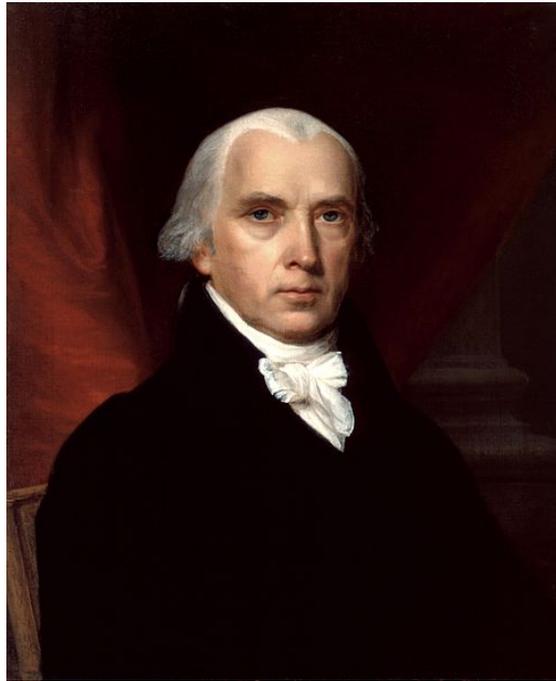


U.S. Presidents James Madison



James Madison was the fourth President of the United States. He is best known as the Father of the Constitution for his leading role in shaping the **document**.¹ Madison designed the Constitution's system of checks and balances at the Constitutional Convention of 1787. The system balances the power between Congress, the President and the Supreme Court. It gives each branch some control over the actions of the others. This way, one branch of government can't become too powerful. Madison also helped create the U.S. federal system. This system divides power between the central government and the states. Most importantly, he drafted the first 10 amendments to the Constitution. The amendments are called the Bill of Rights.

Like his predecessor, Thomas Jefferson, Madison was a Virginia man. He served as Secretary of State under President Jefferson. During this time, Madison

¹ **document** – a piece of paper containing important information

worked extra hard to keep America out of wars that were happening all over Europe. In 1812, however, Madison led America into a war with Great Britain. Great Britain was interfering with American trading ships. They were also becoming allies with Native Americans in the west. The British encouraged Native Americans to attack Americans.

Madison realized that his nation needed to fight back, even though they were unprepared. At one point in the War of 1812, British troops captured Washington, D.C. They destroyed the White House and other government buildings. But their success was only temporary. America won the war in 1815 when General Andrew Jackson defeated the British in the south.

The British **invasion**² caused Madison and his wife, Dolly, to flee Washington, D.C. Dolly was famous for throwing **lavish**³ parties at the White House. The fact that the White House was burned by the British didn't stop her. She continued her presidential entertaining from a new Washington home. Madison served out his second term while the White House was rebuilt. The war had brought an era of good feeling. Americans were more united. The economy was growing. Madison left office in 1817. He retired to Montpelier, his estate in Virginia.

² **invasion** – entering by force

³ **lavish** – generous or extravagant

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Madison was responsible for all of the following EXCEPT
 - a. leading the United States as the fourth President.
 - b. leading America into the War of 1812.
 - c. his leading role in shaping the Constitution.
 - d. serving as Secretary of State under President Washington.

2. The federal system shares power between the central government and
 - a. law makers.
 - b. Washington, DC.
 - c. states.
 - d. senators.

3. Which best describes the War of 1812?
 - a. an easy British victory
 - b. an easy win for America
 - c. the Native American's War
 - d. a challenging but important victory for America

4. According to the passage, **predecessor** means
 - a. person in office before.
 - b. person not in office before.
 - c. person who lost the office.
 - d. person who doesn't care about the office.

5. Why was Dolly Madison famous?
 - a. for throwing lavish parties
 - b. for being good looking
 - c. for her charity work
 - d. for wearing nice clothes

6. Describe Madison’s involvement in the creation of the Constitution.

7. How can the relationship between America and Great Britain be characterized during Madison’s presidency? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

_____ wanting to keep the peace, Madison was forced to declare war on the British in 1812.

- a. For
- b. Because
- c. Despite
- d. In

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below:

In 1812, the United States began a domestic war against the British because the Britons were interfering with America’s trade.

What? _____

(did) What? began a domestic war against the British

When? _____

Why? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** federal: having or relating to a system of government in which several states form a unity but remain independent in internal affairs.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____
