

# George Washington

*“The Constitution is the guide which I will never abandon.”*

—George Washington



## Pre-Reading

### A. Warm-Up Questions

1. What do you know about George Washington?
2. Do you think military leaders make good presidents? Why or why not?
3. What do you know about the American Revolutionary War?
4. What might cause a revolution in a country?

### B. Vocabulary Preview

Match as many meanings and words as you can before you read.  
Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| ___ 1. planter    | a) a person in a position of authority in the army, like a captain or general |
| ___ 2. surveyor   | b) to express sadness over a loss   |
| ___ 3. regulation | c) an organized group of soldiers   |
| ___ 4. colonist   | d) someone who has the job of measuring land                                  |
| ___ 5. leader     | e) a person who is in charge of a group, an army, a government, or a country  |
| ___ 6. troops     | f) someone who owns a plantation  |
| ___ 7. officer    | g) a person who is a member of a group that settles in a new land             |
| ___ 8. soldier    | h) someone who fights as part of an army                                      |
| ___ 9. persuade   | i) to convince someone of something   |
| ___ 10. mourn     | j) a rule   |

## Reading

1. George Washington was the first president of the United States. He was born in 1732 in Virginia. Washington's father was a **planter** who died when George was 11 years old. After his father's death, George went to live with his older brother. As a boy, George didn't go to school for very long. However, he was good at math and geography. While he was still a teenager, George started working as a **surveyor**. In 1752, George's brother died and left him Mount Vernon, his large estate. At the age of 20, George had a good career and was a landowner.
2. Washington was also in his twenties when he began his military career. He was an **officer** in the French and Indian War. In spite of his youth, he was a good **leader** and a very lucky one. In one battle, he rode directly into the line of fire. Bullets ripped through his coat, but not one bullet struck him. Two horses were shot out from under him, but, again, not one bullet hit him. In fact, Washington was never injured in all his years in the army.
3. Washington left the army after he was elected to the Virginia House of Burgesses. He was still loyal to England at that time, but the British government was beginning to anger him. The government was imposing unfair **regulations** and taxes on the **colonists**. In 1774, Washington and other colonists decided to meet to discuss their rights. This meeting was called the First Continental Congress. The colonists voted for a boycott of British products at this meeting. They also sent a petition to the British king, asking for fair treatment. The king ignored their petition.
4. In May of 1775, the Second Continental Congress met. Tensions between the British and the colonists had increased in the time between the two meetings, and two short battles had taken place. At the Second Continental Congress, the colonists decided to separate from England. A committee was formed to draft and write a declaration of independence. The colonists also established an army and a navy, and decided to print money to fund the army. George Washington was elected to lead the Continental Army.
5. Washington immediately started training his **soldiers**. The new army won a few battles, but success didn't last long. Washington's **troops** suffered terribly for most of the Revolutionary War. His soldiers didn't always have enough food. Often hungry soldiers had to march in the snow without shoes or warm coats. Many soldiers wanted to quit, but Washington **persuaded** most of them to stay. In 1778, the French government sent troops and ships to help the Americans. In 1781, the British surrendered.
6. In 1789, George Washington was elected the first president of the United States. Washington believed in a strong central government, but he did not want a president to have too much power. After his second term, Washington said no to a third term. He returned home to Mount Vernon. He died there in 1799. The nation **mourned** his death, but remembered and honored him, as Americans do today, with the title "Father of His Country."

## Comprehension

### A. True or False?

Read the statements below.

If the statement is true, write T beside the sentence.

If it is false, write F and correct the information in your notebook.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. George Washington's first military experience was in the Revolutionary War.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Washington was injured several times in his army career.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The British government ignored the colonists' grievances.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Washington's soldiers often suffered from hunger and cold.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Washington was winning the war before the French sent help.

### B. Ask & Answer

Practice asking and answering the following questions with your partner.

Then write the answers in complete sentences in your notebook.

- 1. When and where was George Washington born?
- 2. Why did George go to live with his older brother?
- 3. What was George Washington's first job?
- 4. Which war did George Washington fight in first?
- 5. Why was the Second Continental Congress more important than the First Continental Congress?
- 6. When and where was Washington elected to be the leader of the Continental Army?
- 7. How did the French help the Americans win the Revolutionary War?

## Vocabulary Practice

Choose the correct word (in parentheses) that makes sense in the sentence and write it on the line.

1. The bullet \_\_\_\_\_ the soldier in the back.  
(struck / froze)
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ often walked in the snow without shoes.  
(presidents / troops)
3. The soldiers \_\_\_\_\_ from hunger and cold.  
(separated / suffered)
4. It's not fair when a government \_\_\_\_\_ heavy taxes on the people.  
(drafts / imposes)
5. In a democracy, citizens have certain \_\_\_\_\_ .  
(rights / terms)
6. A bullet can easily \_\_\_\_\_ a coat or shirt.  
(rip / injure)
7. George Washington was a good leader in spite of his \_\_\_\_\_ .  
(estate / youth)
8. The soldier fell off his horse, but he was not \_\_\_\_\_ .  
(injured / funded)
9. Citizens can sign a \_\_\_\_\_ to protest an unfair law.  
(petition / fund)
10. A good military leader can \_\_\_\_\_ his soldiers to stay and fight.  
(surrender / persuade)
11. The colonists wanted to \_\_\_\_\_ a new nation.  
(mourn / establish)
12. Most countries \_\_\_\_\_ their heroes.  
(ignore / honor)

## Discussion

1. Discuss two qualities that made Washington a great military leader.
2. Why do you think the British king refused to listen to the colonists' complaints?
3. If you had been a soldier in the American Revolutionary War, would you have quit fighting and gone home? Why or why not?
4. "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen." Why were these words spoken about Washington right after he died?

# Answer Key

## LESSON DESCRIPTION:

In this lesson, students read a short biography about the first president of the United States. Students review new vocabulary and discuss 18th-century tensions between the British and the colonists.

**LEVEL:** Int – Adv

**TIME:** 1–2 hours

**TAGS:** George Washington, American presidents, British, US, history, French War, Indian War, colonists, American history

## Pre-Reading

### A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Answers will vary.

### B. VOCABULARY REVIEW

- |      |      |      |      |       |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. f | 3. j | 5. e | 7. a | 9. i  |
| 2. d | 4. g | 6. c | 8. h | 10. b |

## Comprehension

### A. TRUE OR FALSE?

- F – Washington’s first military experience was in the French and Indian War.
- F – Washington was never injured in his military career.
- T
- T
- F – Washington’s troops were suffering terribly before the French sent help.

### B. ASK & ANSWER

- George Washington was born in Virginia in 1732.
- George went to live with his older brother after his father died.
- Washington’s first job was surveying.  
(He worked as a surveyor.)
- Washington first fought in the French and Indian War.
- The Second Continental Congress decided to separate from England, establish an army and navy, and write a declaration of independence.

- Washington was elected to be the leader at the Second Continental Congress in 1775.
- The French sent troops and ships to help the American army.

## Vocabulary Practice

- |             |            |               |
|-------------|------------|---------------|
| 1. struck   | 5. rights  | 9. petition   |
| 2. troops   | 6. rip     | 10. persuade  |
| 3. suffered | 7. youth   | 11. establish |
| 4. imposes  | 8. injured | 12. honor     |

## Discussion

Discuss in groups or as a class. Answers will vary.

### SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the words *Practice* and *Honor*. Most other English-speaking countries spell these words this way: *Practise* (when used as a verb; *Practice* when used as a noun) and *Honour*. Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.