Washington D.C.

Pre-reading

Questions: What do you know about Washington D.C.?
- What would you like to know about it?

Definitions: Symbolize – to represent or stand for something
- Memorial – something that serves to honor the memory of a person or an event
- Chamber – an enclosed place

Reading

Surrounded by the states of Maryland and Virginia on the Potomac River is our nation’s capital, Washington D.C. It is named after the first President of the United States, George Washington. The city is the central hub of our national government. It is also a place of rich history and beauty.

Washington D.C. is home to the highest governing bodies in the U.S. The centers of all three branches of government are housed in the city. The Senate and House of Representatives, the legislative branch, make laws at the Capitol. The U.S. Supreme Court Judges are housed in the Supreme Court Building. This judicial branch of government enforces the law. The President of the U.S. lives and works with his staff at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, more commonly known as the White House. This executive branch interprets the law.

Washington D.C. is also the site of many national landmarks and museums. Tourists from all over the world visit the city each year. The National Mall is a large, open area in the center of the city. It features many famous monuments to American leaders.

At the west end of the Mall is the Washington Monument. This four-sided stone structure honors the “founding father” of the United States, George Washington. The first stone was laid on July 4, 1848. It opened to the public in the fall of 1888. In total, there are 36,491 stones. At 555 feet 5 1/8 inches high, the Washington Monument towers over everything in the city. It is one of the tallest masonry structures in the world.

Fifty flags, symbols of the fifty states, surround the base of the Monument. An elevator takes visitors to the top of the structure where windows offer views of landmarks such as the Lincoln Memorial, the White House and the Capitol building.

The Lincoln Memorial, built between 1914 and 1922, honors Abraham Lincoln, our 16th President. He was President during the Civil War (1861-1865). The theme of the building represents the Union. The columns surrounding the walls symbolize the 36 states in the Union at the time of Lincoln’s death. The names of the 48 states in the Union (when the memorial was completed in 1922) are carved on the walls along the outside of the memorial.

The inside chamber contains a statue of Lincoln. He is seated facing the Washington Monument and the Capitol. The statue of Lincoln is 19 feet high and weighs 175 tons. The chamber also houses two huge stone tables. One is engraved with Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address, and the other with the Gettysburg Address. Two large murals portray Lincoln’s principles of freedom, justice and unity.

The Reflecting Pool is located on the Mall between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. This 2000 by 160 foot pool contains 7 million gallons of water. It offers a beautiful place for reflection on our country’s past, and allows one to ponder our country’s future.

Level 8.0
Understanding

1. Who is described as the “founding father” of the U.S.? Why? 

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2. What are the three branches of government? 

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3. Where is each branch housed? 

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_______________________________________________________________________________________

4. What does each branch do? 

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5. How many states joined the Union after Lincoln’s death? 

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6. What does the word monument mean? 

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7. What’s the difference in meaning between capital and capitol? 

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8. What is one of the most famous street addresses in the U.S.? Why? 

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Writing

Option A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Option B: Write about a place you would like to visit in the nation’s capital. Why that place?

Option C: If you’ve visited or lived in Washington D.C, write about what you liked or didn’t like about the city.

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Washington D.C. – Level 8.0