

Young America Lesson Plan: George Washington

Essential Question(s): What can we learn about leadership from writings about and images of George Washington?

Brief Introduction: During and after the American Revolution, as the new nation was struggling to define itself, George Washington emerged as a leader. Although he expressed reluctance to enter public life, he played a significant role in setting precedents for the infant government. In this lesson, students use a combination of artwork, everyday objects, and primary sources to learn about George Washington's life and leadership.

Primary Subject and Grade Level: U.S. History, 5th Grade

National Standards:

National History Standard Era 3: Revolution and the New Nation (1754-1820s)
Standard 3-1 – The causes of the American Revolution, the ideas and interests involved in forging the revolutionary movement, and the reasons for the American victory.

Components:

- Lesson Plan
- Images
- Student Activity

Keywords: George Washington, leader, president, primary source, reproduction, leadership, monarch, symbol, Great Seal, souvenir, federalist, anti-federalist

Materials:

- SAAM George Washington powerpoint presentation
 - Henry Brintnell Bounetheau (Copy after Gilbert Stuart), *George Washington*, ca. 1845
 - Ferdinand Pettrich, *Washington Resigning His Commission*, ca. 1841
 - Horatio Greenough, *George Washington*, 1840
 - Nathaniel Currier, *Washington's Reception by the Ladies*, 1845
 - Enoch G. Gridley, *Mourning Piece for George Washington*, 1810
- Primary Source Handout
- Analysis Sheet

Procedure:

Optional Introduction

If your students need practice analyzing artworks, it will help to begin with an everyday object.

1. Ask several volunteers to share their initial word associations with a dollar bill. These are often words such as ‘money,’ ‘cash,’ and ‘green.’
2. Pass around photocopied and enlarged dollar bills (Reproductions of currency are legal as long as the bill is enlarged at least 150%). Ask more volunteers to share observations, focusing on the image of George Washington and the Great Seal. The Bureau of Engraving and Printing has fact sheets about currency on its website, including this one about the Great Seal:
<http://www.moneyfactory.gov/document.cfm/18/2233>
3. Ask students to relate the design to the United States and its founding ideals.
4. Ask students to share their new word associations with the dollar bill. Typically, the new words reflect a deeper understanding of the object and can include ‘nation,’ ‘patriotic,’ and ‘symbol.’

Model Activity

1. Copy the Analysis Sheet onto a whiteboard or alternative surface.
2. Use *Primary Source Set One*: Henry Brintnell Bounetheau’s miniature of George Washington (slide two of the SAAM Young America - George Washington powerpoint presentation) and the two excerpts that can be found on the first page of the Primary Sources document. The painting can be projected or printed out for distribution.
3. Lead the students through the process of completing the Analysis Sheet as a class to model the skills needed to analyze both the artwork and the text excerpts. Record their answers on the board.

Analysis Sheet Instructions:

This graphic organizer is designed to guide students through the process of relating two primary sources—one artwork and one textual excerpt. The first half encourages students to think critically about each source individually; the second asks them to combine their analysis of the two.

Observation: Without providing any background information, ask the students to list their observations about each image or quotation. List the observations in the first column of the T-chart found either under ARTWORK or TEXT. If someone makes a statement that interprets the observable evidence, save it by recording it in the second column.

Interpretation: Ask students to use and connect their observations in order to interpret the primary source. Focus their ideas on George Washington, his characteristics, contributions, and impact (e.g. Why might the artist/writer have depicted Washington in this way?)

Final Reading: Combine the observations and interpretations into a paragraph explaining the students' reading of the artwork or text.

Student Group Activity

1. Divide the class into groups of about four or five and assign each group a new Primary Source Set. Each group will need printouts of the artwork, related textual excerpt, and Analysis Sheet. More than one group can work on the same Primary Source Set.
2. Have each group work together to repeat the analysis activity with their new Set while completing an Analysis Sheet.
3. Bring everyone back together and have each group select a reporter to share the group's findings with the class.
4. After each group reports, ask the class if they see connections between other groups' work and their own. What connections can be made between other artworks and quotations?

Museum Visit

To learn more about the artworks used in this lesson plan, schedule a *Young America* gallery tour or videoconference using this registration form:

http://americanart.si.edu/education/programs/field_trip_form.cfm

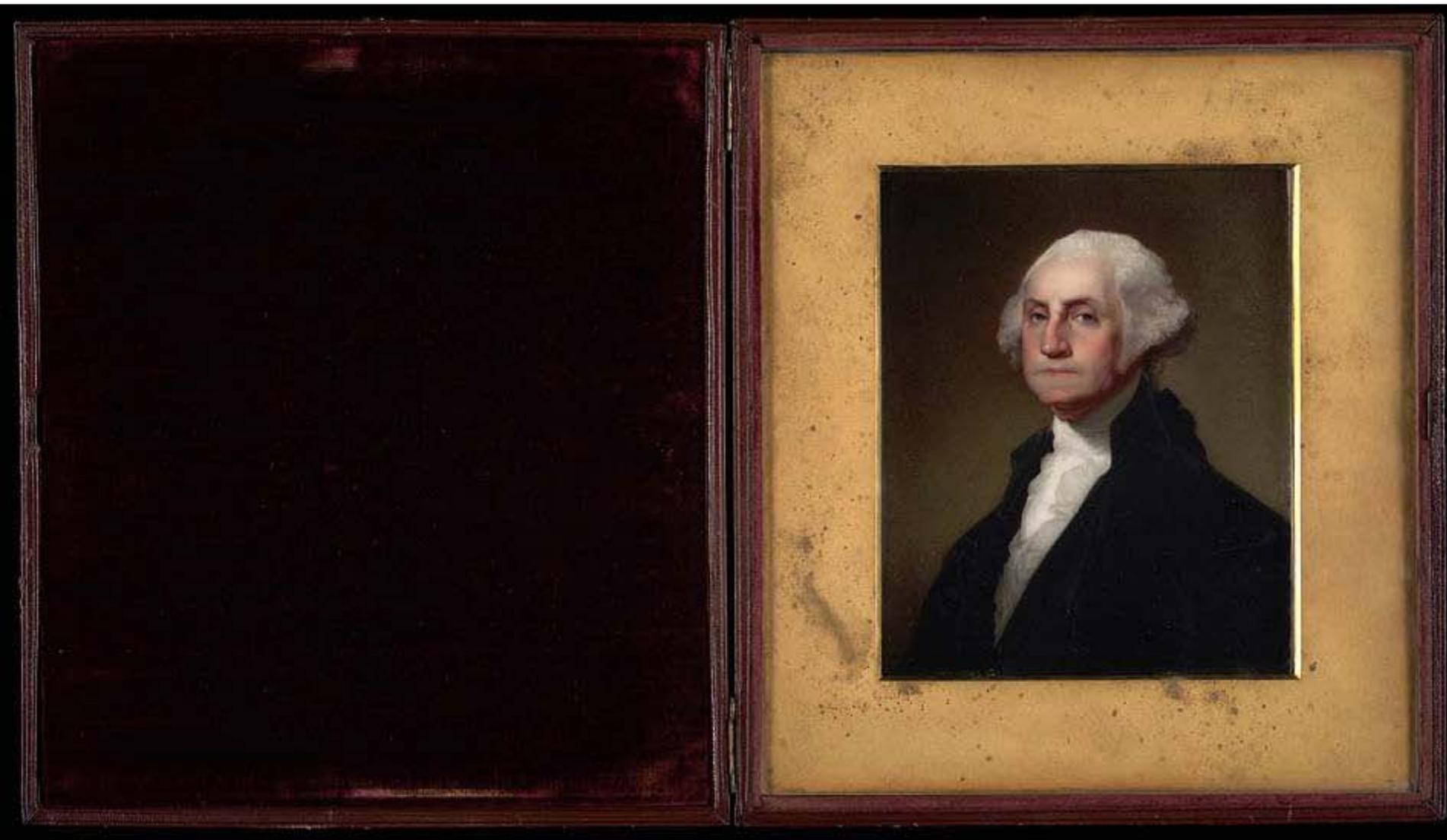
Analysis Sheet

ARTWORK		TEXT	
<i>Things to look for: How has the artist shown Washington? How is he posed? What is his expression like? Where is he? Who is he with? What is he holding? How is he dressed?</i>		<i>Things to consider: Was the writer speaking to a large group or one close friend? Who is the person who wrote or said what you are reading and what did they want?</i>	
Observation	Interpretation	Observation	Interpretation
Final Reading:		Final Reading:	
ARTWORK AND TEXT			
What have you learned about George Washington and his leadership by looking at this text and artwork together?			



Smithsonian
*Donald W. Reynolds Center for
American Art and Portraiture*
Smithsonian American Art Museum

Young America: George Washington



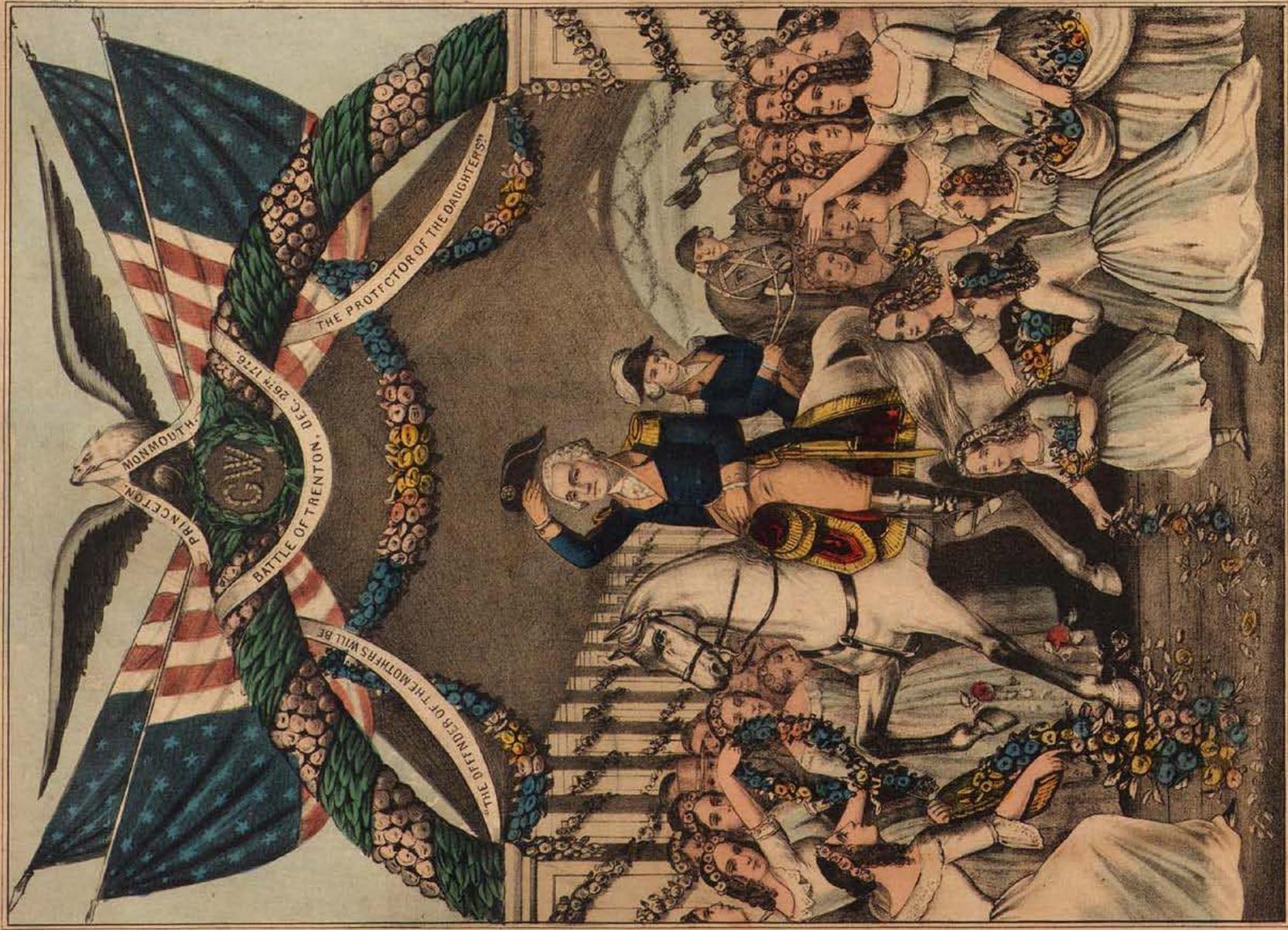
Henry Brintnell Bounetheau (Copy after Gilbert Stuart), George Washington, ca. 1845, watercolor on ivory, 6 1/8 x 5 in., Gift of Mrs. Henry Du Pré Bounetheau, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.



Ferdinand Pettrich, *Washington Resigning His Commission*, ca. 1841, painted plaster
86 x 48 1/2 x 36 3/8 in., Gift of the artist, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.



Horatio Greenough, *George Washington*, 1840, marble, 136 x 102 x 82 1/2 in., Transfer from the U.S. Capitol, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.

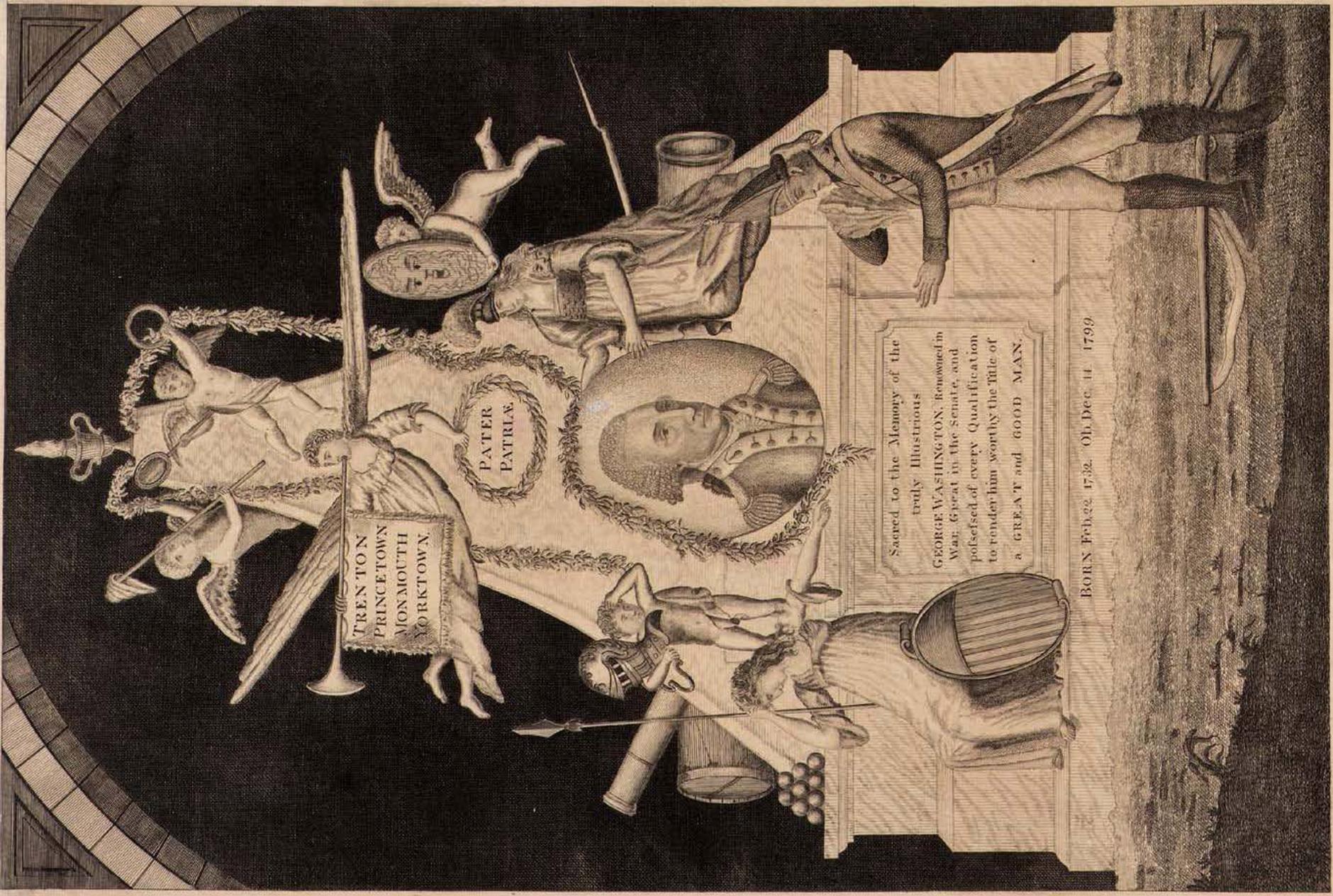


WASHINGTON'S RECEPTION BY GEORGE WASHINGTON, ON PASSING THE

BRIDGE AT TRENTON N. J. APRIL 1789
ON HIS WAY TO NEW YORK, TO BE INAUGURATED FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

Currier & Ives

Nathaniel Currier, *Washington's Reception by the Ladies*, 1845, hand-colored lithograph, 12 x 8 7/8 in., Gift of the family of C. B. Shafer, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.



Enoch G. Gridley, *Mourning Piece for George Washington*, 1810, engraving on paper, 13 1/8 x 8 3/4 in., Museum purchase, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.

Primary Source Set One

Use this set to model the activity for the class.

Artwork:

George Washington by Henry Brintnell Bounetheau (Copy after Gilbert Stuart)



Text:

*Excerpt from Washington's Queries on a Line of Conduct to be Pursued by the President*¹; *May 10, 1789*

Many things, which appear of little importance in themselves and at the beginning, may have great and durable consequences from their having been established at the commencement of a new general government. It will be much easier to commence the Administration upon a well-adjusted system, built on tenable grounds, than to correct errors, or alter inconveniences, after they shall have been confirmed by habit.²

¹ Washington sent this document to John Jay, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Adams for input.

² Zall, Paul M. *Washington on Washington* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2003). p104.

Primary Source Set Two

Artwork:

Washington Resigning his Commission by Ferdinand Pettrich



Text:

Excerpt from George Washington's speech to Congress on his appointment as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army; June 15, 1775:

Tho I am truly sensible of the high honor done me in this appointment, yet I feel great distress from a consciousness that my abilities and military experience may not be equal to the extensive and important trust. However, as the Congress desire it, I will enter upon the momentous duty, and exert every power I possess in their service and for the support of the glorious cause. I beg they will accept my most cordial thanks for this distinguished testimony of their approbation.

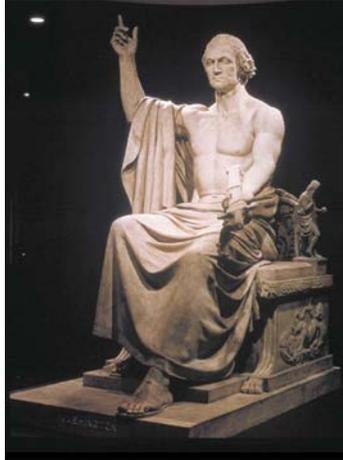
But lest some unlucky event should happen unfavorable to my reputation, I beg it may be remembered by every gentleman in the room that I this day declare, with the utmost sincerity, I do not think myself equal to the command I am honored with.³

³ Zall, Paul M. *Washington on Washington* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2003). p52-53.

Primary Source Set Three

Artwork:

George Washington by Horatio Greenough



Text:

Excerpt from a letter from George Washington to his Doctor, James Craik; March 25, 1784:

I will frankly declare to you, My Dr. Doctor that any memoirs of my life, distinct and unconnected with the general history of the war, would rather hurt my feelings than tickle my pride whilst I lived. I had rather glide gently down the stream of life, leaving it to posterity to think and say what they please of me, than by any act of mine to have vanity or ostentation imputed to me.⁴

⁴ Zall, Paul M. *Washington on Washington* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2003). p129.

Primary Source Set Four

Artwork:

Washington's Reception by the Ladies by Nathaniel Currier



Text:

Excerpt from William Duane's⁵ 1796 publication, "Letter to George Washington," where he warned the American people against worshipping Washington as an idol:

[my aim is] "...to expose the PERSONAL IDOLATRY into which we have been heedlessly running—to awaken my countrymen to a sense of their true situation—and to shew them in the fallibility of the most favored of men, the necessity of thinking for themselves."⁶

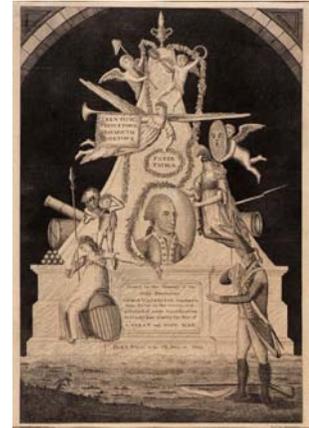
⁵ Duane was a radical anti-Federalist and journalist who became editor of *The Aurora*, a Philadelphia newspaper known for attacks on George Washington. Anti-Federalists worried that any strong central government, no matter if it was a monarchy or a democracy, would be equally oppressive.

⁶ Little, Nigel. "Transoceanic Radical: The Many Identities of William Duane" (Ph.D diss. Murdoch University, Perth, 2003) pp195-196.

Primary Source Set Four

Artwork:

Mourning Piece for George Washington by Enoch Gridley



Text:

Excerpt from James Thomas Callender's attack on Washington published in the The General Advertiser⁷; December 23, 1796.

It has been a serious misfortune to our country, that the President of the United States has been substituted for a Providence, and that the Gifts of Heaven have been ascribed for his agency. The Flattery, nay, the adoration that has been heaped upon him, has made him forget that he is mortal, and he may have been persuaded to believe, and indeed his actions squint that way, that like Alexander⁸ he is an immediate offspring of the gods. During the revolution it was necessary to give a consequence to the commander-in-chief by ascribing to him extraordinary qualifications. The delusion was useful, as it inspired confidence... but what was then was policy in the end became habit, and as the people were instructed to believe in the pre-eminent talents and virtues of the General, the belief continued when it was no longer necessary or useful. George III, it seems, became his example, and like George, he was only to be approached at a levee dragged in a coach and fix. The pomp, ostentation and parade of a British monarch was to be appended to the first magistrate of a free people, and hosannas were to be sung to him as the province of our country. This is an epitome of the conduct of George Washington...⁹

⁷ *The General Advertiser*, also called the *Aurora*, was a Philadelphia newspaper known for its harsh criticism of Washington.

⁸ Callender is referring to Alexander the Great, the famous conqueror.

⁹ Cogan, Jacob Katz. "The Reynolds Affair and the Politics of Character." *Journal of the Early Republic*, Volume 16 (1996): p396.