

Topic 6: President's Day

Background:

Americans honor George Washington as the "Father of the Country." He was the first president and was in office from 1789 -1797. Americans honor Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States, for his role in keeping the country together during America's Civil War, 1861-1865, which was fought because of the issue of states' rights and slavery.

Originally established in 1885 in recognition of President George Washington, the holiday became popularly known as Presidents' Day after it was moved as part of 1971's Uniform Monday Holiday Act, an attempt to create more three-day weekends for the nation's workers. While several states still have individual holidays honoring the birthdays of Washington, Abraham Lincoln and other figures, Presidents' Day is now popularly viewed as a day to celebrate all U.S. presidents, past and present. It is celebrated on the third Monday of February.

Discussion Questions:

1. In your country, is there a special day to honor a leader of your country? If so, when is the day? Is the leader an historical political leader, or a current leader?
2. How does your country celebrate the day? Are there speeches, parades, special music, food, or colors?
3. In your opinion, what makes a good leader for a country? Tell about the values and qualities important for a leader in your country to have.
4. When did your home country become a nation? Is the form of government today the same as the form of government at the beginning of your country's history? If it is different, tell about the differences.
5. Has your home country ever had a civil war? If the answer is yes, when was this civil war, and what were the issues? How were the problems resolved?
6. If you could have any leader in the world to be the leader of your country, who would it be? (Any leader from history or today, from any country in the world.) Why?
7. In your home country, do people disagree publicly with any government policies? Is organized opposition to governmental policies common? Is it safe to oppose the government?
8. Has your country had problems with human rights issues, either in the past or today? Why do you think problems like this occur in a country? What should governments and individual people do to help change the problems?

Vocabulary: slavery, civil war, human rights, current, majority, minority