



THE HISTORY CHANNEL

SAVE OUR HISTORY®: GEORGE WASHINGTON'S WORKSHOP

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George Washington was not just the leader of the Continental Army during the American Revolution and the republic's first president. He was also a conscientious and innovative farmer and businessman. Steve Thomas, formerly of *This Old House*, takes viewers on a hands-on tour of the Mount Vernon estate and shows how Washington's approach to farming, architecture, technology and commerce reflected his broad vision for the new nation. Special thanks to Bank of America for their commitment to education and support of *Save Our History: George Washington's Workshop*.

## Curriculum Links

*Save Our History: George Washington's Workshop* is recommended for use in US history classes. The program is appropriate for middle school and high school students.

## Objectives

After viewing this program, students should be able to discuss the major components of George Washington's Mount Vernon estate, Washington's involvement in their development and operations, and most importantly, how the development and organization of Mount Vernon reflected and complemented Washington's goals as a statesman.

## National Standards

*Save Our History: George Washington's Workshop* fulfills several objectives of the National Standards for History, as recommended by the National Council for History Education, for grades 5-12 including values, beliefs, political ideas and institutions and human interaction with the environment.

## Pre-Viewing Activities

1. Discuss with students their preexisting impressions of George Washington. What do they know about Mount Vernon? How does Mount Vernon function today in the lore of the early republic?
2. Locate Mount Vernon on a map. Remind students that when Washington served as President, the nation's capital was still located in Philadelphia and that Washington, D.C. did not yet exist.





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## CRITICAL VIEWING QUESTIONS

1. Did this program alter your ideas about George Washington, as a statesman and as a man? How?
2. How did Mount Vernon reflect and manifest Washington's social and political ideas? How did it also express what is described in the video as his "personal vision"?
3. How important was slavery to Mount Vernon? How did Washington feel about slavery? What evidence can you point to to support your view?
4. What was the dung repository and why was it important? What is composting and how does it work? Who was in charge of this work?
5. What was the crop that the Mount Vernon estate had concentrated on before Washington became its owner? How important was this to the colonial economy?
6. George Washington developed a *mixed economy* at Mount Vernon. What do you think that term means? What are the advantages of a mixed economy? Why do cities, states, and nations today desire mixed economies? What is the economic base of where you live?
7. George Washington was particularly attentive to the importance of crop rotation. What is this, and why is it necessary? Why might a seven-year cycle have been more effective than a three-year cycle?

## ADVANCED VIEWING QUESTIONS

1. Washington's vision for the United States was as a land of technologically sophisticated agricultural production which could function, in his words, as the "storehouse and granary for the world." How did this vision compare with that of other leaders of Washington's time? How did Thomas Jefferson think the nation should develop? Alexander Hamilton?
2. Washington was a successful military commander, politician, statesman, architect, horticulturalist, farmer, and businessman. Being involved in, and excelling at, pursuits as varied as these was not common in the late eighteenth century, but it is even more difficult to imagine today. What factors account for this shift?
3. In the section on the distilleries, the video mentions that whiskey was replacing rum as the drink of choice in the colonies. Why is this significant? What is rum made from? Where is it produced? How is this linked to the political issues and developments of the era?
4. If Mount Vernon manifested many of Washington's public goals, to what extent did the young nation follow or realize Washington's vision? Explain. How was the country pulled in different directions, in terms of charting a course for its future development?





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## EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1. Imagine you are giving a tour of Mount Vernon. Write out some talking points about what you would emphasize as you led visitors through the site. If your school has the available technology, create a Powerpoint presentation for a demonstration in class, using video and images from [www.mountvernon.org](http://www.mountvernon.org) and [www.saveourhistory.com](http://www.saveourhistory.com).
2. Choose one part of Mount Vernon's operations: the grist mill, fishing, the distillery, the dung repository, or wheat farming. Research how this activity functioned in the colonial and early republican economy. Create a poster, or give a presentation to your class about your findings.
3. Imagine you are one of Martha Washington's grandchildren. Write a diary about your daily life at Mount Vernon. Or imagine that you are a reporter for a Northern newspaper. Describe your visit to Mount Vernon in a newspaper article. Remember to answer the fundamental questions: *who, what, where, why and when*.
4. Create a model of Mount Vernon showing the various stages of its development.
5. George Washington was one of the few slave-holding founding fathers who emancipated his slaves – although it was after his death. Today it is easy to see the horrors of slavery. Why did people who knew slavery was ethically wrong continue to own slaves? Research slavery at Mount Vernon and present your findings to your class. (Is slavery still an existing practice in any country today?)
6. Mount Vernon was the site for America's first national historic preservation organization. Research the history of Mount Vernon after Washington's death . What happened during the Civil War? Give a presentation to your class about the importance of preservation and how preservationists saved Mount Vernon.

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*George Washington's*  
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## RESOURCES

### Websites:

<http://www.mountvernon.org> - Extensive official website of George Washington's estate.  
<http://gwpapers.virginia.edu> - The Papers of George Washington, fully searchable.

### Books:

The following books are appropriate for high school students:

*Washington: The Indispensable Man* by James Thomas Flexner, (Back Bay Books, 1994).

*Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* by Joseph J. Ellis, (Vintage 2002).

*George Washington's Mount Vernon: Mt. Vernon and its Associations Historical, Biographical and Pictorial* by B.J. Lossing, (Gramercy, 2001).

*George Washington: The Writer: A Treasury of Letters, Diaries, and Public Documents* by George Washington and Carolyn Yoder, (Editor), (Boyd's Mills, 2003).

The following books are appropriate for middle school students and above:

*Meet George Washington* by Joan Heilbroner, (Random House Books for Young Readers, 2001).

*George Washington: The Man Who Would Not Be King* by Stephen Krensky, (Scholastic, 1991).

*George Washington: Soldier, Hero, President* by Justine Korman, Ron Fontes, and Justine Fontes, (DK Readers, Level 3, DK Publishing, 2001).

*George Washington's World* by Genevieve Foster, (Beautiful Feet Books, 1997).



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