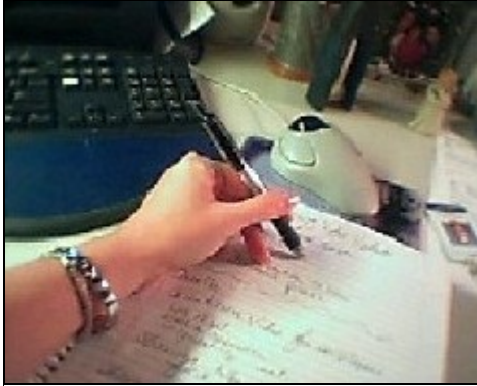


Dear Mr. President



Thousands of people write to the U.S. president every year.

In 1860, 11-year-old Grace Bedell saw a picture of then-presidential candidate Abraham Lincoln and didn't like the way he looked. Grace wrote Lincoln a letter: "If you will let your whiskers grow...you would look so much better, for your face is thin." Lincoln took Grace's advice. He grew a beard. A year later, Lincoln was elected president.

Not every president takes a child's letter to heart, as Lincoln did. Below are just a few of the thousands of letters kids have sent U.S. presidents over the years. These and other letters have been on display at the National Archives and Records Administration, in Washington, D.C.

Don't Draft My Dad

In 1943, at the height of World War II (1939-1945), 10-year-old Carolyn Weatherhogg wrote a letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt: "I am sending in a suggestion, that is draft fathers alphabetically."

The government at the time was **drafting**, or ordering, people to serve in the military. Carolyn hoped that because her father's last name began with *W*, he wouldn't be drafted for a long time, according to her proposal.

There was no return address on the letter, and no one knows what happened to Carolyn's father. Roosevelt did not reply.

Rock 'n' Roll Haircut

In the 1950s, Elvis Presley, a young singer from Memphis, Tennessee, rocked the music world. In 1957, the U.S. government had other plans for Presley--it drafted him into the U.S. Army. That decision did not sit well with many of his fans. For example, three girls in Montana did not want the Army to give Presley the standard Army buzz haircut. They

Reading Passage

wrote a letter to President Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-1961) hoping to stop the Army from cutting Presley's hair and sideburns: "We think [it's] bad enough to send Elvis Presley in the Army, but if you cut his sideburns off we will just die!"

An army barber eventually gave Presley the military-issue crew cut.

Disaster Relief

When Ronald Reagan was president (1981-1988), he believed that the government should not solve all of the nation's problems. But that didn't stop seventh grader Andy Smith of Irmo, South Carolina, from asking Reagan for "federal funds to hire a crew to clean up my room."

"Today my mother declared my bedroom a disaster area," Andy wrote. "I am prepared to provide the initial funds if you will [provide] matching funds for this project."

In response, Reagan noted that Andy's mother was probably "fully justified" in declaring the youngster's room a disaster area. But "this administration [believes that government] has done many things that could better be done by volunteers....You are in an excellent position to launch another volunteer program to go along with the more than 3,000 already underway in our nation." Andy never got the cash.



Ronald Reagan Library

President Ronald Reagan responded to Andy Smith's letter.