George Washington

Everywhere you look in America today, you see some reminder of George Washington. Streets, cities, and states have been named after him. There's a beautiful monument built in his memory in Washington, D.C. Every one dollar bill carries a picture of our first president. George Washington must have been a remarkable man to have been remembered in these ways for so long.

George led a good life for most of the time he was growing up. He was born February 22, 1732, to Augustine Washington and his second wife. When George was eleven, his father died. George was sent to live with his half-brother Lawrence. His mother was not up to the task of raising him. George learned many things while living with Lawrence. His brother was in the militia. The militia then became part of George's life. Lawrence owned a plantation. George learned the secrets of being a good farmer by helping him. He had once had wanted to run away to the sea. Instead, he studied to become a surveyor. He wanted to help the colonists open up the new frontier. He helped mark property lines for new farms and roads.

George became a soldier during the French and Indian War. He proved himself a leader in the British army. When Lawrence died suddenly, George left the military to take over his brother's plantation. Mount Vernon became the focus of his life. He married Martha Custis and became a gentleman farmer. George became involved in local politics and won a seat in the Virginia House of Burgesses.

The colonists were feeling the sting of King George's taxes. They did not like being taxed without having a say in what was going on. If the king needed money, he needed to find somewhere else to get it. Talking and boycotting were not going to change the king's mind. It was time to fight.

George Washington was asked to take charge of the unorganized local militias. He turned them into an army strong enough to face the awesome British force. He was named Commander in Chief of the Continental army. He led the army through five years of battles. He was present for the surrender of the British army at Yorktown in 1781.

Washington's plan was to retire to his home at Mount Vernon after the Revolutionary War. This plan was short lived. In 1789, the nation needed a leader to pull all the parts together. George Washington was the man chosen to be the first President of the United States. He again accepted the role of leader.

He and Martha spent the next eight years in New York City, the first American capital. He helped Congress and the people set up a foundation for the government still standing today. George Washington is just one of the many men who dedicated their lives to building a new country. This new country would hear every person's
George Washington believed in freedom and equality. He believed in doing his part to earn those freedoms.

George Washington

Questions

   A. false
   B. true

2. With whom did George Washington go to live when he was eleven?
   A. his father
   B. his brother Augustine
   C. his half-brother Lawrence
   D. his uncle Lawrence

3. George Washington studied to be a:
   A. general
   B. surveyor
   C. businessman
   D. lawyer

4. America's first capital was what city?

5. George Washington became president of the House of Burgesses.
   A. true
   B. false

   A. true
   B. false

7. Why do you think George Washington was selected to be the first president of the new country?

8. Which is not named after George Washington?
   A. a city
   B. a state
   C. a street
   D. a flower
Martha Washington

Martha Dandridge never dreamed she would become the First Lady of a brand new country. Her father came to the colonies from England long before she was born. Martha was the eldest of eight Dandridge children. When she turned nineteen, she married a much older plantation manager named Daniel Parke Custis. Martha was quite happy to be this man's wife and raise the four children they had together. Life doesn't always turn out the way you think it will, however. The happy couple had been married seven years when Mr. Custis suddenly died. Two of her children died within a short period. How was a young widow with two small children going to survive?

Martha was very fortunate to meet a slightly younger plantation owner. Two years after her husband's death, Martha Dandridge Custis married George Washington. They moved to his plantation, Mount Vernon. There they set about making a home for themselves and her two remaining children. George and Martha enjoyed the life of country gentry. George had already become involved in local politics. He had served in the British army during the French and Indian War. Now he wanted to farm and keep active in the politics of the colonies. George was selected for the First Continental Congress and then elected to the Second Continental Congress. Martha was right there supporting him. He was selected to be the Commander of the Continental Army before the beginning of the Revolutionary War. Martha supported his decision.

Many men in the army traveled with their families. Martha Washington traveled with General George Washington much of the time. She kept his headquarters clean. She arranged for the officers' laundry to be washed, dried, and ironed. She gathered needed supplies. She saw to it that decent meals were prepared. She tended to the sick and wounded. She cried and prayed with members of the men's families. It seemed that when anything needed to be done for the men, Martha Washington saw that it was taken care of.

When the Revolutionary War was over and the colonists had freed themselves from British rule, Martha returned to her beloved Mount Vernon. She now took on the responsibility of raising two of her grandchildren. In 1789, George Washington was again called to serve his country. This time he was asked to become the first President of the United States. George and Martha traveled to New York City, the capital of this new country. They spent the next eight years as America's first couple. Martha again earned the respect and love of her countrymen. The couple returned to Mount Vernon after George Washington had completed two terms as president. Martha died in 1802, three years after her greatly loved husband.

Martha Washington

Questions

1. Martha Dandridge was born in England.
   A. true
   B. false
Name: ________________________________________________________________________________

2. Martha was raised to be the First Lady of the land.
   A. true
   B. false

3. What job did Martha's first husband have?
   A. plantation manager
   B. military
   C. town clerk
   D. delegate to the Continental Congress

4. How many of Martha's children lived?
   A. three
   B. four
   C. one
   D. two

5. How did Martha Washington help her husband during the Revolutionary War?
_____________________________________________________________________________________

6. What conclusion can you draw about how the colonists felt about Martha Washington?
_____________________________________________________________________________________

7. What was the first capital of the United States?
   A. Washington, D.C.
   B. New York City
   C. Philadelphia
   D. Mount Vernon

8. Martha Washington died before her husband.
   A. true
   B. false
The Intolerable Acts

After the American colonists dumped 342 crates of tea into Boston Harbor in 1773, King George and Parliament agreed that the colonists must be punished for their mischief. In 1774, Parliament created five laws called the Coercive Acts. The colonists called them the Intolerable Acts because they felt that they were too cruel to be accepted.

Act I-The Boston Port Act: Until the East India Tea Company was paid in full for the crates of tea it had lost during the Boston Tea Party, the port of Boston was to be closed to all sea traffic. This caused a great hardship to the colonists who made their living fishing the Atlantic waters and trading with foreign countries and other colonies.

Act II-Massachusetts Government Act: In 1691, the colony of Massachusetts wrote a charter giving the colony the right to make its own laws and govern itself. The people took great pride in their ability to function without the help of England. The Massachusetts Government Act took the right of self-government away from them.

Act III-Administration of Justice Act: This act allowed any British official accused of a crime in the colonies to be sent back to England for trial instead of having to face a hostile jury in America.

Act IV-The Quartering Act: The Parliament had already made it mandatory for colonists to house British soldiers in their homes back in 1765. This new act allowed the governor of Massachusetts to take control of any tavern or unoccupied building in the colony for the purpose of quartering British troops.

Act V-The Quebec Act: This act actually had nothing to do with the citizens of Boston or Massachusetts. Parliament merely used the opportunity to increase the boundaries of the Canadian province of Quebec which Britain also claimed.

In 1772, Samuel Adams had asked the people of Boston to set up a committee to "state the rights of the colonists." The idea caught on in other colonies, and by 1774 all but one of the colonies, Pennsylvania, had formed a group called the Committees of Correspondence. These committees wrote to each other keeping each of the colonies informed of any political activities going on in their area that might affect the other colonies. When the British closed the port of Boston, they thought that it would cause the rebellious colonists to bend to their rules. The closing of the port would deny the people of Boston the goods that they had grown to depend on from trade. The closing would keep many of the colonists from earning a living by fishing or ship building. The Committees of Correspondence saw the effect that this act might have on Boston and, in turn, the other colonies, so they collected goods and money which they sent to the people of Boston. They supported the colonists in their refusal to pay the British for the destroyed tea. The colonies were beginning to work together.
2. Who had the most power to make laws in England, Parliament or the king?

3. King George III chose an official to help him. His name was _____.

4. According to the story, where did the colonists believe their rights came from?

5. Name two things the Stamp Act taxed.

6. Name one effect of the Stamp Act in the colonies.

7. How long did the Stamp Tax stay in force?

8. Write a brief summary of this piece.