

Lesson Twenty-Two

George Washington

LESSON IDEA

To demonstrate how the courage, wisdom, and integrity of George Washington were formed in his early years.

PREPARATION

Collect pictures of George Washington from library books or textbooks, illustrating his early years and young manhood. There is, for example, an excellent portrait of young Washington on the cover of *The Making of George Washington* by William H. Wilbur.

WHEN IT CAME to washing behind his ears, wiping his feet, and bringing garter snakes into the house, George Washington was little different from other boys. He received his share of switchings from his mother, woodshed sessions with his father, and scolding and correction from both. Together, August and Mary Washington prepared their tall, muscular son to become America's first great soldier and statesman — and the Father of his Country.

The Washingtons lived a simple life on a farm in Virginia. An inventory of their household goods taken in 1743 revealed a modest and crowded dwelling. For example, three beds are listed in the parlor, along with one old table, three ancient chairs, an old desk, window curtains, and a sugar box. There were no rugs, carpets, glittering silver tea services, or niceties for social entertaining — no wines, liquors, coaches, or carriages.

Meals were simple affairs, typically consisting of cornmeal cakes with milk for breakfast; meat, fowl, or fish with vegetables for the mid-day dinner; and corn cakes, milk, and sometimes noon-time leftovers for the evening supper. Simple desserts were served on Sundays. Both August

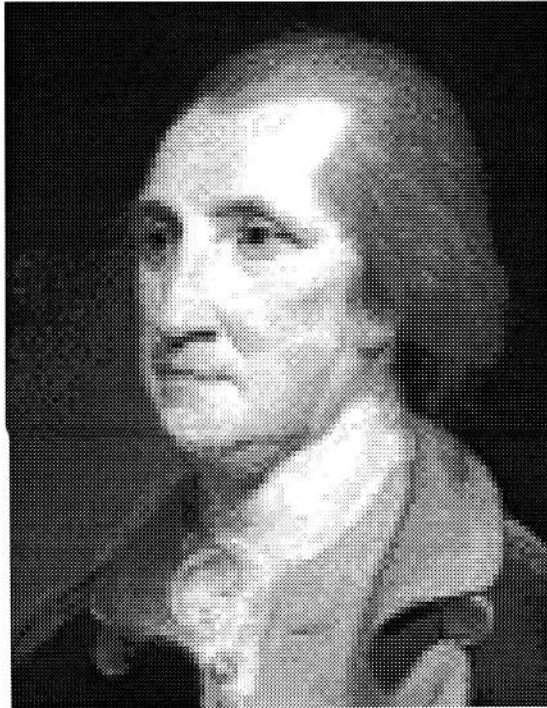
and Mary believed heavy eating dulled the mind and slowed the muscles. Hard work was a Washington standard.

AT AN EARLY AGE George was sent to the tobacco fields with the black workers to hoe weeds and kill the ugly, fat, white worms that devoured roots of the young plants. August Washington believed that one must first learn a job himself before becoming a supervisor. Time spent in the fields was also a time for lessons and conversation between father and son. As they walked about the farm or rode into town, young George solved math problems, learned geography, and discovered the meaning of Bible passages.

August Washington placed a high value on education. In his early years, he had acquired a superior basic education (especially in mathematics and history) at Appleby Grammar School in England. He also developed sound study habits which enabled him, after returning to Virginia, to build on the Appleby foundation. August Washington was considered to be a well-educated man. George's two older stepbrothers (August's sons by an earlier marriage) were also sent

to Appleby after their mother died. Upon their return, they tutored young George.

On most days, George was up by 4:00 a.m., working on his lessons for an hour or two before breakfast. Often, he studied by himself in the little hut that his father had built for a farm office. The habit of working without immediate supervision, coupled with his responsibility for daily assignments, did much to his strong, independent



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