

George Washington NEH Summer Project, 2009

By Tina Lopez, Easton Public Schools, Easton, MA

“We’re Learning, by George!”

Target Student Population: Grade 5 Massachusetts students

Rationale: The town of Easton, Massachusetts has a vision statement that calls for “...educating children to become motivated lifelong learners who are contributing members of their community, able to meet the challenges of a global society.” The Massachusetts frameworks call for “...transmitting to each new generation the political vision of liberty and equality,” along with conveying knowledge of our Revolutionary leaders. As the consummate American citizen and one of the key figures associated with the Revolutionary War, the person and life of George Washington appears to be the perfect subject matter to address these desired outcomes.

Since instructional time is at a premium and educational standards must be the focus of curriculum, state standards and curriculum have been reviewed with the idea of seeking areas of intersection where content related to George Washington can be effectively utilized.

Every effort has been made to present material at an appropriate level and in a manner that is appealing to the average fifth grade student. Understanding that multiple exposures are needed to teach anything, and integration of subject matter promotes understanding, a collection of relevant lessons on George Washington has been provided across subject areas.

Unit Goal: Teach students about the life and character of George Washington to promote knowledge of their heritage and history and inspire them to become model citizens of our global society.

Big Ideas: The following ideas will be the focus of “We’re Learning by George” activities:

- The American Revolution established the first and longest continuing democratic form of government in the modern world.
- Most historical scholars agree that George Washington was a great man.
- George Washington was an integral part of the American Revolution and the establishment of our democracy.
- Great men and women make great citizens.
- Greatness in men and women can come from studying and emulating greatness from those who have come before us.

The following lessons and activities can be “plugged in” throughout the year at times and places that are chosen by the classroom teacher to best support the established fifth grade curriculum in Easton, MA.

Unit Lesson Plans/Activities:

Unit Opening Activity: ***“So You Think You Know George”***

Objective: Introduce students to the idea of learning about George Washington.

Materials: “So You Think You Know George” handout

Procedure:

1. Teacher asks the question, “Who thinks they know a lot about George Washington?”
2. After a show a hands, the teacher says, “We’re going to be doing a series of lessons and activities related to George this year, and I thought a good place to start would be a little quiz to see how much you know.”
Distribute and administer true/false quiz, entitled, “So You Think You Know George”.
4. Review and discuss answers (see answer key).
5. Announce: “We will be focusing on George a lot this year, not only as part of our studies on the American Revolution, but also a means of learning to be better readers, writers, mathematicians and scientists - all roles of which George became good. Hopefully, by the end of the year, you’ll not only be a better citizen and student, you’ll have a better understanding of why the face of George Washington has been reproduced in this country more than any other person since it began.

Reading/Social Studies

Activity 2: ***“Making It Real”***

By making personal connections through a visualization exercise, students begin to develop an idea of the nature of George Washington, why he may have been so popular and successful and why that mattered.

Objective: Students will be able to identify numerous character traits of George Washington and identify how his personality impacted his life.

Materials: “Making it Real” worksheet

Procedure:

1. Teacher places the “Making it Real Worksheet” on each student’s desk and tells him or her not to turn it over.
2. Teacher then explains to the class, “We are going to do a visualization activity to help you to imagine a certain person that you certainly know, but probably don’t know very well. There are no right or wrong answers in this activity. In fact, after you fill in your sheets, they will all look pretty different, but hopefully in the end, we will have

clearly created an image of a person that is similar for all of you. You will need to respond pretty quickly, so try to just go with the first thought you have. Let's begin.” (Allow 10 –15 seconds on each item).

Think of a person you know who is very good looking. – (Students fill in line 1)

Think of a person you know who is very brave. - (Students fill in line 2)

Think of a person you know of is a good listener. – (Students fill in line 3...)

Think of a person you know who is a good writer.

Think of a person you know who is very honest.

Think of a person you know who never gives up.

Think of a person you know who is very humble.

Think of a person you know who is very popular.

Think of a person you know who is a good athlete.

Think of a person you know who is a good dancer.

Think of a person you know who is thoughtful & concerned about others.

Think of a person you know who is a good dresser.

Think of a person you know who is fair and reasonable.

Think of a person you know who is kind of quiet with strangers, but more outgoing with close friends.

Think of a person you know who is hard working.

Think of a person who you know is constantly trying to improve him or herself.

3. When all students are done, have them flip over the sheet, and announce, “Take all those qualities and imagine them altogether in one person, and you’ve got a good picture of George Washington. Now do you understand why he was the only president to be unanimously elected twice and unanimously chosen to be president of the Continental Army and the Constitutional Convention?” He exhibited an amazing amount of positive qualities. Ask the class, “Why do you think having these types of characteristics was so

important during the Revolutionary War and immediately afterward? Consider student thoughts. Be sure to include the following ideas:

1. The country was very divided between Loyalists and Patriots.
2. England was the most powerful country in the world at that time.
3. There was no other modern day democracy to model ourselves after.
4. Thirteen different colonies had very different interests.
5. Colonists were used to thinking very independently.
6. There were other very learned men with strong opinions that a leader would need to work with.

Assessment: At the end of the week, as a “ticket to leave” or exit question, ask students to identify one character trait of George Washington.

Related Standard: Social Studies, 5.18, “Describe the life and achievement of important leaders during the Revolutionary War.”

Activity 3: “*Questioning with Big George*”

Objective: Students will learn facts about the life of George Washington and learn how to apply the reading comprehension strategy of asking questions

Materials: The picture book, *Big George* by Anne Rockwell; easel paper and markers

Procedure: While teacher role models the reading comprehension strategy of asking questions, the generated questions are posted on easel paper to be answered later in the unit, as more information is presented on George Washington and the Revolutionary War Period. After initial demonstration by teacher, students can “chime in” with related questions that they have as well.

Assessment: This is an introductory activity for the skill of questioning. When adequate practice has been provided, independent written questions on any reading passage or book can be used as a means of assessment.

Related Standard: Reading 2, “Students will pose questions, listen to the ideas of others, and contribute their own information or ideas in group discussion or interviews...”

Activity 4: “*Words of Wisdom*”

Objective: Students will expand their vocabulary and improve in their ability to restate something in their own words.

Materials: “Words of Wisdom” quotation handout, dictionaries

Procedure:

1. Students are separated into small groups of 3 or 4 students and are randomly assigned one of the Washington quotes on the handout.
2. Quotes can be cut up from the Words of Wisdom handout, placed in a can and drawn out by each group.
3. The group will read the quote, define boldened vocabulary words, paraphrase the quote, and decide what it tells about Washington’s values and/or character.
4. Each group will present to the other groups in the class.
5. New vocabulary words will be added to a running list posted on the classroom wall.

Assessment: When 7-10 new words are on the word wall, have students study for a teacher-made quiz. Many opportunities for paraphrasing practice should be provided before students are assessed. Alternative quotes may be used for an assessment.

Related Standards: Reading 4, “Students will understand and acquire new vocabulary and use it correctly in reading and writing.”

Reading 4.17, “Students will determine the meaning of unfamiliar words using context clues.”

Language Arts /Social Studies

Activity 5: “Rules to Success”

Objective: Students will improve their cursive handwriting, become familiar with Washington’s Rules of Civility as a potential influence on him and work toward improving their own behavior as well.

Materials: A rule from The Rules for Civility Handout List. (Handout rules picked by teacher based on current relevancy, especially in a school setting.)

Procedure:

1. The Teacher begins by connecting to prior instruction: “A while ago we read a book about George Washington and did a visualization exercise to try to understand why he was so popular and successful. One of the things that we read about were The Rules of Civility that Washington copied as a young boy. Many people believe that Washington not only copied these rules to practice his handwriting, but also tried to follow them to become a better person. Altogether there were 110 rules. Some of them only make sense for the time period in which Washington lived, (“Spit not in the fire, nor stoop low before it neither put your hands into the flames to warm them, nor set your feet upon the fire especially if there be meat before it.”), but most of them are every bit as wise today as they were then. So if it worked for Washington, maybe it will work for us.”

2. Teacher explains daily activity: A rule from the handout list will be written in cursive on the board or a piece of paper as a model for students to copy.

3. The meaning of various rules will be discussed, either before or after rules are copied.

4. The daily rule will be posted on a bulletin board.

5. Students will be rewarded if they are observed following a rule.

Assessment: Teacher observation of any classroom writing sample and classroom behavior

Related Standard: Social Studies/History 5.18, “Describe the life and achievement of important leaders during the Revolutionary War.”

Activity 6: “Modern Revision” Washington was considered a good writer, but his writing often appears different than what we are used to seeing today. Since there were no English writing standards at that time, the way words were capitalized and punctuated was different, and some words were also spelled differently. Share that Washington was a great believer in collaborative efforts. He regularly sought the advice of others and solicited help with his writing. In fact, Alexander Hamilton is credited with assisting him with numerous speeches. Washington believed everyone should always try to improve themselves, so we’re going to make the assumption that he wouldn’t mind if we did a little revising or editing of his writing.

Objective: Improve editing skills and help students distinguish between current writing styles and those of the 18th century.

Materials: Washington primary source handout with letters regarding the marriage proposal of his granddaughter Betsey, correcting pen, overhead projector and transparency of primary source material

Procedure:

1. Share with students the context of the Washington primary source material. Either independently or with a partner, have students propose revisions/corrections using modern standard English rules.
2. Review with class, making corrections on the overhead.

Assessment: This is meant to be only one practice activity of many presented to the students. Any standard or teacher made assessment may be used to assess editing skills, at which time the teacher feels adequate practice has been provided.

Related Standard: Composition 22, “Students will use knowledge of standard English conventions in writing, revising and editing.”

Activity 7: “*Movie Tribute*”

Objective: Students improve in their understanding of the character and contributions of George Washington.

Materials: PBS movie, “*The Man Who Would Not be King*”, Handout with the following open-ended questions:

*The most interesting thing I learned:

*If I could meet George Washington, the one thing I would like to ask him is...

*The advice I would have given George Washington is....

*The thing I liked best about George Washington is ...

Procedure:

1. Distribute handout with focus questions.
2. Show the first half of the movie, “*The Man Who Would Not be King*.”
3. Stop the film and discuss it.
4. Show the second half of the movie.
5. Allow students time to complete the worksheet followed by discussion related to focus questions.

Assessment: Essay question on George Washington at the end of the Revolutionary War and/or Constitutional Convention unit tests

Possible Extension: Students devise questions while viewing the movie that either they or other students can research.

Related Standard: Social Studies/History 5.18, “Describe the life and achievement of important leaders during the Revolution.”

Activity 8: “*Plantation House Tour*”

Objective: Students develop an understanding of what a southern plantation looks like during Colonial American unit.

Materials: TV monitor with Internet connection, Mt Vernon website (click on Discover the Mansion House Farm)

Procedure:

1. Teacher connects activity to prior learning, i.e. “We have been learning about the southern colonies. Before George Washington became general of the Continental Army, he was a southern plantation owner in the state of Virginia. This plantation, known as Mount Vernon, was acquired after the death of his beloved half brother Lawrence. Touring his home at Mount Vernon, although updated several times to reflect his growing needs and stature, provides some sense of what it was like to live on a southern plantation.
2. Teacher guides students through the Virtual Reality House Tour on the Mt. Vernon website in an interactive manner with the class, providing opportunities for discussion and questions during the process.

Assessment: Students will have to define and describe the word plantation on the Southern colonies assessment.

Related Standard: Social Studies 5.10, “Identify the 13 colonies and describe how regional differences in climate, type of farming, populations, and services of labor shaped their economics and societies through the 18th century.”

Activity 9: “Taking a Stand”

Objective: Students will be able to write a five-paragraph essay

Materials: Organizational rubrics to assist with brainstorming, drafting and editing.

Procedure:

1. After instruction and guided practice has been completed on the steps to writing a five paragraph essay, students can be assigned the following writing prompt to be done independently:

Should George Washington be given his own holiday in lieu of Presidents Day?

2. When final drafts are complete, selected students can read their essays to the class.
3. All essays should be posted on the bulletin board.

Assessment: Essay can be assessed using the standard classroom writing rubric.

Related Standard: Composition 23, “Students will organize ideas in writing in a way that makes sense for their purpose.”

Activity 10: “Know Thy Land”

Objective: Students will be able to compare and contrast two maps of the same area, identify key places in Washington’s life on a map and discuss the importance of geographic features in both war and peace times.

Materials: overhead with maps, blank student maps

Procedure/Activity 1: After listening to the biography of Washington, students will identify key places on maps that were important in Washington's life to include: Pope's Creek, Virginia; Philadelphia, PA; New York, NY; Barbados; Yorktown, VA; The Ohio River Valley; Cambridge, MA; Boston, MA; Trenton, NJ; Valley Forge, PA; and The Delaware River. A map of colonial times as well as a current map will be presented. Students will fill in these blank maps identifying the above locations.

Procedure/Activity 2: Subsequent to instruction on George Washington, The French & Indian War and the Revolutionary War, the teacher will lead a class discussion on the following:

What was the significance of the following geographical features in Washington's life? The Potomac River; The Delaware River, The Ohio River Valley, The Piedmont, Dorchester Heights

Assessment: Make sure all geographical features are included on final Revolutionary War assessment.

Related Standard: History/Geography 7, "Compare maps of the modern world with historical maps."

Science

Activity 11: "Weather Connections"

Objective: Improve students ability to research a question

Materials: Internet access, website listings, relevant books

Procedure:

1. In the context of the science weather unit point out the fact that one of the things that has not changed since the colonial era is that weather has a significant effect on life activities. Two of the activities that George Washington was very involved in were agriculture and war.
2. Direct students to use the internet or other resources to research the following questions:

What was the weather like in Virginia and how did it affect Washington's livelihood or ability to make money? Consider all of the enterprises he was involved in. Or...

How did weather impact the outcome of the Revolutionary War? Tag words might include Valley Forge, the Battle of Trenton, and Dorchester Heights. Morristown Or...

Analyze any available data on weather conditions during the time of the Revolutionary War. Compare and Contrast with current weather conditions in the same area.

3. Assist students in the research process and provide a model of how students should cite resources.
4. Have students use research information to write a comprehensive cause/effect paragraph or essay, depending upon the level of the students.

Assessment: Oral or written response, as appropriate.

Related Standard: Earth & Space 7, “Distinguish among the various forms of precipitation (rain, snow, sleet and hail) making connections to the weather in a particular place and time.

Activity 12: “Choppers”

Objective: Students will identify simple machines used in making dentures in the 18th century and continue to develop an understanding of Washington’s life and character.

Materials: TV monitor: website: The History Channel; “George Washington’s Teeth

Procedure:

1. Teacher connects with prior learning, i.e. “As you know George Washington experienced many stresses over the course of his life: the death of his father, half brother; step-daughter and step-son; contracting small pox; fighting against the French & Indians, leading an ill-equipped army against the most powerful army in the world during the American Revolution; keeping his plantation afloat; being away from home for 8 years and trying to get the first democratic republic off the ground. As if that wasn’t enough, he suffered for much of his life with dental problems. By the time he was elected president, he had only one real tooth in his mouth. Dental care being what it was, he was no doubt often in pain because of his teeth. The following film gives you some idea of the kind of dentures Washington wore and you can speculate on how they might have felt.
2. Show film, “George Washington’s Teeth” (2:30 minutes)
3. Discuss reaction & connect with other medical issues of the day, including small pox, disease during the war, and Washington’s death.
4. Have students identify the simple machines that were used to make the dentures.

Related Standards: Social Studies/History 5.18, “Describe the life and achievement of important leaders during the Revolution.”

Science: Technology & Engineering, 1.2, “Identify and explain appropriate materials and tools to construct a given prototype safely.”

Math –

Activity 13- “Wounded, Killed and Captured”

Objective: Improve students math problem solving ability related to skills of addition, subtraction, multiplication, calculating percents, statistical landmarks and interpreting tables.

Materials: Handout on Revolutionary War casualties (www.revolutionarywararchives.org/warstats.html), paper and pencil

Procedure:

1. Distribute table on Revolutionary War casualties
2. Read opening and headings as a class

3. Have students work in pairs to answer the following questions:
 - 1) *Based on the table figures, what was the total number of British troops? Continental Army troops?*
 - 2) *Which general sustained the minimum casualty rate? (Consider both armies, killed & wounded).*
 - 3) *What is the range between the total numbers of British soldiers captured to the total number of Americans captured?*
 - 4) *Based on information provided in the handout, approximately how many men in total died of disease during the Revolutionary War? What percent of the troops was this? How did it compare to the percent lost in battle?*
 - 5) *In our continuing quest to get to know George Washington better, is there anything the numbers on this table might suggest about his character?*
4. Review answers to above questions. After solving the math problems, discuss how Washington demonstrated concern for his soldiers by: writing numerous letters to Congress on their behalf for adequate food and clothing, having his troops inoculated, riding into battle with them, staying with them to the end, speaking highly of them, insisting that they receive compensation due to them, and accepting some as guests in his house.

Possible Extension: Design five additional questions that could be asked using the data from this table.

Related Standard: Math, Data Analysis, Statistics & Probability 8.D2, “Select, create, interpret and utilize various tabular and graphical representations of data.”

6.D1, “Describe and compare data using concepts of median, mean, mode, maximum, minimum and range.”

Social Studies 5.18, “Describe the life and achievement of important leaders during the Revolution.”

Unit Closing Activity: ***“Lessons Learned”***

Objective: Improve students ability to make connections and applications from information acquired about George Washington.

Materials: Handout: *“What Every Fifth Grade Student can Learn From George Washington*

Procedure:

1. Discuss the difference between learning about someone and learning from someone. Over the course of the year we have learned a good deal about the life and character of George Washington. How can we translate that information into our own lives?
2. Depending upon the ability level of the students, either have them take turns reading from the handout, “What Every Fifth Grade Student Can

Learn From George Washington” or after an initial model or two, have them come up with the lessons learned from the information provided.

Assessment: Include an essay question at the end of the American Revolution social studies unit test related to the character and/or contributions of George Washington.

Related Standard: Reading, Non-fiction 13, “Students will identify, analyze and apply knowledge of the purpose and/or structure of non-fiction or informational materials and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.”