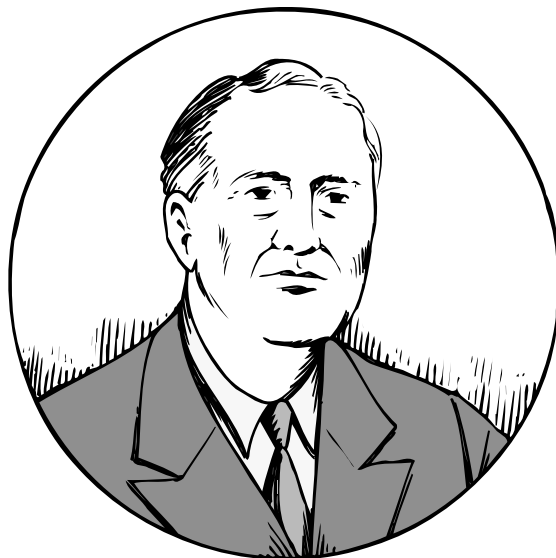


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# Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial<sup>1</sup>

Franklin D. Roosevelt is certainly deserving of a memorial. He was the only President to be elected to that office four times, and he led our nation through two of the worst crises of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Great Depression and World War II. Most historians would rank Franklin Roosevelt among the top five Presidents of all time. But why did it take so long to build his memorial?

One year after FDR's death, Congress began to organize a commission to work on an appropriate memorial. But things take time, and bureaucracy causes them to take even longer. By 1955, the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Commission was in place, and it had chosen the site of the memorial by 1959. However, it took another 15 years for the Commission to approve a design to honor Roosevelt. In 1974, the FDR Commission chose architect Lawrence Halprin and his plan to commemorate the President.

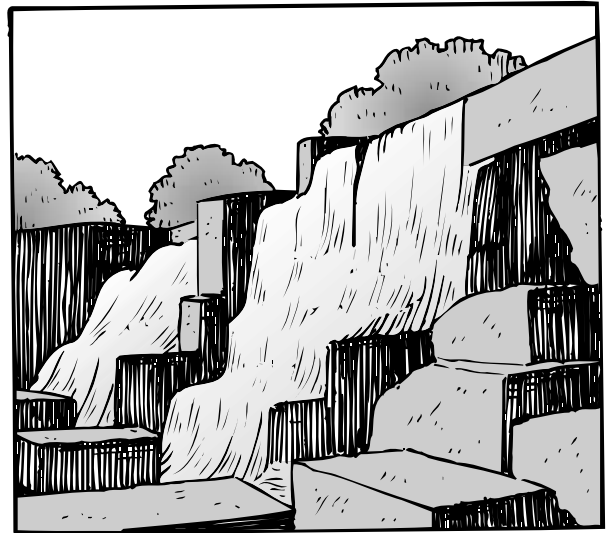
The site in Washington, D.C., chosen to honor FDR is close to the Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln monuments. The White House and Congress are also close by the site. It is located south of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Korean War Veterans Memorial in an area called West Potomac Park. Because Roosevelt had grown up near the Hudson River and loved to sail and swim, the Commission decided that water should be an important element of the memorial. West Potomac Park was appropriate because the Potomac River flows by it on the west, and the Tidal Basin lies to the east. Halprin also incorporated waterfalls into the memorial's design.

Building the memorial was a huge task because it consists of four rooms, one to honor each of President Roosevelt's terms in office. Twelve-foot high walls made of Carnelian granite outline the four rooms. This stone had to be hauled from the border between South Dakota and Minnesota. Once on the site, the granite still had to be shaped and put in place. Halprin's design called for several bronze statues, most notable those of FDR, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and Fala, the couple's well-known Scottish terrier. Creating the

statues was such a huge job that Halprin chose five sculptors to help him: Leonard Baskin, Neil Estern, Robert Graham, Tom Hardy and George Segal. Estern worked on the statues of FDR and Fala. These two works alone took 10 years to complete. A stonecutter was also hired to inscribe quotations from Roosevelt's presidency on the walls of the rooms. The final cost of the memorial was \$48 million.

When the memorial was finished, a controversy arose between people who thought that Roosevelt should have been shown in his wheelchair (because that was a truth of his life) and those people who thought that no wheelchair should be shown (because the public never saw their President in one). President Clinton recommended, and Congress passed, a law that would add a statue of Roosevelt in a wheelchair to the memorial at a later date. Meanwhile, the memorial is the first one in Washington, D.C., to be wheelchair accessible.

The memorial was dedicated on May 2, 1997, 52 years after FDR's death. The next year, more than four million people toured the site.



<sup>1</sup>Anne Phillips, *The Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial*, New York, Children's Press, a division of Grollier Publishing, 2000.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# *Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial Questions*

1. What are three reasons why Franklin D. Roosevelt deserved a memorial?

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2. a. Why does the memorial have four rooms? b. Briefly describe two other major elements of the memorial. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What are two reasons why the memorial was so expensive? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. a. What is the argument used by those who think FDR's statue should show him in a wheelchair?  
b. What is the argument of those who think his statue should not show him in a wheelchair?

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5. Do you think FDR should be shown in his wheelchair as part of the memorial? Explain the reasons for your answer using your own ideas, not those in the text.

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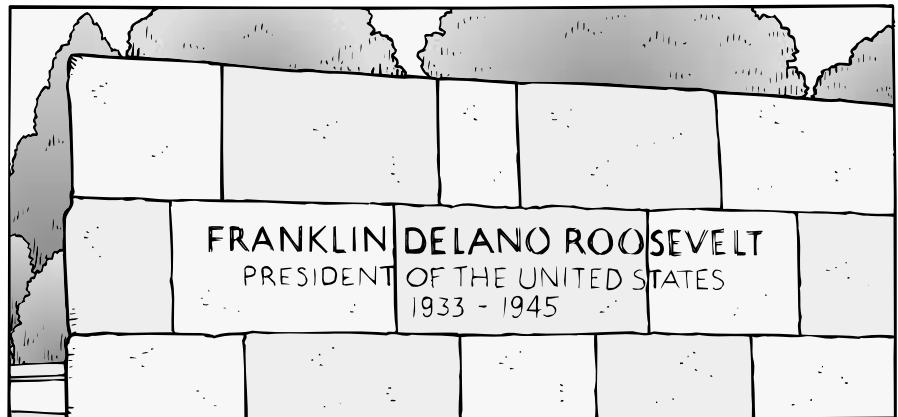
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# Franklin D. Roosevelt and Polio<sup>1</sup>

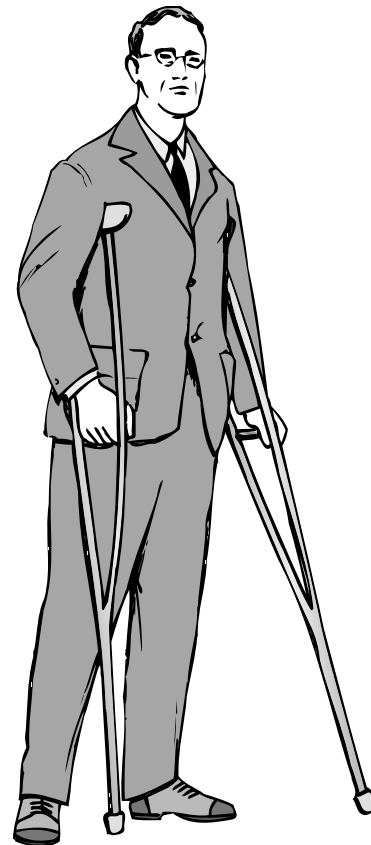
Many young people enjoy being physically active. They ride skateboards, scooters, roller blades, snowboards and bicycles. They play sports at school or on community teams. They dance, act in plays or perform in the marching band. Think of the activities you enjoy the most and then imagine how you would feel if suddenly you couldn't do those things any more. That's exactly what happened to Franklin Roosevelt. One day in August 1921, he was sailing, swimming and fighting a forest fire. The next day, he had trouble with the muscles in his legs. Three days later, the muscles of his upper body were weak, and his lower body was completely paralyzed.

In the first days of his illness, Roosevelt's doctors could not diagnose what was wrong with him. Meanwhile, the patient was in extreme pain; his skin and muscles were so sensitive that the sheet over his body or a breeze through the window hurt him. To make matters worse, one of the misinformed doctors had prescribed massage for his legs, which must have been excruciating for Roosevelt. Finally, Dr. Robert W. Lovett made the diagnosis of poliomyelitis (or infantile paralysis); however, there was little even Lovett could do for FDR except prescribe sleeping medications.

During this time, Eleanor Roosevelt was dedicated to her husband's care, massaging his legs, turning his body on the bed to prevent bedsores and taking care of his other physical needs. Later, when FDR was President, Eleanor was his "eyes and ears," traveling the country gathering information, as her husband was unable to do.

Throughout Roosevelt's convalescence, his aids—particularly Louis Howe—hid from the press and the public the extent of FDR's illness and disability. This policy continued for the rest of Roosevelt's life. When he appeared in public to deliver a speech, everything was stage-managed so that it appeared that Franklin could walk with only the limited support of a cane or crutches. This deception worked so well that only two known pictures showing FDR in a wheelchair were taken during the entire 12 years and three months that he was President.

Roosevelt spent the next seven years (1921-1928) trying to recover from the effects of polio. He began doing exercises that increased the strength of his upper body, and he learned to adapt to his disability. He also worked very hard at trying to walk again without braces, crutches or a cane. Every year, he said to himself that he would be walking again in just one more year. That never happened. Then in 1928, Roosevelt was invited to run for governor of New York. The campaign and his election to the office of governor ended this seven-year period of rehabilitation, but FDR had to deal with the disability caused by polio for the rest of his life.



<sup>1</sup>Hugh Gregory Gallagher, *FDR's Splendid Deception*, Arlington, Virginia, Vandamere Press, a division of AB Associates, 1994.