

George C. Marshall

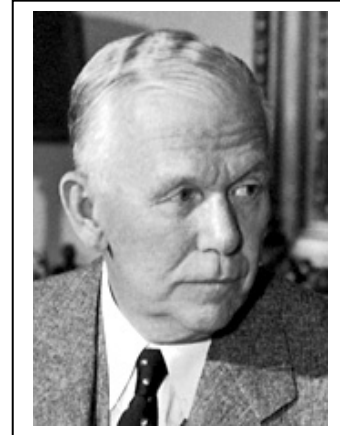
1953

“Two words above all others became his guide - as he underlined it years later in a speech to the graduating class at his old military school - the words honor and self-sacrifice.”

It may seem surprising to consider a career soldier for the Nobel Peace Prize. General George C. Marshall was in no way a pacifist, and was the head of the largest army the United States ever fielded. After the Second World War, Marshall’s efforts to rebuild a **war torn** Europe earned him the respect.

George Marshall was the youngest of three children. The Marshall family lived near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where his worked for the steel and iron industries.

Marshall dreamed of attending the Virginia Military Institute, or VMI, but his brother Stuart, a VMI graduate, begged their mother not to let him apply.



- **President Roosevelt once called General Marshall by his first name. The look on Marshall’s face was enough that Roosevelt never did again.**
- **In Europe, there is a training center and a bridge named for Marshall in Germany, as well as a museum in Holland.**
- **In the US, the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama, several public schools, a street in Pittsburgh, and the George C. Marshall Foundation in Lexington, Virginia are named for him.**

“If man does find the solution for world peace, it will be the most revolutionary reversal of his record we have ever known.”

Stuart was sure that Marshall would fail and bring shame to their family. Mrs. Marshall did not agree and, at the age of sixteen, George Marshall enrolled at VMI. He quickly realized that there were two ways to excel at the Institute: one was academic, the other as a military cadet. He decided to become the best soldier at the entire school, a goal he achieved by the end of his second year and maintained throughout his time at VMI.

Marshall earned the respect of his peers, subordinates, and superiors. He discovered that giving an order was easy, but it took more for the order to be successfully carried out. One important **aspect** of leadership for Marshall was to be an example. If he expected his men to work hard, he had to be willing to do the same. He was

unfailingly honest, and as a result his men learned to trust him without reservation.

After graduating from VMI, George Marshall entered the Army and was **deployed** to the Philippines. Ten days before deploying, he married Lily Coles. Marshall was sent back to the Philippines in 1913 and commanded 5,000 troops in training demonstrating the talents that would make him a top general.

In 1917, the United States entered World War I and Marshall was put in charge of leading the U.S. 1st Infantry Division across the Atlantic. The troops were eager to fight, but completely under-equipped and without proper training. Marshall did his best to create an effective force that could fight a modern war, where machine guns, tanks, and chemical weapons had become the weapons of the time.

After the war, George and Lily Marshall lived Washington, D.C. and, later, in China where Marshall's men provided security to Americans in the northern part of the country. Tragedy struck upon their return to Washington, D.C. in 1927 when Lily suddenly died while in recovery from surgery

Eventually, a new assignment would change that. He became the head instructor at Fort Benning, Georgia—the army's largest training center. While there, he met new people, took part in outdoor activities, and eventually met Katherine Brown, a recent widow with three children. Three years after the loss of his first wife, Marshall remarried at the age of 50.

The 1930s saw the arrival of another enemy at America's door: the **Great Depression**. Marshall took a pay cut in order to remain in the Army.

When he was posted in 1933 to South Carolina, many soldiers were unable to feed their families on army pay. Marshall taught his men to grow their own food, and helped establish Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) projects throughout the South. The CCC was part of President Roosevelt's **New Deal**, and its goal was simple: put young men to work. It was overseen by the Army, and Marshall continued the program in Washington State.

While many of his peers didn't like the CCC, Marshall once again decided that personal glory was less important than the needs of the country. He saw the CCC as a means of creating strong, hardworking citizens.

As tensions rose in Europe, George Marshall was nearing the end of his military career. He'd only recently become a general, and at 58 his dream of heading the entire U.S. Army seemed out of reach, especially with 30 other generals ahead of him in line for the job. However, his many talents made him stand out among his peers and President Roosevelt made Marshall Army Chief-of-Staff in September 1939, promoting him from a one-star to a four-star general overnight.

At the same time, Hitler's troops launched their **blitzkrieg** into Poland, igniting another war in Europe. Marshall agreed with Roosevelt that **neutrality** could only be maintained by being ready to fight. But as he studied the world situation, Marshall felt it inevitable that the United States would be dragged into the conflict. The people of the United States did not want war, but Marshall remained a strong advocate of military preparedness. In December of 1941, the United States was torn out of neutrality by the attack on Pearl Harbor. When the United States declared war on Japan, Germany and Italy declared war

on the United States. As always, George Marshall wished he could take the lead on the battlefield and enter the fighting. But his skills in organizing the war meant that he would spend most of the war behind a desk in Washington. By 1943, the Allies were turning the war around. Marshall's careful planning, honesty, and hard work made a huge impact on Allied efforts. He began to plan a major operation that, if successful, could end the war in Europe.

Marshall wanted to send U.S. and Allied forces through Great Britain, over the English Channel, and into German-occupied France. President Roosevelt agreed, despite the British preference to invade through Italy instead. The plan, called Operation Overlord, was to become the largest military operation in history. While Marshall had hoped to be given command of this operation, he honored the request of President Roosevelt and stayed in Washington. Operation Overlord was a success, and in less than a year the Germans had retreated back to their own country. By spring of 1945, the war in Europe was won.

George Marshall's work did not end when the Germans were defeated. He began shifting soldiers and supplies to the other side of the world, where the Japanese were still fighting desperately against the Allies. President Roosevelt had died in the spring of 1945, and Harry Truman was now Commander-in-Chief. He asked Marshall about how the U.S. might use the newly invented atomic bomb to end the war with Japan. Marshall felt that whether or not to use the bomb was a political decision, not a military one and he felt that the President, not a general, should decide.

The Second World War ended soon after, and George Marshall, now in his sixties, was prepared to retire. In fact, he and his wife had just returned home to Virginia from his retirement ceremony when the phone rang. It was President Truman, and there was trouble in China between the Nationalists and the Communists. He asked Marshall to go try and create a truce between the two groups.

Marshall, of course, accepted the request. But the tensions among Chinese factions were impossible for Marshall to resolve, and in 1947 he returned to the United States. He was then made U.S. Secretary of State, and was given the task of rebuilding Europe. National boundaries were in disarray, food was scarce, and the Soviet Union saw an opportunity to act aggressively in Eastern Europe. By 1947, the European economy was still well below pre-war levels. Winter was especially harsh that year, and both food and coal were in short supply everywhere. Marshall worked with officials from European countries and the U.S. State Department to produce the European Recovery Program. The ERP, which came to be known simply as the Marshall Plan, involved huge donations of American aid to Europe. In today's dollars, the Marshall Plan would total about \$130 billion.

The Marshall Plan worked. By the end of the four years, Europe's economy had **surpassed** pre-war levels. The transportation and manufacturing **infrastructure** that had been **decimated** during the war was rebuilt. The plan was also seen as a way of keeping the Soviet Union from dominating the region. Russia's Eastern European satellites, such as Poland and Czechoslovakia, were invited to take part, but Russia kept them from coming.

In 1953, the Nobel Committee gave George Marshall the Peace Prize for his efforts to rebuild Europe after the war. For George Marshall, the success of the European Recovery

Program was not his final bow. He resigned the State Department in 1949 to become head of the American Red Cross. Unlike the International Committee of the Red Cross, which served prisoners of war during World War II, the American Red Cross had a very poor reputation among servicemen. Marshall worked to improve the organization's image, but was recalled in 1950 by President Truman and asked to become the U.S. Secretary of Defense. Despite their occasional differences, Truman later called Marshall "the greatest living American."

Marshall resigned from office for the last time in 1951. He died in 1959, having served his country for over forty years.

Activities

George Marshall

Discuss student ideas for the best ways to deal with defeated nations after a war. Specifically focus on the approach taken by the “winning” nation.

Vocabulary Terms:

1. **Aftermath**
2. **Devastated**
3. **Aspect**
4. **Deployed**
5. **Blitzkrieg**
6. **Neutrality**
7. **Unflinching**
8. **Surpassed**
9. **Infrastructure**
10. **Decimated**

Discussion Questions

1. What was the Civilian Conservation Corps? (Level 1)
2. Is it better to be very smart or to work very hard? Explain your answer. (Level 1)
3. What was the Great Depression? How did it affect the United States? (Level 2)
4. Why was the Marshall Plan successful (Level 2)
5. Good leaders have different strengths and different styles. Compare Marshall’s leadership style with that of another leader you admire. (Level 3)

Activity

“Marshall felt that whether or not to use the (atomic) bomb was a political decision, not a military one and he felt that the President, not a general, should decide.”

Students should each be assigned to theoretically reconstruct the point of view of the following people:

- a. Citizens of the United States.
- b. Citizens from Japan
- c. Citizens from a neutral country, such as Peru.

They develop responses to the question of whether Marshall did the “right” thing with his decision not to attempt to influence the president.

These views are to be expressed orally as part of a world “round table” discussion or role play. Groups may choose one student to represent them, or this may be done as a whole class round table.

The class should discuss whether the responses seem plausible—why or why not.

Technology Option

Go to http://nobelprize.org/educational_games/peace/nuclear_weapons/
Read the directions for the game about nuclear weapons, then play the game.

Resources

“George C. Marshall.” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Marshall

The Marshall Foundation <http://www.marshallfoundation.org/>

The Marshall Films Collection <http://www.marshallfilms.org/>

The Marshall Plan Speech:

http://www.georgecmarshall.org/lt/speeches/marshall_plan.cfm/

http://nobelprize.org/educational_games/peace/nuclear_weapons/