



STUDY GUIDE

WHAT MADE GEORGE WASHINGTON GREAT

KEY TERMS: trusted
wisdom

courage
fortitude

integrity
committed

NOTE-TAKING COLUMN: Complete this section during the video. Include definitions and key terms.

CUE COLUMN: Complete this section after the video.

How tall was George Washington?

Why did others look up to George Washington?

What did George Washington do in May of 1775?

What made George Washington such a great man?

What did General Washington do at the end of the war?

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

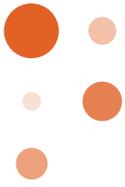
- At the beginning of the video, Mr. Rhodehamel notes about George Washington that, "...he was admired by generals, political theorists and politicians. Why? Because he was a man great men trusted. Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, James Madison and so many others looked up to him – literally. He was one of the tallest men of his era at six foot three. Add courage, integrity and wisdom and you have a truly impressive figure. Why do you think that so many great figures admired and trusted George Washington? What factors do you think contributed to George Washington becoming the type of man he became?"
- When using the multiple wars that Washington fought in as an example of Washington's courage, Mr. Rhodehamel points out that, "...Washington was always in the thick of the action. His aides often struggled to keep him from surging too far ahead of his own troops. In one battle, his coat was pierced four times by musket fire. Horses were shot out from under him. Amazingly, some would say miraculously, he was never wounded, not so much as a flesh wound." What do you think compelled General Washington to be so aggressive in battle? Considering how tall he was and that he often rode a white horse, do you think it is miraculous that General Washington was never wounded or killed in battle? If yes, why do you think so? If no, what do you think is the best explanation for General Washington never even getting wounded in multiple battles?
- Later in the video, Mr. Rhodehamel explains that, "Of his integrity, one need only to look at what he did when the war ended – exactly what he promised when the war began. He resigned his military command and went home to Mt. Vernon. By stepping down, Washington raised himself up as the embodiment of republican heroism." Why do you think that General Washington kept his promise and gave up his military command? In what ways did his resignation from the military make him a republican hero? Explain.
- Mr. Rhodehamel later shares with us that in an effort to quell the anger of military officers who had not been paid for their service and were threatening to take over the government Washington, "...stopped. From his pocket, he pulled a pair of spectacles. None of the officers had ever seen him wear them. Putting the glasses on, Washington said, 'Gentlemen, you must pardon me. I have grown gray in the service of my country and now find myself going blind.' He finished reading the letter [from a congressman] and left the hall without another word. The gesture, sincerely offered with just the right touch of stagecraft, pierced the hearts of his men. Many were moved to tears. They immediately passed a resolution declaring their loyalty to civilian government. George Washington had saved the Revolution once again." How do you think Washington knew just what to do in that situation in order to get the men to stand down without resorting to threats or violence? Do you think that
- At the end of the video, Mr. Rhodehamel concludes that, "During the writing of the Constitution and during his eight years as President, Washington was repeatedly called upon to hold the fractious young nation together. He never failed to do so. We commonly refer to George Washington now as the father of our country. It's hard to imagine any nation ever had a better one."

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: George Washington

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the articles “Why is George Washington the Greatest President?” and “What Made George Washington a Great Leader,” then answer the questions that follow.

- According to David Boaz, from where did President Washington derive his abhorrence of kingship? How many times did George Washington give up power? What was so significant about his not seeking a third term as president? Why should all Americans study George Washington? What did President Adams declare about President Washington’s virtue and character? What did General Washington refer to American independence as? How much did General Washington get paid as commander of the Continental Army? How wealthy was President Washington when he finished his second term as president? What did Richard Neustadt say about the way in which General Washington stood out? What did Barbara Tuchman admire about George Washington?
- How did George Washington inspire the people around him? How do you define greatness in a person- i.e. what qualities and traits do you think make one ‘great?’ Explain. Do you think that George Washington was the greatest president? Why or why not?
- How might the history of the United States, and indeed the world, have been significantly different if George Washington had not been the man he was and had not come along at just the right time? Explain. Many people believe that it was divine providence that George Washington was never killed in battle and went on to guide the U.S. into becoming a great nation- i.e. that God was directly involved and that it was His will for those events to unfold the way that they did. Do you believe this to be the case to any degree? Why or why not?



QUIZ

WHAT MADE GEORGE WASHINGTON GREAT

1. How did George Washington successfully guide the United States through war and nurture it in peace?

- a. By being a great general.
- b. By being a clever politician.
- c. By being a potent political theorist.
- d. By being a man great men trusted.

2. How many times was George Washington wounded in battle?

- a. 4
- b. 3
- c. 2
- d. 0

3. During his presidency, Washington often failed holding the fractious young nation together.

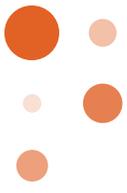
- a. True
- b. False

4. What did George Washington do when the Revolutionary War ended?

- a. He resigned his military command and went home to Mt. Vernon.
- b. He became Secretary of State.
- c. He became the senator of Virginia.
- d. He became the Vice President.

5. How many presidential terms did Washington serve?

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- b. 3
- c. 2
- d. 0



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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Acton Institute Powerblog

Why is George Washington the Greatest President?

by Ray Nothstine • February 17, 2014



Sometimes I recoil a little when somebody declares that there can be an American president greater than George Washington. Henry “Light-Horse Harry” Lee declared Washington, “First in the hearts of his countrymen.” Washington is great for many things, but perhaps he is greatest for the manner in which he surrendered power not once but twice.

One of the best recent commentaries written on Washington is David Boaz’s, [“The Man Who Would Not Be King.”](#) In the piece from 2006, Boaz wonderfully sums up the depth of Washington’s immense character and what that means for liberty and America. The entire commentary is worth reading but the conclusion is especially poignant:

From his republican values Washington derived his abhorrence of kingship, even for himself. The writer Garry Wills called him “a virtuoso of resignations.” He gave up power not once but twice – at the end of the revolutionary war, when he resigned his military commission and returned to Mount Vernon, and again at the end of his second term as president, when he refused entreaties to seek a third term. In doing so, he set a standard for American presidents that lasted until the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose taste for power was stronger than the 150 years of precedent set by Washington.

Give the last word to Washington's great adversary, King George III. The king asked his American painter, Benjamin West, what Washington would do after winning independence. West replied, "They say he will return to his farm."

"If he does that," the incredulous monarch said, "he will be the greatest man in the world."

Washington's moral model of leadership is timeless. In everything he said and did, he affirmed the spirit of the American Revolution. His fellow Virginian, Thomas Jefferson noted, Washington would "rather be in his grave than in his present situation [the presidency]; that he had rather be on his farm than to be made Emperor of the world." All Americans should study Washington because he is the embodiment the principles of liberty. His peers would all argue and did, that in America there was no leader who possessed greater virtue. Charles Francis Adams, the son of President John Quincy Adams, declared of Washington:

More than all, and above all, Washington was master of himself. If there be one quality more than another in his character which may exercise a useful control over the men of the present hour, it is the total disregard of self when in the most elevated positions for influence and example.



Ray Nothstine is opinion editor of the the North State Journal in Raleigh, North Carolina. Previously, he was managing editor of Acton Institute's Religion & Liberty quarterly. In 2005 Ray graduated with a Master of Divinity (M.Div) degree from Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Ky. He also holds a B.A. in Political Science from The University of Mississippi in Oxford.

What Made George Washington a Great Leader

By [Michael Lee Stallard](#) Published February 17, 2015 [Columns](#) [FOXBusiness](#)



On this anniversary of George Washington's birth, it is worth looking back at what historians have observed about his leadership. Although he wasn't perfect, as no man or woman is, there is much to admire about George Washington and the way he led. Historians have written about Washington's commitment to American independence and that he frequently referred to it as "our glorious cause." And Washington walked the talk. Henry Steele Commager once observed Washington's sacrifice for America was supported by the facts that he served as commander of the Continental Army without pay and was nearly bankrupt by the time he returned home to Mount Vernon after serving as the country's first president. On one occasion when approached by soldiers who wanted to overthrow the wartime government and set up Washington to lead the country, he met with them and made it clear that the thought of overthrowing the colonial American government was repulsive to him and under no circumstances would he consider it. Like many great leaders who inspire their followers, George Washington valued the people he led rather than thinking of them as means to an end. Richard Neustadt, Presidential Scholar at Harvard University, once observed the following about Washington: "It wasn't his generalship that made him stand out . . . It was the way he attended to and stuck by his men. His soldiers knew that he respected and cared for them, and that he would share their severe hardships." Edward G. Lengel, described Washington's leadership during the extraordinarily cold winter of 1777-78 at Valley Forge as "sacrificial" and noted that "he took great care in seeing that his soldiers were well housed." Washington was confident, yet humble. His humility was reflected in the way he gave people a voice by seeking and considering their opinions and ideas. David McCullough wrote that during the Revolutionary War, Washington listened to the advice of his war council, a group of soldiers who reported directly to him, and their advice helped him avoid what would have been costly mistakes. Historians have noted that during the Constitutional Convention over which Washington presided, he rarely said a word other than to intervene and make decisions to break a logjam in the deliberations. The foregoing historical observations paint the picture of a

leader who inspired the confidence of the people he led. Joseph Ellis wrote that with all the brilliant individuals surrounding him—John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, and others—Washington was the one to whom they indisputably looked as the greatest leader among them. George Washington's reputation even held up under the critical scrutiny of the tough and thorough, two time Pulitzer-prize winning historian Barbara Tuchman. While writing *The First Salute*, her gripping account of the American Revolution, Mrs. Tuchman struggled with the onset of blindness. With help from her daughter, she persevered to complete the volume that included a leader who truly inspired her. In an interview with Bill Moyers, Mrs. Tuchman spoke of how much she admired George Washington's courage and perseverance despite the enormous obstacles he faced and how she and her daughter encouraged one another with the rallying cry, "remember George." George Washington, like all effective leaders, communicated an inspiring vision and lived it, valued people and gave them a voice. Under his leadership the colonists pulled off one of history's greatest upsets by defeating the preeminent military power of their age with an under-trained, under-resourced militia. On this day, it is wise for us to pause and reflect on the sacrifices of those who came before us and on how we lead others in light of George Washington's example.