

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CHERRY TREE

LEVEL:

Upper Elementary School, Middle School

TIMEFRAME:

30 minutes

OBJECTIVES:

Students will conduct research individually and cooperatively on George Washington's life.

Students will describe the concept of a myth and analyze the myths that surround George Washington.

Students will use a graphic organizer to analyze a painting in teaching teams.

STANDARDS:

- Colonial America
- Civic Values and Social Norms
- Explain Changing Perspectives
- Using Multiple Historical Sources

PROCEDURE:

1. Hold a class discussion in which you ask students to define the concept of a myth. If they need help, remind them that the word myth comes from the Greek word *mythos* which means "story". Check for understanding by asking for examples of myths and identifying qualities make these myths.
2. Show students the video *George Washington and the Cherry Tree* (1 minute):
https://youtu.be/tFx0NChJ_xA.
3. Provide students with copies of the handout *Bulls Eye Organizer* (included in ZIP file download). Allow students ten minutes to fill in their Bulls Eye with information about George Washington. The center of the Bulls Eye is for information they are certain is true about George Washington, the next ring for information they think is true and the outer ring is for questions that they have.
4. Allow students ten minutes to discuss the Bulls Eye in small groups. Students should initial facts in the inner circle on their classmates' Bulls Eyes that they agree with. Instruct students to also pay attention to information on their classmates' Bulls Eyes that supports their own statements about George Washington and/or answers their questions in the outer circle.
5. Create a large Bulls Eye organizer on a chalk board, smartboard, or butcher paper. Ask students to share what they have discovered about George Washington. Research the information included to verify what is written on the board or butcher paper.

6. Hold a class discussion using the following prompts:
 - a. *Did we discover any myths about Washington?*
 - b. *What were these myths?*
 - c. *How is what we know about George Washington different from the myth of George Washington?*
7. Distribute the handouts *Parson Weems' Fable* and *O.P.T.I.C. Organizer Explanation*, as well as the worksheet *O.P.T.I.C. Organizer* (included in ZIP file download). Explain to students that they will analyze the painting, which depicts one of the most notable myths about George Washington, using an O.P.T.I.C. Organizer (or another visual analysis worksheet of your choice). They may work individually or in groups. Discuss findings as a class.
8. Write the quote below by Nathaniel Hawthorne on the board. As a class, discuss how this quote is related to the painting.

George Washington "was born with his clothes on and his hair powdered and made a stately bow on his first appearance in the world."

OPTIONAL EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

1. Assign the following writing prompt to your students:

Why is it inaccurate to believe that George Washington never told a lie or that he was born a perfect person? How can it limit our study of George Washington, or other historical figures, when we believe that they never made mistakes or encountered failure?

Allow students to utilize the following sources to help answer the questions:

Biography of George Washington:

<http://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/biography/>

Key Facts About George Washington:

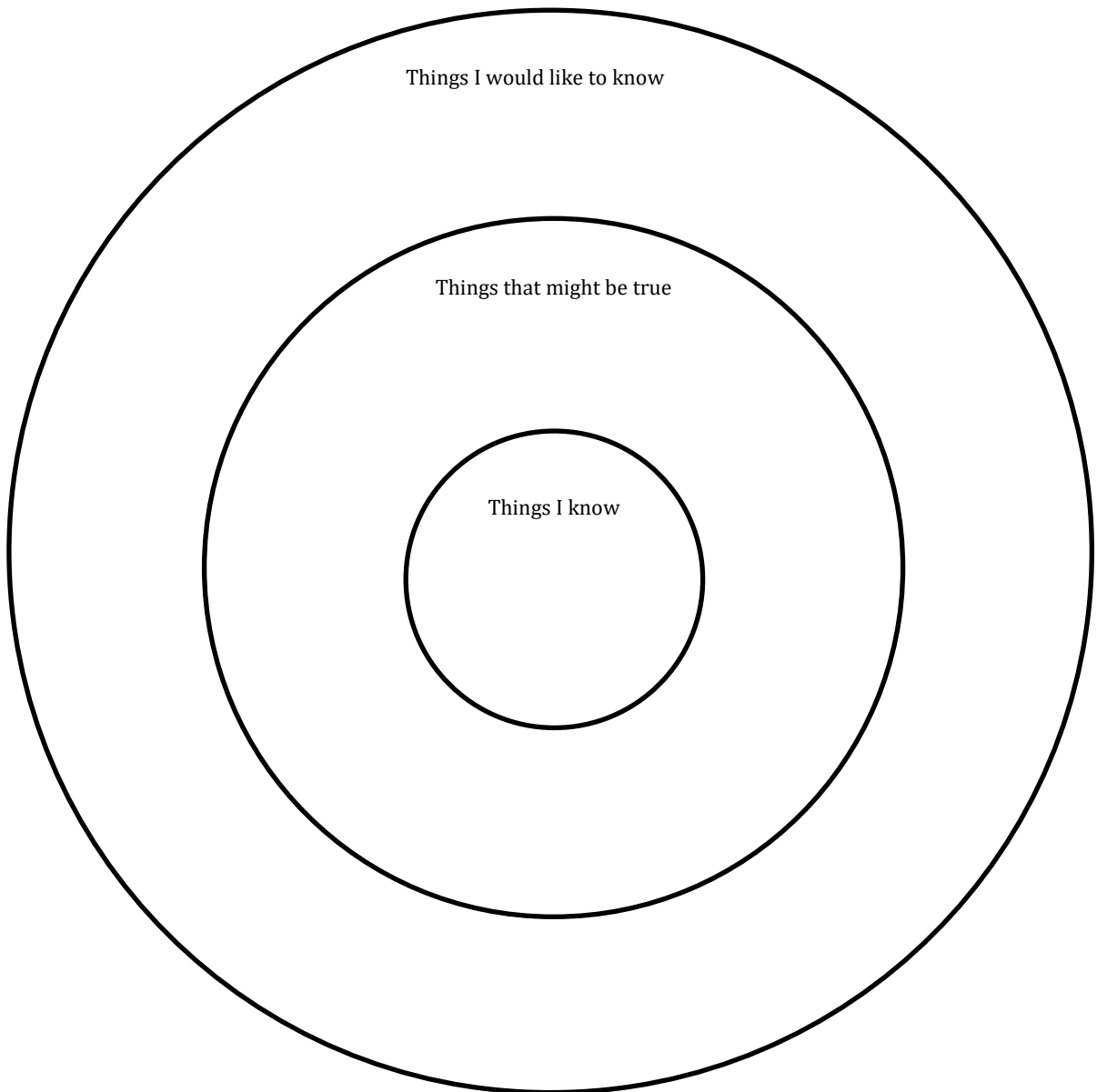
<http://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/key-facts/>

The Cherry Tree Myth:

<http://www.mountvernon.org/digital-encyclopedia/article/cherry-tree-myth/>

Transcript Of An Interview With Phil Levy:

<http://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/the-man-the-myth/where-the-cherry-tree-grew-an-interview-with-phillip-levy/>



HANDOUT: THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CHERRY TREE

The Parson Weems' Fable, Grant Wood, 1939

Source Type: Painting

Courtesy of Amon Carter Museum



O for Overview

- Conduct a brief overview of the subject of the visual.

P for Parts

- Look closely at the parts of the visual and write down any details that seem important.

T for Title

- Read the title and write it down.

- If there is no title, what do you think it should be?

I for Interrelationships

- Use any words in the visual, title, or caption to determine connections and relationships in the picture.

- What actions are taking place between people, places or things? Use verbs to describe the actions.

C for Conclusion

- What is the overall meaning of the visual?

- Why is it important?

THE O.P.T.I.C. STRATEGY

Analysis of Visual and Graphic Texts

OVERVIEW:

Conduct a brief **OVERVIEW** of the visual or graphic. This should be in the form of a brief description or summary.

PARTS:

Key in on the **PARTS** of the image by reading the visual as a text. You should be looking for specific details or for literary techniques such as imagery, simile, metaphor, symbol, and irony.

TITLE:

Read the **TITLE** or caption of the visual (if one is present) so that you are clear on the subject it is covering.

INTERRELATIONSHIPS:

What action is going on in the visual? Use the title as your theory and parts of the visual as your clues to detect and specify the **INTERRELATIONSHIPS** in the graphic.

CONCLUSION:

What is the visual trying to show or teach us? Draw a **CONCLUSION** about the visual as a whole by stating its theme or the argument it is making.

GROWTH MINDSET

WHAT IS A GROWTH MINDSET?

Each of us has an attitude toward learning. We either possess a “fixed” or a “growth mindset”. The concepts of a fixed and growth mindset were developed by psychologist Carol Dweck and popularized in her book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. Dweck theorizes that if our mindset is “fixed” we believe that our talent or intellectual abilities are fixed and cannot change no matter how much hard work or effort we put into developing them. People with fixed mindsets shy away from challenges because poor performance could confirm that they are “dumb” or less intelligent than they think. If they already see themselves as “smart”, they are unwilling to challenge themselves because they believe they cannot afford to fail. People with a “fixed” mindset make excuses for themselves and do not take responsibility for their learning.

On the other hand, someone with a “growth” mindset believes that intelligence is not static and can be increased throughout the span of your life. According to Carol Dweck, “In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment.” Students who have a growth mindset view challenges and failures as opportunities to improve their learning and skills. Rather than excuse makers, they become problem solvers.

Teachers can promote a growth mindset by rewarding and praising effort. They shy away from making blanket statements, such as “You are a genius”, and instead focus on the effort put forth in learning a new concept or skill. In a growth mindset classroom, students are taught how to set goals and achieve them so that the learning process truly becomes a lifelong pursuit.