

COLONIAL ENCOUNTERS IN THE OHIO COUNTRY: GEORGE WASHINGTON AND NATIVE AMERICANS IN THE OHIO COUNTRY

LEVEL:

Middle/High School

TIMEFRAME:

Approximately two class sessions

OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to analyze various primary sources, identify key elements of those sources, and make a reasonable claim based on their analysis of the sources.

Students will be able to create an evidence-based concluding interpretation based on the primary sources that interpret George Washington's views of Native American tribes and the land they occupied.

STANDARDS:

- Colonial America
- Native Americans
- Analysis of Primary Sources
- Integrate Evidence of Multiple Primary Sources into a Reasoned Argument about the Past
- Evaluation of Primary Sources
- Speaking and Listening
- Working in Groups

LESSON HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Unlike other U.S. Presidents of the founding era, George Washington had direct connections with Native Americans; specifically, tribes in the Ohio Country (the Delawares, Mingoes, Shawnees, Wyandots, and Miamis) and the Six Nation (or Iroquois) Confederacy (Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora). Washington's encounters were on matters of military, diplomacy, surveying, and land speculation. He had limited time observing or interacting with Native American families and their day-to-day routines. This meant that he was not well-versed in these diverse cultures. However, he did have more personal experience to directly inform his opinions in contrast to subsequent Presidents. As the historian Colin Calloway put it, "Virginians like Washington who ventured there [the Ohio Country] were like blind men feeling an elephant: they touched the edges of an Indian world they could barely imagine..."¹

¹ *The Indian World of George Washington*, Colin G. Calloway, page 41.

CULTURAL CONTEXT:

Washington's account are not presented here to reinforce stereotypes about Native Americans either in the 18th century or in contemporary society.

WARM UP

1. Hook Activity: *The Ohio Country?*
 - a. Read the *Lesson Historical Background* to the students
 - b. Hand out to students or display for all students to see, the *Map of the Western parts of the COLONY of VIRGINIA, as far as the Mississippi*
<https://collections.leventhalmap.org/search/commonwealth:hx11z4254>
 - c. Have students identify key geographic and ethnic elements of the map.
 - d. Discuss, as a class, where the "Ohio Country" is today.

PROCEDURE:

1. **Essential Question:** *How did George Washington view Native American tribes in the Ohio Country?*
 - a. Present the Essential Question to the class and ask students what they might expect.
2. **Lesson Activity #1:** *First Encounters in the Ohio Country*
 - a. Place students into groups of two or three.
 - b. Distribute Activity #1
 - c. As a class, read through and discuss the historical background for the activity and the activity instructions.
 - i. Please refrain from giving too much interpretation of the documents; instead allow the students to make their own interpretations.
 - d. Allow students time to work through the activity.
 - e. **Important:** Be mindful of the 18th century notions of racial bias against American Indians and how that is reflected in Washington's language. Your students should be able to reference these terms as examples of Washington's views, but should not think they are acceptable ways to talk about indigenous people in the past or in today's world.
3. **Lesson Activities #2:** *War in the Ohio Country*
 - a. Have students remain in their groups from Activity #1.
 - b. Distribute Activity #2: War in the Ohio Country
 - c. As a class, read through and discuss the historical background for the activity and the activity instructions. *This step is the same as the previous activity; you may wish to skip it.*
 - i. Please refrain from giving too much interpretation of the documents; instead allow the students to make their own interpretations.
 - d. Allow students time to work through the activity.

4. **Lesson Activities #3: *The West: The Ohio Country and Native Americans***
 - a. Have students remain in their groups from Activity #1.
 - b. Distribute Activity #3: The West: The Ohio Country and Native Americans
 - c. As a class, read through and discuss the historical background for the activity and the activity instructions. *This is the same as the previous activity; you may wish to skip it.*
 - i. Please refrain from giving too much interpretation of the documents; instead allow the students to make their own interpretations.
 - d. Allow students time to work through the activity.
 5. **Whole class discussion:**
 - a. As a class, discuss the essential question, “How did George Washington view Native American tribes in the Ohio Country?”
 - i. Make certain that as students discuss these questions, they are defending their claims with evidence from the documents.
 - b. In addition, ask students, “How might these experiences shape Washington’s Native American Policies as President?”
 - i. Make certain, that as students discuss these questions, they are defending their claims with evidence from the documents.
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ACTIVITY #1: FIRST ENCOUNTERS IN THE OHIO COUNTRY

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

How did George Washington view Native Americans tribes in the Ohio Country?

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

At the age of 17, George Washington made his trip into Western Virginia, on the edge of The Ohio Country. He was sent to survey the land with George Fairfax (son of Thomas Fairfax, sixth Baron Fairfax). As Washington states, “Began my Journey in Company with George Fairfax Esqr. [Esquire]: we travell’d this day 40 miles...”

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

1. As a group, read through each diary excerpt of George Washington.
2. For each diary entry, identify three key words to summarize Washington’s view of Native Americans and the Ohio Country.
 - a. Justify your choices and be prepared to discuss your choices with the class.
3. Make a claim by answering the Essential Question after analyzing the primary source excerpts.

PRIMARY SOURCE

DIARY ENTRY: *George Washington's Diary Entry: March 14 and 23, 1748* [excerpted]

Monday [March] 14th [1748]. We sent our Baggage to Capt. Hites (near Frederick Town) went ourselves down the River about 16 miles to Capt. Isaac Penningtons (the Land exceeding Rich & Fertile all the way produces abundance of Grain Hemp Tobacco &c.) in order to Lay [survey] of some Lands on Cates Marsh & Long Marsh.

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Justify your group's selection of these words:

Wednesday [March] 23rd [1748]. Rain'd till about two oClock & Clear'd when we were agreeably surpris'd at the sight of thirty odd Indians coming from War with only on Scalp. We had some Liquor with us of which we gave them Part it elevating there Spirits put them in the Humour of Dauncing of whom we had a War Daunce. There Manner of Dauncing is as follows Viz. They clear a Large Circle & make a great Fire in the Middle the seats themselves around it the Speaker makes a grand Speech telling them in what Manner they are to Daunce after he has finish'd the best Dauncer Jumps up as one awaked out of a Sleep & Runs & Jumps about the Ring in a most comicle Manner he is followed by the Rest then begins there Musicians to Play the Musick is a Pot half of Water with a Deerskin Stretched over it as tight as it can & a goard with some Shott in it to Rattle & a Piece of an horses Tail tied to it to make it look fine the ones keep Rattling and the other Drumming all the While the others is Dauncing.

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Justify your group's selection of these words. Be mindful of the 18th century notions of racial bias against American Indians and how that's reflected in Washington's language:

What were Washington's views of Native Americans and the Ohio Country? Support your claim with evidence from the documents.

ACTIVITY #2: WAR IN THE OHIO COUNTRY

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

How did George Washington view Native Americans and the Ohio Country?

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

In 1754, George Washington was a 22-year-old that had already led one successful expedition into the Ohio Country the year before, with the assistance of local Native American tribes. As a Major in the British Army, he delivered a message to the French at Fort LeBoeuf [near present day Erie, Pennsylvania]. However, his return trip to the Ohio Country was disastrous. After Washington's humiliating defeat at Fort Necessity, which had helped to ignite the French and Indian War, and the calamitous defeat of Braddock's army, George Washington was ordered to defend the British frontier from the French and their Native American allies. But Washington still had much to learn about the French, the Native Americans nations, and diplomacy in the Ohio Country.

Activity Instructions:

1. As a group read through each letter excerpt of George Washington.
2. For each excerpt identify three key words to summarize Washington's view of Native Americans in the Ohio Country.
 - a. Justify your choices and be prepared to discuss your choices with the class.
3. Make a claim by answering the Essential Question after analyzing the primary source excerpts.

PRIMARY SOURCE

LETTER: *George Washington's Letter to Robert Dinwiddie: June 3 and 10, 1754* [excerpted]

DIARY: *George Washington's Diary Entry: June 18, 1754* [excerpted]

To Robert Dinwiddie [Lieutenant Governor of Virginia]

Honble Sir

From our Camp &ca June 3d 1754

Monacatoocha was sent by the Half King [Tanaghrisson] of the Seneca Tribe] abt 5 Nights ago to the Logs Town with 4 French Scalps two of which was to be sent to the Wyendotts &ca and the other two to the 6 Nations telling them that the French trickd them out of their Lands for which with their Brother's the English who joyn'd hand in hand....

Montour [Andrew Montour—Oneida/French interpreter] would be of singular use to me here at this present, in conversing with the Indians for I have no Person's that I can put any dependence in: I make use of all the influence I can to engage them warmly on our side, and flatter myself that I am not unsuccessful, but for want of a better acquaintance with their Customs I am often at a loss how to behave and should reliev'd from many anxious fear's of offendg them if Montour was here....

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Justify your group's selection of these words

To Robert Dinwiddie

Honble Sir

[10 June 1754]

I am very thankful to your Honour for ordering an assortment of Indian goods, which we daily find still more necessary—I shall take care while they are under my direction that they are judiciously applied...Mssr [Monsieur or Sir] Croghon [Indian Agent and Onongaga Council Sachem/Leader], and Montour, by whom I shall be advised in all Indian affairs...He [Monacatoocha] set of from the Logs Town abt 5 Nights ago, with the French Scalps and four Hatchets with which he intended to visit the 4 Tribes of Indian's between this and Lake Irrie, and present each Tribe a scalp and Hatchet...that they expected as the English and Six Nations had hand in hand struck the French...and join our Forces.

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Justify your group's selection of these words:

PRIMARY SOURCE

LETTER: *George Washington's Letter to Robert Dinwiddie: June 3 and 10, 1754* [excerpted]

DIARY: *George Washington's Diary Entry: June 18, 1754* [excerpted]

George Washington, Speech to the Indians, On the March to Red Stone, June 18, 1754

Brethren: We are very glad to see you, and sorry that you are disquieted by such reports that: The English intend to injure you, or any of your allies; this report we know must have been forged by the French, who are always treacherous...they speak well, promise fine things, but all from the lips only...they returned to their natural pride and drove you off your lands, declaring you had no right on the Ohio. The English, you real friends, are too generous to think of ever using the Six Nations...the Governors of Virginia and Pennsylvania sent an army to maintain your rights; to put you again in possession of your lands, and to take care of your wives and children, to dispossess the French, to maintain your rights and to secure the whole country for you...To assure you of my sincerity and esteem I present you this belt of wampum. [Wampum belts were used to signify trust or agreement.]

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Justify your group's selection of these words:

**What were Washington's views of Native Americans and the Ohio Country?
Support your claim with evidence from the documents.**

ACTIVITY #3: THE WEST AND OHIO COUNTRY

Essential Question:

How did George Washington view Native Americans in the Ohio Country?

Historical Background:

After the defeat of the French and their Native American allies during the French and Indian War, the British Colonies settled into a patriotic calm. As Washington noted in April of 1763 in a letter to Robert Cary and Company of London, with whom he did a great deal of business,

“We are much rejoiced at the prospect of Peace which ‘tis hoped will be of long continuance, and introductory of mutual advantages to the Merch’t [Merchant] and Planter, as the Trade to this Colony will flow in a more easy and regular Chan’l [Channel] than is has...”¹

Washington was also looking west to the land of the Ohio Country to expand his wealth. However, in order to keep the peace between encroaching colonists and sovereign Native American nations, King George III issued the Royal Proclamation of 1763, thwarting colonial expansion westward. In November of 1768, the Treaty of Fort Stanwix gave Washington, and others the opportunity for land and settlement they were seeking in the Ohio Country from the Six Nation Confederacy. By 1770, George Washington would once again be in the Ohio Country.

Activity Instructions:

1. As a group, read through each letter and diary excerpts of George Washington.
2. For each excerpt, identify three key words to summarize Washington’s view of Native Americans and the Ohio Country.
 - a. Justify your choices and be prepared to discuss your choices with the class.
3. Make a “Final” claim by answering the Essential Question after analyzing all of the primary source excerpts.

¹ *George Washington to Robert Cary & Co., April 26, 1763*
<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-07-02-0125>

PRIMARY SOURCE

LETTER: *George Washington's Letter to William Crawford: September 21, 1767* [excerpted]

DIARY: *George Washington's Diary Entry: October 19, 21, and 27, and November 17, 1770* [excerpted]

**George Washington to William Crawford,
Mount Vernon, September 21, 1767**

Dear Sir:

The other matter, just now hinted at which I proposed in...attempting to secure some of the most valuable Lands in the King's part [land west of the Proclamation line/Ohio Country.] which I think may be accomplished after a while notwithstanding the Proclamation that restrains it at present and prohibits the Settling of them at all for I can never look upon that Proclamation in any other light...than as a temporary expedient to quiet the Minds of the Indians and must fall of course in a few years especially when those Indians are consenting to our Occupying the Lands. Any person therefore who neglects the present opportunity of hunting out good Lands...will never regain it....

By this time it may be easy for you to discover, that my Plan is to secure a good deal of Land....

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Justify your group's selection of these words:

Friday [October] 19th [1770]. Recd. A Message from Colo. [Colonel] Croghan, that the White Mingo & other Chiefs of the 6 Nations had something to say to me...to bid me welcome to this Country, and to desire that the People of Virginia woud consider them as friends & Brothers linked together in one chain...To this I answerd...that all the Injuries & Affronts that had passd on either side was now totally forgotten...

Sunday [October] 21 [1770]. Left our Incampment abt. 6 Oclock & breakfasted at the Logs Town...At 11 we came to the Mouth of big Bever Creek, opposite to which is a good Situation for a House, & above it, on the same side...there appears to be a body of fine Land.

Saturday [October] 27 [1770]. Left our Incampment a Quarter before Seven...we came to the Mouth of the Muskingham [Muskingum].... From Muskingham to the little Kanhawa is about 13 Miles.... On the upper side of this River there appears to be a bottom of exceeding rich Land and the Country from hence quite up to the 3 Islands level & in appearance fine. The River (Ohio) running round it in the nature of a horse shoe forms a Neck of flat Land wch...cannot contain less than 50,000 Acres in view.

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Justify your group's selection of these words:

Saturday [November] 17th [1770]. The Indians who live upon the Ohio...are composd of Shawnas, Delawares, & some of the Mingos, who...view the Settlement of the People [colonists] upon this River with uneasy & jealous Eye, & do not scruple [hesitate] to say that they must be compensated for their Right if the People settle thereon, notwithstanding the Cession of the Six Nations [Treaty of Fort Stanwix] thereto. On the other hand, the People from Virginia & elsewhere, are exploring and Marking all the Lands that are valuable...& by next Summer I suppose will get to the great Kanhawa, at least; how difficult it may be to contend with these People afterwards....

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Justify your group's selection of these words:

Based on your analysis of all of the primary source excerpts: What were Washington's views of the Native American tribes in the Ohio Country? Support your claim with evidence from the documents.