



Recognizing President's Day and Celebrating with Kids

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When most people think of holidays, they think of fun family gatherings and time spent away from work or school. While there are a number of these days throughout the calendar year that celebrate both religious and secular customs, there are others that aren't recognized in quite the same way. Even though the U.S. has several designated federal holidays, or those in which banks and postal services are closed, some of them are simply treated differently.

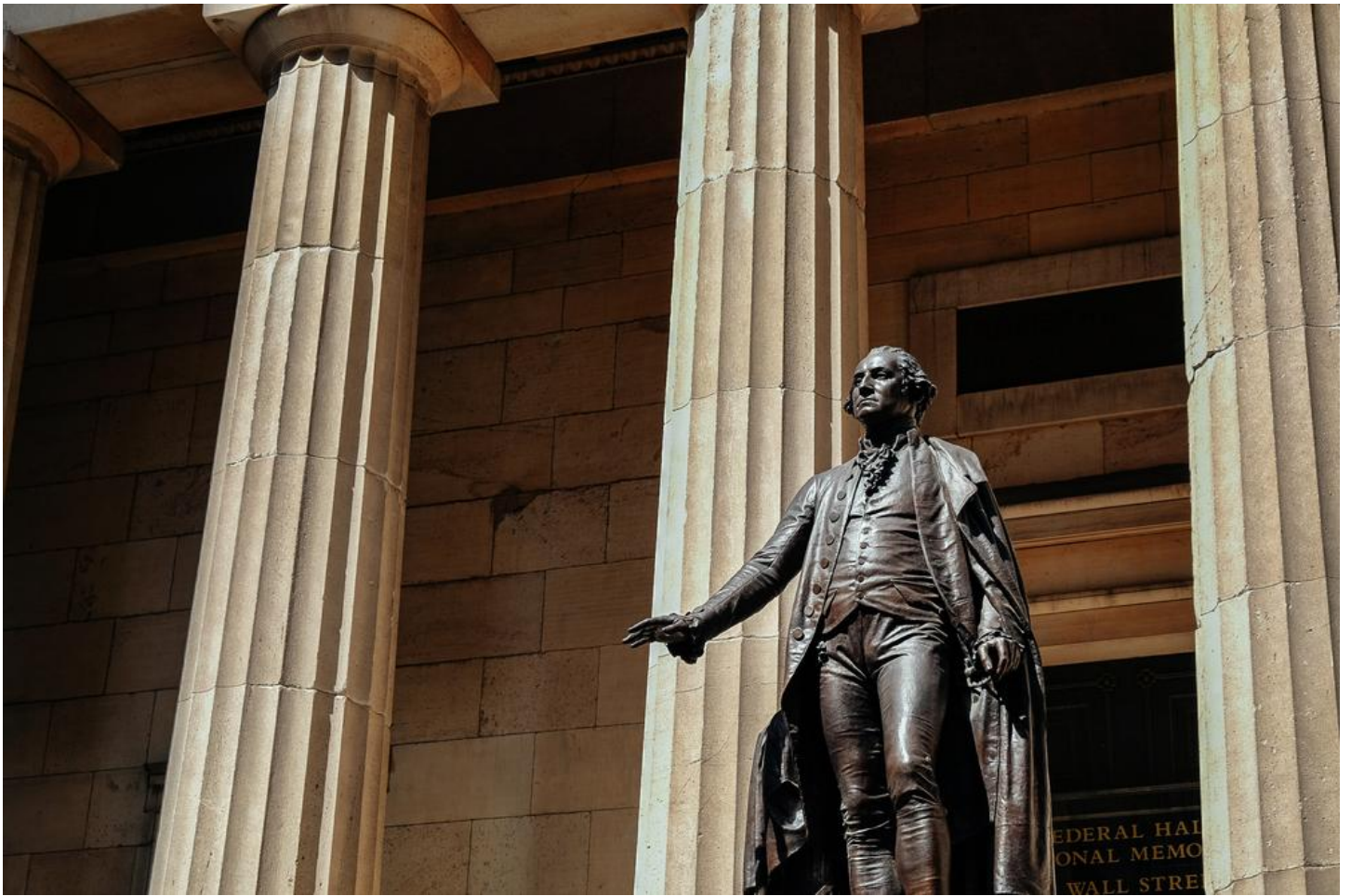
Take for instance President's Day, which is coming up on February 21st this year. As a federal holiday, the U.S. government will recognize it, but most families will not. In fact, many parents will still have to go to work, and much of the country's school children will still go to work. But why is this?

Today we're shining the spotlight on President's Day. Before we can answer why this holiday is treated differently from other, more major holidays, we must understand how it originated, and how it became a federal holiday in today's world.

Is It President's Day, or George Washington's Birthday?

If you run a quick Google search for federal holidays in 2022, you will see that Google lists February 21st as Washington's birthday. Likewise, some calendars also list the holiday as such, even though it is federally known as President's Day instead. However, you most likely already know that like Columbus Day, President's Day always falls on a Monday, and Washington's birthday obviously did not fall on the same day of the week each year. This may be confusing for some without reviewing the history behind the holiday.

George Washington was born on February 22nd, 1732. Considering his importance to the American Revolution, and his status as the first president of the newly formed nation, he was potentially the most important figure in America during his era. As a result, following his death in 1799 and throughout most of the 19th century, Washington's birthday was seen as an unofficial holiday. It wasn't until President Rutherford B. Hayes signed it into law that the day would become a federal holiday for the District of Columbia. Finally, the day became fully recognized nationwide in 1885.



For nearly a century, the country celebrated Washington's birthday on February 22nd, but in the late 1960's, there began a shift to make the day known as President's Day. This was due to the Uniform Monday Holiday Act. At the time, Senator Robert McClory from Illinois introduced the measure to make several federal holidays that occur throughout the year to occur on a Monday, granting a 3-day weekend to federal workers in an effort to reduce absenteeism in the workplace after holidays. In addition, the measure would ensure multiple long weekends throughout the calendar year to give hard working citizens a well-deserved rest. The holiday eventually became known as President's Day in 1971 and falls on the third Monday in February every year.

How Is President's Day Celebrated Today?

Since the day shifted from Washington's birthday to a more generalized holiday, President's Day is now meant to celebrate all U.S. presidents from past to present. Something fascinating about the month of February is the fact that three other presidents were born in that month including William Henry Harrison, Abraham Lincoln, and Ronald Reagan. Regardless, the day honors all presidents and federal workers still get the day off from work, even while other essential services, such as those in the medical and educational fields continue to operate.

Unfortunately, the options for celebrating this holiday are typically scarce. Many department stores and automotive dealerships use President's Day to justify special sales events, but these usually do not celebrate the importance of the day specifically. Instead, to teach children more about its history and significance, it might be useful to explore homegrown activities to celebrate.



Ways to Celebrate President's Day with Kids

While it's always a good idea to check out the local events, it's possible to celebrate President's Day with just your family. Try the following ideas to enrich your child's holiday this year:

1. Take a Trip to a Local Historical Marker

Each state has its own rich American history, with historical markers spread out throughout the nation. In fact, this [database](#) serves as a tool of all the historical markers recorded in the U.S. and allows users to search near their home to find sites they can visit to learn more about American history. To celebrate this patriotic holiday, create a list of nearby historical markers, and learn about what happened there. After reviewing the history, head out to the site with your child to see firsthand where history happened.

2. Help Children Write a Letter to the President

One option to honor the president, while also working on valuable ELA skills, could be to compose a letter or email to the White House. Writing to the president is always welcomed and provides a great opportunity to thank him and the First Lady for their service to our country. Find all the details, such as the physical and email address [here](#).

3. Take a Virtual Tour of the White House

While it might not be possible to get to Washington D.C. on President's Day, your children can still take a virtual tour of the White House in the comfort of your own home! [Using this site](#), citizens can tour the grounds of this famous residence utilizing 360-degree technology that allows participants to "walk" through the rooms! To celebrate President's Day, take your kids on a virtual tour after reviewing the different wings and rooms in the White House. Honor presidents past and present by learning more about the rich history that is contained within those walls.

4. Put on a President's Day Play

Gather siblings and neighborhood friends together to plan and present a fun President's Day play! There's no better way to review early American history than by asking kids to recall facts that they can incorporate into a play. In addition, kids can create a play imagining the current president meeting the George Washington and what their interaction might look and sound like. Encourage children to get creative! They can utilize what they already know from class into a play they design and present to neighborhood parents.

5. Bake a Cherry Pie

Believe it or not, President's Day is also informally known as "Cherry Pie Day". This is because of the famous myth surrounding George Washington chopping down a cherry tree. While we now know that the first president did not, in fact, cut down a cherry tree, he is said to have loved the fruit above all others. This is so well-known that the cherry pie has become a symbol that overtakes the popularity of the all-American apple pie in the month of February.



It's true that President's Day doesn't rank up with the most popular holidays for family gatherings and celebrations, such as Thanksgiving or even the 4th of July. Even so, it's a national holiday that is rich with American history that can serve as a valuable lesson kids. This year, teach your child the significance behind this sometimes-forgotten holiday, and celebrate President's Day using the fun-filled ideas above.

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