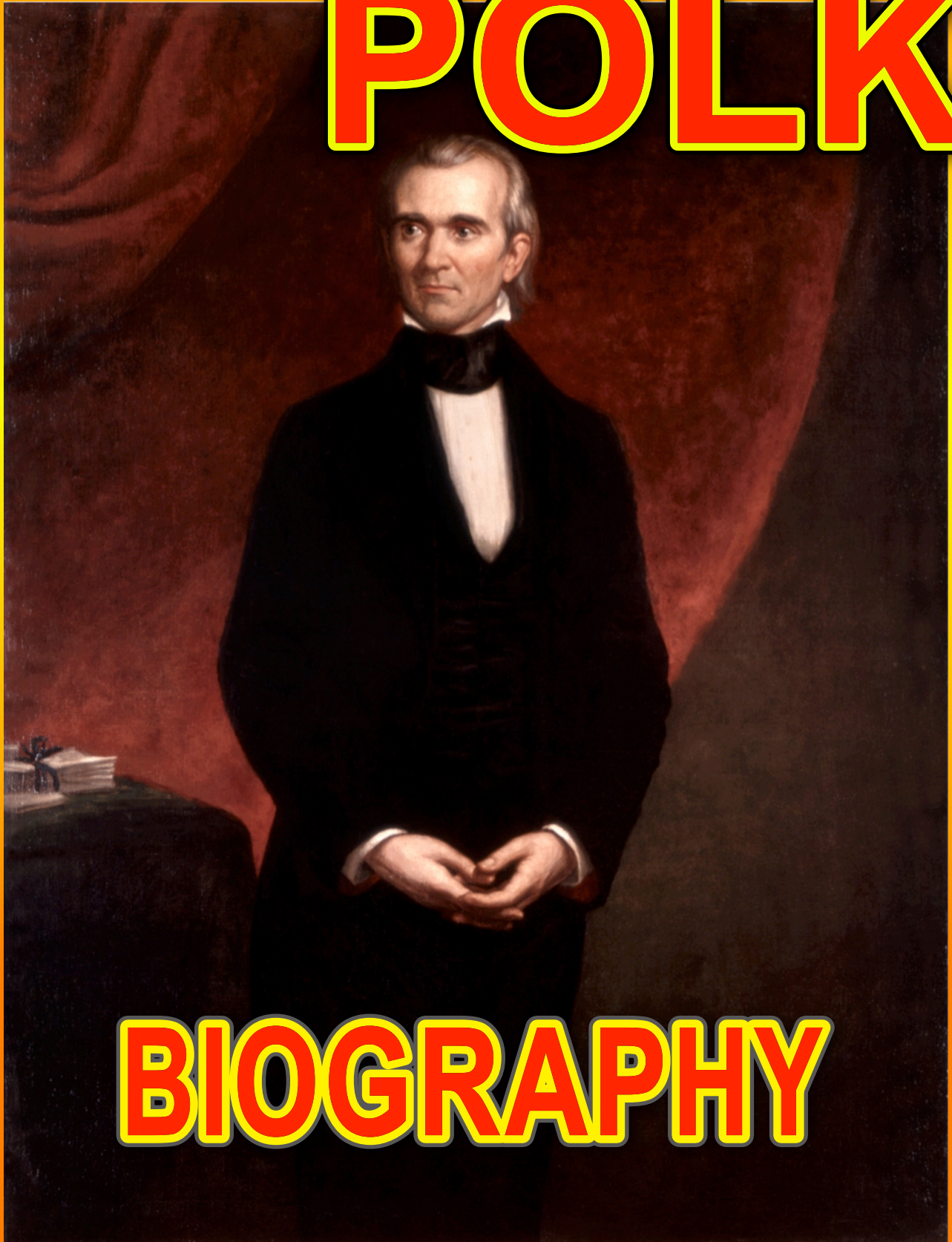


JAMES POLK



BIOGRAPHY

JAMES POLK

James Knox Polk was born on November 2, 1795, in North Carolina, but lived in and represented Tennessee. Polk was a Democrat and Governor of Tennessee.

Polk became president aged 49, making him the youngest person at the time to become president. He was the first president to have his photograph taken.

He won the presidency by promising to invade and annex Texas, something that had been started by John Tyler. He also agreed a split of the Oregon Country with Britain, so that the United States claimed land right up to the southern border of what is now Alaska.

When Mexico opposed the American annexation of Texas, Polk began the Mexican-American War. At the end of this the United States gained most of its present southwest. During his presidency the first postage stamps in the United States were issued.

He did not want to run for re-election and so only served one term. His health had suffered while he was in office, and he caught cholera shortly afterwards, which led to his death on June 15, 1849, in Nashville, Tennessee.

Understanding words

Before we can understand a story we have to know what all of the words mean. Let's try one...

a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'promising'.

b From that sentence, suggest what 'promising' means.

c Write a new sentence using the word 'promising'.

d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'promising'.

e Draw a small picture showing what you think 'promising' means.

Finding key words

Next, we need to find the key words that tell us what the story is about...

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list like the one below. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym). You don't have to use all the spaces, but you should not use more.

Key word	Synonym (similar word)
Example: invade	take over

Sequencing

Sequencing means getting the events in the right order. Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense.

As president, Polk wanted to annex Texas.

When he was 49 years old, Polk became president.

Polk served only one term, and he died shortly after it.

But Mexico resisted the annexation of Texas, and war broke out.

Polk was governor of Tennessee.

After the war, the United States had gained much land in the southwest.

James Knox Polk was born in North Carolina.

Get to the facts

1 Which state did Polk represent?

2 What did Polk agree to split with Britain?

3 How old was Polk when he became president?

4 Which country opposed the annexation of Texas?

5 When did Polk die?

Make a story...

When you read a description it often gives you ideas about how the event might be described differently.

James Polk's photograph

I was the first president to have my photograph taken. When I saw the photo for the first time... (now complete the story)

Below is a plain text version for printing:

Understanding words:

- a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'promising'.
- b From that sentence, suggest what 'promising' means.
- c Write a new sentence using the word 'promising'.
- d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'promising'.
- e Draw a small picture showing what you think 'promising' means.

Finding key words:

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym).

For example:

Key word – invade Synonym – take over

Sequencing:

Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense:

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When he was 49 years old, Polk became president.

Polk served only one term, and he died shortly after it.

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