



0. MOUNT RUSHMORE - Story Preface

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**8. MOUNT RUSHMORE**

In this image of Mt. Rushmore, we see the size of the mountain, the heads of four presidents and the rubble (known as "scree") of rock fragments resulting from sculpting on this peak. Mt. Rushmore is located in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Photo, taken on the morning of 5 August 2011, by Bbadgett. License: [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)

Around the time a colossal Olmec head was found at La Venta, an American historian was envisioning a different type of giant head to be carved in a mountain. Doane Robinson believed such a work would attract visitors to South Dakota. Peter Norbeck, the state's senior senator, agreed.

To move his idea forward, Robinson sent a letter to Gutzon Borglum, a respected American sculptor. It was the summer of 1924, and the artist was looking for a challenging project.

Borglum wasn't interested in local heroes or mundane topics. Were he to carve a South Dakota mountain, his subjects would have to be presidents who had championed individual liberty.

But where would the carving take place? Climbing Harney Peak, Borglum noticed a granite cliff with a southern exposure. It was called Mount Rushmore and was situated near a town named Keystone.

Although Congress passed legislation to allow the venture, most folks weren't interested in contributing funds. Why would anyone want to carve the side of a mountain? Years passed, and the money did not come in. Not, that is, until the President came to town.

Calvin Coolidge, and his wife Grace, decided to vacation in the Black Hills of South Dakota during the summer of 1927. Captivated by the scenery and restful atmosphere, they converted their three-week visit into a three-month sojourn. That was enough time to convince the President to back the Mount-Rushmore project.

By this time, Borglum was sixty years old. His artist tools would include dynamite to blast the mountain and workers to carry out his vision. Among his crew were out-of-work miners who had the needed skills. Among his detractors were Native Americans - especially the Sioux - from whom their sacred lands (including Mount Rushmore) had been forcibly taken.

Borglum decided on four presidents: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and the artist's friend, Theodore Roosevelt. It wasn't just the faces of presidents he decided to create, however. His plan included a giant vault which he would carve into the canyon wall behind the mountain. Into the vault would go national treasures such as the documents which guarantee freedom and individual liberty to all Americans.

Age (and a post-surgery embolism) caught up with Borglum before he finalized his vision, so his son (Lincoln) wrapped up the project with a few finishing touches - except for the hall of records. More than fifty years later, in 1998, the National Park Service carried-out Borglum's plan when it completed a scaled-down version of the great hall.

Last time anyone checked, however, that Rushmore vault contained neither golden treasures from the lost city of Cibola nor tablets filled with Olmec glyphs!

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/MOUNT-RUSHMORE-National-Treasure-Book-of-Secrets>

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See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/MOUNT-RUSHMORE-National-Treasure-Book-of-Secrets>





### Mt Rushmore with the Heads of 4 Presidents

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### Colossal Olmec Head

Image by Mary Ann Sullivan. Copyright, Mary Ann Sullivan, all rights reserved. Permission granted by Professor Sullivan, of Bluffton College, to use this image for educational purposes.

Quote from *Yucatan and Mayan Mexico*, by Nick Rider, published in the UK, by New Holland Publishers, in 2002. A Cadogan Guides Book.

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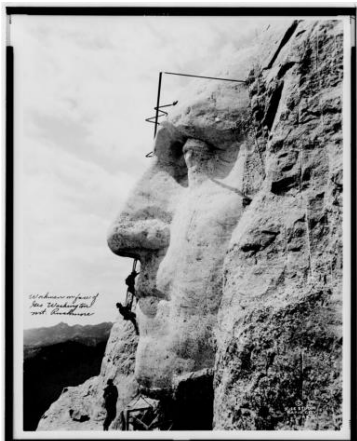
### Air Force One - Over Mt. Rushmore

Image online, courtesy U.S. Air Force

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### Carving Mt. Rushmore - George Washington

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### Carving a South Dakota Mountain with Dynamite

Image online, courtesy ATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosive).

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### Gutzon Borglum - Sculptor of Mt Rushmore

Image of Borglum online, courtesy [American Studies at the University of Virginia](#).

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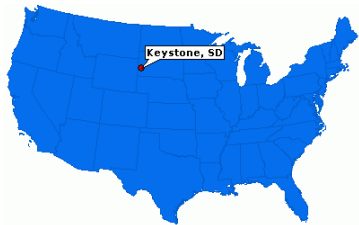
### Harney Peak - Near Mt Rushmore

Image online, courtesy Professor Steven Dutch, Natural and Applied Sciences, University of Wisconsin - Green Bay.

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### Keystone, South Dakota - Map Locator

Image online, courtesy ePodunk.

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### South Dakota - Map Locator

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### Mt. Rushmore - View of Borglum Working

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Mt. Rushmore - Vault Entrance, Hall of Records

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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