

## L'Enfant and Urban Design Washington, D.C.

### Introduction and Instructions

How did a French painter come to be the designer of Washington, D.C.? Discover the life and story of Pierre Charles L'Enfant and his lasting influence on our nation's capital. In addition to any prior knowledge you may have, use your research skills and the resources provided here to answer the questions below.



Learn about L'Enfant and his vision for the new capital.

READ: <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/a-brief-history-of-pierre-lenfant-and-washington-dc-39487784/>

#### 1. What is L'Enfant's importance to Washington D.C.?

Answer: L'Enfant was George Washington's friend and trusted city planner who designed the initial plan for Washington, D.C.

#### 2. What was L'Enfant's vision for the capital of our young nation?

Answer: L'Enfant designed the city from scratch and envisioned a grand capital of wide avenues, inspiring buildings, public squares, forests, plantations, and marshes.

#### 3. What was to be the center of the city?

Answer: A great public walk, which is today the National Mall.

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## 4. Why did L'Enfant resign?

Answer: L'Enfant refused to compromise his design, which led to frequent clashes with others.

 Did you know Washington, D.C., was not the first capital? Learn which other cities served this role first.  
WATCH: <http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/washington-dc/videos/ask-history-first-us-capital>

## 5. What was the first capital of the United States? How many capitals have there been in the country's history?

Answer: New York City; nine

 Wondering how Washington, D.C., got its shape? Watch this video to find out more!  
WATCH: <http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/washington-dc/videos/how-washington-dc-got-its-shape>

## 6. Why is the District of Columbia not the perfect diamond shape that Washington envisioned?

Answer: In 1846, Alexandria voted to secede from the District of Columbia and rejoin Virginia. This was partly due to fears that slavery would be made illegal in the District (it was, in 1850), as well as other prohibitions restricting the construction and location of all federal institutions to the "Maryland side" of the Potomac.

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## **WHAT DO YOU THINK?** *This is your chance to share your opinions, make connections, and apply what you've learned!*

1. If the capital city was to be moved again, where do you think the best location would be? Provide three strong reasons for your response.

Answers will vary.

2. Why do you think the current site of Washington, D.C., was a good choice for the location of our nation's capital?

Answers will vary.

3. Evaluate the positives and negatives for locating our nation's capital where it is currently located.

Answers will vary.

4. Do you think L'Enfant deserves praise for his contributions to the creation of our nation's capital? Why or why not?

Answers will vary.