Colonial Williamsburg Offers Citizenship Lesson as “Gift to the Nation” for Constitution Day

Electronic Field Trip “A More Perfect Union” Offered at No Cost from Sept. 6 through 30

In a scene from the Electronic Field Trip “A More Perfect Union,” Mark Schneider portrays James Madison, one of the delegates to the Virginia Ratifying Convention, who met in a theater in Richmond to accommodate the large number of spectators who wanted to watch the ratification proceedings.

(To obtain these images, contact Penna Rogers at (757) 220-7121 or progers@cwf.org.)

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. – In honor of Constitution Day, Colonial Williamsburg is providing at no cost its electronic field trip “A More Perfect Union” to any school in the country from Sept. 6 through Sept. 30. The Emmy-winning program examines what happened when the newly drafted Constitution was sent to the states for ratification.

“Our education for citizenship initiative seeks to engage young people in the crucial role they play in the future of their country,” said Colin Campbell, Colonial Williamsburg’s president and chief executive officer. “If recent national testing statistics are any indication, we are failing as a nation to prepare students adequately for that role, and we must act to change that if our republic is to survive. Through online and on-site experiences, Colonial Williamsburg is
committed to helping future generations learn from the past and assume the responsibilities of citizenship in the 21st century.”

By 1787, the young United States government under the Articles of Confederation was in trouble. It lacked enough money to meet expenditures and relied on the unanimous support of the states to approve many of its important decisions. Convened to address these and other shortcomings in the Articles of Confederation, delegates from the fledgling states instead drafted an entirely new constitution.

Through the eyes of young observers tallying the votes, viewers of “A More Perfect Union” learn that the states debated many issues that were essential to the creation of our nation. As the young witnesses discover, although the Constitution was not perfect, it laid the foundation for a strong republic through compromise on important issues – a timely lesson with contemporary relevance.

As a gift to the nation, Colonial Williamsburg is providing the “A More Perfect Union” electronic field trip streaming video, teacher guide and student Web activities, including the opportunity to email Benjamin Franklin, free of charge to any school, home school family or individual interested in learning more about the story of the ratification of the U.S. Constitution. To register, log on to http://giftnation.history.org/ and follow the instructions. The program will be available free from Sept. 6 to 30. After that time, it will be available for $120 per school as part of Colonial Williamsburg’s 2011–2012 Electronic Field Trip series.

Colonial Williamsburg’s Electronic Field Trips are meticulously researched and intentionally non-partisan programs that tell the stories of our country’s founding and span a broad range of historical subjects from colonial times to the present day. Broadcast one Thursday each month from October through April at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. Eastern time on participating public television stations and cable channels across the country, the distance learning programs are targeted to grades 4–8.

For teachers, each electronic field trip is supported with multi-disciplinary lesson plans, interactive student resources, program scripts and other materials to make history exciting and relevant for students. These Web-based resources have been developed by teachers, historians and museum educators and address national standards for civics education and 21st-century skills as well as state standards for social studies, technology and language arts. Selected programs also correlate to additional state standards.

The National Capital Chesapeake Bay Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences recognized Colonial Williamsburg with an Emmy for “A More Perfect Union” in the category of children/youth 12-and-under, single story or series in 2010. The program premiered Nov. 19, 2009.

For more information about electronic field trips, visit www.history.org or call 1-800-761-8331, or e-mail eftsupport@cwf.org. Colonial Williamsburg’s Electronic Field Trip series is supported in part by the William and Gretchen Kimball Young Patriots Fund.

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation is the not-for-profit educational and cultural institution dedicated to the preservation, interpretation and presentation of the restored 18th-century Revolutionary capital of Virginia. Colonial Williamsburg is committed to expanding its thought-provoking programming through education outreach on site and online. Purchase of Colonial Williamsburg products and services supports the preservation, research and educational programs of the Foundation. Philanthropic support by individuals, corporations, and foundations benefits the educational mission of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.
Williamsburg is located in Virginia’s Tidewater region, 20 minutes from Newport News, within an hour’s drive of Richmond and Norfolk, and 150 miles south of Washington, D.C. For more information about Colonial Williamsburg, call 1-800-HISTORY or visit Colonial Williamsburg’s website at www.colonialwilliamsburg.com.

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