



THE HISTORY CHANNEL® PRESENTS:

Special Presentation

Washington the Warrior

He is perhaps the most iconic figure in American history—the nation’s first President, George Washington is considered by many to be the “father” of the United States. Yet in many ways Washington remains an icon shrouded in myth, his actual life overshadowed by his image. In this special two-hour presentation, a fuller vision of this great leader and statesman emerges. *Washington the Warrior* reveals fresh insights into George Washington’s life through a fascinating examination of his military career. Though many think of Washington as an invincible force, large both in stature and in influence, this program humanizes him by exploring his mishaps and failures along the road to eventual victory in the American Revolution.

Starting with Washington’s first military endeavor at the young age of 21, *Washington the Warrior* follows his career from his brave missions as a loyal English subject through his tumultuous six-years as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army in the struggle to overthrow British authority in the colonies. Rather than steadily victorious in his military pursuits, Washington was nearly rendered to obscurity by his early military mistakes against French and Indian forces in the West. The lessons he learned from these travails, and his perseverance in the face of tremendous uncertainty and peril, were fundamental in forming Washington’s triumphant leadership during the final stages of the War for Independence.

Compelling historical excerpts, gripping reenactments, and surprising stories about Washington’s life will introduce students to the nation’s first President in new ways. Covering Washington’s role in the French and Indian War, his life at Mount Vernon, and his years in the Continental Congress, this program traces the pivotal turning points in his early life and military career. Educators and parents will find that *Washington the*

Warrior extends beyond a traditional biography, peering inside Washington's life and capturing the characteristics and motivations that made him a leader worthy of his nation's trust. This documentary would be an excellent supplement to lesson plans on the life of George Washington, the formation of the colonies, and the Revolutionary era.

Curriculum Links

Washington the Warrior would be an excellent addition to high school courses in American History, Politics, World History, American Studies, or Civics. It fulfills the following standards as outlined by the National Council for History Education: (1) Civilization, cultural diffusion and innovation, (2) Human interaction with the environment, (3) Values, beliefs, political ideas, and institutions, and (4) Patterns of social and political interaction.

Vocabulary

Capitulation
Colonial
Commission
Debacle
Emboldened
Genteel
Icon
Rarefied
Regiment
Reserve
Revered
Travail

Discussion Questions

1. *How would you describe George Washington's upbringing and social status? How do you think his social background influenced his desire to pursue a military career?*
2. *At the time George Washington first entered the military, how would you describe the political situation in North America? Which nations or groups held the most power?*
3. *Why do you think George Washington was chosen to bring a message to the French on behalf of the British crown? Why do you think authorities trusted him with this duty?*
4. *What were some of Washington's biggest mistakes in his early confrontations with the French in the Ohio territory? Do you think he could have avoided these mistakes? Discuss.*
5. *Why was the death of French Commander Jumovel a turning point in Washington's life? How did he deal with the aftermath of this murder?*
6. *After his early military mishaps, what decisions did Washington make with regards to his military career? What do you think this proves about his leadership qualities?*

7. *At what point in his life did George Washington break loyalty with the British crown? Why?*
8. *Why do you think Washington was chosen to lead the Continental Army in the fight against the British? How did he convince his compatriots that he was up to this task despite his early military failures?*
9. *What was the focus of Washington's life at Mount Vernon? How do you think life at Mount Vernon prepared Washington for the Presidency?*
10. *If you were a Patriot at the time of the American Revolution, would you have wanted him to be Commander-in-Chief of the Army? Why or why not?*
11. *How do you think Washington inspired troops to keep fighting through the very difficult years of the American Revolution? Do you think his personality played a role in the decision by troops to keep fighting? Discuss.*
12. *Based on this documentary, how would you describe George Washington? How does it change your previous impression of him?*

Extended Activities

1. ***Dispatch from the West***- Imagine that you were a scout sent on behalf of a neutral newspaper to assess the situation on the Ohio territory at the time of Washington's excursion there in 1754-1755. Write a report to readers describing the political situation in this territory, noting the nations and groups interacting in this territory and their stakes in protecting their lands. You can supplement these reports by locating maps online or at the library which show the geography of the Ohio territory during this time period. Then, share your findings with the larger class or group, and discuss the status of the colonies before the American Revolution.
2. ***Portrait of a Leader***- This documentary discusses Washington's decision to dress in military costume for his first formal portrait. On your own, create a portrait or other artistic representation of Washington's first self-portrait. These projects can be creative and imaginative, but should reflect your own interpretation of Washington's personality, history, and leadership style.
3. ***Commander-in-Chief***- This documentary discusses the decision-making process of the Continental Congress in appointing Washington Commander-in-Chief of the Army. Imagine that your role is to compose an official letter as a representative of the Continental Congress requesting that Washington take this position. Using what you have learned from viewing this documentary, write a short letter inviting Washington to take this role. Then, compose a response letter from Washington explaining his rationale for accepting the role.
4. ***A Farewell to Arms***- Upon his retirement after securing victory in the American Revolution, Washington wrote an extensive farewell address to troops in 1783. In small groups, locate a copy of Washington's farewell address using either the internet or the library and analyze what became one of Washington's most eloquent and famous speeches. Then, select the sentence you feel is the most important or compelling in the address. Create a poster-board or PowerPoint emphasizing your selected sentence and choose a representative from your group to share your choice with the class in a short oral presentation.

Additional Resources

Books

Ellis, Joseph. *His Excellency: George Washington*. (Knopf, 2004).

Garrett, Wendell (ed). *George Washington's Mount Vernon*. (Monacelli, 1991).

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

Washington, George and Dorothy Twohig. *George Washington's Diaries: An Abridgement*. (University of Virginia Press, 1999).

Web sites

Official Mount Vernon website:

<http://www.mountvernon.org/>

The History Channel's tour of George Washington's home:

<http://www.historychannel.com/classroom/workshop/>

The Gilder Lehrman Institution of American History

<http://www.gilderlehrman.org/>

Fun Facts

DID YOU KNOW that clothing was always important to George Washington?

Washington's earliest known fashion statement was a set of instructions he wrote to his tailor as a teenager for altering a coat—a note which ran more than 150 words in length!

IT IS TRUE that during the French and Indian War, Washington emerged from one fierce battle without a scratch despite his clothing being pierced by several bullets. Native Americans, who had fought against him, regarded Washington as a warrior who was protected against death by “The Great Spirit.”

IT IS SAID that after rumors circulated of Washington's death in battle, he wrote to his brother with a touch of humor, “...As I have heard...a circumstantial account of my death and dying Speech, I take this...opportunity of contradicting the first, and assuring you that I have not, as yet, composed the latter.”

TO HIS CREDIT, in order to alleviate the suffering of his starving, frost-bitten army at Valley Forge, Washington engineered a monumental cattle drive that reportedly moved more head of beef than any other operation up until the railroad era of the 1870s.