

# Character Chronicles

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## *The Character Traits of George Washington*

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Vol. I

INTEGRITY

No. I

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### **The Cherry Tree Saga**

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**MASON WEEMS – 1800**



Parson Mason Locke Weems is the famous creator of the legend of George Washington and the cherry tree. Weems, who wanted to depict the virtues of George Washington to set an example for generations to come, wove a clever story about George Washington as a boy chopping down a cherry tree

with his new axe and then having to tell his father the truth, knowing that consequences would probably follow. No evidence of truth in this tale was ever found, although it remained a legend taught in every American classroom for more than 200 years.



### **Truth Be Told**

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**VALLEY FORGE 1777-78**

Washington's army was in the most terrible battle of the war thus far just trying to survive the bitter cold winter. Lacking food and

supplies, General Washington pled with Congress to send the necessary supplies or monies to purchase them. How did Congress respond? They said: Take what you need from the local farmers and towns! In other words, steal from your own countrymen!



Such theft from fellow patriots failed the character test of George Washington and he refused to comply. Congress was told that Washington would not take what the army needed from the locals!

George Washington believed that what was morally best would, in the long run, be politically best for the new country.

The starving army was so impressed by his integrity that they worked hard that winter drilling and practicing under the worst conditions, even leaving bloody footprints in the snow from their uncovered feet.

George Washington knew that America could never endure if it could not earn the respect of its own citizens...and he was right.



## Jefferson Applauds

**DECEMBER, 1795**

In a letter to Senator William B. Giles, Thomas Jefferson has the following

to say about George Washington and integrity:

“He errs as other men do, but he errs with integrity...His mind was great and powerful, without being of the very first order...and as far as he saw, no judgment was ever sounder. It was slow in operation, being little aided by invention, but sure in conclusion...He was incapable of fear, meeting personal dangers with the calmest unconcern. His integrity was most pure, his justice the most inflexible I have ever known, no motives of interest or consanguinity, of friendship or hatred, being able to bias his decision. He was, indeed, in every sense of the words, a wise, a good, and a great man.”

— *Thomas Jefferson*

## Adams Gives Praise

**1785**

Washington’s character would not only exemplify his own creed but that of an entire nation as stated by

John Adams from a book by Marcus Cunliffe, 1785, entitled, *George Washington, Man and Monument*: "Instead of adoring Washington, mankind should applaud the nation which educated him... I glory in the character of Washington, because I know him to be only an exemplification of the American character."

When we show integrity we mimic George Washington and the very character which represents the best of all American citizens.

## in-teg-ri-ty

*noun* \in-'te-grə-tē\

: the quality of being honest and fair

Read the Readers’ Theater Production (of a rather fractured tale) *The Cherry Tree Incident – A Little Different Tale*

