



Choose Your Weapon: **George Washington's Five Swords**

Students will learn...

- The importance of swords in the 18th c.
- To analyze objects as primary sources
- Cooperation and working as a team

You will need...

- Pictures of Washington's Five Swords
- Portraits of Washington Activity Sheet & Answers
- Object Description Worksheet
- Sword Fun Facts Cards Handout
- Slips of paper with 1-5 written on them

Opener: Match the Sword to the Painting

- Give your students copies of Washington's portraits and his five swords for them to match the sword to the picture.
- Ask your students to look at the dates of the portraits and the swords- do they all correspond? Are some of the portraits inaccurate? Could another sword have been chosen? Why might an artist choose to paint one sword over another?
- Explain the importance of swords in 18th century life:

Task: Choosing a Sword

- Divide your students into groups of five.
- Give them five worksheets (one for each sword) and ask them to fill out the information. At this time, they should all be working together.
- Also, give them the Sword Fun Facts Cards, so they can learn more about the swords.
- After they have finished their worksheets have them randomly pick a slip of paper with a number 1-5 on it.
- Explain that in Washington's will, he wished each of his five nephews to choose one of his swords to inherit. He also assigned the order in which they were supposed to choose. The number each student took shows the order in which they will pick a sword.
- First, they should discuss with each other their first choices and make a case to the rest of the group on why they should get it. Then they will choose their swords.
- Finally, have them write a paragraph or two on why they chose their sword (even if they didn't get their first or even fourth choice) and what it represents to them.

Swords were more than mere weapons- they were a fashion statement and reflected a person's rank. A majority of the time, swords would have remained in their scabbard and not be used. Despite that, a military man would always have a sword on him in battle and for ceremonies. Each day, Washington had to decide which sword to wear. His choice was not just a reflection of himself, but the importance of the situation he was in and the others present.

Closer: Reflections

- Ask each group what the most popular sword was. Was there any consensus? Why? What made a sword popular or not?
- Ask if they honored each others' preferences or not?