Marquis de Lafayette (often simply known as Lafayette) was a French aristocrat. He fought for the US army during the Revolutionary War. During the French revolution, he strongly defended the French monarchy, and became one of the most powerful men in France.

Lafayette was born to a French noble family on September 6th, 1757, in Auvergne, a region of Central France. Before his second birthday, his father was killed during the Seven Years War, by the British. As he grew older, this would motivate him to fight in the Revolutionary war for the colonies. At age 12, his mother died, leaving him a young orphan. He was cared for by his grandmother. He inherited his family's fortune. At age 14, Lafayette entered France's royal army. At 16, he married Adrienne de Noailles, the daughter of the duke of Ayen, in 1774, allying himself with one of France's richest families.

At first, he was a young Courtier at King Louis XVI's court, but soon, he wanted to become a soldier in the colonies. His vast fortune helped pay for his trip to Philadelphia, where he arrived in July, 1777, 27 months into the American Revolution. Because King Louis XVI did not want to provoke Great Britain, Lafayette had to leave France secretly. At the time, he was not even 20 years old, and had no combat experience, nor did he speak any English. Soon, however, due to his nobleman background, persuasiveness, and the fact that he was willing to pay his own way, he became a general in the US colonies army.

He also befriended George Washigton. Overtime, their bond grew, and Lafayette's military career benefited greatly from their friendship. Due to George Washnignton's mentorship, he flourished in the Continental Army, unlike most European generals (who were either unsuccessful or quickly forgotten after the war). Lafayette would go on to serve under General Washington for several weeks. He stayed with him during the harsh winter at the battle of Valley Forge in 1777, and the battle of Yorktown in 1781.

George Washington was like a father figure to him, and so, named his first son Georges Washington de Lafayette, in his honor. After he helped his troops win the battle of Brandywine (near Philadelphia) on September 11th, 1777, he was given his own division. He was shot in the calf during the battle. However, he refused medical assistance, and successfully led a retreat. He also led a successful retreat during the Battle of Barren Hill on May 28, 1778. In February, 1779, he returned to France, where he worked with Benjamin Franklin and John Adams in order to persuade King Louis XVI to send more troops and supplies to the Continental army in the colonies. In April, 1780, Lafayette returned to the US with 6,000 soldiers and six ships. He was then given command of a full army in Virginia. In 1781, he fought against Loyalist troops led by Benedict Arnold, and won. He also forced general Charles Cornwailis and his army to retreat to Yorktown. After a French fleet and several other American armies joined the siege, on October 19th, general Charles Cornwailis surrendered. By that point, the British had lost, and the war ended. Lafayette was hailed as a hero, so much so that in 1784, Maryland gave him honorary US citizenship.

He returned to France in 1782. During the next 5 years in Paris, Lafayette became an advocate for religious toleration/freedom, as well as the end of the slave trade. His time in America helped make him a supporter of democracy, although he still maintained connections with the French royal family from his youth. With the help of Thomas Jefferson, he wrote the Declaration of Rights of Man and of Citizen, one of the most important documents in French history. He was inspired by the Declaration of Independence. He also supported measures that transferred power from the aristocracy to the common people, as French society was deeply unequal at the time. Lafayette was elected commander of the national guard of Paris soon after the storming of Bastille. He and his troops saved King Louis XVI and queen Marie Antoinette from a crowd of common people that had invaded Versailles. He then escorted them to a different part of Paris, where they became trapped in their own house due to the revolution. He became more popular in France during this time period. Lafayette supported giving common people control of the Estates General, which was converted into a national assembly. However, he didn't want too much democratization for the lower class, lest they attack France's already existing property rights. On July 17, 1791, Lafayette's men fired into a crowd of protesters who wanted king Louis XVI to step down. 50 people were killed, and Lafayette's popularity decreased. He soon resigned from the Paris guard.

In 1791, Lafayette became commander of an army in Metz. He wanted to help France in their war against Austria. Around that time, on August 10, 1792, the French crown was overthrown in a popular coup. With the rise of a new general, Maximillien de Robespierre, who wanted power for himself, Lafayette would have been tried for treason (and possibly killed) had he not secretly defected to the Austrian army, where he was held captive for 5 years. After the king and queen of France were executed, Lafayette retired from public life, partially in protest to Napoleon's dictatorship.

Tomas Jeffereson offered Lafayette the role of Governor of the Louisiana Territory, but he refused. In 1824, President James Monroe, a long time friend, invited Lafayette back to the US, which he accepted. He made stops at George Washignton's grave as well as Monticello, where he met Thomas Jefferson. He also addressed the House of Representatives, becoming the first foreigner to do so, on December 10th, 1824. Lafayette retired when he went back to France. He died in 1834, and was buried with dirt from Bunker Hill, the site of a famous battle during the revolutionary war.