

THE PERIODIC TABLE OF THE PRESIDENTS™

The Presidents & Their Inaugural Addresses

Introduction:

Today we know Inauguration Day as January 20th, but for much of the country's past it was March 4th. Prior to 1933, an incoming president took the oath of office and gave his inaugural address on March 4th. If the fourth fell on a Sunday, the proceedings were moved to the following Monday.

The original system created a four-month gap between Election Day and Inauguration Day. This time was necessary to accurately count votes and to move the new president to Washington, D.C.

As voting, communication, and travel became easier, this lengthy lame-duck period became unnecessary, and created an obstacle to governing. In 1933, the 20th Amendment changed Inauguration Day to January 20th.

Questions:

1. What is the name of the day the new president takes office?
2. What was the date that Congress first set as Inauguration Day?
3. Why was there such a long gap between the November election and the March inauguration?
4. Which amendment to our Constitution changed the date the president takes office? What is the current inauguration date?
5. Today a president takes office nearly eleven weeks after Election Day. Why might the sitting president be called a "lame-duck" during this time?
6. We have had political party strife since our earliest days. How does Thomas Jefferson's first inauguration demonstrate this? Think about his political party.
7. Who gave the shortest inaugural address? The longest?
8. Lincoln's second inaugural address was delivered near the end of the Civil War. What does he mean when he says, "With malice toward none, with charity for all..."?
9. During the Great Depression, who famously said, "...the only thing we have to fear is fear itself..."?
10. Which president's speech is Bill Clinton responding to when he states, "Government is not the problem, and government is not the solution"?

Answer Key

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Inauguration Day

2. What was the date that Congress first set as Inauguration Day?

March 4th

3. Why was there such a long gap between the November election and the March inauguration?

***It took a long time for the president to leave his home and travel to Washington, D.C.
Vote counting***

4. Which amendment to our Constitution changed the date the president takes office? What is the current inauguration date?

20th Amendment, January 20th

5. Today a president takes office nearly eleven weeks after Election Day. Why might the sitting president be called a "lame-duck" during this time?

The president has little time in office remaining, giving him less influence - he is less likely to accomplish much.

6. We have had political party strife since our earliest days. How does Thomas Jefferson's first inauguration demonstrate this? Think about his political party.

Jefferson states, "We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists." The election was a bitter fight between Jefferson, the Democratic-Republican, and Adams, the Federalist. Adams did not attend the inauguration.

7. Who gave the shortest inaugural address? The longest?

George Washington, William Henry Harrison

8. Lincoln's second inaugural address was delivered near the end of the Civil War. What does he mean when he says, "With malice toward none, with charity for all,..."?

The nation was torn apart by war - he wanted the nation to heal and not hold onto anger and hatred. It was time for the nation to come back together.

9. During the Great Depression, who famously said, "...the only thing we have to fear is fear itself..."?

Franklin D. Roosevelt

10. Which president's speech is Bill Clinton responding to when he states, "Government is not the problem, and government is not the solution"?

Ronald Reagan's speech