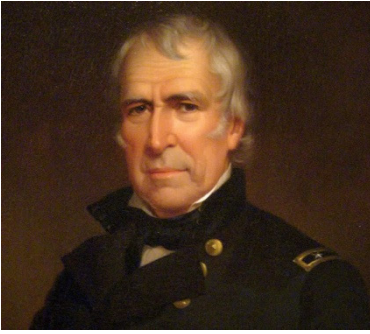


# The Murder of Zachary Taylor



On July 4, 1850, in Washington, DC, President Zachary Taylor attended the dedication of the cornerstone of the Washington Monument. On this sunny, very hot, and humid day, the President consumed a large quantity of iced milk, cold cherries, and pickled cucumbers. Shortly after the festivities he was stricken with an attack of gastroenteritis and he died on July 9, 1850.

This was a critical period in American history. Some Slave-holding states were murmuring secession and there was continuous conflict over the admission of new territories as states. Taylor had threatened to veto the Omnibus Bill (Compromise of 1850) and to keep southern states in line with force if necessary. Many radicals felt that he wasn't forceful enough with the South. After his death the forces of compromise triumphed and the Civil War was delayed 11 years.

Over the years there has been speculation that Taylor died of typhus or cholera. Regardless, he was dead and the inept Millard Fillmore was the new President of the United States.

Let's fast forward to 1991. A historical novelist and humanities professor named Dr. Clara Rising claimed that she had evidence that "Old Rough and Ready" was poisoned with arsenic. She was so convincing that Taylor's heirs agreed to have his body exhumed and to have scientific tests to determine if he was poisoned. **He wasn't.**

For the purposes of our simulation **we will assume that Dr. Rising was correct.** As the head of the Secret Service, your instructor Mrs. Sleuth Burgess has conducted a preliminary investigation. In a box she found in a dark corner of the National Archives, she discovered evidence that the Chief of Police of Washington, DC, had found several items of interest that he stored in the box.

The **evidence**, along with a small vial with arsenic residue, was:

- A key ring with the initials "L G" engraved on it.
- A portion of a love note signed: "With all my love, TDW".
- A portion of a faded railroad ticket with the destinations "Washington to Washington".
- An envelope with the return address of A. P. Nicholson, Tennessee.
- A commemorative coin with the following letters and worn spaces:  
H \_ M I \_ C \_ \_
- Part of a calling card with "I Will Be Heard" engraved on it.
- A piece of paper with the following written on it, "At the President's Mansion he said he would hang us at the mention of secession".

## **THE SIMULATION**

1. It is assumed that you have read the appropriate chapters in your text (up through Chapter 18 to give background information on people and key events.
2. Each of you will be assuming the role of a Secret Service agent assigned to report to the head of the Secret Service, Mrs. Sleuth Burgess and the other members of your investigative team. **You will be assigned two suspects to investigate.**

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3. Resources to use for primary sources and other information can include, but not be limited to:
  - American Pageant Textbook
  - Your AMSCO Review book
  - Utilize search engines for .edu or .org sites and your person
  - The Gilder-Lehrman Institute of American History  
<http://www.gilderlehrman.org/>
  - Smithsonian Presidents Site  
<http://americanhistory.si.edu/presidency/home.html>
  - History Online <http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/>
  - History Matters <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/www.taf>
4. For each report, provide:
  - significant factual information about the suspect
  - direct quotes about the issues of the time
  - your conclusion as to the suspect's possible guilt, match with the available clues, and reason for your conclusion.
  - Stay focused on the issues of the times, you are not doing a biography report unless that is critical to your conclusion as to possible involvement with the crime.
5. The report is due Thursday, November 19, 2009. Each agent will address the squad briefly (about 2 minutes per person being reported on) and answer any questions from other agents. The report is worth 50 points.
6. Your last task, after having heard the reports of all of the agent team, is to **compose an essay elaborating who** it is you think was involved in the death of the president. You may conclude that it was one person or a group of people; however, you must give justification for your conclusions on each person involved. Your essay should discuss the key issues of the time, and the relation of the "guilty party" with those issues and President Taylor. Remember we are writing "historical fiction" here, your essay should be logical and supported even if it is fiction. **The essay will be due on Monday, November 23, 2009.**
7. After the head of the Secret Service has read (and graded) the reports and final essays, she will announce who the guilty party or parties is or are.

## **ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY ON THE CAUSE OF TAYLOR'S DEATH**

Your essay must begin with a short introductory paragraph which explains the somewhat mysterious circumstances of President Taylor's death. Supply the necessary background in a concise manner. Your thesis must state your position as to who the murderer is. The thesis should also state why you have adopted this position. Your essay's body should be analytical, factual and supportive of your thesis. Cite facts, quotes, incidents, and arguments that can be used as evidence in support of your position on this controversial issue. This is where you must argue with conviction and unwavering logic. The success of your research and investigation depends upon this crucial part of the essay.

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Your conclusion should be logical and sum up your arguments to your reader. Bring closure to the issue and push wide the implications. Emphasize the importance of the issue and how it may have directly changed events in our nation's history. In other words, answer the question, "So what?"

In other words:

1. Introduction – set the stage with exposition and state your thesis.
2. Body – take your stand and use factual evidence as your weapon.
3. Conclusion – wrap your argument up succinctly.
4. Use transitions as you move from point to point and from paragraph to paragraph.
5. Chicago Style footnotes and a bibliography to cite your sources.

## **SUSPECTS**

For your use, listed below are the suspects the agents will investigate. If in your investigation you come across someone who is not on the list, whom you suspect of participating in the murder of Taylor, you may report on that person or include your special insights on that person in your report.

1. Adams, Charles Francis
2. Lincoln, Abraham
3. Astor, John Jacob
4. Lopez, Narciso
5. Beecher, Henry Ward
6. Mann, Horace
7. Birney, James G.
8. Melville, Herman
9. Brooks, Preston
10. Morse, Samuel
11. Brown, Albert Gallatin
12. Mott, Lucretia
13. Brown, John
14. O'Sullivan, John L.
15. Buchanan, James
16. Pierce, Franklin
17. Calhoun, John C.
18. Scott, Winfield
19. Cass, Lewis
20. Seward, William H.
21. Chase, Salmon
22. Seymour, Horatio
23. Clay, Henry
24. Stanton, Elizabeth Cady
25. Crittenden, John J.
26. Stephens, Alexander
27. Davis, Jefferson
28. Stowe, Harriet Beecher
29. Dix, Dorothea
30. Sumner, Charles
31. Douglas, Stephen A.
32. Sutter, John
33. Douglass, Frederick
34. Taney, Roger
35. Emerson, Ralph Waldo
36. Thoreau, Henry David
37. Fillmore, Millard
38. Toombs, Robert
39. Foote, Henry S.
40. Trist, Nicholas
41. Fremont, John C.
42. Truth, Sojourner
43. Garrison, William Lloyd
44. Tubman, Harriet
45. Grimke, Angelina
46. Van Buren, Martin
47. Grimke, Sarah
48. Webster, Daniel
49. Hamlin, Hannibal
50. Whitman, Walt
51. Hayne, Robert
52. Wilmot, David
53. Young, Brigham

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