



Smithsonian  
*Donald W. Reynolds Center for  
American Art and Portraiture  
National Portrait Gallery*

## National Portrait Gallery

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# ***America's Presidents***

**I am going to the National Portrait Gallery soon. There are many things to see at the Gallery.**



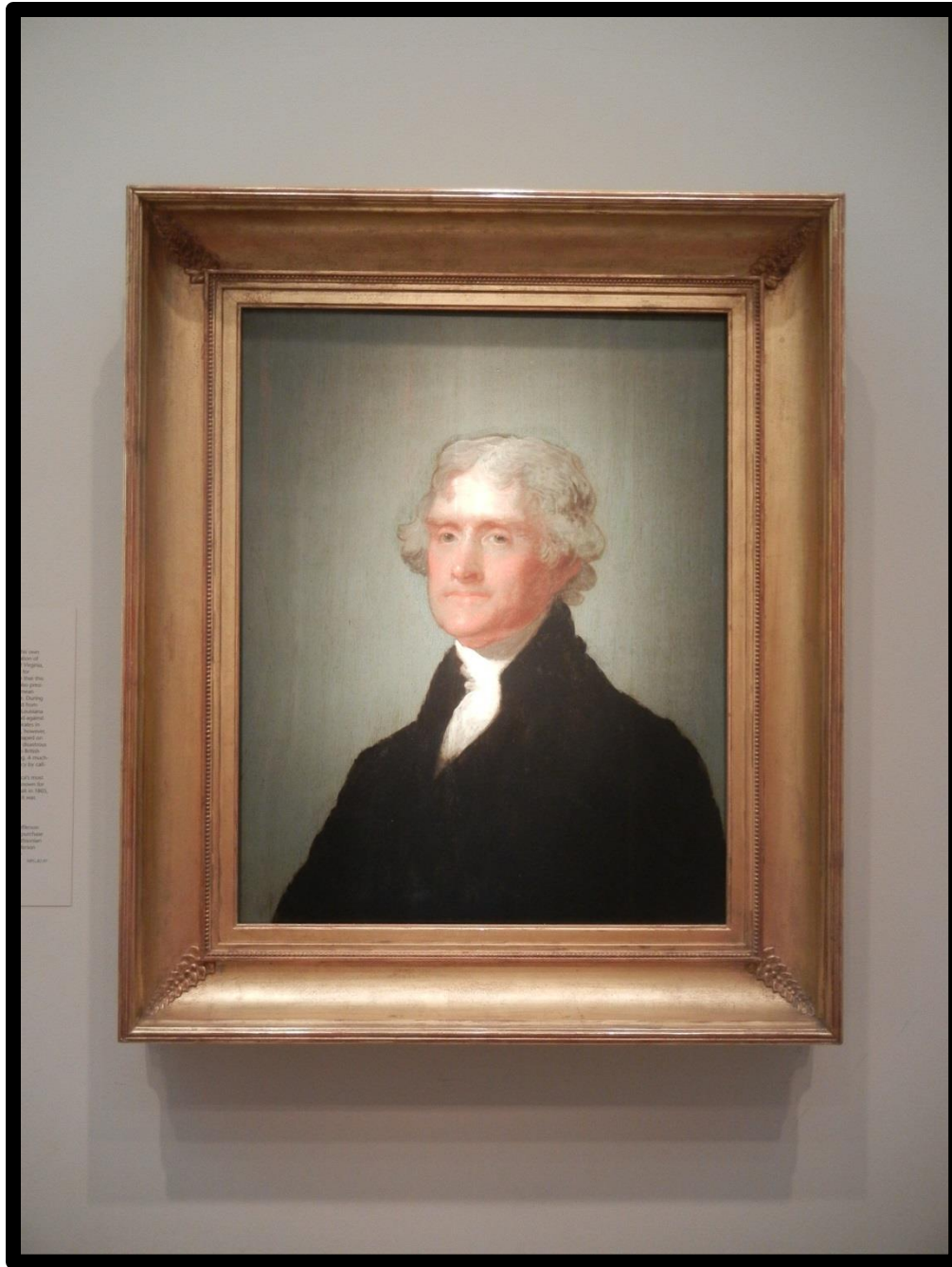


**One exhibition I may see is**  
***America's Presidents.***

**There are many portraits of our presidents to see.**







**A portrait shows us what a person looked like.**

**A portrait can be a painting, a sculpture, a photo, or many other things.**

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**Presidents are important leaders of our country. We can learn about them by looking at their portraits.**

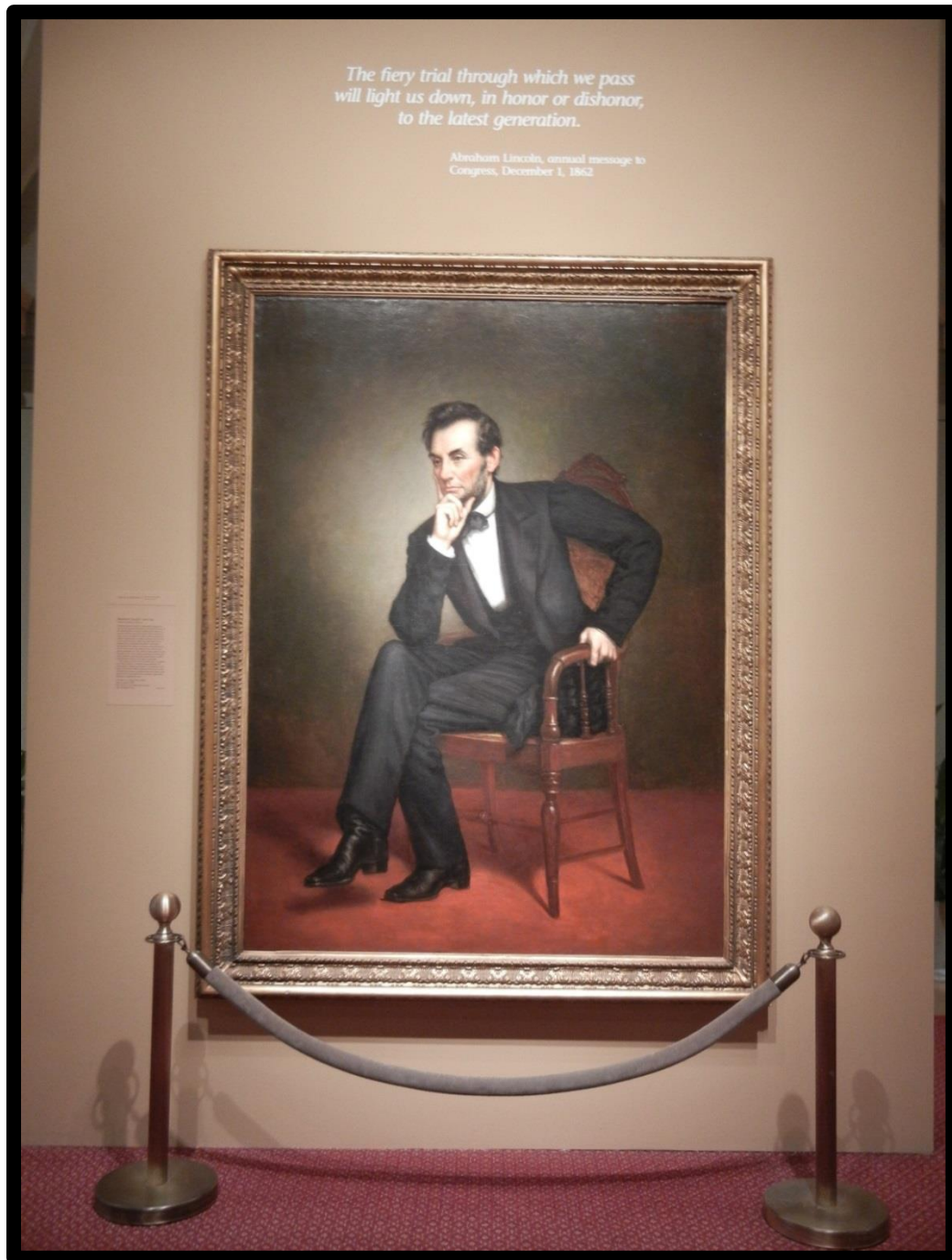


**I may see a portrait of George Washington.**





**I may see a portrait of Abraham Lincoln.**



*Life mask of Abraham Lincoln done two months before his death*

In early 1865, Abraham Lincoln consented to having another life mask made of him. This time he called on Clark Mills. The process began with an application of wet plaster to Lincoln's face, followed by a thin coat of plaster gauze. After fifteen minutes, Mills asked Lincoln to smile for the first, and the plaster fell off in three pieces into a cloth. Mills then reconstructed the pieces to form the finished mask.

A comparison between the two and Leonard Volk's third mask shows the Civil War's great toll on Lincoln's health. One friend who saw him a few weeks after this mask was made noted that Lincoln "looked badly and felt badly."

Clark Mills (1810-1883)  
Plaster the mask, c. 1917 cast, after 1865 original  
1865, 21.26

*Castings of Abraham Lincoln's hands*

Sculptor Leonard Volk took castings of Lincoln's hands at Lincoln's home in Springfield, Illinois, in late May of 1865. Lincoln had just won the Republican presidential nomination, and Volk was already thinking of using these castings, in combination with his recently completed Lincoln bust, to fashion a full-length statue. Lincoln's right hand shows a version of forearm hands that he idiosyncratically flexed to form a "claw" when the other "sugarbush" hand was for supporting. When Lincoln brought up the weight of his sword cane, "both hand[s] really were convulsed," he told Clark Mills. Volk's casts, like the others in series, are shown in color.

Leonard Volk's casts, c. 1865  
Plaster the casts, c. 1917 casts, after 1865 original

**I may see a portrait of Theodore Roosevelt.**





**I may see a TV showing presidents talking. I may hear the TV, too.**





**I may hear the voice of Franklin Roosevelt on the radio. I may press a button to hear his different speeches.**



**I may see a portrait of John F. Kennedy.**



**I may see a portrait of Bill Clinton.**



**I am going to the National Portrait Gallery.**

**I will see portraits of America's Presidents.**

**I may see portraits from this story.**

**I may see other portraits, too.**