

George Washington on Display

by Jill Cross

Background: This series of lessons is meant to be used after an in-depth study of George Washington. The focus of this project is the creation of an exhibition to showcase students' knowledge of George Washington. Students will use sources utilized in a George Washington unit to inform their exhibition decisions. Lessons that could be taught before the exhibition include a virtual visit to Mount Vernon/online webquest, reading a painting, reading a document, and reading an object. Information on exercises like this can be found at <http://historyexplorer.si.edu/PrimarySources.pdf>. Before introducing the learning activities, decide on a space for the exhibition within your school. It would be beneficial to invite a museum professional to speak to the students about how objects are selected for exhibitions or make this part of your class visit to a local museum. Exhibition images can also be found online on most museum websites and on Flickr to broaden students' understanding of what a museum is and does.

Grade Level: 5th and up

Learning Outcomes:

Students will be able to

- Communicate visually, orally, and in writing to support exhibit content.
- Read a painting, object, and document related to George Washington.
- Write exhibit captions and labels.
- Use a museum website
- Develop, install, and present a school-based museum exhibit
- Work in a team
- Select appropriate visual text to support exhibit
- Use elements of art in exhibit creation
- Apply 21st century skills to the research, planning and creation of a school based exhibit

Duration of Unit: 4-7 days

Materials: Listed under the lesson plans

Learning Activities:

1. Personal Experiences and Memory (1 class session)

- Lead students in a discussion that focuses on the following questions.
 1. What is your favorite museum? Why?
 2. What is your favorite museum exhibition? Why? Describe it.
 3. What is your favorite 'thing' you have seen in a museum? Why? Describe it.

- Chart responses for reference later.
- 2. Visit a Museum:** Visit a local museum, preferably a history museum and use the attached investigation guide to introduce students to museums. See Appendix 1. Review investigation guides with class when students return from the museum visit.
 - 3. On View in a Museum:** If you haven't done a virtual visit to Mount Vernon or the Smithsonian Museum of American History this could be completed between lessons 2 and 3. Using the chart in Appendix 2, students list different kinds of museums. They list and describe the exhibitions you may find in the museums. They also list the kinds of objects they may find in this exhibition (artifacts, art, etc.). If students are stumped, provide them with virtual visits to other major museums or share museum exhibition catalogs which can usually be found in local libraries. Be sure to include National Parks, zoos, aquariums, and gardens if not mentioned by students.
 - 4. Inside a Museum** (1 class session): If students spoke with a museum professional, remind them of this experience. Ask students "Why do you think we have museums?" Chart answers. Then ask students to list possible museum jobs and describe. Chart this as well.
 - 5. Artifact Analysis** (1 class session): Introduce the Material Culture Analysis worksheet to students (Appendix 4). Model artifact analysis using George Washington's dentures.



Source:

<http://emuseum.mountvernon.org/code/emuseum.asp?style=browse¤trecord=1&page=search&profile=objects&searchdesc=teeth&quicksearch=teeth&sessionid=A3EE1C9D-E525-4CAD-B96A-F3776F01F3C4&action=quicksearch&style=single¤trecord=5>

Then allow students to practice the process of artifact analysis in small groups with the following items:



Source:

<http://collections.si.edu/search/results.htm?tag.cstype=all&q=george+washington&start=40>. Record: nmah_434863



Source:

<http://emuseum.mountvernon.org/code/emuseum.asp?style=browse¤trecord=9&page=search&profile=objects&searchdesc=Clocks,%20Watches,%20and%20Scientific%20Equipment&searchstring=classification/,/is/,/Clocks,%20Watches,%20and%20Scientific%20Equipment/,/true/,/false&sessionid=A06ECEB2-E3FA-4C3B-BB39-A0B86AD3E51C&action=advsearch&style=single¤trecord=12>



Source:

<http://emuseum.mountvernon.org/code/emuseum.asp?style=browse¤trecord=1&page=search&profile=objects&searchdesc=Clothing,%20Jewelry,%20and%20Personal%20Accessories&searchstring=classification/,/is/,/Clothing,%20Jewelry,%20and%20Personal%20Accessories/,/true/,/false&sessionid=D06804F6-6F05-4C85-9D0A-376EDD34B7A0&action=advsearch&style=single¤trecord=8>

Each small group shares out their artifact analysis with the whole class.

6. Brainstorming (may take up to 4 class sessions)

Materials:

- Large chart paper or art paper
- Large, medium, and small sized Post-It notes
- Markers

Explain to students they will be creating an exhibition on George Washington for their school and community. Ask them to think about all the things they would like the public to know about George Washington. List as many ideas as possible on the small Post-It notes and place them on the chart paper. Encourage students to talk about their choices as they are placed on the chart paper.

Review descriptions of the exhibitions/objects listed in the previous exercise to teach the exhibition audience about Washington. Now invite students to imagine they have a limitless budget to create their exhibition. What resources would they include? What objects/artifacts? What people would they invite to be part of the exhibition? They can choose to include the Landsdowne portrait, Washington's dentures, a Mount Vernon interpreter/tour guide, an archaeologist, or even Mount Vernon itself. They can also include any type of technology they would like to include. List these resources (artifacts, people, events, and performances) on the small Post-It notes as well and place on the chart.

Ask students to look at their brainstorming and attempt to place the Post-It notes into categories or groups. The teacher may want to suggest the following categories: objects, places, people, technology, etc. if students are struggling. They could also use verbs to categorize. These verbs would describe how visitors will interact with the resources. Have students group related artifacts and resources and then label categories with the medium sized Post-It notes. Teacher assists in this process as necessary.

Go back to the categories and look over the small Post-It note ideas that are within each category looking for connections between them all. What is the main idea students want to tell their audience about George Washington? This will become the Big Idea of the exhibit. Guide students in seeing connections if necessary. Then, students brainstorm a title for their exhibition. The title is written on a large Post-It note and placed on the chart.

Students are then asked to leave 2-3 ideas within each category that are attainable. Students will need to ask themselves these questions: If you can't include the real Mount Vernon in your exhibition, could you include a model? If you can't include a real artifact, would a reproduction or image of the artifact serve the same purpose? If you can't include the real George Washington, can a student be George Washington? Can a student/s recreate a famous work of art for the exhibition? Two to three ideas stay on the chart paper under each category and new ideas may need to be listed on small post-it notes.

7. Design and Production

Materials:

- Measuring tape
- Clipboards, paper, pencils
- Markers
- Exhibition creation materials as needed (cardboard, construction paper, art supplies, digital photos, etc.)
- Washington research material (non-fiction books, primary source reproductions, internet access, etc.)

Visit the area that will be used for the student exhibition on George Washington. Divide students into small groups and have them map out the area, measuring and drawing the area for future reference. Remind them to note any doorways, bulletin boards, obstructions, etc.

Return to class and discuss the limitations of the space and the brainstorming chart. Recreate the map of the location on an additional chart paper and then ask students to rearrange the Post-It notes within the map. Arrange the order of artifacts and resources to indicate how visitors will move through the exhibition. Draw a path and label entrance and exit. Place the title Post-It note at the entrance.

Decide on a color scheme, symbol, and other design ideas for the exhibition.

Refer back to the “Inside a Museum” activity completed with students. Look over the list of museum jobs created and make a list of George Washington exhibition jobs. Allow students to choose job groups to work on various aspects of the exhibition. Do not forget to include marketing, docents, and installers. Decide as a class which group will work on the elements that will be included in the exhibition. Refer back to the exhibition map as needed.

Meet with each group to discuss their approach, materials needed, or research options. Some students may need to collaborate with the media specialist, art, or music educators in the school. Schedule computer research time if necessary.

Schedule an official exhibition opening and have the student marketing group create flyers and send invites to parents and community members.

Allow students time to install.

8. Exhibition Opening: Open the exhibition to fellow students, families, and community members. Student docents can serve as tour guides.

Assessment: Use exhibit rubric to assess students’ understanding and creation of the exhibition. See Appendix 3.

Additional Resources to Consult

- The Museum Book: A Guide to Strange and Wonderful Collections, by Jan Mark
- Museum Trip, by Barbara Lehman
- You Can’t Take a Balloon Into the Metropolitan Museum of Art, by Jacqueline Weitzman
- Working at a Museum, by Arthur L’Hommedieu
- What Happens at a Museum, by Lisa M. Guidone
- Who Cleans Dinosaur Bones? Working at a museum, by Margie Markarian
- How to Take Your Grandmother to the Museum, by Lois Wyse
- How the Sphinx Got to the Museum, Jessie Hartland

- Learning on Display: Student Created Museums That Build Understanding, by Linda D'Acquisto
- Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery George Washington: A National Treasure
- <http://georgewashington.si.edu/>
- Deterioration squad: <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/nof/agents/>
- Ask a Curator: <http://www.askacurator.com/home.html>
- Preservation:
http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/starspangled/Preservation_and_Light.pdf
- Star Spangled Banner Project/Smithsonian:
http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/starspangledbanner/pdf/SSB_Museums_K_2.pdf
- Mount Vernon Object Spotlight:
<http://www.georgewashingtonwired.org/category/object-spotlight/>
- Smithsonian National Museum of American History Behind the Scenes/Exhibitions:
<http://www.georgewashingtonwired.org/category/object-spotlight/>
- Mount Vernon Objects Page: <http://emuseum.mountvernon.org/code/emuseum.asp>

Standards

Common Core

RI.5.9. Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

W.5.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

W.5.7. Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

SL.5.5. Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, sound) and visual displays in presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.

Appendix 1

Museum Investigation Guide

Spend a few minutes walking through the galleries. Observe all of the different ways that information is shared with visitors. (wall panels, videos, objects). List a few that you find. Discuss what you find with your group.

Choose one exhibit/gallery/room. Let's take a closer look.

What exhibit/gallery/room did you choose?

Why did you choose this exhibit/gallery/room?

List some of the objects in this exhibit/gallery/room.

How are these objects alike?

What does the exhibit tell us?

How are the objects in this exhibit explained? (wall labels, video, audio clips)

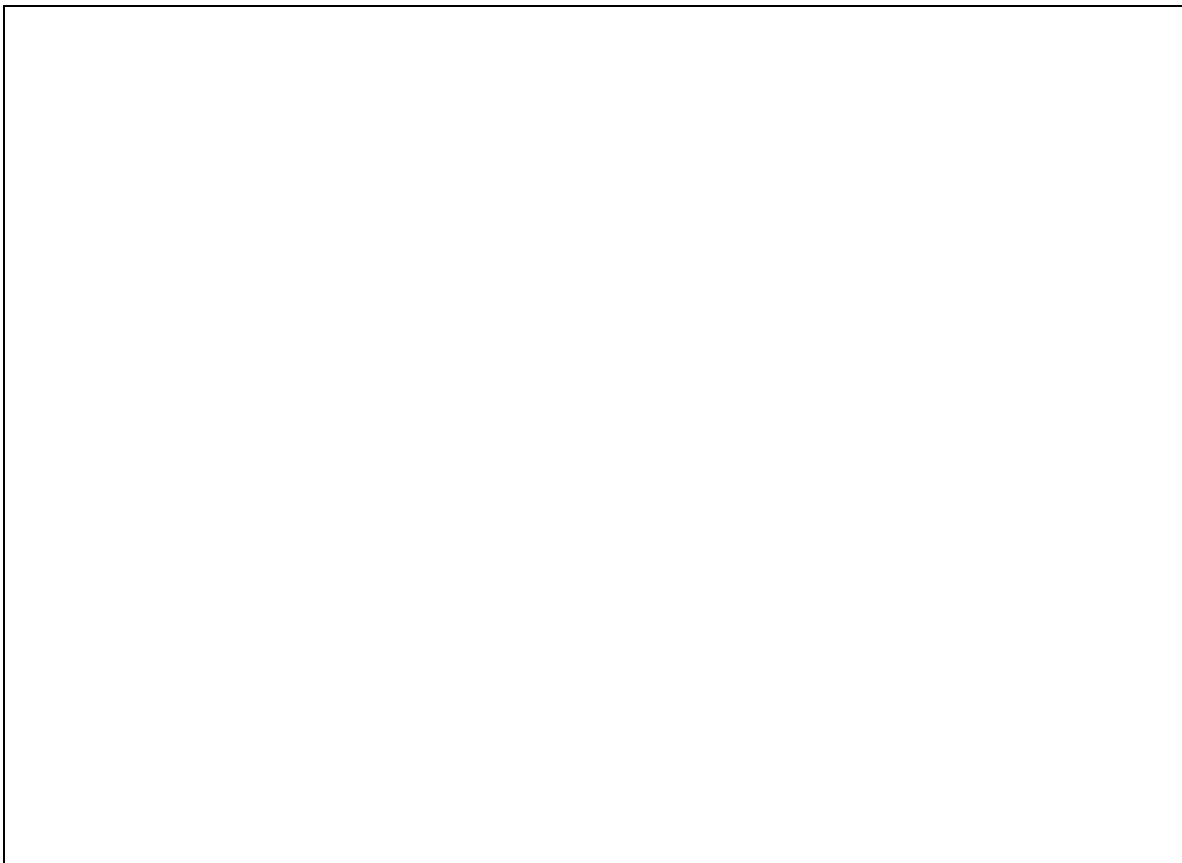
Are objects arranged in any particular order? Do they make a scene or tell a story?

Where are objects placed? (in a case, on a platform, on the wall)

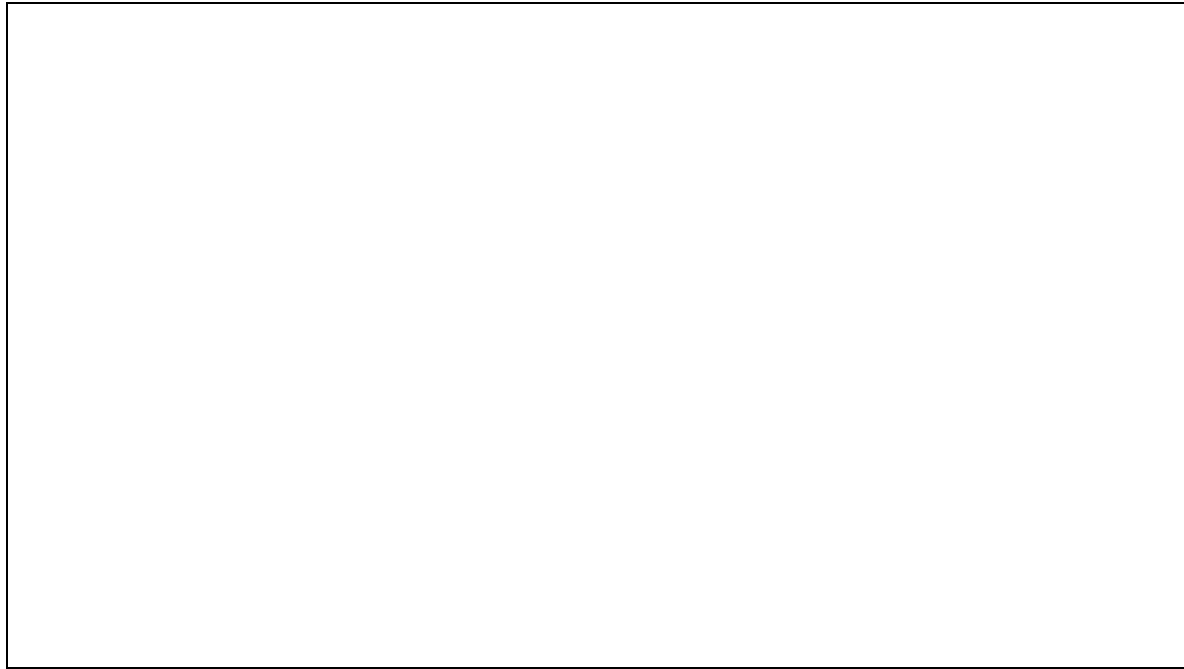
What are the main colors in this exhibit?

Does the exhibit have a symbol or a mascot?

Sketch it here



Make a quick sketch of the exhibit. Make sure to include the objects, wall labels, entrance, and exit.

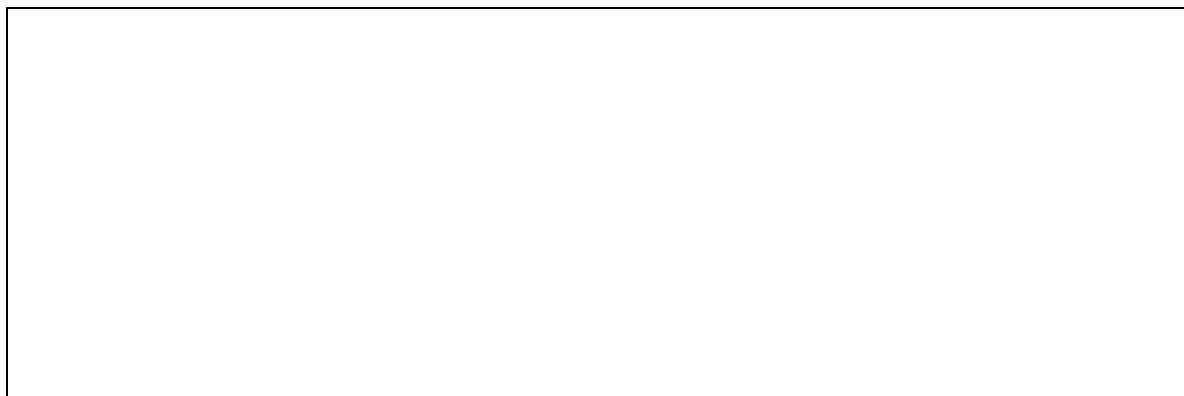


Choose one object for closer observation. Let's take a closer look.

Which object did you choose?

Use the object label to find out one interesting fact about your object and write it here:

Sketch the object in this box.



Choose one wall panel. Let's take a closer look. Wall panels are larger than object labels. The title tells you what the written information on the panel will be about. Wall panels

often have photos, artifacts, quotes, drawings, letters, timelines, or other important objects on them or nearby that relate to the written information.

What is the title of the wall panel you chose?

Read the wall panel and list one interesting fact that you learned.

Appendix 2

Museums	Exhibits	Objects, Artifacts, Art, Other...

Appendix 3

Exhibit Rubric

Category	10-9 points	8-6 points	5-3 points	2-0 points
Exhibit Quality	Exhibits contain historical evidence that supports Big Idea or supporting idea your group was responsible for.	Most of the exhibits contain historical evidence that supports the Big Idea or supporting idea your group was responsible for.	Some of the exhibits contain historical evidence that supports the Big Idea or supporting idea your group was responsible for.	There are historical inaccuracies. Few of the exhibits support the Big Idea or supporting idea your group was responsible for.
Visual Appeal	Exhibits effectively use a variety of elements. Exhibits are organized and displayed artfully and professionally.	Exhibits have a variety of elements. Exhibits are artfully done.	Exhibits have very few elements and are artistically bland.	Exhibits look unprofessional.
Group Interaction	Group members worked consistently and purposefully	Group members worked in a mainly consistent and cooperative way, and generally kept on task.	Group members were not always consistent and often got off task, but were cooperative	Group members were not cooperative with each other and were rarely on task and rarely consistent in their work.
Individual Contribution	Contributed at all stages of the project. Shared equally in the planning, research, and design.	Contributed at some stages of the project. Shared equally in some planning, research, and	Contributed at few ideas at few stages of the project. Did not assist in either the research,	Contributed few ideas at some stages of the project. Did no share equally in the responsibility of

	Effectively completed the responsibilities of assigned role.	design. Met most of the responsibilities of assigned role.	planning, or design, did not meet some of your responsibilities in your assigned role.	design, planning, and research. Met very few of your requirements in your assigned role in the project.
Object Display	Artifacts are related to the groupings and convey exhibit Big Idea or supporting ideas. Objects are placed in visually appealing arrangement.	Some artifacts are related to the groupings and convey Big Idea or supporting ideas. Objects are somewhat placed in a visually appealing arrangement.	Few artifacts are related to the groupings and do not always convey Big idea or supporting ideas. Objects are rarely placed in a visually appealing arrangement.	Artifacts are not connected to the groupings, Big Idea, or supporting ideas. Objects are not in a visually appealing arrangement.
Signage/Wall Labels	Visual devices and labels communicate a clear message and /orenhance the content or flow of the exhibition. Signage and wall labels are set at eye level and are presented in various formats.	Most visual devices and labels communicate a clear message and enhance the content or flow of the exhibition. Most of the signage and/or wall labels are set at eye level and are usually presented in various formats.	Some visual devices and labels communicate a clear message and/or enhance the content or flow of the exhibition. Some of the signage and wall labels are set at eye level. Format is redundant.	Visual devices and labels do not communicate a clear message and/or enhance the content or flow of the exhibition. Signage and wall labels are not set at eye level. Format is redundant.

Appendix 4

<p>Characteristics: What can you tell about this object's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Materials?• Design?• Age?• Value?	<p>Interpretations:</p>
<p>Function: What do you think is its intended purpose? How would one use it?</p>	<p>Interpretations:</p>
<p>Context: What does it tell you about the people who made it? What does it tell you about those people who used it? In what time period would this object be used? Under what circumstances was it used?</p>	<p>Interpretations:</p>
<p>Comparison: Do we use something similar today? If so, what?</p>	<p>Interpretations:</p>
<p>Additional Thoughts: What else would you like to know about this object? Is there anything else you observe?</p>	<p>Interpretations:</p>