



# Part A: Young George Washington

In Part A students will be introduced to George Washington before the French and Indian War, when he was a prominent young Virginian little known outside of his local world. They will see an ambitious young man dedicated to hard work, proper behavior, and love of duty (and country)—intent on building a solid reputation and making a name for himself. These characteristics (especially his concern with reputation) stayed with Washington throughout his lifetime. Earning money, owning land, and pursuing a military or public career were ways in which Washington carved out his reputation and fulfilled his ambitions.



For Part A, Level One use Resource Pages 1–8 and Images 1–6 on the CD-ROM.

**All the written resources in this guide are considered primary sources. Be sure that students understand that primary sources can be journals, letters, diaries, speeches, and public documents, as well as comments on manuscripts. All of the selections here were written by George Washington. As students use these personal writings from an icon of American history, they will learn that, more than secondary sources, primary sources allow one to “see” the inner workings of a person. They let the person speak for himself or herself.**

## Level One (Grades 4-6)

### Getting Started

**1** Ask your students what they know about George Washington. (*Answers will undoubtedly include: first president, general, “the man on the \$1 bill,” and so on.*) Then ask students if anyone knows about Washington’s life as a young man. Their answers (*born in Virginia, chopped down a cherry tree, athletic, tall, and so on*) will undoubtedly include a combination of myth and fact. Begin a wall chart—Who Was George Washington?—which you and students can add to (and correct) throughout the study. Include what students think they know about Washington’s personality as a young man (*honest/did not tell a lie, brave, sports-minded, and so on*). You may want to set up a T-Chart categorizing What Washington Did and What Washington Was Like.

**2** Encourage students to correct any misconceptions or misinformation on the wall chart as they learn more about “the true George Washington.” To extend this study, set up a resource corner with materials in which the class can learn more about Washington’s life. (See the Additional Sources file on the CD-ROM.)

## GOALS

In Part A students will:

**Examine** their preconceptions about George Washington

**Expand** their knowledge of the events of Washington’s early years

**Analyze** excerpts from Washington’s writings in order to answer the Focus Question: What can you learn about young George Washington’s personality and ambitions by reading his journals?



**Be sure students understand that surveyors measure the land and locate boundaries of land ownership.**

**Tell students that another calendar system—the Julian calendar—was used in Great Britain and the colonies until 1752. According to the Julian calendar, Washington was born on February 11th, not February 22nd.**

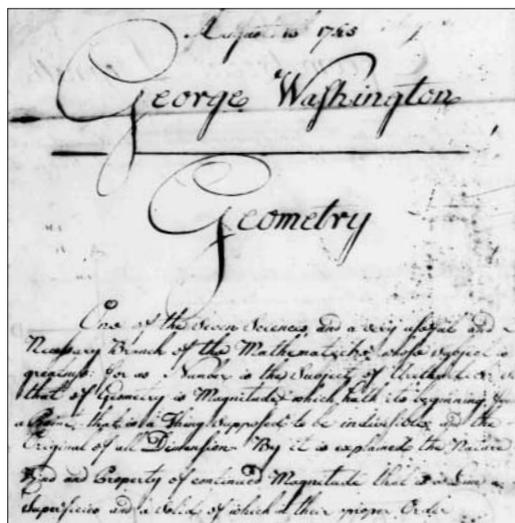
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**3** As a resource on Washington’s early years, distribute **Resource Page 1: Timeline: Young George Washington**. Make **Image 1: Map of the Virginia Colony** available at the same time, so that students can locate key places described. Suggest that students use the timeline as a mini-biography to provide background knowledge as they read.

**4** Pointing out that Washington was the nation’s first president, open a discussion on what kind of person might become president of the United States. Ask the class what qualities such a person would need to have (*determination, energy, intelligence, patriotism, ambition*). If some of your students think that they would like to be president one day, ask them to tell the class why they have this ambition and how they hope to reach it!

**5** Tell the class that they are going to have an opportunity to meet young George Washington long before he became president, and, through his personal writings, to find out more about the kind of person he was. To focus students’ investigation, write the **Focus Question** on the chalkboard:  
***What can you learn about young George Washington’s personality and ambitions by reading his journals?***



George Washington wrote this page in his school copy book when he was 13 years old.

## Reading and Reflecting

### The Young Surveyor

**1** Discuss the act and art of journaling, making links to any journal writing activities related to your classwork. Tell students that they are going to learn more about Washington by reading some of his own journal entries. As background, use **Resource Page 2: Washington as a Record Keeper**.

**2** Hand out **Resource Page 3: George Washington, Surveyor, 1748**. Explain that 16-year-old George Washington wrote these two journal entries about his first trip to the wilderness. Washington and others were surveying land on the Virginia frontier for Lord Fairfax, an important landowner.

**3** Students can use **Image 1: Map of the Virginia Colony** and **Image 2: Washington as a Young Surveyor** to place the event geographically and to imagine the scene.

**4** Point out to students that **Resource Page 3** includes the original text from Washington’s journal as well as an adaptation in modern English. Have the students read the adapted version of the excerpt to themselves first. Working individually or in pairs, they should answer the Guided Reading Questions on the handout.

**5** Ask students to think about the Focus Question and to cite evidence from the documents as they discuss the journal entries.

~What do you think Washington might have learned as a surveyor? (*practical skills such as how to survive in the wilderness, how to work with others*)

~What does the excerpt say about Washington’s character? (*He was a hard worker; inexperienced and young, but decisive. He was neat and proper, perhaps a tad snobby —disliked poor bedding and fleas!*)

~What decisions did Washington make? (*to work hard; to undress, then dress again; to sleep in the future by an open fire*)

~In this account, does Washington appear ambitious? Do you think that he wants to better himself or his situation? (*He shows that he was a hard worker, concerned about getting the job done. He learned from his mistakes, and he knew how to be more comfortable in the future.*)

~Does this reading change your image of George Washington? (*Students undoubtedly think of Washington as commander of the Continental Army or in fancy clothes in positions of power in his later years. Here Washington faced frontier conditions, complete with lice and fleas. He was confident but somewhat humble at the same time.*)

**6** Ask the class to consider Washington's actions and personality. Add a list of these key points to your wall charts.

**7** Depending on your students' familiarity with primary sources, discuss why Washington's journals are such a valuable resource. Have the class look at the original



After his 1748 trip to survey some of Lord Fairfax's 5 million acres in the Shenandoah Valley, young George took a job as surveyor of Culpeper County, Virginia.

selections on the handout—the journal entries as Washington wrote them—and be sure that students understand what makes them a primary source (*that they were written by Washington, not about him*). Discuss what can be learned from a private journal, written for oneself.

**8** Then discuss the spellings, capitalizations, and “shorthand” that Washington used. Ask a volunteer to try to read the entries aloud and point out that this is a good technique to help in figuring out what some of the “oddly spelled” words mean. If your students find the original wording and spelling fascinating, you may want to use **Resource Page 4: Spelling the Washington Way** to help them understand more about 18th-century writing.

## Making a Name for Himself

**1** Explain that, in the next journal selection, Washington is five years older. Intent on making a name for himself, he volunteers to serve the governor of Virginia. His mission is to deliver a message to the French who are occupying lands that the British claim in the Ohio River Valley. The message asks the French to leave. Washington delivers the message to the French, but is told that they have no intention of following this request. Eager to deliver the French reply to the governor, Washington heads home. The excerpt deals with one event in the long and dangerous trip back to Williamsburg (with guide Christopher Gist). As background information, read aloud the description of the journey on **Resource Page 5: Washington's Journey to Fort LeBoeuf**.

**2** For visual and geographic background, display **Image 3: Map of the Journey to Fort LeBoeuf**; **Images 4a, 4b, and 4c: Washington on the 1753 Expedition**; **Image 5: Historic Map of the Ohio River Valley**.



**A Word Wall would be a helpful teaching tool to use as students work their way through these primary source documents.**

**Tell students that Image 5 shows a map drawn by Washington in 1753. Using his surveying skills, Washington drew a map so accurate that it was later used to plan modern roads.**

**3** Hand out **Resource Page 6: Return from Fort LeBoeuf, 1753**. Have the students read the adapted version of the excerpt to themselves first and then answer the questions on the handout. Suggest that students locate on the map (**Image 3**) the key places described on **Resource Pages 5** and **6**.

If possible, make transparencies or color prints of the paintings and the engraving included in the **Image 4** file. Have students identify the “three nations” shown in **Image 4a: “Domain of Three Nations”** by John Buxton (*British, French, and American Indians*). Discuss why the artist would have shown the American Indians as shadows on the floor (*because they were “outside” of the negotiations*). Have students describe what they see in the two images of Washington and Gist crossing the Allegheny (**Images 4b and 4c**).

**4** After reading the excerpt, have the students write down the characteristics that the excerpt presents. (*A man of action who made quick decisions; sense of duty to task; brave; not afraid of hard work; wise, intelligent; industrious, inventive; survived life-threatening situation; articulate*) Have them consider Washington’s actions and personality, adding these to the lists on the wall chart.

**5** Discuss the excerpt. Ask students to think about the Focus Question and to cite evidence from the documents in their answers.

~What does this excerpt tell you about Washington’s personality? About his determination? (*Washington made quick and solid decisions. He was inventive and decisive, a man of action. He did not appear to be defeated but got out of many difficult situations. It is interesting that Washington never mentions his own reactions to the cold that affects Gist so severely.*)

~In what ways does Washington seem more grown-up than he did on the 1748 surveying trip? (*He seems far less concerned with his physical comfort. He made quick, smart decisions in a life-threatening situation.*)

~Does reading this journal change your image of George Washington? (*Students should realize that Washington could have died in the extreme cold of the icy river. While they may have thought of Washington as the stiff hero of a Gilbert Stuart painting, this journal entry presents a brave young man risking death.*)



In this fanciful 19th-century engraving, Washington is shown traveling the rivers of the Ohio Valley. The scene could have taken place on the canoe trip Washington and Gist took between Fort LeBoeuf and Venango.

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## Pulling It All Together

**1** Have students answer the Focus Question by writing a short essay titled “Getting Ahead.” Ask them to compare the George Washington presented in the journal entries of 1748 and 1753, commenting on similarities and differences. To help students make comparisons, have them consider the following questions:

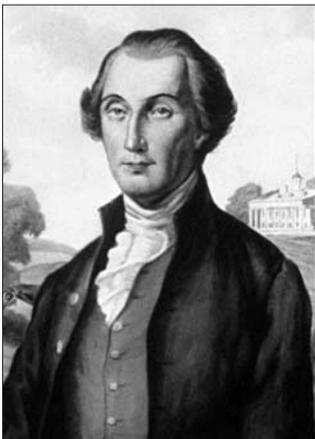
~How has Washington changed mentally and physically? (1748: *young and inexperienced*; 1753: *experienced and able—also more robust and comfortable with the outdoors*. Both excerpts show him as a hard worker with a sense of duty.)

~Has his writing style changed? (1748: *more reflective and emotional—getting to know himself*. 1753: *interested in his actions—what he did*.)

~How does he handle both situations? (Adapted to situations and came up with ways to fix them. Washington made good, intelligent decisions. In both situations, Washington was on assignment: the first as a surveyor; the second on a political mission. In the 1748 excerpts, Washington was able to get out of his situation—the uncomfortable bed. He put on his clothes but didn’t leave the room. His decision was not a bold one and the situation also was not life-threatening. In the 1753 excerpts, Washington had no choice and adapted to more than one desperate situation.)

~Was Washington concerned with doing a good job? Was he ambitious to succeed? (1748: *Washington did not waste time—works as soon as it clears, determined to get to sleep; knew what to do in the future to be better prepared*; 1753: *determined to continue on his journey; determined to get to the other side; determined to keep going; determined to deliver the message*.)

**2** Ask for volunteers to read their short essays out loud. In a class discussion, have students consider ways in which Washington changed as he experienced the world and ways in which he remained the same.



Washington was an outstanding rider and an avid fox hunter.

