

America's Story

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Meet Amazing Americans



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U.S. Presidents ▶ Theodore Roosevelt



A letter with drawings from Teddy Roosevelt to his son, Teddy Roosevelt, Jr., 1890

The Family Pets

When Roosevelt was a young boy he had been sick with asthma. In order to get well he spent a lot of time outdoors building up his strength and learning about animals. Since he loved animals, it was no surprise that his six children loved them too. While the Roosevelt family lived in the White House, the children collected many pets, including a badger, a bear, a raccoon, cats, dogs, rats, guinea pigs, snakes, and a calico pony named Algonquin. During the summers, the children and Mrs. Roosevelt often stayed at their home in Long Island, New York. While they were away from their father, he often sent them letters. Roosevelt wrote one you see here to his son Theodore Jr. who had not yet learned to read. What do you think this letter was about?

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Quentin examines a June bug on his hand

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The Family Pets

President Roosevelt seemed to enjoy the family's numerous pets just as much as his children. In this photo, his son Quentin is examining a June bug on his hand. Roosevelt enjoyed writing letters to his friends and telling them about his children's animals. Here's an example:

To Mrs. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward White House, Oct. 20, 1902,

"At this moment, my small daughter being out, I am acting as nurse to two wee guinea pigs, which she feels would not be safe save in the room with me--and if I can prevent it I do not intend to have wanton suffering inflicted on any creature."

Would you have trusted Roosevelt to take care of your pet?



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Roosevelt's sons, Kermit and Theodore Jr., dressed to go hunting

The Family Pets

Although Roosevelt loved animals, he also liked to go hunting. As his boys grew up they often went with their dad on hunting trips. In this picture, his grown-up sons, Theodore Jr. and Kermit, are dressed for hunting. When he was no longer president, Roosevelt went on safaris to Africa and Brazil to gather natural specimens for the Smithsonian Institution. His son, Kermit, went on the African safari with him.



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