

# FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THEIR FATHERS?

---

**LEVEL:**

High School

**TIMEFRAME:**

Two class periods or less, depending on if assigned as an individual or group project

**OBJECTIVES:**

Students will analyze and interpret primary and secondary sources in order to recognize change over time

Students will respond to a writing prompt in a clear, thesis-driven essay that uses evidence from the provided sources

**STANDARDS:**

- |                           |                                    |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| · Primary Source Analysis | · Politics and Power               |
| · Writing Standards       | · Civic Value and Social Norms     |
| · Reading Standards       | · Contextualization and Comparison |
| · Qualities of Leadership | · American and National Identity   |
- 

**PROCEDURE:**

1. Distribute the handout *Following in the Footsteps of Their Fathers Source Set* (included in PDF). Ask students to evaluate the following statement using the documents.

*The Southern secession movement, a reaction against arbitrary and abusive power in a highly centralized government, was simply an extension of the ideals of the American Revolution and the beliefs of the Founders.*

- A. Excerpt: George Washington to George Mason, March 5, 1769
- B. Excerpt: Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, January 30, 1787
- C. Excerpt: Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, November 13, 1787
- D. Excerpt: George Washington to Benjamin Harrison, January 18, 1784
- E. Excerpt: *Address at Cooper Union, February 27, 1860*, Abraham Lincoln
- F. Excerpt: Patrick Henry, *Speech at Virginia Ratifying Convention*, June 5, 1788
- G. Excerpt: Jefferson Davis, *First Inaugural Address*, February 18, 1861

- H. *Life of Washington, The Farmer* by Claude Regnier, after Junius Brutus Stearns, 1853
  - I. Excerpt: *Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, Section Six*
  - J. Currency: \$50 Confederate Currency, 1861 and \$.25 United States Currency, 1863
- 

**OPTIONAL EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:**

1. Ask students to read the *Cornerstone Speech* by Alexander Stephens, as well as the *South Carolina Ordinance of Secession*. As a class, create a list of grievances that both documents mention. Hold a class discussion that considers the main reason for Southern secession using evidence from these documents.
2. Hold a class discussion based upon students' understanding of George Washington and evaluate the question below. Then hold the same discussion about Robert E. Lee.

Would you consider him to be a Virginian first or an American first?

**Source A – Excerpt: George Washington to George Mason, March 5, 1769**

Source Type: Letter

- 1 That no man shou'd scruple, or hesitate a moment to use arms in defence of so valuable a blessing
- 2 on which all the good and evil of life depends; is clearly my opinion; Yet Arms I wou'd beg leave
- 3 to add, should be the last resource...Addresses to the Throne, and remonstrances to parliament, we
- 4 have already, it is said, proved the inefficacy of...

---

**Source B – Excerpt: Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, January 30, 1787**

Source Type: Letter

- 5 I hold it that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world
- 6 as storms in the physical...It is a medicine necessary for the sound health of government.

---

**Source C – Excerpt: Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, November 13, 1787**

Source Type: Letter

- 7 ...the tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots & tyrants. It is
  - 8 its natural manure.
-

**Source D – Excerpt: George Washington to Benjamin Harrison, January 18, 1784**

Source Type: Letter

9 The disinclination of the individual states to yield competent powers to Congress for the Federal  
10 Government- their unreasonable jealousy of that body & of one another- & the disposition which  
11 seems to pervade each, of being all-wise and all-powerful within itself, will, if there is not a  
12 change in the system, be our downfall as a Nation. This is as clear to me as the A, B.C.; & I think  
13 we have opposed Great Britain, & have arrived at this state of peace & independency, to very  
14 little purpose, if we cannot conquer our own prejudices...For my own part, altho' I am returned  
15 to, & am now mingled with the class of private citizens, & like them must suffer all the evils of a  
16 Tyranny, or of too far great an extension of federal powers; I have no fears arising from this  
17 source; in my mind, but I have many, & powerful ones indeed which predict the worst  
18 consequences from a half- starved, limping Government, that appears to be always moving upon  
19 crutches, & tottering at every step

---

**Source E – Excerpt: *Address at Cooper Union, February 27, 1860, Abraham Lincoln***

Source Type: Speech

20 Let us be diverted by none of those sophistical contrivances wherewith we are so industriously  
21 plied and belabored - contrivances such as groping for some middle ground between the right and  
22 the wrong, vain as the search for a man who should be neither a living man nor a dead man - such  
23 as a policy of "don't care" on a question about which all true men do care - such as Union appeals  
24 beseeching true Union men to yield to Disunionists, reversing the divine rule, and calling, not the  
25 sinners, but the righteous to repentance - such as invocations to Washington, imploring men to  
26 unsay what Washington said, and undo what Washington did.

---

**Source F – Excerpt: *Speech at Virginia Ratifying Convention, June 5, 1788, Patrick Henry***

Source Type: Speech

27 The fate of this question and of America may depend on this: Have they said, we, the States?  
28 Have they made a proposal of a compact between states? If they had, this would be a  
29 confederation: It is otherwise most clearly a consolidated government. The question turns, Sir, on  
30 that poor little thing- the expression, *We, the people*, instead of the *States*, of America. I need not  
31 take much pains to show that the principles of this system are extremely pernicious, impolitic, and  
32 dangerous. Is this a monarchy, like England-a compact between prince and people, with checks  
33 on the former to secure the liberty of the latter? Is this a Confederacy, like Holland-an association  
34 of a number of independent states, each of which retains its individual sovereignty? It is not a  
35 democracy, wherein the people retain all their rights securely. Had these principles been adhered  
36 to, we should not have been brought to this alarming transition, from a Confederacy to a  
37 consolidated Government. We have no detail of these great consideration, which, in my opinion,  
38 ought to have abounded before we should recur to a government of this kind. Here is a revolution

39 as radical as that which separated us from Great Britain. It is radical in this transition; our rights  
40 and privileges are endangered, and the sovereignty of the states will be relinquished: And cannot  
41 we plainly see that this is actually the case? The rights of conscience, trial by jury, liberty of the  
42 press, all your immunities and franchises, all pretensions to human rights and privileges, are  
43 rendered insecure, if not lost, by this change, so loudly talked of by some, and inconsiderately by  
44 others. Is this tame relinquishment of rights worthy of freemen? Is it worthy of that manly  
45 fortitude that ought to characterize republicans: It is said eight States have adopted this plan. I  
46 declare that if twelve States and a half had adopted it, I would, with manly firmness, and in spite  
47 of an erring world, reject it.

---

**Source G – Excerpt: *First Inaugural Address, February 18, 1861, Jefferson Davis***  
Source Type: Speech

48 The declared purpose of the compact of Union from which we have withdrawn was "to establish  
49 justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare,  
50 and secure the blessing of liberty to ourselves and our posterity;" and when, in the judgment of  
51 the sovereign States now composing this Confederacy, it had been perverted from the purposes  
52 for which it was ordained, and had ceased to answer the ends for which it was established, a  
53 peaceful appeal to the ballot-box declared that so far as they were concerned, the government  
54 created by that compact should cease to exist.

---

**Source H – *Life of Washington, The Farmer* by Claude Regnier, after Junius Brutus Stearns, 1853**

Source Type: Painting

*Courtesy of Mount Vernon Ladies' Association*



**Source I – Excerpt: *Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, Section Six***

Source Type: Act of Congress; Legal Document

55 And be it further enacted, That when a person held to service or labor in any State or Territory of  
56 the United States, has heretofore or shall hereafter escape into another State or Territory of the  
57 United States, the person or persons to whom such service or labor may be due, or his, her, or  
58 their agent or attorney, duly authorized, by power of attorney, in writing, acknowledged and  
59 certified under the seal of some legal officer or court of the State or Territory in which the same  
60 may be executed, may pursue and reclaim such fugitive person, either by procuring a warrant  
61 from some one of the courts, judges, or commissioners aforesaid, of the proper circuit, district, or  
62 county, for the apprehension of such fugitive from service or labor, or by seizing and arresting  
63 such fugitive, where the same can be done without process, and by taking, or causing such person  
64 to be taken, forthwith before such court, judge, or commissioner, whose duty it shall be to hear  
65 and determine the case of such claimant in a summary manner; and upon satisfactory proof being  
66 made, by deposition or affidavit, in writing, to be taken and certified by such court, judge, or  
67 commissioner, or by other satisfactory testimony, duly taken and certified by some court,  
68 magistrate, justice of the peace, or other legal officer authorized to administer an oath and take  
69 depositions under the laws of the State or Territory from which such person owing service or  
70 labor may have escaped, with a certificate of such magistracy or other authority, as aforesaid,  
71 with the seal of the proper court or officer thereto attached, which seal shall be sufficient to  
72 establish the competency of the proof, and with proof, also by affidavit, of the identity of the  
73 person whose service or labor is claimed to be due as aforesaid, that the person so arrested does in  
74 fact owe service or labor to the person or persons claiming him or her, in the State or Territory  
75 from which such fugitive may have escaped as aforesaid, and that said person escaped, to make  
76 out and deliver to such claimant, his or her agent or attorney, a certificate setting forth the  
77 substantial facts as to the service or labor due from such fugitive to the claimant, and of his or her  
78 escape from the State or Territory in which he or she was arrested, with authority to such



79 claimant, or his or her agent or attorney, to use such reasonable force and restraint as may be  
80 necessary, under the circumstances of the case, to take and remove such fugitive person back to  
81 the State or Territory whence he or she may have escaped as aforesaid. In no trial or hearing  
82 under this act shall the testimony of such alleged fugitive be admitted in evidence; and the  
83 certificates in this and the first [fourth] section mentioned, shall be conclusive of the right of the  
84 person or persons in whose favor granted, to remove such fugitive to the State or Territory from  
85 which he escaped, and shall prevent all molestation of such person or persons by any process  
86 issued by any court, judge, magistrate, or other person whomsoever.

---

**Source J – Currency: \$50 Confederate Currency, 1861 and \$0.25 United States Currency, 1863**

Source Type: Currency

*Courtesy of National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History*



**Source A – Excerpt: George Washington to George Mason, March 5, 1769**

Source Type: Letter

**Background Information:** This is one of the first hints we get of Washington chafing under what he sees as repressive British policy and his frustration that Parliament is doing nothing to address colonists' grievances.

- 1 That no man shou'd scruple, or hesitate a moment to use arms in defence of so valuable a blessing
  - 2 on which all the good and evil of life depends; is clearly my opinion; Yet Arms I wou'd beg leave
  - 3 to add, should be the last resource...Addresses to the Throne, and remonstrances to parliament, we
  - 4 have already, it is said, proved the inefficacy of...
- 

**Source B – Excerpt: Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, January 30, 1787**

Source Type: Letter

**Background Information:** Many times Jefferson commented that it is natural and good for society to experience political upheavals. He believed that these should occur every generation or approximately every nineteen years.

- 5 I hold it that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world
  - 6 as storms in the physical...It is a medicine necessary for the sound health of government.
- 

**Source C – Excerpt: Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, November 13, 1787**

Source Type: Letter

**Background Information:** Many times Jefferson commented that it is natural and good for society to experience political upheavals. He believed that these should occur every generation or approximately every nineteen years.

- 7 ...the tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots & tyrants. It is
  - 8 its natural manure.
-

**Source D – Excerpt: George Washington to Benjamin Harrison, January 18, 1784**

Source Type: Letter

**Background Information:** Throughout the Revolution and the Confederation phase, Washington grew increasingly frustrated by the lack of a strong, centralized form of government. Washington is lamenting the fact that the current state-centered approach of the Articles is ineffectual and will lead to the ruin of the nation.

9 The disinclination of the individual states to yield competent powers to Congress for the Federal  
10 Government- their unreasonable jealousy of that body & of one another- & the disposition which  
11 seems to pervade each, of being all-wise and all-powerful within itself, will, if there is not a  
12 change in the system, be our downfall as a Nation. This is as clear to me as the A, B, C.; & I think  
13 we have opposed Great Britain, & have arrived at this state of peace & independency, to very  
14 little purpose, if we cannot conquer our own prejudices...For my own part, altho' I am returned  
15 to, & am now mingled with the class of private citizens, & like them must suffer all the evils of a  
16 Tyranny, or of too far great an extension of federal powers; I have no fears arising from this  
17 source; in my mind, but I have many, & powerful ones indeed which predict the worst  
18 consequences from a half- starved, limping Government, that appears to be always moving upon  
19 crutches, & tottering at every step

---

**Source E – Excerpt: *Address at Cooper Union, February 27, 1860, Abraham Lincoln***

Source Type: Speech

**Background Information:** Prior to his nomination as the Republican candidate for President in 1860, Abraham Lincoln gave a speech in New York City in which he stated that Southerners were perverting the words and actions of the Founders to find justification for a secession based upon their concern for the survival of slavery.

20 Let us be diverted by none of those sophistical contrivances wherewith we are so industriously  
21 plied and belabored - contrivances such as groping for some middle ground between the right and  
22 the wrong, vain as the search for a man who should be neither a living man nor a dead man - such  
23 as a policy of "don't care" on a question about which all true men do care - such as Union appeals  
24 beseeching true Union men to yield to Disunionists, reversing the divine rule, and calling, not the  
25 sinners, but the righteous to repentance - such as invocations to Washington, imploring men to  
26 unsay what Washington said, and undo what Washington did

---

**Source F – Excerpt: *Speech at Virginia Ratifying Convention, June 5, 1788, Patrick Henry***

Source Type: Speech

**Background:** Upon the completion of the Constitution, each state held ratifying conventions to debate the merits and liabilities of the proposed new government. Patrick Henry argued vociferously against ratification, due to the harm it would inflict upon state powers.

27 The fate of this question and of America may depend on this: Have they said, we, the States?  
28 Have they made a proposal of a compact between states? If they had, this would be a  
29 confederation: It is otherwise most clearly a consolidated government. The question turns, Sir, on  
30 that poor little thing- the expression, *We, the people*, instead of the *States*, of America. I need not  
31 take much pains to show that the principles of this system are extremely pernicious, impolitic, and  
32 dangerous. Is this a monarchy, like England-a compact between prince and people, with checks  
33 on the former to secure the liberty of the latter? Is this a Confederacy, like Holland-an association  
34 of a number of independent states, each of which retains its individual sovereignty? It is not a  
35 democracy, wherein the people retain all their rights securely. Had these principles been adhered

36 to, we should not have been brought to this alarming transition, from a Confederacy to a  
37 consolidated Government. We have no detail of these great consideration, which, in my opinion,  
38 ought to have abounded before we should recur to a government of this kind. Here is a revolution  
39 as radical as that which separated us from Great Britain. It is radical in this transition; our rights  
40 and privileges are endangered, and the sovereignty of the states will be relinquished: And cannot  
41 we plainly see that this is actually the case? The rights of conscience, trial by jury, liberty of the  
42 press, all your immunities and franchises, all pretensions to human rights and privileges, are  
43 rendered insecure, if not lost, by this change, so loudly talked of by some, and inconsiderately by  
44 others. Is this tame relinquishment of rights worthy of freemen? Is it worthy of that manly  
45 fortitude that ought to characterize republicans: It is said eight States have adopted this plan. I  
46 declare that if twelve States and a half had adopted it, I would, with manly firmness, and in spite  
47 of an erring world, reject it.

---

**Source G – Excerpt: *First Inaugural Address, February 18, 1861, Jefferson Davis***

Source Type: Speech

**Background:** Upon his inauguration as President of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis stated the Federal government has not lived up to the promise it established in the Constitution, and in a paraphrase of the Declaration of Independence, he justifies their secession.

48 The declared purpose of the compact of Union from which we have withdrawn was "to establish  
49 justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare,  
50 and secure the blessing of liberty to ourselves and our posterity;" and when, in the judgment of  
51 the sovereign States now composing this Confederacy, it had been perverted from the purposes  
52 for which it was ordained, and had ceased to answer the ends for which it was established, a  
53 peaceful appeal to the ballot-box declared that so far as they were concerned, the government  
54 created by that compact should cease to exist.

---

**Source H – *Life of Washington, The Farmer* by Claude Regnier, after Junius Brutus Stearns, 1853**

Source Type: Painting

*Courtesy of Mount Vernon Ladies' Association*

**Background:** George Washington, as well as many other Founders, was the owner of a significant number of enslaved persons. It was through the labor of these enslaved individuals that men like George Washington, and their families, derived a great deal of wealth. The abolition of slavery would lead to economic ruin for them.



**Source I – Excerpt: *Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, Section Six***

Source Type: Act of Congress; Legal Document

**Background Information:** After the Mexican War, slavery in the newly acquired territories caused fierce Congressional debates and further exposed the rift between slave and free state representatives. The resulting compromise yielded a new, stronger Fugitive Slave Law, one which was demanded by the slave-owning interest in Congress.

55 And be it further enacted, That when a person held to service or labor in any State or Territory of  
56 the United States, has heretofore or shall hereafter escape into another State or Territory of the  
57 United States, the person or persons to whom such service or labor may be due, or his, her, or  
58 their agent or attorney, duly authorized, by power of attorney, in writing, acknowledged and  
59 certified under the seal of some legal officer or court of the State or Territory in which the same  
60 may be executed, may pursue and reclaim such fugitive person, either by procuring a warrant  
61 from some one of the courts, judges, or commissioners aforesaid, of the proper circuit, district, or  
62 county, for the apprehension of such fugitive from service or labor, or by seizing and arresting  
63 such fugitive, where the same can be done without process, and by taking, or causing such person  
64 to be taken, forthwith before such court, judge, or commissioner, whose duty it shall be to hear  
65 and determine the case of such claimant in a summary manner; and upon satisfactory proof being  
66 made, by deposition or affidavit, in writing, to be taken and certified by such court, judge, or  
67 commissioner, or by other satisfactory testimony, duly taken and certified by some court,  
68 magistrate, justice of the peace, or other legal officer authorized to administer an oath and take  
69 depositions under the laws of the State or Territory from which such person owing service or  
70 labor may have escaped, with a certificate of such magistracy or other authority, as aforesaid,  
71 with the seal of the proper court or officer thereto attached, which seal shall be sufficient to  
72 establish the competency of the proof, and with proof, also by affidavit, of the identity of the  
73 person whose service or labor is claimed to be due as aforesaid, that the person so arrested does in  
74 fact owe service or labor to the person or persons claiming him or her, in the State or Territory  
75 from which such fugitive may have escaped as aforesaid, and that said person escaped, to make  
76 out and deliver to such claimant, his or her agent or attorney, a certificate setting forth the



77 substantial facts as to the service or labor due from such fugitive to the claimant, and of his or her  
78 escape from the State or Territory in which he or she was arrested, with authority to such  
79 claimant, or his or her agent or attorney, to use such reasonable force and restraint as may be  
80 necessary, under the circumstances of the case, to take and remove such fugitive person back to  
81 the State or Territory whence he or she may have escaped as aforesaid. In no trial or hearing  
82 under this act shall the testimony of such alleged fugitive be admitted in evidence; and the  
83 certificates in this and the first [fourth] section mentioned, shall be conclusive of the right of the  
84 person or persons in whose favor granted, to remove such fugitive to the State or Territory from  
85 which he escaped, and shall prevent all molestation of such person or persons by any process  
86 issued by any court, judge, magistrate, or other person whomsoever.

---

**Source J – Currency: \$50 Confederate Currency, 1861 and \$0.25 United States Currency, 1863**

Source Type: Currency

*Courtesy of National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History*

**Background Information:** Prior to and during the Civil War, both the South (Confederacy) and North (Union) claimed George Washington as their own, implying that their respective causes had his blessing

