# AWESOME stories

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#### 8. MOUNT RUSHMORE





In this image of Mt. Rushmore, we see the size of the mountain, the heads of four presidents and the rubble (known as "scree') of rock fragments resulting from sculpting on this peak. Mt. Rushmore is located in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Photo, taken on the morning of 5 August 2011, by Bbadgett. License: <u>CC BY-SA 3.0</u> Click on the image for a full-page view.

Around the time that a <u>colossal Olmec head</u> was found at La Venta, an American historian was envisioning a different type of giant head to be carved into the side of a mountain. <u>Doane Robinson</u> believed such a work would attract visitors to <u>South Dakota</u>. Peter Norbeck, the state's senior senator, agreed.

To move his idea forward, Robinson sent a letter to <u>Gutzon Borglum</u>, a respected American sculptor. It was the summer of 1924, and the artist was looking for a challenging project.

Borglum wasn't interested in local heroes or mundane topics. Were he to <u>carve a South Dakota mountain</u>, his subjects would have to be presidents who had championed individual liberty.

But where would the carving take place? Climbing <u>Harney Peak</u>, Borglum noticed a granite cliff with a southern exposure. It was <u>called Mount Rushmore</u> and was situated near a town named <u>Keystone</u>.

Although Congress passed legislation to allow the venture, most folks weren't interested in contributing funds. Why would anyone want an artist to <u>carve the side of a mountain</u>? Years passed, and the money did not come in. Not, that is, until the President came to town.

<u>Calvin Coolidge</u>, and his wife Grace, decided to vacation in the Black Hills of South Dakota during the summer of 1927. Captivated by the scenery and restful atmosphere, they converted their three-week visit into a three-month sojourn. That was enough time to convince the President to back the Mount-Rushmore project.

By this time, Borglum was sixty years old. His <u>artist tools</u> would include dynamite to blast the mountain and workers to carry out <u>his vision</u>. Among his crew were out-of-work miners who had the needed skills. Among his <u>detractors</u> were Native Americans—especially the Sioux—from whom their sacred lands (including Mount Rushmore) had been forcibly taken.

Borglum decided on <u>four</u> <u>presidents</u>: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and the artist's friend, Theodore Roosevelt. It wasn't just the <u>faces of presidents</u> he decided to create, however. His plan included a <u>giant vault</u> which he would carve into the canyon wall behind the mountain. Into <u>the vault</u> would go national treasures such as the documents which guarantee freedom and individual liberty to all Americans.

Age (and a post-surgery embolism) caught up with Borglum before he finalized his vision, so his son (Lincoln) wrapped-up the project with a few finishing touches—except for the hall of records. More than fifty years later, in 1998, the National Park Service carried-out Borglum's plan when it completed a scaled-down version of the great hall.

Last time anyone checked, however, that Rushmore vault contained neither <u>golden treasures</u> from the lost city of Cibola nor tablets filled with Olmec glyphs!

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/MOUNT-RUSHMORE-National-Treasure-Book-of-Secret

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## See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/MOUNT-RUSHMORE-National-Treasure-Book-of-Secrets

# Media Stream











# Colossal Olmec Head

View this asset at:

<u>Mt Rushmore with the Heads of 4 Presidents</u> Wikimedia Commons; photo by Bbadgett. License: <u>CC BY-SA 3.0</u>

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http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Mt-Rushmore-with-the-Heads-of-4-Presidents

Quote from *Yucatan and Mayan Mexico*, by Nick Rider, published in the UK, by New Holland Publishers, in 2002. A Cadogan Guides Book. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Colossal-Olmec-Head</u>

<u>Air Force One - Over Mt. Rushmore</u> Image online, courtesy U.S. Air Force PD View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Air-Force-One-Over-Mt.-Rushmore

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#### Carving a South Dakota Mountain with Dynamite

Image online, courtesy ATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosive. PD

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Gutzon Borglum, The Sculptor,









# Gutzon Borglum - Sculptor of Mt Rushmore

Image of Borglum online, courtesy <u>American Studies at the University of Virginia</u>. PD

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http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Gutzon-Borglum-Sculptor-of-Mt-Rushmore1

#### Harney Peak - Near Mt Rushmore

Image online, courtesy Professor Steven Dutch, Natural and Applied Sciences, University of Wisconsin - Green Bay.

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#### Keystone, South Dakota - Map Locator

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### South Dakota - Map Locator

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#### <u>Mt. Rushmore - View of Borglum Working</u> Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives. PD View this asset at:

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# <u>Mt. Rushmore - Vault Entrance, Hall of Records</u> Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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