who was the only president to have been divorced?
14. Who was the only president to serve as chief justice of the Supreme Court?
15. Who was the only president to be survived by both his parents?
16. Who was the only president to have served two nonconsecutive terms?
17. Who was the first president to live in the White House?
18. Who made the first presidential radio broadcast?
19. Who was the first president to appear on television?
20. Who was the only man to have been president and vice president but not elected to either office?

See next page for ANSWERS.

Richard Lederer, Ph.D., is the author of more than 3,000 books and articles about language and humor. His syndicated column, "Looking at Language," appears in newspapers and magazines throughout the United States. His new title, *Comma Sense: A Fun-damental Guide to Punctuation*, with John Shore, is now available from St. Martin's Press. E-mail: richard.lederer@pobox.com



Answers

1. Ronald Reagan, who became president at 69 and left office at 77. When Reagan died at the age of 93, he was the longest-lived president.
2. Abraham Lincoln, at 6 feet, four inches.
3. James Madison, at 5 feet, 4 inches.
4. William Howard Taft, at 6 feet and 300-352 pounds.
5. Abraham Lincoln.
6. William Henry Harrison died on the 31st day of his presidency.
7. John Tyler was the most fatherly of presidents. He had three sons and five daughters with his first wife and five sons and two daughters with his second. From a single marriage William Henry Harrison was the father of ten children—four girls and six boys, one of who became the father of another president, Benjamin Harrison.
8. George Washington.
9. George Washington (Washington, D.C.) and James Monroe (Monrovia, the capital of Liberia).
10. James Buchanan. During his term in office, his niece, Harriet Lane, played the role of First Lady.
11. James Garfield.
12. Grover Cleveland and Woodrow Wilson
13. Ronald Reagan.
14. William Howard Taft.
15. John Fitzgerald Kennedy.
16. Grover Cleveland, who was both our 22nd and 24th president.
17. John Adams, who moved into the White House on November 1, 1800. He occupied that residence for only four months, having lived most of his term in Philadelphia.
18. Warren G. Harding, in June of 1922.
19. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, on April 30, 1939, at the opening ceremonies of the New York World's Fair. Herbert Hoover appeared on the nation's first TV broadcast in 1927, but as secretary of commerce, not as president.
20. Gerald Ford.

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