AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE · DEAF HISTORY · GRADES 3–5

Meet Laurent Clerc

Read about the Deaf teacher who helped start the first permanent school for the deaf in America, then answer the questions.

Name: _____ **Date:** _____



Read

Laurent Clerc was born in France in 1785. He became deaf when he was a baby. When he was 12 he went to a school for deaf children in Paris, where he learned French Sign Language. He did so well that the school later hired him as a teacher.

In 1816 an American named Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet came to the school. Gallaudet wanted to start a school for deaf children in the United States, and he asked Clerc to help. Clerc said yes. On the long trip across the ocean, Clerc taught Gallaudet sign language and Gallaudet helped Clerc with English.

In 1817 they opened a school in Hartford, Connecticut. Today it is called the American School for the Deaf, the oldest school for the deaf in the United States that is still open. Clerc taught there for more than 40 years and trained teachers who started schools across the country.

The signs Clerc brought from France mixed with the signs deaf Americans were already using. Over many years, this mix grew into American Sign Language.

Answer the questions.

In what country was Laurent Clerc born?

_____

What language did he learn at school in Paris?

_____

Who asked Clerc to come to America?

_____

When and where did their school open?

_____

How did Clerc's signs help make ASL?

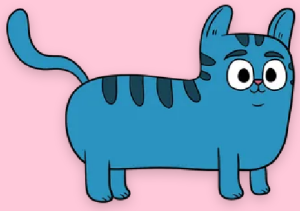
_____

Art © Kevin Coulston

AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE · DEAF HISTORY · GRADES 3–5

Meet Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet and Alice Cogswell

Read about a hearing minister, a Deaf girl named Alice and the school they helped start, then answer the questions.



Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Read

Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet was a hearing minister in Hartford, Connecticut. His neighbors had a daughter named Alice Cogswell. Alice was deaf, and at that time there was no school in the United States where she could learn.

Gallaudet saw that Alice was bright and eager to learn. A famous story says he taught her her first word, hat, by pointing to his hat and writing the letters in the dirt.

Alice's father, Dr. Mason Cogswell, and other families raised money to send Gallaudet to Europe in 1815 to learn how deaf children were taught. There he met Laurent Clerc, a Deaf teacher at the school for the deaf in Paris, and brought him back to America.

In 1817 they opened the school now called the American School for the Deaf, and Alice was one of its first students. In 1864 a college for deaf students was started in Washington, D.C. Today it is Gallaudet University, named for Thomas, and his son Edward was its first leader.

Answer the questions.

Who was Alice Cogswell?

_____

Why did Gallaudet go to Europe?

_____

Whom did he bring back to America?

_____

What school did they open in 1817?

_____

What university is named for Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet?

_____

Art © Kevin Coulston

AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE · DEAF HISTORY · GRADES 3–5

Martha's Vineyard: An Island That Signed

Read about an island where deaf and hearing people both signed, then answer the questions.

Name: _____ **Date:** _____



Read

Martha's Vineyard is an island off the coast of Massachusetts. For more than 200 years, starting in the 1700s, many people there were born deaf. In the town of Chilmark, about 1 out of every 25 people was deaf.

Because deafness was so common, almost everyone on the island learned to sign, hearing people too. Deaf and hearing neighbors fished, farmed and went to town meetings together. Hearing people sometimes signed to each other even with no deaf person around, like across a field or a boat.

Their language is called Martha's Vineyard Sign Language. Deaf children from the island went to the school in Hartford, Connecticut, where their signs mixed with others. Many experts think it was one of the languages that helped form ASL.

Over time, people moved away and fewer deaf children were born on the island. The last deaf person who grew up using the island's sign language died in 1952.

Answer the questions.

Where is Martha's Vineyard?

_____

Who on the island learned to sign?

_____

What was the island's language called?

_____

How did the island's signs help ASL?

_____

How do you think signing together made life fairer for deaf islanders?

_____

Art © Kevin Coulston

AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE · DEAF HISTORY · GRADES 3–5

Deaf President Now

Read about the week in 1988 when Gallaudet University students won a Deaf president, then answer the questions.



Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Read

Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., is a university for deaf and hard of hearing students. In its first 124 years, it never had a Deaf president.

In March 1988, the university's board chose a new president. Two of the three finalists were deaf, but the board picked the hearing finalist, who did not know sign language. Students believed a university for deaf students should have a Deaf leader.

Students closed the campus and marched to the U.S. Capitol. They made four demands, including a Deaf president and more deaf people on the board. Teachers, workers and people across the country joined them. The protest was called Deaf President Now.

After a week, the students won. On March 13, 1988, I. King Jordan was named the first Deaf president of Gallaudet University. He said, "Deaf people can do anything hearing people can do, except hear."

Answer the questions.

What is Gallaudet University?

_____

Why were the students upset?

_____

What was the protest called?

_____

Who became the first Deaf president, and when?

_____

What do you think Jordan's words mean?

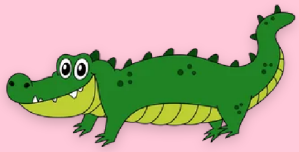
_____

Art © Kevin Coulston

AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE · DEAF HISTORY · GRADES 3–5

Deaf History Timeline

Write each event from the box in the right place on the timeline.



Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Events (not in order)

Deaf President Now: Gallaudet University gets its first Deaf president (1988).

The first lasting school for the deaf in America opens in Hartford, Connecticut (1817).

The Americans with Disabilities Act becomes law, protecting the rights of deaf people and others with disabilities (1990).

President Abraham Lincoln signs the law that starts a college for deaf students, now Gallaudet University (1864).

William Stokoe publishes a study showing that ASL is a real language with its own grammar (1960).

At a meeting in Milan, Italy, teachers vote that deaf schools should teach speech instead of sign language (1880).

Write each event next to its year.

1817 _____

1864 _____

1880 _____

1960 _____

1988 _____

1990 _____

Art © Kevin Coulston

ANSWER KEY · DEAF HISTORY · GRADES 3–5

Answer Key: Meet Laurent Clerc

Answers for grown-ups. Where kids write their own ideas, the key shows one example.



Read

Laurent Clerc was born in France in 1785. He became deaf when he was a baby. When he was 12 he went to a school for deaf children in Paris, where he learned French Sign Language. He did so well that the school later hired him as a teacher.

In 1816 an American named Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet came to the school. Gallaudet wanted to start a school for deaf children in the United States, and he asked Clerc to help. Clerc said yes. On the long trip across the ocean, Clerc taught Gallaudet sign language and Gallaudet helped Clerc with English.

In 1817 they opened a school in Hartford, Connecticut. Today it is called the American School for the Deaf, the oldest school for the deaf in the United States that is still open. Clerc taught there for more than 40 years and trained teachers who started schools across the country.

The signs Clerc brought from France mixed with the signs deaf Americans were already using. Over many years, this mix grew into American Sign Language.

Answer the questions.

In what country was Laurent Clerc born?

France

What language did he learn at school in Paris?

French Sign Language

Who asked Clerc to come to America?

Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet

When and where did their school open?

1817 in Hartford, Connecticut

How did Clerc's signs help make ASL?

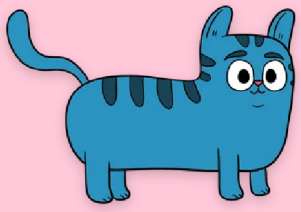
They mixed with signs deaf Americans already used.

Art © Kevin Coulston

ANSWER KEY · DEAF HISTORY · GRADES 3–5

Answer Key: Meet Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet and Alice Cogswell

Answers for grown-ups. Where kids write their own ideas, the key shows one example.



Read

Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet was a hearing minister in Hartford, Connecticut. His neighbors had a daughter named Alice Cogswell. Alice was deaf, and at that time there was no school in the United States where she could learn.

Gallaudet saw that Alice was bright and eager to learn. A famous story says he taught her her first word, hat, by pointing to his hat and writing the letters in the dirt.

Alice's father, Dr. Mason Cogswell, and other families raised money to send Gallaudet to Europe in 1815 to learn how deaf children were taught. There he met Laurent Clerc, a Deaf teacher at the school for the deaf in Paris, and brought him back to America.

In 1817 they opened the school now called the American School for the Deaf, and Alice was one of its first students. In 1864 a college for deaf students was started in Washington, D.C. Today it is Gallaudet University, named for Thomas, and his son Edward was its first leader.

Answer the questions.

Who was Alice Cogswell?

Gallaudet's deaf neighbor

Why did Gallaudet go to Europe?

To learn how deaf children were taught

Whom did he bring back to America?

Laurent Clerc

What school did they open in 1817?

The American School for the Deaf

What university is named for Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet?

Gallaudet University

Art © Kevin Coulston

ANSWER KEY · DEAF HISTORY · GRADES 3–5

Answer Key: Martha's Vineyard: An Island That Signed

Answers for grown-ups. Where kids write their own ideas, the key shows one example.



Read

Martha's Vineyard is an island off the coast of Massachusetts. For more than 200 years, starting in the 1700s, many people there were born deaf. In the town of Chilmark, about 1 out of every 25 people was deaf.

Because deafness was so common, almost everyone on the island learned to sign, hearing people too. Deaf and hearing neighbors fished, farmed and went to town meetings together. Hearing people sometimes signed to each other even with no deaf person around, like across a field or a boat.

Their language is called Martha's Vineyard Sign Language. Deaf children from the island went to the school in Hartford, Connecticut, where their signs mixed with others. Many experts think it was one of the languages that helped form ASL.

Over time, people moved away and fewer deaf children were born on the island. The last deaf person who grew up using the island's sign language died in 1952.

Answer the questions.

Where is Martha's Vineyard?

Off the coast of Massachusetts

Who on the island learned to sign?

Almost everyone, deaf and hearing

What was the island's language called?

Martha's Vineyard Sign Language

How did the island's signs help ASL?

Island children took them to school in Hartford, where they mixed into ASL.

How do you think signing together made life fairer for deaf islanders?

They could talk with everyone in town.

Art © Kevin Coulston

ANSWER KEY · DEAF HISTORY · GRADES 3–5

Answer Key: Deaf President Now

Answers for grown-ups. Where kids write their own ideas, the key shows one example.



Read

Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., is a university for deaf and hard of hearing students. In its first 124 years, it never had a Deaf president.

In March 1988, the university's board chose a new president. Two of the three finalists were deaf, but the board picked the hearing finalist, who did not know sign language. Students believed a university for deaf students should have a Deaf leader.

Students closed the campus and marched to the U.S. Capitol. They made four demands, including a Deaf president and more deaf people on the board. Teachers, workers and people across the country joined them. The protest was called Deaf President Now.

After a week, the students won. On March 13, 1988, I. King Jordan was named the first Deaf president of Gallaudet University. He said, "Deaf people can do anything hearing people can do, except hear."

Answer the questions.

What is Gallaudet University?

A university for deaf and hard of hearing students

Why were the students upset?

The board picked a hearing president who did not know sign language.

What was the protest called?

Deaf President Now

Who became the first Deaf president, and when?

I. King Jordan, March 13, 1988

What do you think Jordan's words mean?

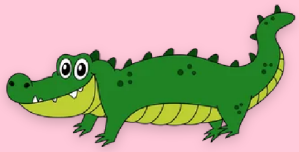
Being deaf does not stop people from doing any job.

Art © Kevin Coulston

ANSWER KEY · DEAF HISTORY · GRADES 3–5

Answer Key: Deaf History Timeline

Answers for grown-ups. Where kids write their own ideas, the key shows one example.



Events (not in order)

Deaf President Now: Gallaudet University gets its first Deaf president (1988).

The first lasting school for the deaf in America opens in Hartford, Connecticut (1817).

The Americans with Disabilities Act becomes law, protecting the rights of deaf people and others with disabilities (1990).

President Abraham Lincoln signs the law that starts a college for deaf students, now Gallaudet University (1864).

William Stokoe publishes a study showing that ASL is a real language with its own grammar (1960).

At a meeting in Milan, Italy, teachers vote that deaf schools should teach speech instead of sign language (1880).

Write each event next to its year.

1817 — First school for the deaf opens in Hartford

1864 — Lincoln signs the law for a deaf college

1880 — Milan meeting votes for speech over sign

1960 — Stokoe shows ASL is a real language

1988 — Deaf President Now

1990 — Americans with Disabilities Act

Art © Kevin Coulston