

Landmarks live!



Grades 3-5 | Activity Option 1 | ⌚ 52 minutes

Students will use facts they learn today to develop short creative presentations as reporters live from a landmark on its opening day.

Preparation

Make sure to coordinate which supplies and amounts are needed.

Step 1 (3 minutes)

Introduce the fun activity students will get to do with you today

- Students will be creating a script for a news station and report live from a famous landmark on its opening day.

Step 2 (2 minutes)

Ask the students to choose a landmark from the list below:

- The Amazon Rainforest
- Big Ben
- Disney World
- Eiffel Tower
- The Empire State Building
- Golden Gate Bridge
- Grand Canyon
- Great Pyramid of Giza
- The Great Wall of China
- The Lincoln Memorial
- Mount Kilimanjaro
- Niagara Falls
- Statue of Liberty
- The Taj Mahal
- Yosemite National Park

Materials



Pencils/pens



Internet connection



Student handout



Landmark fact sheets
(attached)

Step 3 (5 minutes)

Ask the students to utilize a search engine or pass out the **landmark fact sheets** provided. Instruct them to complete the **student handout** to help them research for their newscast. Explain that they will be doing a field report as a news crew at their landmark.

Some facts they should look for are:

- What is the landmark?
- Where is it located?
- When was the landmark built?
- Who built it? Why?
- What are the physical characteristics of the landmark? What is it made of? Why?
- Why would people want to visit the landmark?
- What are 2-3 additional interesting facts?

Step 4 (10 minutes)

Have the students spend a few minutes to imagine a short story a reporter might have about their landmark. Instruct students that it is time to have some fun as actors. Have students imagine how they would play each of the roles below:

Reporter - The student will be an “in-studio” reporter and will introduce themselves, their news station name and the field reporter.

- **Field reporter** - The student will tell the audience where they are located and report about the landmark.
- **Producers** - The students will write the script.

Each newscast should be about 2 minutes in length. The students can keep track with a timer.

Step 5 (30 minutes)

Have each student present what they learned.

- After the presentation, start a 3-5 minute discussion.
- If the students need helps, ask:
 - Name one thing that you didn't know before today about the landmark.
 - Name one thing that you find the landmark has in common with another landmark from the list.
 - If you could visit a landmark different from your group's, which would it be and why.

Step 6 (2 minutes)

- Applaud the presentations.
- Thank the students for a GREAT job!
- Let them know how much you enjoyed being with them.

Student handout

Full name of landmark: _____

Nickname or common name: _____

What is it? _____

If applicable:

When was it built? _____

Who built it? _____

Why did they build it? _____

What are some physical characteristics? What is it made of? Why? _____

Why would people want to visit the landmark? _____

Interesting facts:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Amazon rainforest

- The Amazon rainforest is the largest tropical rainforest in the world, covering over 5.5 million square kilometers (1.4 billion acres).
- Over half of the rainforest is located in Brazil, but is also located in other countries including Peru, Venezuela, Ecuador, Colombia, Guyana, Bolivia, Suriname and French Guiana.
- The Amazon represents over half of the planet's remaining rainforests, and comprises the largest and most biodiverse tract of tropical rainforest in the world, with an estimated 390 billion individual trees divided into 16,000 species.
- 10% of the world's known species live in the Amazon rainforest, which constitutes the largest collection of living plants and animal species in the world.
- 20% of the world's bird species live in the Amazon rainforest.
- At least 2.5 million different insect species, 40,000 plant species, 2,200 fishes, 1,294 birds, 427 mammals, 428 amphibians and 378 reptiles have been scientifically classified in the region.
- There are a number of dangerous species living in the Amazon rainforest such as the cougar, jaguar and anaconda.
- In both 2005 and 2010 the Amazon rainforest suffered severe droughts that killed off large amounts of vegetation in the worst affected areas.
- The rainforest has been in existence for at least 55 million years
- More than 56% of the dust fertilizing the Amazon rainforest comes from the Sahara desert in Africa. The dust contains phosphorus, important for plant growth. Up to 50 million tons of Sahara dust per year are blown across the Atlantic Ocean.
- The Amazon produces half its own rainfall through moisture it releases into the atmosphere.
- During the past 40 years, close to 20% of the Amazon rainforest has been cut down.
- The main cause of the deforestation is human settlement and development of the land.

Big Ben

- Big Ben is the nickname for the Great Bell of the clock at the north end of the Palace of Westminster in London. “Big Ben” is often extended to refer to the clock and the clock tower that contains it.
- Construction on the tower began in 1843 and finished in 1859 without an official opening ceremony. Big Ben chimed for the first time on July 11, 1859.
- The original bell cracked after it was installed and it took one year to have a new one cast and installed into the tower. The second bell also cracked and didn’t ring for four years.
- A solution was found by turning the bell a quarter turn so the hammer would strike a different spot. The hammer was also replaced by a lighter version and a small square was cut into the bell to prevent the crack from spreading.
- During World War II, the sound of the chimes being broadcast told the world that Britain had not been defeated.
- The bell is just over seven feet tall and weighs about the same as an elephant, at 13 tons.
- The minute hand on Big Ben weighs 220 pounds, is just over 12 feet long and travels the equivalent of about 118 miles each year. The hour hand weighs about 600 pounds.
- Big Ben has four clock faces, which are visible from each side of the tower. Each number on the clock face is about two feet tall.
- Big Ben is made of a combination of tin and copper.
- The bottom 200 feet of the tower’s structure is made of brickwork and limestone. The remainder of the tower’s height is a framed spire of cast iron.
- The clock on Big Ben’s tower is accurate within one second.
- The tower used to be named “Clock Tower.” It was renamed to “Elizabeth Tower” during the 2012 Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II.

Disney World

- Walt Disney World Resort, also known as Disney World, is located in Bay Lake, Florida, near Orlando.
- The resort opened on October 1, 1971, and is the most visited vacation resort in the world, with an annual attendance of over 52 million.
- Magic Kingdom was the first and original theme park to open in the complex, followed by Epcot, Disney's Hollywood Studios and Disney's Animal Kingdom.
- Disney World was first dubbed "The Florida Project," and was designed to supplement Disneyland in Anaheim, California, which had opened in 1955.
- Walt Disney World covers 43 square-miles, in which it houses hotels, theme parks, water parks, golf courses and miniature golf courses, camping resorts and shopping.
- More than 5,000 employees (called "cast members") are dedicated to maintenance and engineering, including 750 horticulturists and 600 painters.
- There is an underground tunnel system below the Magic Kingdom called the utilidor (short for utility corridor), but it is not really underground. The utilidor system is actually constructed at ground level and the park itself was constructed over that. Some parts of the park are as much as three stories above ground level.
- There are pipes underneath the Magic Kingdom in the utilidor that use pressurized air to jet trash to its final destination at over 60 mph.
- There is a tree farm on site so that when a mature tree needs to be replaced, a thirty-year-old tree will be available to replace it.
- Most trash cans are no more than 30 steps apart. Walt came up with this calculation when first designing Disneyland, observing guests in other parks and averaging out how many steps a person would take with trash in their hand before dropping it.
- The tallest structure in Disney's Magic Kingdom is the Cinderella Castle, standing 189 ft tall.
- The honor for the second tallest structure goes to the Space Mountain, which is 183 ft tall.
- Disney spends more than \$100 million every year on maintenance at the Magic Kingdom.

Eiffel tower

- The Eiffel Tower was originally built as the entrance for the World's Fair in 1889 in Paris, France.
- The Tower construction started in 1887 and took two years, two months and five days to build.
- It is named after Gustave Eiffel, the architect of the project.
- The Eiffel Tower is 1,050 feet in height and was the tallest man-made structure in the world for 41 years before being surpassed by the Chrysler Building in New York in 1930. In 1957, a spire was added to the top of the tower to make it 17 feet taller than the Chrysler building.
- The tower is constructed of 18,038 pieces of wrought iron, weighs 10,000 tons and is fastened with 2.5 million rivets.
- Around 50 tons of paint are added to the Eiffel Tower every seven years to protect it from rust.
- The Eiffel Tower was designed to be wind resistant and sways only a few inches in the wind.
- Temperature alters the height of the Eiffel Tower by up to 6 inches, so that it is tallest in the summer.
- Not everyone liked the Eiffel Tower when it was first built, with many criticizing its bold design.
- The French name for the Eiffel Tower is La Tour Eiffel; it also has the nickname "La dame de fer," which means "the iron lady."
- The Eiffel Tower played a crucial role in World War I. Signals would be sent out from the top of the tower in order to direct the French troops to the front line.
- The Eiffel Tower uses 20,000 light bulbs to make it sparkle every night, for 10 minutes on the hour. The monument consumes 7.8 million kWh of electricity per year, the equivalent of a small village, including 580,000 kWh for all its lights.
- Millions of people climb the Eiffel Tower every year and it has had over 250 million visitors since its opening.

Empire State Building

- The Empire State Building is a skyscraper in Manhattan, New York City, U.S.
- There are observatories on both the 86th and 102nd floors. Visitors can see 80 miles into New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts on a clear day.
- The building has 103 floors and at roof height is 1,250 feet tall. The height when including the antenna spire is 1,454 feet. The building weighs over 365,000 tons.
- The Empire State Building was designed by William Lamb of the architect firm Shreve, Lamb & Harmon Associates. It attracts around four million visitors annually.
- Around 3,400 workers were involved in the construction of the Empire State Building. It took just 410 days and more than seven million man hours for the Empire State Building to be constructed, quicker than anticipated.
- The building was officially opened on May 1, 1931, when President Herbert Hoover turned the lights on with a push of a button from Washington, D.C.
- Between 1931 and 1972, the Empire State Building was the tallest building in the world.
- From street level to the 103rd floor there are 1,872 steps. A race up the stairs to the 86th floor is held annually and the athletes must climb a total of 1,576 steps.
- The Empire State has its own Zip code (10118) for the businesses housed in the building.
- The cost of the building with the cost of the land was \$40,948,900. This cost was less than half of the total anticipated cost due to the Great Depression.
- The tower lights are turned off on foggy nights during the spring and autumn bird migration seasons, so the lights will not confuse birds and cause them to fly into the building.
- In 1945, elevator operator Betty Lou Oliver survived a plunge of 75 stories inside an elevator that was damaged during a fire. It is the Guinness World Record for the longest survived elevator fall recorded.
- The Empire State Building is struck by lightning an average of 100 times per year.

Golden Gate Bridge

- The Golden Gate Bridge links San Francisco, on the northern tip of the peninsula, to Marin County.
- The Golden Gate Strait is the entrance to the San Francisco Bay from the Pacific Ocean. The strait is approximately three-miles long by one mile wide.
- The bridge is one of the most internationally recognized symbols of San Francisco, California, and the United States. It has been declared one of The Wonders of the Modern World by The American Society of Civil Engineers.
- Construction commenced on January 5, 1933, and opened to vehicular traffic on May 28, 1937.
- The weight of the roadway hangs from two cables that pass through the two main towers and are fixed in concrete at each end. Each cable is made of 27,572 strands of wire. There are 80,000 miles (130,000 km) of wire in the main cables.
- The bridge has approximately 1,200,000 total rivets. It is 8,981 feet long.
- The Golden Gate Bridge has been closed due to weather conditions only three times:
 - December 1, 1951: Winds reached 69 miles per hour; the Bridge closed for about three hours.
 - December 23, 1982: Winds up to 70 miles per hour close the Bridge for almost two hours.
 - December 3, 1983: Wind gusts reaching 75 miles per hour close the Bridge for the longest period in its history – 3 hours and 27 minutes.
- As of January 2014, 2,025,883,491 vehicles have crossed the Golden Gate Bridge (includes northbound and southbound) since opening to traffic on May 28, 1937.
- The bridge paint job is maintained by over 30 painters, who touch up the paintwork where it has become seriously corroded. They use a special paint that helps protect it from the high salt content in the air, which rusts and corrodes the steel components.
- The Golden Gate Bridge has always been painted orange vermilion.
- From May 1937 to December 1970, a pedestrian toll (sidewalk fee) was charged and collected using a coin turnstile. On December 15, 1970, the pedestrian toll was eliminated.

Grand Canyon

- Located in northern Arizona, the Grand Canyon is known for its size and colorful landscape and is considered to be one of the Seven Wonders of the Natural World.
- It was formed by the Colorado River, which flows west through the canyon and averages about 300 feet in width, 100 feet in depth and flows at an average speed of four miles per hour.
- The Grand Canyon is 277 miles in length and took 3-6 million years to form; erosion continues to alter its contours.
- The rock found at the bottom of the Grand Canyon (schist) is around 2 billion years old.
- The rock found on the upper rim (limestone) is around 230 million years old.
- The widest point stretches 18 miles across and the narrowest point stretches 4 miles.
- The different types of rock visible make it an important site for geological research.
- American Indians have been living in and around the canyon for thousands of years. The Navajo Tribe are the native people of Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and Colorado. They are the largest tribe in the U.S. today.
- John Wesley Powell led the first expedition down the Grand Canyon in 1869. He was the first to use the name “Grand Canyon” after it had previously been known as the “Big Canyon” or “Great Canyon.”
- The Grand Canyon became a national park in 1919, but tourists started visiting the Grand Canyon in the late 1800s. The Grand Canyon receives close to 5 million visitors each year.
- It was the 17th national park to be established in the United States.
- Includes approximately 70 species of mammals, 250 species of birds, 25 types of reptiles and five species of amphibians.
- Some of the oldest ruins and artifacts from inhabitants date back nearly 12,000 years.
- The Grand Canyon is geologically important because the layers of ancient rocks are so beautifully preserved and exposed in the walls of the canyon, revealing a timeline of Earth’s history.

Great Pyramid of Giza

- The Great Pyramid of Giza (also known as the Pyramid of Khufu or the Pyramid of Cheops) is the oldest and largest of the three pyramids in the Giza Necropolis in Egypt.
- It was built for Khufu (Cheops, in Greek), the second of the eight kings of the fourth dynasty. Little is known about Khufu's reign of 23 years (2589-2566 B.C.).
- There are three primary pyramids that make up the "Pyramids of Giza," also referred to as the "Great Pyramids" – Khufu's, one for Khufu's son Khafre (2558–2532 B.C.) and one for Khafre's son Menkaure (2532–2503 B.C.).
- The Great Pyramid of Giza is the oldest and only surviving structure out of the original seven wonders of the ancient world. It is the oldest of the current seven wonders.
- Egyptologists believe the pyramid was built as a tomb over a 10 to 20 year period concluding around 2560 B.C and took as many as 20,000 laborers.
- The pyramid was built with about 2.3 million limestone blocks and weighs 5.9 million tons.
- This pyramid is the only one in Egypt known to have passages inside that go up and go down.
- To visit King Khufu's chamber you would have to walk down a passage all the way bent over.
- The Great Pyramid of Giza once had a swivel door at the entrance. It weighed about 20 tons and could easily be pushed open from the inside. On the outside it was very hard to find because it fit perfectly. There are only two other pyramids known to have had swivel doors.
- The mortar, which stronger than the stone that was used to build the pyramid and is still in place today, cannot be reproduced. Even though it has been analyzed, we still can't make it.
- There has been no writing or hieroglyphics found inside the Great Pyramid of Giza.
- This pyramid is the only one built with concave sides so that all four sides curve in slightly.
- There were three burial chambers inside. One of the chambers was built into the bedrock underground. The queen's chamber was higher and the king's chamber was the highest.
- The Great Pyramid is the most accurately aligned structure in existence and faces true north.
- It was originally covered with casing stones that reflected the sun's light and made the pyramid shine like a jewel. Ancient Egyptians called the Great Pyramid "Ikhet," meaning the "Glorious Light."

Great Wall of China

- Rather than being one long, continuous wall, the Great Wall of China is made up of a number of different sections. These sections were built by various dynasties over a long period of time from stone, earth, wood and other materials.
- When Emperor Qin Shi Huang ordered construction of the Great Wall around 221 B.C., the labor force was made up largely of soldiers and convicts. It is said that as many as 400,000 people died during the wall's construction; many were buried within the wall itself.
- Its main purpose was protection against attacks and invasions from the north. Although the Great Wall never effectively prevented invaders from entering China, it came to function more as a psychological barrier between Chinese civilization and the world.
- The best-known section of the Great Wall experienced major rebuilding during the Ming Dynasty that began in the 14th century. During the Ming dynasty, bricks were heavily used in many areas of the wall, as were materials such as tiles, lime and stone.
- The Great Wall of China stretches around 3,915 miles in length. If you measure the length of all the different sections of wall, the distance is more like 13,670 miles.
- The Great Wall of China is the longest structure ever built by humans.
- In some strategic areas, sections of the wall overlapped for maximum security (including the Badaling stretch, north of Beijing, that was later restored by the Ming dynasty).
- The width of the wall varies from 15-30 feet at the base and from 9 to 16 feet at the top. Some sections of the wall are up to 26 feet tall. Watchtowers rise above the wall at certain points.
- The best-known section of the Great Wall of China – Badaling, located 43 miles northwest of Beijing – was rebuilt in the late 1950s and attracts thousands of tourists daily.
- While some parts of the wall have been preserved or renovated, other parts have been vandalised or destroyed to make way for construction.
- The claim that the Great Wall is visible from space has been debunked many times, but remains ingrained in popular culture.

Lincoln Memorial

- The Lincoln Memorial, part of the National Mall in Washington, D.C., is an American national monument built to honor the 16th president of the United States, Abraham Lincoln.
- Construction took place between 1914 and 1922 and it is built of primarily marble and limestone.
- Dedicated in 1922, it is one of several monuments built to honor an American president. It has always been a major tourist attraction and since the 1930s has been a symbolic center focused on race relations.
- The building exterior echoes classic Greek architecture. It contains a large seated sculpture of Abraham Lincoln sitting in contemplation and inscriptions of two well-known speeches by Lincoln: the Gettysburg Address and his Second Inaugural Address.
- The inscription behind the Statue of Lincoln reads: “In this temple, as in the hearts of the people for whom he saved the union, the memory of Abraham Lincoln is enshrined forever.”
- The statue was carved by the Piccirilli brothers under the supervision of the sculptor, Daniel Chester French, and took four years to complete. Plaster casts of Abraham Lincoln’s face were used by the sculptor to make the monument’s statue.
- The original statue was intended to only be 10 feet tall, but was ultimately enlarged to finally be 19 feet tall from head to foot. If Lincoln were standing, he would be 28 feet tall. The statue weighs 175 tons and had to be shipped in 28 separate pieces.
- The memorial has been the site of many famous speeches, including Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, delivered on August 28, 1963, during the rally at the end of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.
- It is open to the public 24 hours a day. About 6 million people visit the memorial annually.
- The 36 columns represent each of the states in the Union at the time of Lincoln’s death in 1865.
- On the south wall mural, Freedom, Liberty, Immortality, Justice and the Law are pictured, while the north wall portrays Unity, Fraternity and Charity.

Mount Kilimanjaro

- Mount Kilimanjaro is the highest mountain in Africa and the highest free standing mountain in the world. It rises approximately 16,001 feet from its base to 19,341 feet above sea level.
- Located in Tanzania, Kilimanjaro stands on Tanzania's northern border with Kenya. It is located 205 miles south of the equator in Kilimanjaro National Park.
- Kilimanjaro is composed of three distinct volcanic cones: Kibo (19,340 feet), Mawenzi (16,896 feet) and Shira 13,000 feet).
- Mawenzi and Shira are extinct but Kibo, the highest peak, is dormant and could erupt again.
- Almost every kind of ecological system is found on the mountain: cultivated land, rain forest, heath, moorland, alpine desert and an arctic summit.
- The temperatures on Mount Kilimanjaro depend on the altitude and time of day. The climb takes you from tropical temperatures on the first two days to below zero at summit.
- Eruptive activity at the Shira center began about 2.5 million years ago, with the last important phase occurring about 1.9 million years ago. Both Mawenzi and Kibo began erupting about 1 million years ago.
- Approximately 25,000 people attempt to summit Mt. Kilimanjaro annually. Approximately two-thirds are successful. Altitude-related problems is the most common reason climbers turn back.
- The youngest dated rocks at Mawenzi are about 448,000 years old.
- Nearly every climber who has summited Uhuru Peak, the highest summit on Kibo's crater rim, has recorded their thoughts about the accomplishment in a book in a wooden box at the top.
- Temperatures at the peak can be 0° F, and if the winds are blowing, the wind chills reach dangerous levels.
- Kilimanjaro is not a peak you can climb on your own. It is mandatory to climb with a licensed guide and have porters carry your equipment.
- The youngest person to climb Kilimanjaro at age 7 is American Keats Boyd.
- The oldest person ever to summit Mt. Kilimanjaro was 87-year-old Frenchman Valtee Daniel.

Niagara Falls

- Niagara Falls is the collective name for three waterfalls that straddle the international border between Canada and the United States; more specifically, between the province of Ontario and the state of New York.
- From largest to smallest, the three waterfalls are the Horseshoe Falls, the American Falls and the Bridal Veil Falls.
- Established in 1885, the Niagara Falls State Park is the oldest state park in the U.S.
- Frederick Law Olmsted, landscape architect of Niagara Falls State Park, also designed Central Park in New York City.
- 3,160 tons of water flows over Niagara Falls every second. This accounts for 75,750 gallons of water per second over the American and Bridal Veil Falls and 681,750 gallons per second over the Horseshoe Falls.
- The water falls at 32 feet per second over the falls, hitting the base of the falls with 280 tons of force at the American and Bridal Veil Falls and 2,509 tons of force at the Horseshoe Falls.
- The Niagara Falls are capable of producing over 4 million kilowatts of electricity, which is shared by the United States and Canada.
- Four of the five Great Lakes drain into the Niagara River, (Superior, Michigan, Huron and Erie) before emptying into Lake Ontario. These five Great Lakes make up almost one-fifth of the world's fresh water supply.
- Niagara Falls State Park stretches over 400 acres, with close to 140 acres under water.
- During the last Ice Age, starting about 1.7 million years ago, continental glaciers up to two miles thick covered the Niagara Frontier region. These ice sheets melting into the basin formed the Great Lakes and Niagara River.
- There are differing theories as to the origin of the name of the falls, but the name is generally traced to the Iroquois Native American Indians.

Statue of Liberty

- The Statue of Liberty is located on Liberty Island in the New York City harbor.
- The Statue of Liberty was a gift from the people of France to commemorate the American Declaration of Independence. It was designed by French sculptor, Frederic Bartholdi.
- The statue was assembled on its pedestal after being constructed in France and sent to the U.S. in crates. Construction started in 1875 and it opened to the public in 1886.
- The female form represented by the sculpture is based on Libertas, the Roman goddess of liberty. She holds a torch and a tablet that has the date of the American Declaration of Independence inscribed in it (July 4, 1776) in Roman numerals.
- The official name of the Statue of Liberty is “Liberty Enlightening the World.”
- The Statue is 305ft. 1in. from the ground to the tip of the flame. It is the equivalent height of a 22-story building. In 1886, it was the tallest structure in New York.
- The Statue of Liberty is made of copper 3/32 in. thick, the same as two pennies put together.
- Lady Liberty would wear a size 879 shoe.
- The Statue’s height and the conductive material she’s made of, copper, makes it a structure of choice for lightning strikes. Estimates put the amount at as much as 600 times a year.
- The Statue’s copper has naturally oxidized to form its familiar “patina” green coating. This patina is as thick, in many places, as the copper behind it and is protecting the copper from naturally wearing away.
- The statue has been closed for renovation a number of times, including between 1984 and 1986 when the torch and much of the internal structure was replaced.
- The torch is a symbol of enlightenment. The Statue of Liberty’s torch lights the way to freedom showing us the path to liberty. The Statue’s current torch, added in 1986, is a copper flame covered in 24K gold. It reflects the sun’s rays in daytime and is lighted by 16 floodlights at night.
- A broken chain also lies at the feet of the statue, which is hard to see from the ground.

The Taj Mahal

- The Taj Mahal was built in between 1632 and 1653 on the southern bank of the Yamuna River in Agra, India.
- The Taj Mahal was built as a mausoleum for the tombs of his wife and child. Shah Jahan was sick with grief after Mumtaz Mahal, his wife, was in labor for 30 hours before dying at age 40 while giving birth to their 14th child.
- Taj Mahal means “crown of palaces” in Persian and Arabic.
- The Taj Mahal complex is believed to have been completed in 1653 at a cost estimated at the time to be around 32 million Indian rupees. In 2015, this would be valued at around 52.8 billion Indian rupees (\$827 million U.S.).
- The Taj Mahal took approximately 20 years and approximately 20,000 artisans to complete.
- There were about 1,000 elephants used to transport the materials for construction.
- The material used to build the Taj Mahal is white marble, brought from many different countries.
- The Taj Mahal has a large white dome surrounded by four smaller domes.
- The color of the Taj Mahal appears to change color depending on the time of day. The color change also depends on whether there is moonlight at night.
- There were about 28 different types of precious and semi-precious stones inlaid into the walls, many of which were lost during the Indian Rebellion of 1857.
- As many as 2 to 4 million people visit the Taj Mahal every year. The Taj Mahal complex has places of worship, a reflecting pool and large gardens to add to its beauty.
- UNESCO has designated the Taj Mahal as a World Heritage Site and it is also one of the New Seven Wonders of the World.
- The four pillars around the main dome were built to slant away from the dome slightly. This was done to help protect the tomb if the pillars ever collapsed.
- During British rule in India, the garden landscaping was changed to look more like the lawns in London, England. The original garden was adorned with lots of roses and daffodils.

Yosemite National Park

- The park is located in the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California.
- Yosemite Falls, the tallest waterfall in North America, has a 2,425 foot drop.
- There is a waterfall in the park named Bridalveil Falls. Because the wind blows the falling water to the side, it looks like a bride's veil blowing in the wind.
- It is believed that a glacier is responsible for producing the shape of Yosemite Valley.
- Approximately 20% of California's 7,000 plant species are found within Yosemite.
- In 1884 the first concession was opened in Yosemite. It was a store and a bakery.
- President Roosevelt spent three nights camping in Yosemite in 1903.
- In 1906, President Roosevelt took Yosemite away from California's control and put it in the control of the federal government.
- The mountains located in Yosemite still grow about one foot every 1,000 years.
- Over 90 species of mammals live in the park, including black bears, coyotes, gophers and chipmunks.
- There are at least 300 black bears in the park, and possibly as many as 500.
- For hikers, there are more than 800 miles for exploring.
- More than 4 million people visit Yosemite each year.
- The most challenging rock to climb might be El Capitan, which has a 3,300-foot rock face.
- Only a small portion of the park is actually visited by those exploring the park; most of it is untouched by humans.
- The brown bear and the California condor are now extinct in Yosemite.
- There is still approximately 225,000 acres of old growth forest left in Yosemite.
- The Ahwaneechee Native Americans lived in the Yosemite Valley for at least 4,000 years.
- The Yosemite National Park Half Dome hike is 17 miles from beginning to end and takes about 12 hours to complete.