



Educator Guide:

George Washington Leadership Case Study

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Overview: Students will explore the characteristics of leadership and its impact on the historical development of societies through a 60 minute study of George Washington. The first 30 minutes will feature an educator facilitated presentation on George Washington. The second 30 minutes will feature a collaborative exercise at the student level.

Envision Platform & National Standards Alignment:

- CCSS ELA Alignment
 - Middle School Anchor: SL.6-8.1
 - High School Anchor: SL.9-12.1
- C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards Alignment
 - Middle School: D2.Civ.14.6-8; D2.His.3.6-8
 - High School: D2.Civ.14.9-12; D2.His.3.9-12
- Envision Education Platform
 - Dimension 1: Core Skills – Standard 1D, Critical Thinking
 - Dimension 3: Behaviors & Practices – Standard 3D, Leadership and Responsibility

Expected Outcomes & Desired Results:

1. Students will gain a greater appreciation for the figure of George Washington.
2. Students will recognize that leaders are not born, but are carefully and methodically produced.
3. Students will analyze the central characteristics of George Washington’s leadership style with a focus on “character,” “self control,” “humility,” and “ambition.”
4. Students will attempt to directly relate George Washington’s leadership characteristics to their lives by drafting three personal “Rules of Civility” and discussing the relevance of “character,” “self control,” “humility,” and “ambition” to the modern leader’s life.
5. Students will debate the foundation of leadership (power/position vs. principle) and the over-riding purpose of leadership (right vs. duty).

Supporting Resources:

- James C. Rees. (2007). *George Washington’s Leadership Lessons*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.
- Richard Brookhiser. (2009). *George Washington on Leadership*. New York: Basic Books.
- Virtual
 - Teacher and student resources at the George Washington’s Mount Vernon Library at <http://www.mountvernon.org/educational-resources/>

- “George Washington: Genius in Leadership” by Richard C. Stazesky at <http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/history/articles/george-washington-genius-in-leadership/>.

Facilitating the Presentation:

- Overview/Introduction Talking Points:
 - a. For most of human history, there have not been leadership development conferences or programs. Generally, you studied the lives of past leaders, both good and bad. Indeed, the Greeks and the Romans perfected this art of leadership case study as the writings of Suetonius and Plutarch illustrate.
 - b. These studies were interested in those universal human qualities or character traits that individuals practiced that led to both their significance and success.
- Slide 2 Objective: Students will define “leadership”
 - a. Talking Point: Allow 3-4 students to explain Burke’s definition contrasting the two types of leaders.
 - b. Picture is of Edmund Burke, who was one of the leading legislators in the British Parliament during the Revolutionary War and a great admirer of Washington.
- Slide 3 Objective: Students will be impressed by the accomplishments/successes of Washington
 - a. Talking Point: Begin by asking the students “What made Washington great?” or ask them to define greatness/success. (Be sure to contrast the modern external notion of success [\$, trophy spouse, power, car, boat, etc] with Washington’s internal notion of success [character, honor, principle, etc] if this area is explored.)
 - b. Picture is the earliest known portrait of Washington done in 1772 by Charles Wilson Peale
- Slide 4-5 Objective: Students will understand that Washington was not an accidental or expected leader; he proactively prepared himself for leadership.
 - a. Talking point: Ask the students, “What if you had no chance for college and basically had to drop out of school now to support your family? What are your prospects?”
 - b. Ensure that students are wondering/asking, “How did Washington achieve so much? Why was he able to emerge as perhaps the most significant leader of the new nation in spite of all of his personal “road blocks”?”
 - c. These questions need to be directly tied to the answers of the next few slides, namely, character, self control, humility, and ambition.
- Slide 7 Objective: Students will understand that the foundation of Washington’s leadership style was character.
 - a. Talking Point: What is character? What is integrity?
 - b. Washington knew that to be truly great, you must first be truly good.

- Slide 8 Objective: Students will understand that self control was central to Washington's preparation for and ultimate execution of leadership.
 - a. Talking Point: Does our society teach self control?
 - b. Around the age of 15 or 16, Washington authored his 110 "Rules of Civility", his action plan for preparing for leadership.
 - c. These "rules," which he meant to live by every day, focus on his ability to control (i.e. discipline) every aspect of his life from dress and manners to deep moral principles.
 - d. Stress the age relationship between the students and Washington's age when he authored the "Rules of Civility".
 - e. Explore Winston Churchill's quote that "The price of greatness is responsibility".
- Slide 9 Objective: Students will understand that humility for Washington, meant the ability to analyze his strengths/weaknesses and then accept himself as he was so that he could improve.
 - a. True humility is not self deprecation. It is self realization and acceptance.
 - b. Identify your weaknesses and seek to correct or marginalize them.
 - c. Identify your strengths and seek to strengthen or maximize them.
 - d. Regardless, you must craft a plan, much like Washington's "Rules of Civility".
- Slide 10 Objective: Students will understand that ambition has a long term influence even extending to future unborn generations.
 - a. Note the emphasis on the "influence" of "views" and "conduct"
 - b. Tie in this multi-generation perspective to Burke's quote about leadership
 - c. Picture is of the Mount Vernon Mansion, George Washington's estate
- Slide 11 Objective: Students will review the four central leadership characteristics practiced by Washington
 - a. Picture is Mount Rushmore in South Dakota
- Slide 12 Objective: Students are directed to think about Washington's life of leadership in contrasting right vs. duty and privilege/power vs. principle.
 - a. Stress that this will be discussed at as part of the student exercise
 - b. Picture is "Washington Crossing the Delaware" by Emmanuel Leutze;
 - c. Fun Trivia: The flag bearer in Leutze's picture is James Monroe, the 5th president. Monroe, as a young man, crossed the Delaware in Washington's army, but the artist took a few liberties. First, the flag is the early US flag that was first flown two years after the crossing. Second, Monroe is depicted as an older man, i.e. as President. Third, Monroe was not in the same boat as Washington.

Facilitating the Small Group Workshop:

Break up students into groups of three or four individuals and distribute the worksheet, using the following guidelines to frame and debrief the conversations.

- Question 1: Rules of Civility
 - Begin by discussing what might a “rule of civility” be today?
 - Give students time to draft their own rules and then encourage some students to share them and explain why they feel that rule is so important.
 - Stress the importance of pro-active, detailed planning for future leadership even to the point of drafting a “leadership plan” much like Washington.
- Question 2: Why Washington?
 - Get the students talking about destiny and the role of “prospects.” Why should we have expected Washington to not emerge as a great leader?
 - Be sure that students are stressing how Washington essentially “controlled” his own destiny as much as possible.
- Question 3: Attributes of Leadership
 - Walk through the questions with students
 - Stress the practical application of how these attributes could be developed today.
- Question 4: Defining Great Leadership
 - Recall for students Burke’s definition of leadership
 - Ask students to present examples of leaders who led based on power and leaders who led based on principle. Who was significant and why?
 - Ask them to define “right” vs. “duty.”

