



AMERICAN REVOLUTION 250TH ANNIVERSARY LESSON

What's George Washington Wearing?



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Grade Level: Elementary 2023 History

and Social Science SOLS

- K-2.a-e, K.3.b, d
- 1.5.c
- 2.7.h, 2.10.a, 2.12.b
- 3-4.a-e, 3.9.a, c
- VS.4.a-c, VS.5.a-b, VS.6.a, VS.12

Objective: Students will learn more about the life of George Washington through portraits.

Sources (Images Included at End of Packet):

- Jean Leon Gerome Ferris – The Call of the Sea (VMHC Collection 1996.49.1)
- Boude & Miley – George Washington (VMHC Collection 0985.03.00368 CMLS)
- John Trumbull - George Washington & William Lee (Metropolitan Museum of Art Collection, 24.109.88)
- Stanley Arthurs – General George Washington on His Way South to Yorktown in 1781 (VMHC Collection 1997.97.2)
- Thomas Sully – George Washington (VMHC Collection 1857.2)

Additional Materials:

- See, Think, Wonder (worksheet included at end of packet)
- Symbols (examples at end of packet)

Upper Elementary Steps:

1. Start as a whole class and explain that you will be learning more about George Washington through pictures of him at different points in his life. Using a source of your choosing, model the “See, Think, Wonder” thinking routine.
 - a. Note - Learn more here: [See, Think, Wonder Routine](#)
2. After the class analyzes the picture together, divide the students into 4 groups. Assign each group one of the remaining pictures. Have each group fill out their See, Think, Wonder worksheet about their assigned picture.
3. Once the groups are done, pull up each image on class screen and have the groups report out what they saw and what they thought it was. Give the groups context of the image. Answer any questions or encourage the students to look up the answers themselves.
 - a. Note – context provided with image at end of packet.
4. What new info did students learn about GW?

Early Elem Steps:

1. Introduce the idea of the President of the United States – what is the job of a president?
2. The first President of the USA was a Virginian named George Washington! Today we are going to learn a little more about him as a person.

- a. Scaling Note – The activities below will use only 3 of the 5 paintings.
- 3. Activity 1 - See, Think, Wonder
 - a. Teachers will use “The Call of the Sea” to facilitate a group “See, Think, Wonder” where students call out their answers to the questions.
 - b. Follow up by asking students what they think George Washington is thinking? Who is the woman in the picture? Why is his hair red instead of white?
- 4. Activity 2 – Movement Activity
 - a. Teachers will use “General George Washington at Mount Vernon on His Way South to Yorktown in 1781” to explain to students that he lived at a place called Mount Vernon. He was a military leader who helped the United States become a country in the American Revolution.
 - b. Movement Activity Option 1 - “Washington Says”
 - i. Introduction: “We’re going to play a game called Washington Says to get our bodies moving, just like George Washington would have in the military! I will give you different commands, and if I say ‘Washington Says’ before the command, you do it. If I don’t say ‘Washington Says,’ don’t do it! If you move without me saying ‘Washington Says,’ sit down. Any questions? Ready?”
 - 1. Read out instructions after first mention of each order, after that, you can shorten to just the few words command.
 - 2. On the first round of orders, demonstrate all movements clearly.
 - ii. March Like a Soldier: “Washington Says, march like a soldier!”
 - 1. Stand tall, pull your shoulders back, and start marching in place. Lift your knees high and swing your arms like you're walking on a mission. Keep that march strong and steady, just like a soldier on the move!
 - a. Can march around room if space allows
 - iii. Gallop Like a Horse: “Washington Says, gallop like a horse!”
 - 1. Pretend you’re riding a horse. Start by jumping your legs forward like you’re galloping and swing your arms to match.
 - a. Can gallop around the room if space allows—moving fast but controlled, just like riding into battle.
 - iv. Put On Your Tricorn Hat: “Washington Says, put on your tricorn hat!”
 - 1. Imagine you’re a leader of the American army in the Revolutionary War. Reach up with both hands, pull your invisible hat down on your head, and give a nod like you’re ready to lead your troops.
 - a. You can use replicas if available or incorporate a tricorne paper hat craft into this instruction.
 - v. Stand at Attention: “Washington Says, stand at attention!”
 - 1. Stand up tall, feet together, arms at your sides, and look straight ahead—just like a soldier when they’re ready to follow orders. Hold that position and show how focused you are.
 - vi. Salute: “Washington Says, salute your leader!”
 - 1. Stand straight, extend your right arm to your forehead, and salute just like a soldier showing respect to their commander. Keep your body straight and tall!

a. Pick a direction/object to salute towards or yourself.

5. Activity 3 – Craft

a. For the final painting, students will create a paired craft using the Thomas Sully “George Washington” painting. This painting shows George Washington as an older man with white hair, as he would have looked when he was President of the United States. This is a much simpler painting, with less going on in the background than the other paintings. Students will choose from the symbols below to add to the background of the painting.

b. Note for teacher prep –

i. Print and cut out a variety of symbols (you can choose from the options below or make your own).

ii. Explain to students how each symbol represents George Washington.

iii. Students will then paste symbols onto their painting printout. Paintings can be displayed around the classroom.

Culminating Activity (all ages):

Washington’s Relay Race

- Objective: Students will engage in a fun and active relay race while learning about key items related to George Washington’s life.

o Materials Needed:

- Reproductions of various articles of clothing and objects representing George Washington’s life.

- Suggested items:

- o Map and compass, horseshoe or riding boots, military coat, tricorne hat, white wig, 13-star flag or flag of VA, “I voted” sticker.

o Setup:

- Create several checkpoints, each with a different article of clothing or object tied to George Washington’s life.
- Items should be placed in each checkpoint in a way that is accessible to students when it’s their turn in the race.
- Make sure the space is clear to avoid tripping hazards.

o Instructions:

- Divide the class into teams (4-6 students per team, depending on class size). The number of teams running at the same time depends on the number of available replicas and space. If multiple rounds/heats are needed, ensure each group is timed so that a winner may be determined.
- Each student in the team will start at the beginning of the racecourse without any Washington items of clothing or objects.
- When it's a student's turn to race, they will run to the first checkpoint, where they will pick up a clothing item or object (e.g., a military coat or a map), put it on (or hold it, if it's an object), and race back to tag the next student in line.

- The next student will then repeat the process, running to the next checkpoint to pick up a different item, putting it on, and racing back. This continues until all members of the team have participated and all the items related to Washington's life have been collected.
- The first team to collect all the clothing and objects and cross the finish line with all items on is the winner.
- o Safety Notes:
 - If using hats or wigs, be mindful of hygiene. Consider using non-wearable replicas for these items, such as a picture or prop.
 - Ensure the racecourse is free of obstacles and that space is large enough for students to move safely.
- o Additional Notes:
 - This activity works best outdoors, but if you have limited space indoors, consider scaling down the activity or setting up a smaller racecourse. Make sure to clear the area of anything that could be hazardous to the students during the race.
- o Conclusion: This relay race not only encourages physical activity but also provides students with a fun way to learn about important aspects of George Washington's life through the items they "collect" during the race—students can answer how each item represents Washington and what part of his life.

Jean Leon Gerome Ferris – The Call of the Sea (VMHC Collection 1996.49.1)



A portrait of George Washington, as a young man, dressed in military uniform. He is standing before a window, looking out, while his mother is seated, holding him back and asking him to stay. This represents the commonly repeated story about his mother, [Mary Washington](#), which says she refused to allow George to join the Royal Navy in 1746, despite the encouragement of Lord Fairfax and George's older half-brother Lawrence. Note the ship on the wall!

Boude & Miley – George Washington (VMHC Collection 0985.03.00368 CMLS)



This image is based on an Arlington House print of George Washington, which was created from the original portrait by Charles Wilson Peale. Peale's painting, the first known portrait of George Washington, was completed in 1772 and shows him in the uniform of a colonel of the Virginia Militia, fighting for the British in the French & Indian War. Learn more about the portrait here: [Peale Portrait](#).

John Trumbull - George Washington & William Lee (Metropolitan Museum of Art Collection, 24.109.88)



In this famous painting by Trumbull, Washington is depicted standing above the Hudson River with a Black figure assumed to be William Lee—his enslaved valet, groom, and military aide. Trumbull had served on Washington's staff early in the Revolutionary War. He painted this from memory years later while studying in London. It was the first authoritative portrayal of Washington available in Europe and was soon widely copied.

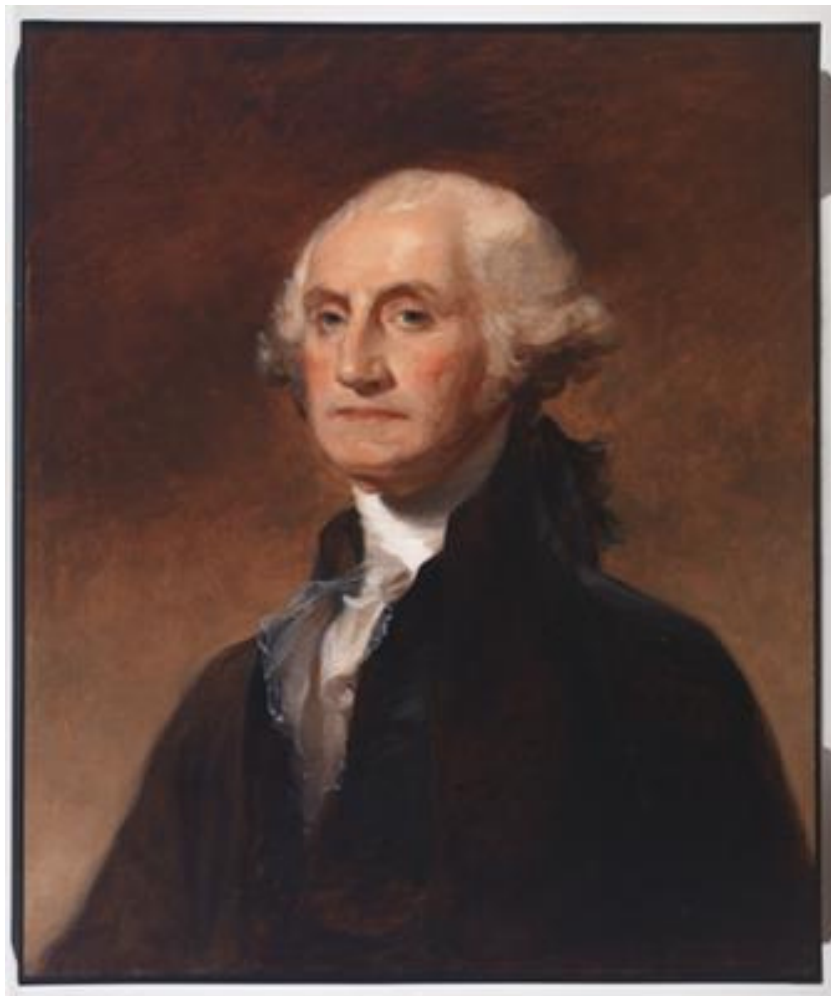
- Edited excerpt from: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/12822>

Stanley Arthurs – General George Washington on His Way South to Yorktown in 1781 (VMHC Collection 1997.97.2)




This oil painting shows George Washington in uniform on horseback facing to the left side of the image. Mount Vernon is visible in the background on the right side of the image, and a stormy sky frames the subject. The work is signed by the artist on the lower right. The painting was completed by Stanley Arthurs (1877-1950) around 1925. In route to engage Cornwallis at Yorktown, George Washington stopped for two days at Mount Vernon, which he had not seen in more than six years. Stanley Arthurs recreates the moment when the general again turned away from his home towards certain chaos and violence at the Battle of Yorktown. Note: George Washington was considered to be one of the best horseback riders of his time.

Thomas Sully – George Washington (VMHC Collection 1857.2)



Painted by Thomas Sully (1783-1872) from an original by Gilbert Stuart (1755-1828) - most famous for being the image of Washington on the dollar bill! Washington is shown in a quarter-length portrait, turned slightly to the left, with white hair, wearing dark coat and white stock. Stuart created many Washington portraits to sell to eager patriotic patrons, which have been copied several times over the centuries. Washington is older and more serious in this image than the others. What do you think he is thinking about?

See, Think, Wonder

See Think Wonder		
 SEE What do you see?	 THINK What do you think is going on?	 WONDER What does it make you wonder?

Symbols



Mount Vernon.

Mount Vernon was George Washington's plantation home in northern Virginia, where he lived for much of his life and where he developed his ideas on farming, leadership, and American independence. Mount Vernon was also the home of over 500 enslaved people who did the labor to keep the estate running.



The story of George Washington and the cherry tree, where he supposedly says, "I cannot tell a lie" after chopping it down, is a popular but fictional tale to show his honesty. This story has continued to be told throughout history, as seen in this early 1900s postcard.



This picture of cherries also represents the famous cherry tree story and George Washington's honesty. Washington was also known to enjoy drinking a cherry cordial.



These 1760s surveying tools come from the American Philosophical Society and represent George Washington's early career as a surveyor to map land in northern and western Virginia.



George Washington wore this copper gorget, a symbolic remnant of a suit of armor, around his throat as part of his military uniforms in multiple wars.



The "Join or Die" political cartoon, showing a snake cut into pieces, represents the need for American colonies to unite for strength and survival, a message that aligns with George Washington's efforts to bring the colonies together during the American Revolution.



The bald eagle, a symbol of the United States, represents strength, freedom, and independence, qualities that were central to George Washington's leadership and vision for the new nation as a general and later the first president.



This painted sign from ca. 1800 featuring an eagle holding the United States flag represents the early American ideas of independence and patriotism that come out of the Revolutionary War and continue past Washington's presidency.



This silver hilted smallsword from Mount Vernon closely resembles George Washington's 1770 boat guard smallsword and represents his military career, from the French and Indian War through the Revolutionary War.



The 13-star flag, representing the original 13 colonies, symbolizes the unity and independence that George Washington fought for during the American Revolution as the first leader of the newly formed United States.



The tricorn hat represents George Washington's role as a military leader during the American Revolution, as it was a common part of his and others' uniforms.



The white wig represents George Washington's connection to the formal, aristocratic style of the 18th century, reflecting his status as a leader and symbol of authority during the early years of the United States in the military and government. However – George Washington himself never wore a wig, instead powdering and tying his hair into a similar style.



The presidential seal represents George Washington as the first President of the United States, as well as his role in shaping the presidency and setting precedents for what it is today.



Laurel leaves represent George Washington's victory and honor, symbolizing his successful leadership in the American Revolution. They also feature on the presidential seal and many other U.S. government symbols.



This close-up of the Constitution represents George Washington as a key leader in its creation, as he presided over the Constitutional Convention and became the first president to uphold and enforce its principles.

- Colors with possible meanings:
 - o Navy: common military uniform color
 - o Green: agricultural connection with Mt. Vernon and political symbol of laurel
 - o Red: symbolizing time in French and Indian War (as provincial soldier—see portraits), part of new flag (stripes), and Mt. Vernon roof
 - o Yellow/Tan (Buff): color from his uniform and Mt. Vernon exterior
 - o Gold: role as first president (also part of uniform colorway)

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