

Part B: Becoming a Leader

The conflict that Americans call “the French and Indian War” played a pivotal role in the life of George Washington. As Washington himself recalls in his “Remarks,” his experiences were dramatic and life-changing. At the beginning of the conflict, Washington was an inexperienced young officer. Just a year later, he was acclaimed a hero after the Battle of the Monongahela, or “Braddock’s Defeat.”

By reading the “Remarks,” written when Washington was in his fifties, students will visit key moments in Washington’s life during the French and Indian War. They will see Washington as a widely known military officer devoted to furthering his reputation and serving his country, England. They also will see a man who suffered both defeat and glory and who matured during this time. The war laid the foundations for the person George Washington would become: family man, farmer, visionary entrepreneur, statesman, general, and first president of the United States.



For Part B, Level One use Resource Pages 9–11 and Images 2, 7–10 on the CD-ROM.

Level One (Grades 4-6)

Getting Started

1 To visualize how George Washington changed as he grew up, ask students to compare the picture of Washington as a young surveyor (**Image 2: Washington as a Young Surveyor**) with a painting of him in the Battle of the Monongahela (**Image 7a: Washington at the Battle of the Monongahela**) just seven years later. Remind students of how young Washington is in both scenes (16 and 23 years old respectively) and ask them

to speculate on how different he seems in the two images. Ask them to imagine themselves in each situation. Tell the class that they are going to find out what it was like to be in that battle scene; they’ll see how far away the soldier was from the boy who worried about fleas and lice!

2 To prepare students for this “close up” study of Washington’s experiences, either teach or review the subject of the French and Indian War, using your text or other classroom resources.

3 As an additional resource on the war and Washington, distribute **Resource Page 9: Timeline: George Washington and the French and Indian War**. Suggest that students use the timeline as a mini-biography that will provide background knowledge to the readings.

GOALS

In Part B students will:

Expand knowledge of Washington’s young adult years

Examine Washington’s role in pivotal events of the French and Indian War

Explore Washington’s reactions to key experiences as described in the “Remarks”

Analyze historical perspective as reflected in a memoir

Answer the Focus Question: How did Washington’s experiences in the French and Indian War prepare him for his role as a military leader?



“...from 1754 to 1759, Washington spent the bulk of his time west of the Blue Ridge, leading a series of expeditions into the Ohio Country that served as crash courses in the art of soldiering. They also provided him with a truly searing set of personal experiences that shaped his basic outlook on the world.”

Joseph J. Ellis,
*His Excellency,
George
Washington*

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The excerpts in Part B come from the manuscript historians call the “Remarks.” The “Remarks” were written by Washington when he was in his fifties, shortly before he became the country’s first president. The manuscript consists of comments about a biographical manuscript submitted to him by his close friend David Humphreys. Washington intended his comments for Humphreys’ eyes only. Be sure that students understand that the “Remarks” are a primary source, as much as a personal letter or journal entry.

4 Invite students to continue to add to and change entries on the Who Was George Washington? chart, which they began in Part A.

5 Tell students that they are going to learn, in Washington’s own words, of his first experiences in defending his country. Note that in a little more than 20 years, George Washington would be the most important military leader in America. Post the *Focus Question* for this investigation: *How did Washington’s experiences in the French and Indian War prepare him for his role as a military leader?*

Reading and Reflecting

At the Start of War

1 Explain that on May 28, 1754, George Washington and his men were involved in a minor skirmish with the French in the woods near Great Meadows, Pennsylvania. It was during this skirmish that the first shots of the French and Indian War were fired. Tell the class that Washington believed the French would counterattack and so, out of necessity, he had his soldiers erect a protective stockade, which he called Fort Necessity. Show students **Image 8: Fort Necessity Today**, explaining that this re-creation from a film shows George Washington in front of a reconstruction of the fort on the original site. Discuss with students what kind of protection they think this would have provided. *(Based on the photograph of the reconstructed Fort Necessity, students should see that the fort was hastily erected and would have offered little safety.)*

2 Tell students that in early July the French did counterattack, and Washington found himself involved in the first major battle of the war. This was also Washington’s first true battle experience, and the first time he was in command. Washington did not emerge a victor or hero. Instead, he was defeated by the French and their Indian allies and forced to surrender. So that students can visualize the scene, distribute or display **Image 9: The Battle at the Great Meadows**, which shows Robert Griffing’s painting “A Charming Field for an Encounter.”

3 Distribute copies of **Resource Page 11: At the Great Meadows, 1754** and tell students that they are going to hear Washington’s own recollections of this battle. Provide some background on the “Remarks” (see boxed text above, and page 30 in this Guide) before students study the adapted version. Ask students to imagine being there as you read

the excerpts aloud to the class. Then have students work in pairs to answer the Guided Reading Questions.

4 Copy the sequence below so that students can follow it as they reread the account. Display or distribute **Image 10: Map of the War at the Forks of the Ohio, 1754–1758**, so that they can track the actions on the map.

Sequence Chart:

- **Troops marched from Winchester, Virginia, toward the Forks of the Ohio.**
- **Washington learned that the French had taken Fort Duquesne (the post at the meeting of the Forks of the Ohio).**
- **Washington’s troops fell back to the Great Meadows.**
- **On May 28, they skirmished with a party of French soldiers sent out from Fort Duquesne.**
- **Washington’s troops built Fort Necessity.**
- **The French attacked on July 3.**
- **There was heavy rainfall.**
- **The French offered terms of surrender.**
- **Washington accepted terms of surrender.**
- **Next morning (July 4) Washington and troops retreated.**

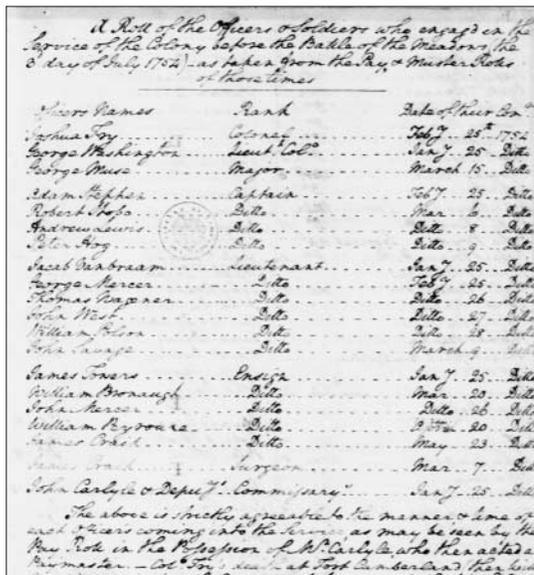
5 After students have read the excerpts, pose the following questions for discussion. Ask students to cite evidence in their answers and to keep in mind the Focus Question.

~According to his “Remarks,” how did Washington feel about his situation at the Great Meadows? (*Washington reported the details about the battle unemotionally, in a matter-of-fact manner. He appears to believe that he did the best job possible. Before the rain, he said, his men were capable of defending the fort. Remind the students that Washington was jotting down notes here, concerned with recording his impressions of the battle.*)

~Why did Washington surrender? (*He saw no signs of improving his situation. The soldiers were out of supplies and food, and a large number of officers and soldiers were killed or wounded. Washington appears realistic rather than desperate.*)

~What kind of leader does Washington appear to be? (*Washington described himself as the brave, aggressive leader at the beginning of the confrontation. He and his men attacked and were successful, forcing the French to gather all their forces and counterattack. It was not until Washington found himself in an unfortunate location and plagued by heavy rains that he had to surrender, according to his account. Washington accepted responsibility for the troops’ actions and their predicament, and in doing so showed leadership qualities.*)

~Do these excerpts change your image of Washington? (*In revealing the “ups and downs” of the encounter at the Great Meadows, Washington appears human. Not everything came easily to him. He also appears to be a compassionate leader. Washington recognized defeat, acknowledging that many of his men had been killed or wounded and that they could not have survived much longer.*)



This record of the First Virginia Regiment, written in April 1771, lists the officers and men in the regiment before the Battle at the Great Meadows in 1754.



Artist Robert Griffing took the title of his painting from Washington’s comment that the Great Meadows was “a charming field for an encounter.”

Explain that Washington for the most part describes himself in the third person (“he”) in the “Remarks,” because he was responding to a biography written in the third person.

The Young Hero

1 Explain to students that after the battle at Fort Necessity, George Washington hoped to improve the status of his soldiers, the Virginia Regiment. He wanted his colonial troops to become part of the regular British Army. As an officer in the regular British Army, Washington's own rank would have been higher, too. Instead, he learned that the Virginia Regiment would be dispersed. A proud Washington resigned from the military, but was not out of service for long. He knew the military life was a good way to get ahead. Less than a year after Fort Necessity Washington signed on as a volunteer with British General Braddock's campaign to oust the French from the Ohio River Valley. (You might want to ask the students if they agree with these decisions—to resign and then to volunteer.) Washington played a major role in the campaign. Although the campaign failed, Washington survived and became a hero. Shortly afterwards, Washington took over the command of the reorganized Virginia forces.

2 To set the scene, display the two paintings in **Image 7: The Battle of the Monongahela** from the Image Gallery. Distribute copies of **Resource Page 12: The Battle of the Monongahela, 1755** and have students read the adapted version of the excerpt to themselves first and then answer the questions on the handouts. Washington's recollection of the events at what is called "Braddock's Defeat" makes dramatic reading, to say the least. Although there are words and references that your students may not understand, they should grasp the confusion, danger, and bravery that Washington described. The painting "Defeat of General Braddock" (**Image 7b**) presents an especially dramatic visual scene of the defeat.

3 Have students locate key sites on **Image 10: Map of the War at the Forks of the Ohio, 1754–1758**. Then, working in pairs, students should reread the account of "Braddock's

Defeat" and make sequence charts of the excerpt's account. Charts should include:

SEQUENCE CHART

- **Washington resigned from military, then volunteered for the Braddock campaign.**
- **He tried unsuccessfully to convince Braddock and officers how best to fight the enemy.**
- **The attack at the Monongahela happened on July 9.**
- **Troops panicked.**
- **Washington offered to lead troops in a different style of fighting but his offer was not accepted in time.**
- **Braddock and other commanding officers were wounded.**
- **Washington survived under heavy fire and led the retreat.**
- **Braddock died and was buried by Washington.**

4 Pose the following questions for discussion. In their answers, students should cite evidence from the documents. They will also need to keep in mind the Focus Question.

~Based on these excerpts, what did Washington think of himself and his decisions? (*He was angry about the military situation that led him to resign; was happy that he had the opportunity to impress Braddock. He seems sure of himself—thought that his opinion about attacking the French and Indians was right. He was opinionated, as well as arrogant about British attitude. He probably felt very lucky to have survived unhurt.*)

~Does Washington seem eager to get ahead and please his superiors? Did he want to be a leader? (*Yes. He wanted a higher rank. He was proud that Braddock noticed him. He admitted that he wanted to impress the general and the principal officers. He voiced his opinions about*

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improving the troops' situations. Washington also took charge when the general and his aides were wounded and the troops were in a state of confusion without leadership.)

~Was Washington successful as a leader? *(Yes and no. Washington voiced his opinions about when and where to attack but his superiors did not listen to him or immediately recognize that his opinions were valid. But Washington was lucky in battle. Unwounded, Washington rose to the occasion and took charge, especially overseeing the burial of General Braddock.)*

~Can you put yourself in George Washington's shoes? *(Have students ever felt unappreciated, felt that they deserved something but a less qualified person was selected? Have they ever felt that their opinions were not taken seriously? Have they ever been the only one to handle a difficult situation, to have others rely on them?)*

Pulling It All Together

1 Have students review the excerpts on **Resource Pages 11 and 12** to consider how Washington changed over the course of a little more than one year, 1754–55. Have them consider the following questions in order to write a short essay on Washington the Young Leader. Remind students of the Focus Question; they should conclude their



essays by analyzing how Washington's leadership as a young soldier prepared him for the roles he would play later on.

~Was Washington ambitious? *(Washington was determined to fight the enemy at the Great Meadows and only surrendered because of location [without defenses] and weather. Afterwards, Washington was not discouraged and resigned from the military rather than accept a lower rank. Washington volunteered again for active duty, and to please his superiors, voiced his opinions about military strategies. He was determined to succeed in battle, but he also was determined to succeed personally—to be noticed. After Braddock was wounded, Washington stepped in and took charge, handling difficult situations and decisions.)*

~Did he grow as a military leader? *(From his defeat at the Great Meadows, Washington understood that in order to succeed in battle one must know the enemy. Based on his prior knowledge, he understood during Braddock's Defeat how and from where the French and their Indian Allies would fight. In all the excerpts Washington never questioned his abilities. He was fully capable of being a leader. Washington also recognized that a leader must accept responsibility—whether in defeat at the Great Meadows or in difficult situations at Braddock's Defeat.)*

~Was Washington a successful military leader as a young man? *(Yes. Washington learned from his mistakes at the Great Meadows and emerged a hero after Braddock's Defeat, mostly because he miraculously survived and because he showed that he was brave and competent.)*

2 Ask for volunteers to read their short essays out loud. In a class discussion have students consider ways in which Washington changed as he experienced the war and ways he remained the same.

A detail from Junius Brutus Stearns' painting of the Battle of the Monongahela.



The CD activity Interactive Learning Journey: Exploring the French and Indian War allows students to consider the who, why, what, and how of the war in a digital exploration.