



Dolley Madison Printable Reading Comprehension

Grade Level: 5+ | Word Count: 394 | Lexile 1020

Early Life

Dolley Madison was born on May 20, 1768, in Guilford County, North Carolina, into a Quaker family with eight children. When she was an infant, the family moved to Scotchtown in Hanover County, Virginia. At fifteen, Dolley and her family moved again to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

First Marriage and Widowhood

On January 7, 1790, Dolley married John Todd Jr., a lawyer and fellow Quaker. They had two children, John Payne and William Temple. Tragically, an outbreak of yellow fever in 1793 claimed the lives of her husband and young William, leaving Dolley a widow.

Marriage to James Madison

U.S. Senator Aaron Burr introduced Dolley to James Madison. Martha Washington encouraged their union. On September 14, 1794, they married. Dolley, James, and her son Payne moved to Montpelier, the Madison family estate in Virginia.

Life in Washington, D.C.

In 1801, when Thomas Jefferson appointed James Madison Secretary of State, the family moved to Washington, D.C. Since Jefferson was a widower, Dolley often served as hostess for White House events, a role she performed with charm and grace.

First Lady of the United States

James Madison became the fourth President in 1809. Dolley organized the first inaugural ball that same year. She was admired for her hospitality during the eight years they lived in the White House. In 1814, during the War of 1812, British troops set the White House on fire. Dolley stayed behind long enough to save important state papers and the famous Gilbert Stuart portrait of George Washington.

Later Years and Death

After James Madison's presidency ended, the couple retired to Montpelier. James died on June 28, 1836. Dolley later returned to Washington, D.C., where she lived until her death on July 12, 1849.

- 1. What was Dolley Madison's most famous act during the War of 1812?**
 - a) Helping James Madison write the Constitution
 - b) Hosting the first inaugural ball
 - c) Rescuing important papers and George Washington's portrait
 - d) Moving back to Montpelier
- 2. Which statement **BEST** describes Dolley Madison's personality based on her role as First Lady?**
 - a) Quiet and reserved
 - b) Elegant and charming
 - c) Rebellious and bold
 - d) Strict and serious
- 3. What does the text suggest about Dolley Madison's life after James Madison's presidency?**
 - a) She never returned to Washington, D.C.
 - b) She remarried and lived in Virginia
 - c) She lived in Washington, D.C., until her death
 - d) She became a White House adviser
- 4. Compare Dolley Madison's role as hostess during Jefferson's presidency with her role as First Lady. What was similar?**
 - a) In both roles, she handled diplomatic events
 - b) In both roles, she lived in Montpelier
 - c) In both roles, she avoided public attention
 - d) In both roles, she focused only on family
- 5. Which sentence **BEST** states the main idea of the passage?**
 - a) Dolley Madison had a tragic life filled with loss and suffering
 - b) Dolley Madison's courage and social skills made her a beloved First Lady
 - c) Dolley Madison lived a quiet life in Virginia after her husband's presidency
 - d) Dolley Madison was the first woman to host an inaugural ball
- 6. Why did Dolley Madison move to Washington, D.C., in 1801?**
 - a) To become First Lady
 - b) Because Jefferson became President
 - c) Because James Madison became Secretary of State
 - d) To escape yellow fever
- 7. What can you infer about the relationship between Dolley Madison and Martha Washington?**
 - a) They were political rivals
 - b) They never met
 - c) Martha approved of Dolley's marriage to James Madison

Answer Key

1. **c)** Rescuing important papers and George Washington's portrait
2. **b)** Elegant and charming
3. **c)** She lived in Washington, D.C., until her death
4. **a)** In both roles, she handled diplomatic events
5. **b)** Dolley Madison's courage and social skills made her a beloved First Lady
6. **c)** Because James Madison became Secretary of State
7. **c)** Martha approved of Dolley's marriage to James Madison