

5th Grade

# Discover America

Course 7 - Teacher Guide



**COURSE 7: AMERICA'S FIRST  
PRESIDENT**

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5th Grade

# Teacher Guide



## Key Themes

- Freedom
- Independence

## Core Values

- Community
- Faith
- Life
- Liberty

# Learning Objectives

## Students will be able to:

- Identify valuable lessons George Washington learned while serving as a military leader that led to his success as the first President of the United States.
- Describe three guiding principles that defined George Washington's leadership.
- Explain why community mattered to George Washington.



# America's First President - 5th Grade

## Key Terms

- 01 **Cabinet** - a group of important people chosen by the president to help make decisions and run the country.
- 02 **Constitution** - a rulebook for the United States that guides citizens on how the government works and instructs them to act fairly.
- 03 **Constitutional Convention** - a big meeting where wise citizens joined together to create the Constitution.
- 04 **democracy** - a form of government where people hold the power to vote and make decisions.
- 05 **Electoral College** - the group of electors from each state who officially pick the president.
- 06 **George Washington** - served as the first president of the United States; a leader who helped America become its own country.
- 07 **leadership** - showing others the right way to go and helping them do their best.
- 08 **precedent** - a rule that's been set before.

# America's First President - 5th Grade

# Introduction

## **ASK** Students

What makes a good leader?

Do you know who the leader of our country is?

(allow students to respond)

## **TELL** Students

The leader of the United States is called the President of the United States. Let's watch another episode of Star Spangled Adventures to learn about the first President of the United States.

## **WATCH**

Star Spangled Adventures Episode 7:  
*Creating the American Government*



Scan Me!

# America's First President - 5th Grade

# Introduction

## ASK Students

Who was the first President of the United States?

(allow students to respond)

## TELL Students

George Washington was a very important leader in America's history. He was our first president and did many great things for our country. His life made a big impact on our country. The way he lived his life inspired many people. It still inspires people today.

## WATCH

Learn More With Liberty Video:

*George Washington:*

*President of the United States*



Scan Me!



# America's First President - 5th Grade

# Lesson

## **ASK** Students

Have you ever had to make a difficult decision?

Has it ever been challenging for you to stick to what you know is right?

Have you ever been asked to do something that felt like a big hurdle to overcome?

(allow students to respond)

## **TELL** Students

Facing situations where you have to stand up for a friend against bullies, share the last cookie, or let your sibling pick the family movie can be difficult. However, making sacrifices for others because you care about them is important. Doing the right thing is often a test of bravery, especially when it means going against popular opinion. Being a leader involves making tough decisions that may not be easy or popular, just like George Washington did in the history of our nation.

## **ASK** Students

What was life like for George Washington before he served our country as the commander of the Continental Army?

(allow students to respond)



# America's First President - 5th Grade

# Lesson

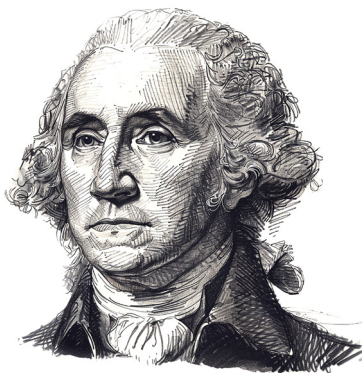
## **TELL** Students

The first president of America was a very strong and respected man. George Washington was tall and looked powerful, but what made him really strong was his honesty and courage. He always tried to do what was right. Washington inspired others to do great things because he was brave and never gave up.

When Washington was 17, he worked as a surveyor, which means he explored and mapped out parts of America. This job helped him understand the land and weather, which later helped him as a soldier. He traveled through forests, climbed mountains, and crossed rivers, learning about America's vastness and beauty.

In 1754, Washington became a major in the Virginia Militia. He fought in a war between the British and French in America. He learned a lot about fighting and battle. He also realized that sometimes it's better not to fight. Even though he made mistakes, he always learned from them.

During the war, Washington showed great leadership and bravery. He led his soldiers through tough times and never gave up hope. He became known for his calmness and determination, which inspired everyone around him.



George Washington

# America's First President - 5th Grade

# Lesson

## TELL Students

Later, when America needed to fight for independence, Washington became the leader of the Continental Army. He didn't want to fight, but he knew it was necessary for freedom. Even though it was hard, he agreed to lead and build the Continental Army.

Following the battles at Lexington and Concord, the Second Continental Congress asked Washington to lead the army against the British. He accepted the job humbly and started getting ready for war. He trained his soldiers and made plans for battle.

Despite facing many challenges and setbacks, Washington never lost hope. He believed in the dream of freedom for America and was determined to make it happen. His leadership and courage inspired people all across the country to keep fighting for their rights.

In the end, Washington's efforts paid off, and America gained its independence from Britain. He became a hero to the nation and was later elected as the first president of the United States.

## WATCH

Learn More With Liberty Video:  
*George Washington Elected the First President*



Scan Me!

# America's First President - 5th Grade

# Lesson

## **ASK** Students

What does community mean?

(allow students to respond)

## **TELL** Students

The word 'community' refers to a group of people who share similar interests. Members of a community interact with each other and share common beliefs and goals. When you think of the word 'community' you may want to think about these questions:

- 01 What does community mean to me personally?
- 02 What are the common interests that bring people together in communities?
- 03 What role does leadership play in building a sense of community?
- 04 What responsibilities do individuals have within a community?

When George Washington agreed to lead the Continental Army, victory for the patriots was not guaranteed. General Washington knew they might fail, and life would be lost. But, he was willing to risk everything. He dedicated everything to ensure Americans have the right to build community and enjoy life freely.

# America's First President - 5th Grade

# Lesson

## **TELL** Students

During the toughest times of the American Revolution, Washington never gave up hope. He thought that God had a special plan for him and for the Revolution. Even when things looked bad, he kept believing they could win.

One of his big victories was when he freed the city of Boston from the British. On December 26, 1776, the day after Christmas, he surprised the enemy by crossing the Delaware River and winning an important battle against the British's hired soldiers, the Hessians.

At Valley Forge, during the winter of 1777 to 1778, things were really tough. His soldiers were hungry, cold, and sad. But Washington worked hard to make them stronger and better fighters. With the help of Baron von Steuben, he turned his army into a powerful force ready to face any challenge.

Finally, after many years of fighting, they won a big battle at Yorktown in 1781. The British general, Charles Cornwallis, surrendered, and that marked the end of the war. Thanks to George Washington's leadership and determination, America won its independence from Britain, and the thirteen colonies became a free country.

## **ASK** Students

Can you describe some of George Washington's military experiences as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army?

(allow students to respond)

# America's First President - 5th Grade

# Lesson

## ASK Students

Do you know how George Washington was elected as our first president of the United States?

(allow students to respond)

## TELL Students

After winning many battles and helping America become independent, George Washington became very popular. Some people even wanted him to become a king because they admired him so much for his **leadership** during the American Revolution. Washington believed in **democracy** and did not want to establish a monarchy in America.

Instead, in 1783, he made a surprising decision. He decided to give up his role as the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army and return to a peaceful life at his home, Mount Vernon. This decision shocked many people because Washington was at the peak of his popularity and could have assumed power in America. However, he believed it was important to set a **precedent** of civilian control over the military, showing that in a democracy, the military should serve the elected government, not the other way around.

# America's First President - 5th Grade

# Lesson

## TELL Students

By resigning as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, Washington demonstrated his commitment to the principles of democracy and the rule of law. He had shown that no individual, not even a hero like himself, should hold too much power.

Some people were surprised and confused by Washington's decision. They wondered why he would give up such a powerful position. Still, others saw that he was acting in the best interests of the new American Republic.

Despite his efforts to retire from public life, Washington's popularity only grew. People admired his humility and integrity, and many saw him as the ideal leader for the new nation. They believed that Washington's leadership was crucial for the success of the young country, especially as it faced many challenges in its early years.

When Washington was selected to be a delegate at the **Constitutional Convention** in 1787, he initially declined the opportunity. He preferred to stay out of politics and focus on his personal life. However, others convinced him to attend, and he was unanimously chosen to preside over the convention. Washington's presence at the convention was crucial, as his reputation and leadership helped create a respectful and orderly environment where delegates could discuss and negotiate the creation of the United States **Constitution**.

Following the ratification of the Constitution, Washington's popularity continued to soar. Many Americans saw him as the natural choice to become the first president of the United States. Despite his reluctance to return to public life, Washington agreed to run for president in 1789. The **Electoral College** unanimously elected him as the first president, and he took office with a sense of duty and responsibility to lead the new nation forward.

# America's First President - 5th Grade

# Lesson

## ASK Students

What is a precedent?

(allow students to respond)



## TELL Students

As the first president of the United States, George Washington knew that his actions would shape the future of the country. He believed in setting examples, called precedents, for future leaders to follow.

During his eight years as president, Washington did many important things. He refused to be called a king and insisted on being called "Mister President." He created the first **cabinet**, started the U.S. Navy, chose the first Supreme Court Justice, made the dollar the official currency, and supported the Bill of Rights.

Washington always thought about what was best for the American people. He wanted to be fair and honest, and he avoided dividing the country into political parties. He believed in bringing everyone together as one nation.



# America's First President - 5th Grade

# Lesson

## TELL Students

When he finished his second term as president in 1797, **Washington** decided not to stay in power any longer. He wanted to show that leaders shouldn't hold onto power forever. Even the king of England praised him for giving up his power.

In his farewell speech, Washington warned against letting politics divide the country and warned against foreign interference. He wanted to make sure that America stayed united and free, just like the people fought for in the Revolutionary War.

## WATCH

Scan Me!



### Optional Course Videos:

*Learn More With Liberty: George Washington's Second Term as President*

*Learn More With Liberty: Why Community Mattered to George Washington*

*Please utilize this additional resource to further the discussion on course content with your students.*

# Explanatory Writing

## INSTRUCTIONS:

**Explain** why George Washington's decision to resign as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army was important in demonstrating his commitment to democracy.

Use **specific examples from the text** to support your answer to the three questions below.



### Prompt 1

Why did some people want George Washington to become a king?



### Prompt 2

Why did Washington believe it was important to set a precedent of civilian control over the military?



### Prompt 3

How did Washington's role at the Constitutional Convention contribute to the creation of the United States Constitution?

## Writer's Checklist

- My response is focused and answers each question fully.
- My response is supported by examples from the lesson.
- My response is clear, accurate, and includes varied vocabulary.
- My response is free from usage or mechanics errors.

# America's First President - 5th Grade

# Assessment

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

*Read each question and answer set carefully. Circle the correct answer.*

- 01 1. What was George Washington's role in American history?  
a) First Vice President of the United States  
b) Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army  
c) King of England  
d) Mayor of New York
- 02 2. What key values did George Washington exemplify?  
a) Honesty and bravery  
b) Dishonesty and fear  
c) Laziness and disobedience  
d) Arrogance and cowardice
- 03 3. What did Washington do after the American Revolution?  
a) Moved to France  
b) Retired to Mount Vernon  
c) Became a senator  
d) Joined the British Army
- 04 4. What important document did George Washington help create?  
a) Declaration of Independence  
b) Emancipation Proclamation  
c) United States Constitution  
d) Bill of Rights
- 05 5. What does the term "precedent" mean?  
a) Breaking traditions  
b) Setting examples for the future  
c) Following others blindly  
d) Ignoring rules

# America's First President - 5th Grade

## Assessment

- 06 6. How did George Washington view the division of the country into political parties?
- a) Supported and encouraged it
  - b) Discouraged and opposed it
  - c) Was indifferent towards it
  - d) Did not have an opinion
- 07 7. What warning did Washington give in his farewell speech?
- a) Beware of foreign interference and political divisions
  - b) Embrace foreign influence over domestic affairs
  - c) Ignore the Constitution and Bill of Rights
  - d) Overturn the democratic process
- 08 8. How did George Washington feel about seeking power indefinitely?
- a) Supported and encouraged it
  - b) Thought it was necessary for stability
  - c) Warned against it and stepped down voluntarily
  - d) Became a lifetime dictator

# America's First President - 5th Grade

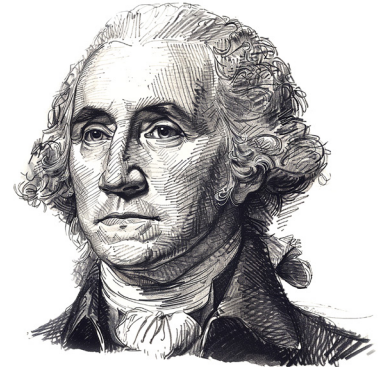
## Answer Key

- 01 **B)** Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army
- 02 **A)** Honesty and bravery
- 03 **B)** Retired to Mount Vernon
- 04 **C)** United States Constitution
- 05 **B)** Setting examples for the future
- 06 **B)** Discouraged and opposed it
- 07 **A)** Beware of foreign interference and political divisions
- 08 **C)** Warned against it and stepped down voluntarily

# America's First President - 5th Grade

## Student Text

*George Washington was a very important leader in America's history. He was our first president and did many great things for our country. His life made a big impact on our country. The way he lived his life inspired many people. It still inspires people today.*



George Washington

*Facing situations where you have to stand up for a friend against bullies, share the last cookie, or let your sibling pick the family movie can be difficult. However, making sacrifices for others because you care about them is important. Doing the right thing is often a test of bravery, especially when it means going against popular opinion. Being a leader involves making tough decisions that may not be easy or popular, just like George Washington did in the history of our nation.*

*The first president of America was a very strong and respected man. George Washington was tall and looked powerful, but what made him really strong was his honesty and courage. He always tried to do what was right. Washington inspired others to do great things because he was brave and never gave up.*

*When Washington was 17, he worked as a surveyor, which means he explored and mapped out parts of America. This job helped him understand the land and weather, which later helped him as a soldier. He traveled through forests, climbed mountains, and crossed rivers, learning about America's vastness and beauty.*

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*Later, when America needed to fight for independence, Washington became the leader of the Continental Army. He didn't want to fight, but he knew it was necessary for freedom. Even though it was hard, he agreed to lead and build the Continental Army.*

*Following the battles at Lexington and Concord, the Second Continental Congress asked Washington to lead the army against the British. He accepted the job humbly and started getting ready for war. He trained his soldiers and made plans for battle.*

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*During the toughest times of the American Revolution, Washington never gave up hope. He thought that God had a special plan for him and for the Revolution. Even when things looked bad, he kept believing they could win.*

*One of his big victories was when he freed the city of Boston from the British. On December 26, 1776, the day after Christmas, he surprised the enemy by crossing the Delaware River and winning an important battle against the British's hired soldiers, the Hessians.*



**Hessian Soldiers**

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## Student Text

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*In his farewell speech, Washington warned against letting politics divide the country and warned against foreign interference. He wanted to make sure that America stayed united and free, just like the people fought for in the Revolutionary War.*



# America's First President

# Resource List

- 01 <https://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/resume/>
- 02 <https://www.gingrich360.com/2021/01/01/newts-world-ep-179-the-immortals-george-washington/>
- 03 <https://www.gingrich360.com/product/the-first-american/>
- 04 <https://www.history.com/news/george-washington-french-indian-war-jumonville>
- 05 <https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/valley-forge/>
- 06 <https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/yorktown-campaign/>
- 07 <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/george-washington-resigns-as-commander-in-chief>
- 08 <https://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/the-first-president/political-parties/>
- 09 <https://www.heritage.org/commentary/the-man-who-would-not-be-king>
- 10 <https://www.history.com/news/george-washington-farewell-address-warnings>

