



NSDAR Educational Resources Committee

Happy Birthday, US Army - George Washington Takes Command

Contributor: Barbara Genter Davis **Grade Level:** 5-8 grades

1. Identify the standards to be addressed:

Reading:

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.1 - Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.2 - Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.3 - Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.

Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.4 - Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 5 topic or subject area.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.5 - Compare and contrast the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.6 - Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.8 - Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point(s).

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

Writing:

Text Types and Purposes:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1 - Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1.a - Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion. And create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to the writer's purpose.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1.b - Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1.d - Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

Production and Distribution of Writing:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.4 - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

<https://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/5/>

Social Studies:

National Standards for Historical Thinking: HI Historical Habits of Mind - 1.2 Historical Analysis and Interpretation
U3 USHG ERA 3 Revolution and the New Nation (1754-1800)

U3.1 Causes of the American Revolution: Identifying the major political, economic, and ideological reasons for the American Revolution

5 - U3.1.4 Describe the role of the First and Second Continental Congress in unifying the colonies (addressing the Intolerable Acts, declaring independence, drafting the Articles of Confederation).

5 - U3.1.6 Identify the role that key individuals played in leading the colonists to revolution, including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams, John Adams, and Thomas Paine.

5 - U3.1.8 Identify a problem confronting people in the colonies, identify alternative choices for addressing the problem with possible consequences, and describe the course of action taken.

<https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/Year/2008/03/28/5thgradeSSGLCE.pdf?rev=b2f78b9d102d4c2c942f827fbc90de28>

2. **Statement of the objective and lesson outcomes:**

Primary source documents assist readers in understanding the point of view of a writer. The words, phrases, and tone used by a writer help readers to gain insight into the impact that historical events had on the individuals who were experiencing those events.

Students will analyze two primary source documents to determine the author's point of view toward the event about which he has written. Students will respond to their analysis of the documents by writing an opinion paragraph. Students will defend their opinion about the author's point of view at the time during which the documents were written. Students will use information quoted from the texts to support their opinion.

3. **Materials, resources, and technology to be used by teacher/students:**

1. Textbook pages (if applicable) about the Second Continental Congress and George Washington's appointment as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army

2. Background information to read with students:

[Appointment as Commander in Chief - Mount Vernon](#)

[Siege of Boston - Mount Vernon](#)

3. Optional video clips - [George Washington's Appointment - John Adams Miniseries](#)

[Liberty's Kids - The Second Continental Congress](#)

[George Washington, A Novice General](#)

[George Washington and the Continental Army](#)

4. Primary source documents - create copies for each student:

[Letter from George Washington to Burwell Bassett 19 June 1775](#)

[Letter from George Washington to Martha Washington 23 June 1775](#)

5. Document Analysis Worksheet [Primary Source Document Analysis Worksheet](#)

6. Opinion Position Paragraph Worksheet [Opinion Position Paragraph Worksheet](#)

4. **Introduction of the topic:**

In the years following the French and Indian War (1754-63), Britain faced enormous debt and looked to the Colonies to pay this debt. For years, Britain levied ever increasing taxes on trade and commerce which caused, in turn, ever increasing unrest among the Colonies. This frustration was escalated by the lack of representation in

Parliament, commonly referred to as “taxation without representation.” By April 1775, this situation had reached a breaking point. Patriot leaders had trained militias to prepare for armed conflict. On April 18, 1775 Patriots Paul Revere and Williams Dawes left Boston and rode to Concord to warn of an impending British attack. On April 19, this attack erupted into open conflict in the towns of Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts, marking the start of the American Revolution. Though defeated in Lexington, the colonial militia prevailed in Concord, resulting in the British retreat back to Boston.

The Second Continental Congress began on May 10, 1775. The Continental Army was formed to represent the Thirteen Colonies on June 14, 1775 by a resolution during the Second Continental Congress. George Washington was elected the Commander-in-Chief the following day.

5. Procedure for instruction:

1. Begin the lesson by reading background information from a textbook (if available), or from the information provided in the resource list above. This information will help to set the stage for the necessity of forming the Continental Army in June 1775. The content will also explain the decision to appoint George Washington as Commander in Chief.
2. Pass out “Primary Source Document Analysis Worksheet” to each student. Guide students through the components of the worksheet to familiarize them with the information they will be gathering from the primary source documents.
3. Introduce the lesson’s two primary source documents.
4. As a class, work together to complete the top portion of the worksheet to determine the type of documents being studied, the date each one was written (note the closeness of the dates), the recipients, and the author of the documents.
5. Read each document aloud with the students, beginning with George Washington’s letter to Burwell Bassett. Focus specifically on the first paragraph of this letter. Clarify questions that students may have regarding text specific terminology in the letter.
6. Continue reading the second document, George Washington’s letter to Martha Washington, aloud with the students.
7. Students will now work individually, or with a partner, to re-read each document.
8. Students will be looking for, and underlining, key phrases in the text to help determine George Washington’s state of mind as he was preparing to take command of the Continental Army: Phrases that exhibit expressions of confidence should be underlined in blue. Phrases that exhibit expressions of concern should be underlined in red.
9. After underlining expressions of confidence and concern, students will select particular phrases directly from the text as examples of each point of view. Students will record examples of their selected text evidence on the “Primary Source Document Analysis Worksheet.”
10. Based on the text evidence that students collect from both documents, they will begin to form an opinion about George Washington’s state of mind regarding his appointment as Commander in Chief of the Continental Army.
11. Each student will decide if George Washington’s letters showed that he felt more confidence or more concern about his appointment as Commander in Chief. Students will write an opinion paragraph to state their position and support their choice.
12. Give each student a copy of the “Opinion Position Paragraph Worksheet.” Students will use this template as a format for writing their opinion paragraph.

Lesson closure:

Students will share their opinions by moving to one side of the classroom: One side of the room = students who said that GW was mostly confident, and the other side of the room = students who said that GW was mostly concerned. Students will share their most conclusive examples of text evidence they used to determine their opinion.

Follow up questions -

Did the letters exhibit similar or different points of view?

Why might GW have written letters with such different points of view when they were written within 5 days of each other? Was GW's point of view different based on who the recipient of the letter was?

Why? How would you have felt if you were in George Washington's position? Would you have felt more confidence or more concern with the situation at hand?

6. Assessment of Understanding:

Student assessment of understanding will be based on participation and completion of the "Primary Source Document Analysis Worksheet," and upon completion of a well-written opinion paragraph following the provided "Opinion Position Paragraph Worksheet." The opinion paragraph must include a strong statement of opinion, accurate examples of text evidence which clearly support the position taken, and a strongly worded restatement of opinion.

From George Washington to Burwell Bassett, 19 June 1775

Philadelphia, June 19th 1775.

Dear Sir,

I am now Imbarkd on a tempestuous Ocean from whence, perhaps, no friendly harbour is to be found. I have been called upon by the unanimous Voice of the Colonies to the Command of the Continental Army—It is an honour I by no means aspired to—It is an honour I wished to avoid, as well from an unwillingness to quit the peaceful enjoyment of my Family as from a thorough conviction of my own Incapacity & want of experience in the conduct of so momentous a concern—but the partiality of the Congress added to some political motives, left me without a choice—May God grant therefore that my acceptance of it may be attended with some good to the common cause & without Injury (from want of knowledge) to my own reputation—I can answer but for three things, a firm belief of the justice of our Cause—close attention in the prosecution of it—and the strictest Integrity—If these cannot supply the places of Ability & Experience, the cause will suffer, & more than probable my character along with it, as reputation derives it principal support from success—but it will be remembered I hope that no desire, or insinuation of mine, placed me in this situation. I shall not be deprivd therefore of a comfort in the worst event if I retain a consciousness of having acted to the best of my judgment.

I am at liberty to tell you that the Congress in Committee (which will, I daresay, be agreed to when reported) have consented to a Continental Currency, and have ordered two Million of Dollars to be struck for payment of the Troops, and other expences arising from our defence—as also that 15,000 Men are voted as a Continental Army, which will I daresay be augmented as more Troops are Imbark'd & Imbarking for America than was expected at the time of passing that Vote.¹ As to other Articles of Intelligence I must refer you to the Gazettes as the Printers pick up every thing that is stirring in that way. The other Officers in the higher departments are not yet fixed—therefore I cannot give you their names.² I set out to morrow for Boston where I shall always be glad to hear from you;³ my best wishes attend Mrs Bassett—Mrs Dandridge⁴ & all our Relations and friends—In great haste, as I have many Letters to write and other business to do I remain with the sincerest regard Dr Sir Yr Most Obedt & Affecte Hble Servt

Go: Washington

P.S. I must Intreat you & Mrs Bassett, if possible, to visit at Mt Vernon as also my Wife's other friends—I could wish you to take her down, as I have no expectations of returning till Winter & feel great uneasiness at her lonesome Situation⁵—I have sent my Chariot & Horses back.⁶

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-01-02-0006>

George Washington's Letter to Martha Washington

Phila. June 23d 1775.

My dearest,

As I am within a few Minutes of leaving this City, I could not think of departing from it without dropping you a line; especially as I do not know whether it may be in my power to write again till I get to the Camp at Boston—I go fully trusting in that Providence, which has been more bountiful to me than I deserve, & in full confidence of a happy meeting with you sometime in the Fall—I have not time to add more, as I am surrounded with Company to take leave of me—I retain an unalterable affection for you, which neither time or distance can change, my best love to Jack & Nelly, & regard for the rest of the Family concludes me with the utmost truth & sincerety Yr entire

Go: Washington

George Washington wrote this letter to his wife, Martha, before departing Philadelphia for the American camp in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The letter reveals the private side of Washington, a side rarely seen in his daily correspondence. After his death in 1799, Martha Washington destroyed all the letters written between herself and George Washington. Three letters survived the destruction, including this letter and another that were found in a desk drawer by Martha's granddaughter Martha Parke Custis Peter.

<https://www.mountvernon.org/education/primary-source-collections/primary-source-collections/article/george-washington-to-martha-washington-june-23-1775>

Name(s): _____

Primary Source Analysis Worksheet

	Document #1	Document #2
Title of Document		
Type of Document		
Date Written		
Name of Author		
Name of Recipient		

Statements exhibiting confidence (BLUE)	<u>Document #1</u>	<u>Document #2</u>
1.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
2.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
3.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
4.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
5.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Statements exhibiting concern (RED)	<u>Document #1</u>	<u>Document #2</u>
1.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
2.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
3.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
4.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
5.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Based on the text evidence you collected, do you think George Washington's point of view about becoming the Commander in Chief of the Continental Army showed that he had more **CONFIDENCE** or more **CONCERNS** about his new position?

Write a sentence stating your opinion:

Name: _____

Opinion Position Paragraph Worksheet

On the template below, write an opinion paragraph to answer the following question:

Based on the letters George Washington wrote in June 1775 to Burwell Bassett and Martha Washington, do you think his point of view showed that he had
more confidence or more concern in his appointment as Commander in Chief of the new
Continental Army?

Your opinion paragraph needs to include the following sentences -

1. Strong statement of your opinion (answer to the question above):

2. First example of support for your opinion (quote 1st example of text evidence and explain how it supports your opinion):

3. Second example of support for your opinion (quote 2nd example and explain):

4. Third example of support for your opinion (quote 3rd example and explain):

5. Strong re-statement of your opinion (write sentence #1 in a new way):

7. Students will now work individually, or with a partner, to re-read each document.
8. Students will be looking for, and underlining, key phrases in the text to help determine George Washington's state of mind as he was preparing to take command of the Continental Army:
Phrases that exhibit **expressions of confidence** should be underlined in **blue**.
Phrases that exhibit **expressions of concern** should be underlined in **red**.
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How would you have felt if you were in George Washington's position? Would you have felt more confidence or more concern with the situation at hand?

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