

NEH Summer Institute:

George Washington and His Legacy: Myths, Symbols, and Reality

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Final Project

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Teacher Notes:

Part One of this unit can be introduced just prior to the French and Indian War as George Washington makes his fateful expedition to the Ohio River Valley and, ultimately, Fort Necessity. The students should have already been introduced to concepts of historiography and the use of primary resources.

Students should have access to a variety of handouts that complement the web sites listed and excerpts from books that might be pertinent to their research. The resources listed are by no means exhaustive. Excerpts from the movie, *The Man Who Won't Be King*, could potentially be shown as an introduction to this lesson as a way to show the concept of the change in Washington over time. Then, the concept of virtue and the definitions of republicanism can be introduced as the class moves through the Revolutionary War and into the period of the Early Republic.

They will be responsible for completing the bulk of the work outside of class. The culminating activity will be a debate about the nature of virtue and republicanism.

The list of resources is by no means complete and may be added to by the teacher or by students.

Part Two of the unit should be introduced at the beginning of the Early Republic. Information needed to understand the concept of a republic and republican citizens will be discussed in class. Attributes of people within each group will also be introduced in a general way before the students start the activity. The research to determine an example of each type of republican should be done independently by the students. Questions 2 and 3 should be covered through class discussion.

References to this anchor of *virtue* and the variant definitions of *republicanism* should be made throughout the year to tie the founding values of the United States to core values and beliefs of its citizenry over the past 200+ years.

Areas in the APUSH curriculum that will be addressed, in part or in total, using materials from this unit:

3. Colonial North America, 1690 – 1754
 - The Enlightenment and the Great Awakening
 - Colonial governments and imperial policy in British North America
4. The American Revolutionary Era 1754-1789
 - The French and Indian War
 - The Imperial Crisis and resistance to Britain
 - The War for Independence
 - State constitutions and the Articles of Confederation
 - The federal Constitution
5. The Early Republic, 1789 – 1815
 - Washington, Hamilton, and the shaping of national government
 - Republican Motherhood and education for women

South Dakota State Standards:

The state requires that 20th century history be taught in the high school so this unit will not cover any history standards directly.

Virtue and Republicanism in the Age of George Washington

PART ONE: It was a prevailing belief of the founding fathers, as well as a large percentage of the citizenry in the revolutionary era, that in order for the young republic to succeed its citizens must be virtuous. Many historians and writers since then have made the case that George Washington exemplified the qualities of such a virtuous citizen. One such historian, Richard C. Stazesky, makes the case that the present generation has much to learn from Washington in that regard.

(Full Text: <http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/articles/stazesky.html>)

“I believe that we can learn a great deal from studying the life of George Washington that would lead to personal and public renewal if we were to apply what we learn.

One, the need and importance to take responsibility for one's own life by controlling one's emotions; Washington had a volcanic temper which, with rare exceptions, he kept under control. Washington was able to control so much externally because he first learned to control himself from within.

Two, the importance of constant learning by observing, listening, reading and reflecting; Washington spent much time reflecting or pondering.

Three, the importance of civility (the 110 rules), which means basic respect for everyone.

Four, the role that morality and emotional maturity can play in enhancing one's natural intelligence.

Five, the ingredients of effective leadership.

Six, the inextricable relationship in a democracy between public and personal virtue; the absence of one will always cause a diminution in the other and vice versa.

Seven, the need in a democracy for all citizens to be good citizens and for the government to be administered in such a manner as to merit the trust of the citizens.

This is enough to show, I believe, that today we urgently need a rebirth of the ideas which he had which made our nation great and a renewal of Washington as our prime national hero and role model.

The future of our nation, to a large extent, depends upon Americans both personally and publicly developing the kind of character so fully and brilliantly seen in George Washington's personal and public lives.”

Although Washington may not have started out as the strong, virtuous leader that history and Stazesky recount, there is evidence that throughout his life he was intent on becoming an exemplary citizen, that he had a sense of creating a legacy.

Using the following resources (or others you may find), find two examples/quotes that illustrate this from the six periods listed on the chart. After completing the chart:

- 1 - Choose one example/quote from each period
- 2 - Place it in historical context
- 3 - Write a full explanation how it illustrates Washington's virtue at that time
- 4 - Determine if it demonstrates an evolution in his character. Explain why or why not.

Period	Example/Quote	Source
Young George Washington (1732-1754)	1	
	2	
The Emerging Leader (1754-1774)	3	
	4	
The Revolutionary Years (1774-1783)	5	
	6	
The Articles of Confederation (1783-1789)	7	
	8	
The Washington Presidency (1789-1797)	9	
	10	
Washington Until His Death (1797-1799)	11	
	12	

Web Resources (This is by no means an exhaustive list.)

The Papers of George Washington

<http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/index.html>

The George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html>

The Diaries of George Washington

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwseries1.html#D>

George Washington's Rules of Civility

<http://www.colonialwilliamsburg.com/Almanack/life/manners/rules2.cfm>

The Apotheosis of George Washington

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~CAP/gw/gwmain.html>

The Moral George Washington

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~CAP/gw/gwmoral.html>

Mt. Vernon Website – Meet George Washington

http://www.mountvernon.org/learn/meet_george/index.cfm/

National Art Gallery – George Washington

<http://www.nga.gov>

George Washington: A National Treasure

<http://www.georgewashington.si.edu/>

The History Place: George Washington Picture Gallery

<http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/revolution/wash-pix/gallery.htm>

Print Resources (This is only a sample of the resources available)

Richard Brookhiser, *Founding Father: Rediscovering George Washington* (New York: The Free Press, 1996)

James Thomas Flexner, *Washington: The Indispensable Man* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969)

Frank Grizzard, Jr., *George: A Guide to All Things Washington* (2005)

Edmund S. Morgan, *The Genius of George Washington* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1980)

Thomas G. West, *Vindicating the Founders* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997)

PART TWO: The prevailing belief was that for the new republic to succeed, all of its citizens needed to be 'virtuous'. What did being virtuous generally mean for the average citizen? Various groups in society had distinct ideas about what being a good, virtuous citizen actually looked like in practice. All three groups shared the concept of a contrast between corrupt Britain and industrious America and felt that the republic could only succeed through hard work and virtue.

Three definitions of *republicanism*:

- Held by the educated elite, emphasizing the necessity of a small, homogenous republic in which the citizens would be willing to sacrifice their own private interests for the good of the whole. Equality of opportunity would eventually create a merit-based "natural aristocracy."
- Held by other members of the elite and some skilled craftsman, drawing on Adam Smith's theories about individual self-interest leading for the best for the community. It stated that if everyone followed their private interests republican virtue would be achieved and the entire community would benefit.
- Held by less educated people and some radicals, emphasizing a more egalitarian approach to participation in government in order to give ordinary people more say.

1 – Select three people, one for each form of republicanism. Give details as to why you think you have a valid example.

2 - Make the case that all three definitions of republicanism can be found in Washington at various stages of his life.

3 – Explain why it was necessary for the young country to establish such standards for its population.