

## Colin Powell

In 1937, Colin Luther Powell was born in Harlem, New York. His parents, immigrants from Jamaica, looked at their son and knew he would be special. They just didn't know how special.

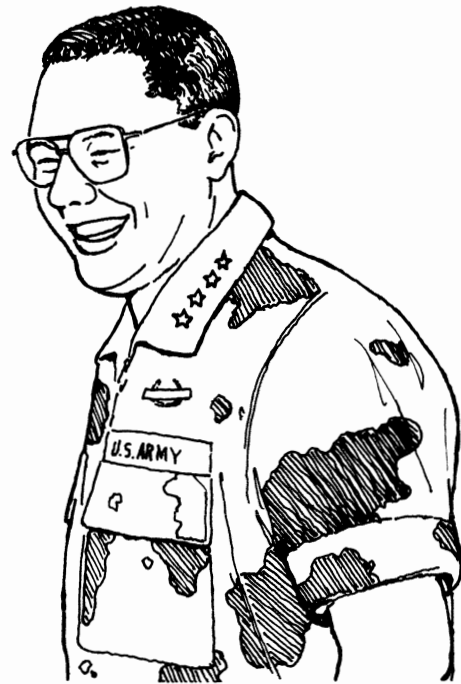
Colin had an ordinary childhood, growing up in a crowded New York neighborhood. He was not a top-ranking student in school, but he was well-liked. Everyone admired Colin's easy-going ways and ability to get things done. His classmates elected him class president in high school. It wasn't until college, however, that Colin discovered his true interest—the army. Colin noticed an ROTC class (Reserve Officers Training Corps) at City College in New York. The class was practicing precise military drills. Immediately, Colin knew this was for him. Colin joined the ROTC program and worked hard. When he graduated, Colin was at the top of his class and carried the rank of second lieutenant in the army. Colin's brilliant military career as a soldier had begun.

Colin served at many army bases throughout the United States, Europe, Korea, and Vietnam. Everywhere he went, Colin Powell earned the reputation of being dependable, responsible, and loyal. He taught other soldiers to set goals and work hard.

While serving at an army base in Massachusetts, Colin met and married Alma Johnson. But the army soon separated them. Powell was sent to Vietnam where he earned medals for bravery and loyalty. His first son was born while he was in Vietnam.

Back home in the states with his family again, Colin wanted to continue his education. He wanted to earn a master's degree, but was told his grades weren't high enough for graduate school. Determined to get his degree, Colin enrolled in the Army Command and General Staff College in Kansas. Again, he worked extremely hard and graduated second in his class of over 1000 students.

The United States government was beginning to notice this determined officer with a



distinguished record of service. By this time, Colin had received the special Soldier's Medal for rescuing his crew members from a fiery helicopter after a crash. He had also earned his master's degree in business administration from George Washington University. The government selected Powell to be a special White House assistant. Only a few military people were chosen for this position, and it was Colin's job to gather information for the president. This job allowed Colin to spend more time with his family, which was growing almost as fast as his military rank was rising. Colin and Alma had three children by then, and Colin had been promoted to major general in the army.

President Ronald Regan personally called Powell and asked him to serve as the National Security Advisor. In this position, Powell had to warn the President about any harm that might come from foreign countries and had to keep the U.S. army ready and alert for defense. This was a tremendous job with great responsibility, but even greater challenges lay ahead.

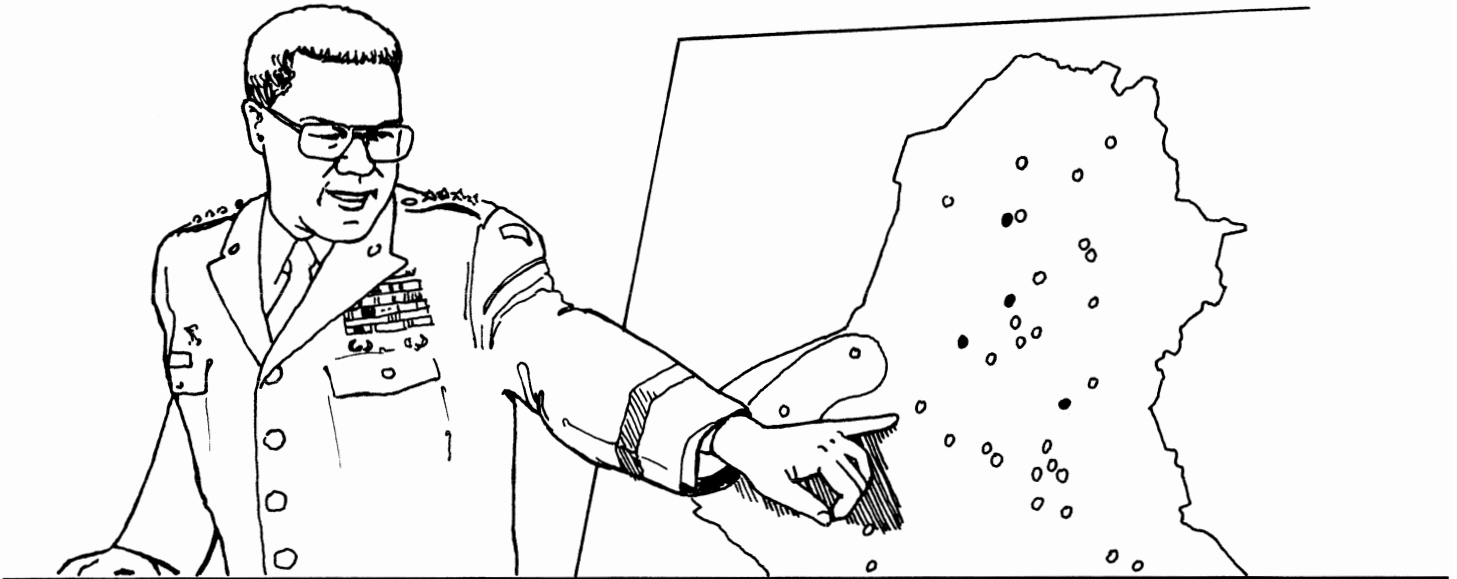
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In 1989, Colin Powell became a four-star general, a rank few soldiers ever achieve. That same year, the new president, George Bush, asked General Powell to be the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Joint Chiefs of Staff is an agency that advises the President on military matters. As Chairman of this committee, Colin Powell became the leader of all of the U.S. armed forces.

His biggest challenge as a military leader came when the country of Iraq invaded the U.S.'s ally, Kuwait. Iraq was ordered to leave Kuwait, but refused. General Powell sent the

United States army to Iraq, and the Persian Gulf War, also known as Operation Desert Storm, began. Finally, Iraq surrendered, and the success of the war was attributed to the calm, careful planning of General Powell.

Not long after the war, General Powell retired from military life, but he is still interested in the military and the United States government. He gives lectures and speeches around the country. There is one question his audiences always ask: "How did you become so successful?" And there is one answer that Colin Powell always gives: "Hard work!"



### Main Idea

1. Colin Powell is best known as a
  - a. student.
  - b. president.
  - c. soldier.

### Significant Details

2. Colin's parents were from
  - a. Jamaica.
  - b. Massachusetts.
  - c. New York.
3. The ROTC program trains people for
  - a. government duties.
  - b. graduate degrees.
  - c. military life.

### Context Clues

4. Kuwait is an *ally* of the United States.
  - a. enemy
  - b. spy
  - c. friend

### Drawing Conclusions

5. Colin's parents worked hard while Colin was growing up. Give two examples of how Colin applied what he learned from his parents.

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### Follow Through

6. Read the newspapers and news magazines to find out what Colin Powell is doing now. Make a prediction about his future life.

## Vincent van Gogh

Vincent van Gogh had a very short career as an artist. During his lifetime he sold only half-a-dozen canvases. Yet today his work is prized and valuable and he is considered one of the most outstanding painters in modern art.

Van Gogh was born in Holland in 1853. Vincent was a preacher's son and wanted to follow in his father's footsteps. When he tried to enter school to study religion in 1878, he was turned down. It was felt that, with his strange appearance, he did not look like a man of God. Disappointed, he went to work for an art gallery in The Hague, the Dutch capital. Vincent did so well that he was promoted to the London office. He seemed to have found success at last. But when the woman he loved rejected him, Vincent was broken-hearted. She had laughed at him! Troubled and unhappy, Vincent left the art gallery and began preaching in the slums.



He could not forget the young woman and tried again to win her love. She refused him again. He left London and joined a religious mission in Belgium. He worked in a poor, coal-mining area, teaching children and helping the sick. Van Gogh began to draw during this time. He drew the miners and the peasants and tried to picture the hardships of their daily lives. When the mission discovered that he was going without proper food and clothing in order to give more to the poor, they asked him to leave. He had become an embarrassment to them.

Rejected again, Vincent decided to spend all his time painting. His own unhappiness and his concern for the poor can be easily seen in his early paintings. There is a real sadness in them. He used dark, depressing colors and thick, angry brush strokes.

In 1886, Vincent moved to Paris to join his brother, Theo. Paris was the center of the art world and Vincent met many leading artists there. Their Impressionist style of art attracted him immediately. The artists recognized Van Gogh's genius and worked with him. Impressionism is a style of art that features bright, shimmering colors and scenes of life and nature. Vincent learned much about this style, and gradually his own style changed. His brush strokes became lighter and his pictures blazed with color.

Vincent now saw beauty in the world around him and he longed to put what he saw on canvas. He left the city and moved to Arles, in the South of France. While there, he produced his greatest paintings. He painted hundreds of pictures between 1888 and 1890. He worked quickly, often creating a work of art in a single sitting! Van Gogh expressed his feeling about a subject with color, as in his *Sunflowers*. But in addition to color, Van Gogh also saw movement in nature. In his *Wheat Field and Cypress Trees*, the sky and the earth seem to be moving. The clouds and hills seem ready to move off the canvas, and the wheat field looks like a stormy sea.

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During this period, when Van Gogh created his most original and expressive pictures, he suffered fits of mental illness. Violent seizures and his fear of being permanently mad made painting very difficult for him. The slashing brush strokes and intense splashes of color in his last works suggest that he was disturbed. His picture *The Night Cafe* is a good example. He felt that his mental illness could never be cured, and he knew that it would keep him from painting. He committed suicide in 1890, because he felt that only art had made his life worth living.

Van Gogh thought of himself as a failure. He longed to be loved and respected. Without knowing it, he had achieved both. His works of art are admired and desired by people all over the world. Today there is a museum in Amsterdam which is filled with his paintings only. Recently, one of his famous *Sunflowers* paintings was sold for \$39.9 million, one of the highest prices ever paid for a single work of art!



### Main Idea

1. Van Gogh's paintings can be recognized by
  - a. the lovely picture frames.
  - b. the bold colors and brush strokes.
  - c. the pale watercolors.

### Significant Details

2. Van Gogh's first paintings were
  - a. bright and happy.
  - b. of his father.
  - c. dark and sad.
3. Van Gogh got new ideas from
  - a. the slums.
  - b. artists in France.
  - c. his brother, Theo.
4. His \_\_\_\_\_ recently sold for \$39.9 million.
  - a. *Sunflowers*
  - b. *The Night Cafe*
  - c. *Wheat Field and Cypress Trees*

### Context Clues

5. The young woman *rejected* him.
  - a. turned down
  - b. accepted
  - c. hired
6. He pictured the *hardships* of their lives.
  - a. boats
  - b. comforts
  - c. suffering
7. Van Gogh *committed suicide*.
  - a. killed a friend
  - b. took his own life
  - c. stole some money

### Inference

8. Vincent van Gogh was \_\_\_\_\_ when he died.
  - a. 37
  - b. 53
  - c. 90

### Following Through

9. Find out why van Gogh cut off his ear.
10. Find color reproductions of the paintings mentioned in this article. Study them.