

★George Washington: Our First President★

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to develop students' understanding of responsible leadership in the American colonial era. Students will have an opportunity to study some of the acts in George Washington's life and how he exhibited responsible behavior.

Objective

The student will identify qualities of responsible leadership in our Founding Fathers.

Theme - Responsibility

People are responsible for their actions, and a nation is responsible for the actions of its government. Washington accepted responsibility for leading the nation and the actions of the American army under his command.

Core Knowledge

Grade 1 - Amer Hist & Geog. Sec III: From Colonies to Independence. The American Revolution. George Washington from a military commander to our first president.

Grade 4 - Amer Hist & Geog. Sec III: Early Presidents and Politics. George Washington as our first president.

Time

45 minutes

Materials

- ★ "George Washington-- A Responsible Man" passage
- ★ KWL Chart
- ★ Silhouette of George Washington
- ★ Website - www.americanheritage.org

Focus

Ask students what it means to be responsible. Show the students the silhouette of George Washington and tell them that George Washington is known as the "Father of Our Country" because of his leadership qualities of courage, humility, and responsibility. The silhouette of George Washington is on the quarter coin. (See Links page on www.americanheritage.org for additional resources on George Washington.)

Activity

1. Complete the KWL Chart for pre- and/or post-reading of the passage. Read "George Washington-A Responsible Man." Discuss the reading and how Washington is portrayed as a responsible person. Answer the questions in groups, individually, or in whole class.
2. Look at and discuss the silhouette of Washington. Create a bulletin board display, "I Am Responsible," having students make their own silhouettes and identify their responsibilities. Students can display their written or illustrated responsibilities around their silhouette.
3. Students create an "I Am Responsible" journal and/or write journal entries about what the term means, their own sense of responsibility, and accounts of times they have or have not been responsible. Students can use the Washington silhouette as a cover for the journal.

Closure

Discuss the importance of and need for being responsible.

George Washington—A Responsible Man

George Washington is considered the "Father of the United States of America." Why? Was it just because he was a responsible man or because he became our president?

When George Washington was young, America still belonged to Great Britain. The people in America were supposed to obey the King of England and the British government. They were not free to do whatever they wanted. The king and his government used the people and land in America and in other places that he owned to make money for themselves. When the king began to take too much money without Americans having a voice in the British government, George Washington and others thought it was not fair. Many Americans wanted to be free to make their own rules and work for themselves. But the king sent his soldiers from Great Britain to America to make the people in America obey him.

Many leaders in the American colonies started to meet in secret and send secret letters to each other trying to find a solution to the British dictates or rules. George Washington was among them. The king still refused to listen to their pleas. So the Americans declared their independence and gathered an army to defend their colonies. They picked George Washington to be the leader or Commander-in-Chief of their Continental Army, and they began fighting Britain.

As commander, Washington ordered soldiers not to curse, blaspheme, or abuse alcohol, believing such behavior would alienate God's care over their cause. Washington was a great military leader, but he often felt unworthy of commanding the Continental Army. He wrote of his dependence on a Supreme Being, God, or Providence.

The war was named the "American Revolution." Many people were hurt or killed in the fighting. Washington's men did not know a lot about the British way of fighting, and Washington often did not have enough food, clothing, and supplies for his soldiers. They were hungry and cold much of the time. When Washington ran out of money for the soldiers, he had to ask them to keep fighting for no pay. Despite all the problems and hardships, George Washington never quit. The Americans won the war and their freedom from Great Britain.

Many men trusted and respected Washington immensely for his great leadership, character, and for not giving up. After the war, Washington became our first president and continued to help build America based on morals and the freedoms won with the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution.

Questions:

1. Before his military pursuits, Washington was a rich colonial planter who owned slaves. At his death he freed all the slaves he personally owned. Reread this passage and carefully look at Washington's character. Why do you think he freed his slaves?
2. Why did the soldiers and American colonists trust and respect Washington so much?
3. Trust and respect are earned. How could you model yourself after Washington?

K-W-L Chart

What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Learned

George Washington, the Father of Our Country



