

6: Presidential Biography

Based on the Bicentennial Quarter



OBJECTIVES

Students will identify George Washington and his contributions to the United States, including being commander of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War, leader of the Constitutional Convention, and the first president of the United States. Students will understand that a biography is a type of literary genre.



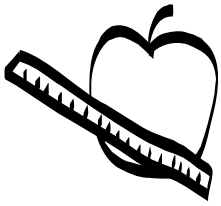
MATERIALS

- 1 overhead projector
- 1 overhead transparency of each of the following pages:
 - “Bicentennial Quarter Obverse”
 - “Bicentennial Quarter Reverse”
- Copies of the following worksheets:
 - “Biographies of Washington”
 - “George Washington Designs”
- Copies of various texts (1 per student) that give biographical information about George Washington and the American Revolution, such as:
 - *A Picture Book of George Washington* by David A. Adler
 - *When Washington Crossed the Delaware* by Lynne Cheney
 - *George Washington* by Lenny Hort
 - *George Washington* by Cheryl Harness
- Chart paper
- Markers
- Crayons, colored pencils



PREPARATIONS

- Make copies of the following:
 - “Biographies of Washington” worksheet (1 per student)
 - “George Washington Designs” worksheet (1 per student)
- Make 1 overhead transparency of each of the following:
 - “Bicentennial Quarter Obverse” page
 - “Bicentennial Quarter Reverse” page
- Locate texts about George Washington and the American Revolution (see examples under “Materials”).
- Gather texts about George Washington and the American Revolution to use in a classroom library.



Presidential Biography



GROUPINGS

- Whole group
- Pairs
- Small groups
- Individual work



CLASS TIME

Four 45- to 60-minute sessions



CONNECTIONS

- Social Studies
- Language Arts



TERMS AND CONCEPTS

- Obverse (front)
- Reverse (back)
- Biography
- Biographer
- Bicentennial
- Liberty
- Declaration of Independence



BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Students should have a basic knowledge of:

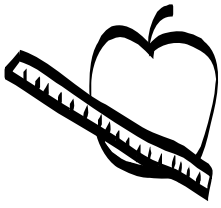
- United States of America
- George Washington
- Revolutionary War
- President
- Great Britain



STEPS

Session 1

1. Display the “Bicentennial Quarter Obverse” overhead transparency. Ask the students what they know about the image. Make sure that the students understand the following:
 - The image is the obverse (front) of a quarter, which is worth 25 cents, and four quarters equal one dollar.



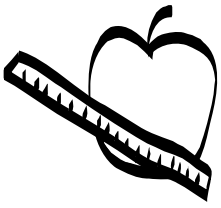
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- The name of our country, “The United States of America,” is stamped at the top of the quarter.
 - “Liberty,” which means being free, is also stamped on the coin.
 - The man on the quarter is George Washington, who was the first president of the United States of America.
 - The quarter is “bicentennial,” meaning two hundred years. This coin from 1976 marks the two hundredth anniversary of when the American colonies declared together their independence from Great Britain in 1776.
2. Ask the students to recall any other information they may know about George Washington. Tell the class that they will read a biography of George Washington. Ask the students what a biography is. If necessary, explain that a biography is a book that tells the story of a person’s life, written by a different person (as opposed to an autobiography).
 3. Ask the students what type of information the story of a person’s life should include. List their responses on chart paper. Tell the students to listen to the biography and note whether or not it has the type of information they predicted it would have.
 4. Introduce the students to the selected text about George Washington. As a group, preview the text. Read the text or excerpts aloud to the students. Attend to unfamiliar vocabulary and concepts.
 5. After reading the selected text, compare the information in the text with the students’ predictions on the chart paper.
 6. Distribute one “Biographies of Washington” worksheet to each student. Tell the students that they will need to think about the biography that they just heard in order to complete the worksheet. They will also need to choose an important fact from each part of George Washington’s life and write that fact in the space provided.
 7. Allow time for the student to complete the worksheet.
 8. Display the “Biographies of Washington” overhead transparency. Briefly have the students share their responses with the class. Record responses on the transparency. Collect the worksheets.

Note: Before Session 2, you may want to create small reading groups based on reading level and select a text for each group to read.

Session 2

1. Display the “Bicentennial Quarter Obverse” overhead transparency. Briefly discuss the main points about George Washington discussed in the previous session. Review the definition of a biography.
2. Tell the students that they will independently read another biography about George Washington, assigned or self-chosen. If having them choose, show and briefly discuss with the students each of the texts from which they can choose.

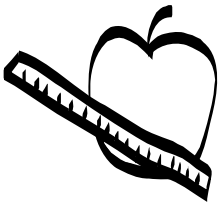


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3. Redistribute the students' completed "Biographies of Washington" worksheets. Tell the students that biographers (people who write biographies) do not always agree about which things are important enough to include in their books. Explain to the students that different biographers will emphasize or include different facts about the same person's life. Tell the students that, while they read the second biography, they should look for new information about George Washington that was not included in the biography from the previous session and record this information in the second part of the "Biographies of Washington" worksheets. If they can't find new information for a particular category, they should include something that they did not note in the first part of the worksheet.
4. Distribute or allow the students to choose one of the biographies available. Have the students read the text and complete their worksheets for the remainder of the class.
5. Collect the worksheets and texts.

Session 3

1. Display the "Bicentennial Quarter Obverse" overhead transparency again. Redistribute the "Biographies of Washington" worksheets. Ask the students to share with a partner what new information they learned about George Washington in their second biography.
2. As a class, discuss the information learned about George Washington. From the readings, point out to the students that George Washington lived a very full and exciting life and that there are many things that a biographer could write about him. Lead a brief discussion regarding how a biographer would decide what events were important enough to include in a biography. Guide the students to the conclusion that a biography should include information about both what a person did and about the person's character and personality.
3. Explain to the students that an author will sometimes tell a fact or event in the person's life, and leave it up to the reader to decide what that fact says about the character or personality of the person. For example, many biographers note that, when Washington was home on his farm, he got up every morning and rode around the farm to see everything that was going on. Ask the students what they think this says about George Washington. Tell the students that a good biography makes readers feel like they have met the person they are reading about.
4. Assign the students to small groups. (If possible, make sure that no two students in the same group read the same biography.) Distribute a poster-sized sheet of chart paper to each group. Have the students review as a group the facts from their completed worksheets and choose five important facts about George Washington's life. Have them list those facts down one side of the chart paper and draw a picture next to each fact that tells more about the fact. The groups should be ready to tell the others what each fact says about George Washington.

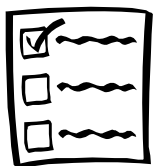


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5. Allow time for the students to complete their charts.
6. Have the student groups share their charts with the class and post them in the classroom.

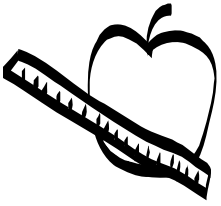
Session 4

1. Display the “Bicentennial Quarter Reverse” overhead transparency. Tell the students that this is the reverse (back) of a special quarter. This quarter is called “bicentennial,” meaning 200 years. It commemorates the 200-year anniversary in 1976 of the year the American colonies declared their independence from Great Britain, 1776. Our Declaration of Independence was signed on July 4, which we celebrate each year as Independence Day.
2. The images chosen for coins often tell a story or represent a big idea. Ask the students why they think the image of the man was chosen. The students should respond that he represents the soldiers who fought for our nation’s independence from Great Britain. Ask the students why they think that 13 stars were chosen. The students should respond that the 13 stars represent the 13 colonies that existed at the time.
3. Ask the students to hypothesize why George Washington was on the obverse of the bicentennial quarter. The students should respond that George Washington was the leader of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War and is called “the father of our country.”
4. Distribute the “George Washington Designs” worksheet. Tell the students that, before the United States Mint produces a coin, the image is designed as a drawing. Sometimes many designs are suggested before one is chosen.
5. Tell the students that their assignment is to think of three designs for the reverse of a new George Washington quarter. Explain to the students that, since his picture is on the obverse of the quarter, they must select something different for the reverses. They may choose to draw an important scene from his life or use symbols to represent his accomplishments or characteristics. Like a biographer, their goal is to present facts about Washington and also something about his personality. Then they are to choose one of the images and write a journal entry (5 to 7 sentences) explaining its importance.
6. Allow time for the students to complete the worksheets.
7. Collect the worksheets.



ASSESSMENT

- Take anecdotal notes about the students’ classroom participation.
- Evaluate the students’ worksheets for achievement of the lesson objectives.



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ENRICHMENTS/EXTENSIONS

- Have students read other texts on another Revolutionary War figure and write a biography.
- Write the following on the board: “First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.” Explain to students that this was written about George Washington after his death. Ask students to explain the meaning of the quote.
- Have the students locate other words with the prefix “bi” and “tri” in them and create an illustrated mini-dictionary.
- Have the students look at the reverse of the Virginia quarter, and discuss the meaning of the word “quadricentennial” and its pertinence to the coin. (The Virginia quarter honors the founding of Jamestown, Virginia, our nation’s first permanent English settlement, in 1607. Jamestown turns 400 years old in 2007).



DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING OPTIONS

- The teacher may select texts written at the appropriate reading level.
- Allow students to read with a partner.
- Provide books on tape.



CONNECTION TO WWW.USMINT.GOV/KIDS

- Visit the July 1999 Coin of the Month and learn about the bicentennial quarter at www.usmint.gov/kids/index.cfm?fileContents=coinNews/cotm/1999/07.cfm.
- Have students look at other coins that also relate to the Revolution, such as:
 - New Jersey quarter at www.usmint.gov/kids/index.cfm?fileContents=coinnews/50sq/1999/nj.cfm.
 - Massachusetts quarter at www.usmint.gov/kids/index.cfm?fileContents=coinnews/50sq/2000/ma.cfm.
 - Delaware quarter at www.usmint.gov/kids/index.cfm?fileContents=coinnews/50sq/1999/de.cfm.
 - Connecticut quarter at www.usmint.gov/kids/index.cfm?fileContents=coinnews/50sq/1999/ct.cfm.



Name _____

Biographies of Washington

Directions: Record in the first section information from the first biography. Watch for information in the second biography that was not in the first. List only new facts in the second section.

Name of first biography: _____

1. Childhood and Early Life: _____
2. Education: _____
3. Work: _____
4. Challenges: _____

5. Accomplishments: _____

6. Impact (Why Washington was important to our country's history):

Name of second biography: _____

1. Childhood and Early Life: _____
2. Education: _____
3. Work: _____
4. Challenges: _____

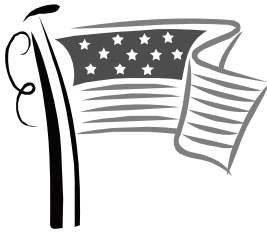
5. Accomplishments: _____

6. Impact (Why Washington was important to our country's history):



Bicentennial Quarter Obverse





Bicentennial Quarter Reverse

