

With members as influential as Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Mark Twain, it is easy to see how Freemasonry came to be the most significant fraternal organization in the world. Freemasonry was thought to have originated from stonemasons who built castles in medieval Europe. The early history of freemasonry is recorded in mysterious and cryptic manuscripts which date back to 1425. The first document, known as the Regius Poem, recounts how the art of masonry came to England. It also contains instructions, rules, and warnings for craftsmen and for worksite construction. Later manuscripts contain additions and amendments to the Regius Poem. Records show that the first Grand Lodge, which is a governing body of the freemasons, was established in 1717 in London. Many other lodges exist worldwide, which serve as places for Freemasons to gather.

Freemasonry is not affiliated with politics or religion, although some religions consider freemasonry a cult or secret society incompatible with religious doctrine. That said, Freemasonry prides itself on its devotion to many charitable causes and gathering together men of good moral character. The organization donates more than \$38 million per year to different global, community, and individual organizations. Requirements of becoming a Freemason include being of sound reputation and character, being at least eighteen years old, and believing in God. Also, since it is a fraternal organization, women are prohibited from joiningj however, an order of women Freemasons now exists.

Participation in freemasonry involves attending meetings and ceremonies. Ceremonies take place for inducting new members, as well as when existing members fulfill the requirements for the three “degrees.” Each degree signifies a new step to achieving higher knowledge. The three degrees are: Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason. The Masonic square and compass is the symbol of the Freemasons. These represent architectural tools and are used as emblems to teach symbolic lessons.

While Freemasonry has its roots in England, there is significant membership within the United States. In fact, fourteen US presidents have been members of the organization! Though membership has gone down significantly, there are still over one million American members, largely based out of Pennsylvania and Ohio.

**1. Which of the following was described in the Regius Poem?**

- a. Rules for determining who would be excluded from freemasonry
- b. Where the governing bodies would be located
- c. How masonry would spread from England
- d. How masonry came to England

**2. Which is NOT true about freemasonry?**

- a. It has political affiliations
- b. Some religions consider it a secret society or cult
- c. Members must be at least eighteen years of age
- d. Members must acknowledge the existence of God

**3. Which best describes the recorded history of freemasonry prior to 1717?**

- a. Detailed records present a very clear history
- b. There are no records of freemasonry before 1717
- c. The history of freemasonry before 1717 is unclear and confusing
- d. Freemasonry dates back thousands of years before 1717

**4. Which best describes membership in freemasonry over time?**

- a. It has increased significantly
- b. It has increased slightly
- c. It has decreased significantly
- d. It has decreased slightly

**5. What are “amendments” as used in the following sentence?**

Later manuscripts contain additions and amendments to the Regius Poem.

- a. changes
- b. conditions
- c. placeholders
- d. notes

**6. Which of the following might be used as evidence by freemasons against those who claim freemasonry is “incompatible with religious doctrine”?**

- a. Fourteen presidents were freemasons
- b. Belief in God is required for membership
- c. George Washington was a freemason
- d. Freemasons have to achieve three degrees to complete membership

**7. To which of the following questions would “fellowcraft” be the answer?**

- a. What is the highest “degree” of achievement amongst freemasons?
- b. What is the first “degree” of achievement amongst freemasons?
- c. What is one of the three “degrees” of achievement amongst freemasons?
- d. What does the Masonic square and compass represent?