

George Washington: The Unknown Years: Teacher's Guide

Grade Level: 9-12

Curriculum Focus: U.S. History

Lesson Duration: Two class periods

Program Description

Young, ambitious, adventurous. Before he became an icon of greatness in the history books of America, George Washington led a life in colonial Virginia that prepared him admirably to become one of the country's founding fathers. Explore the world of young Washington and discover the depth, richness, and diversity of his experience.

Onscreen Questions and Activities

- Pre-viewing questions:
 - How did King George II of England respond to the presence of French forts in the Ohio valley? (*King George II issued an edict giving the colonists of Virginia the right to remove the French from the Ohio valley.*)
 - Why was Washington's attack on the French near Great Meadows a significant historical event? (*Washington's attack on the French near Great Meadows marked the beginning of the French and Indian War.*)
 - Discuss some of the ways that George Washington's early military experiences may have prepared him for future success.
 - Activity: On a blank map of North America, identify the major military campaigns and battles of the French and Indian War. Be sure to color code them as either French or British campaigns and victories.
-

Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

Students will understand:

- General Washington—the general and the president—was formed to some extent by his early military experiences.
- The early experiences involved working under difficult conditions and losing as well as winning.

Materials

- *George Washington: The Unknown Years* video and VCR, or DVD and DVD player
- Reference materials with detailed information about Washington's early military experience

Procedures

1. Tell students that they will be researching the early military career of George Washington and, based on their findings, writing an editorial about Washington for a colonial newspaper.
2. Begin by having students use various reference sources to piece together a chronological overview of George Washington's early military career – from the fall of 1752 to the summer of 1755.
3. To determine if students have learned the facts and opinions surrounding Washington during the specified period, give the following true-false quiz orally:
 - a) In November 1752, the 20-year-old George Washington was appointed adjutant in the colonial militia of the southern district of Virginia by his beloved half-brother Lawrence. [false: The appointment was made by Robert Dinwiddie, the governor of Virginia.]
 - b) In the summer of 1753, Major Washington volunteered to carry Governor Dinwiddie's message to the French who were coming down from Canada into the headwaters of the Ohio River. The governor, following orders from the British, demanded that the French immediately withdraw. [true]
 - c) Washington returned to Williamsburg, Virginia, less than three months later with the French expedition's response: They would not withdraw. [true]
 - d) Upon his return to Virginia, Washington recommended to Dinwiddie that a British fort be erected at the forks of the Ohio, and Washington was given a thousand men to help protect the fort. [false: Washington had to raise his own troops without equipment, clothing, or funds. He built a column of two hundred men.]
 - e) Washington's plans had to change. His men built a log stockade, which he named Fort Necessity. Then in May 1754, he routed a French force that he had surprised in a brief battle, which also involved the killing of the French commander and the taking of French prisoners. [true]
 - f) On July 3, 1754, Fort Necessity was attacked by the French, but they surrendered to Washington on July 4. [false: Washington himself had to surrender to the French on July 4, but he was not blamed for losing to a superior force.]
 - g) Later in 1754, Washington was promoted. [false: Later in 1754, Washington resigned because he did not want to report to regular British army officers.]
 - h) In 1755, Washington was invited by a high-ranking British officer to drive the French from another site, Fort Duquesne. [true]



- i) Although Washington had to lead a retreat in the July 9 battle near Fort Duquesne, he was cited for performing bravely and levelheadedly. [true]
4. Once you feel that your students know the basic facts of Washington's early military career and the reputation that he acquired, invite your students to imagine that they are on the editorial board of a newspaper in the colonial settlement of Williamsburg, Virginia, home of the governor to whom Washington reported. Ask students to discuss what the newspaper will say about Washington when he returns from the retreat of July 9, 1755. Raise these issues:
 - Will the newspaper commend Washington or chastise him?
 - What will the editorial writers predict about Washington's future leadership abilities in the colonies?
 - What do the editors predict Washington's historical reputation will be two hundred years from now?
5. Provide basic instruction in or a review of the elements of an editorial. These elements include the following:
 - Clearly stating an opinion (in this case, an opinion of Washington's current performance and future reputation)
 - Providing sufficient details to support the opinion
 - Acknowledging why some readers may disagree with the editorial's position; responding to those readers' views
 - Calling for some action by the person being written about or by the readers of the editorial
6. Decide if you want students to work independently, in pairs, or in small groups, and give them time to prewrite, draft, and revise the texts of their editorials about the young George Washington.
7. Have students, pairs, or groups exchange their writing with another student, pair, or group. Ask each recipient to read and then comment on the editorial.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss why the British government and the Virginia colonists were both eager to remove the French from the Ohio Valley.
2. Discuss how Washington prepared himself for his future role as a military leader.
3. Discuss why Washington was referred to as both a hero and a criminal as a result of the skirmish near Great Meadows.
4. Why did Washington retire from service in the Virginia colonial militia as a result of the defeat at Fort Necessity?
5. How was Washington's future greatness shaped by his military experiences in "the unknown years"?



Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Student's editorial clearly states an opinion based on accurate facts; acknowledges and answers opposing opinions; contains unified and coherent paragraphs; contains no errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.
- 2 points: Student's editorial states an opinion based on accurate facts; acknowledges and answers at least one opposing opinion; contains paragraphs that are mostly unified and coherent; contains some errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.
- 1 point: Student's editorial states an opinion but does not support it with accurate facts; does not acknowledge and answer opposing opinions; contains paragraphs that are not sufficiently unified and coherent; contains many errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.

Vocabulary

edict

Definition: A decree or order issued by a sovereign or other authority.

Context: The monarch responds with an edict that cracks like thunder across the wilderness.

skirmish

Definition: Any minor or brief encounter in war carried on between small groups.

Context: It couldn't be called a battle; it was more of a skirmish.

squire

Definition: A title of respect given to a country gentleman or local dignitary.

Context: In December, 1774, Colonel Washington becomes Squire Washington of Mount Vernon.

terrain

Definition: A tract of land, with regard to its natural features.

Context: He knew the area; he knew the enemy; he knew the terrain.

ultimatum

Definition: A final proposal or statement of terms between two parties, which if rejected, could bring about war.

Context: Governor Dinwiddie sets about to recruit a volunteer to carry an ultimatum to the French.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit <http://www.mcrel.org/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- History – World History: Understands the economic, political, and cultural interrelations among peoples of Africa, Europe, and the Americas between 1500 and 1750.
- History – U.S. History: Understands how the early Europeans and Africans interacted with Native Americans in the Americas.
- Geography – Human Systems: Understands the forces of conflict and cooperation that shape the divisions of Earth's surface.
- Geography – Environment and Society: Understands the changes that occur in the meaning, use, distribution, and importance of resources.
- Civics: Understands the importance of political leadership, public service, and a knowledgeable citizenry in American constitutional democracy.

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Time, Continuity and Change
 - Civic Ideals and Practice
-