



## ***Martha's Bible:*** **Recording Family Histories**

### **Students will learn...**

- The role of women and family bibles in historical record keeping.
- To use fragmented information to create a larger picture.
- To use math to calculate birth/death dates.

### **You will need...**

- A picture of Martha Washington's Bible
- Martha's Family Tree Clues Handout
- *Optional:* Martha's Family Tree Outline Handout
- *Optional:* The color distinction of Martha's Family Tree Outline and Clues Handouts

### ***Opener: Family Records***

- Ask your students what records they have that document their life- official records like a birth certificate but also unofficial ones like Facebook posts. Record them.
- Now go back and circle the ones that are available to historians of the past- specifically the 18th century.
- Ask how might a person in the 18th century preserve their family history. Where would they keep these records?
- Reveal that a Family Bible is often used as a family records.

### ***Task: Examining Martha's Bible***

- Divide your classroom into pairs or small groups and give each group a copy of the pictures from Martha Washington's Bible.

- What do they notice? What has been written?

Most Family Bibles had a "Records" or "Register" section where a person would record all the births, marriages, and deaths in the family. Letters and other documents have also been found in-between the pages of Family Bibles.

- Give each group Martha's Family Tree clues. Their goal is to make a family tree based on that information (names & dates).
  - Start them off with Martha Dandridge (1731-1802)
  - Explain that some of the information may not be relevant to the tree
- *Optional:* hand out Martha's Family Tree Outline (original or color distinction).

### ***Closer: Women and Records***

- Explain to them that both men and women recorded information in their Family Bible. However, Martha's Bible went through generations of women- her granddaughter Nelly Custis inherited it after her death and then her daughter, Frances Lewis after her.
- Ask your students why might Martha might have been the family historian? Looking at her family history, what in her life may have made her interested in recording and remembering her history?
- *Optional:* For homework, have them write out their own family records.