Colonial Life at Mount Vernon
What can you learn about the agricultural community Washington designed? What observations can you make about life on a plantation in the 1700s?

The Farm Site
George Washington was innovative and selective about the types of crops and products growing on his five farms.

- Examine Washington’s farm map and look for the compass, as well as any natural land forms and resources. Observe the names of each farm, and draw a map of your own imaginary farm with 3-5 natural features represented in your region. Give the map a name and explain why you chose the name and the specific resources.
- Read a list of Washington's crops. Pick a season and create a collage showing the variety of Washington's crops during that time of year.
- Work in partnerships or small groups to research Washington’s 16-Sided Barn, organizing the information found about people and STEAM concepts in a T-chart.
- Examine the Weekly Report for Union Farm on August 3, 1793. Calculate how many enslaved people carted, stacked, and cleaned up wheat. Then, read through the biographies of enslaved individuals to learn about the lives who labored at Union Farm.

Slave Cabin
- Read about the Plantation Structure at Mount Vernon, and find the chart of enslaved peoples working at the five farms.
- Watch a video about Penny, an enslaved child who may have been one of the people listed as numbers listed in the farm report. Write a descriptive paragraph including details of Penny’s life and how she might be represented within the chart of enslaved peoples.
- As a class, create an anchor chart listing reasons why it is important to learn the names and stories of the peoples listed in the chart of enslaved peoples above.
- Complete a Know, Wonder, Learn chart before, during and after analyzing the day of an enslaved field worker timeline.

Kitchen
Enslaved individuals worked in this space seven days a week to create meals for both the Washingtons and their visitors at the Mansion.

- Read a chocolate cake recipe that Martha Washington would have selected. Create a visual representation for the fractions in the recipe by drawing a picture of each ingredient and dividing them into their specific fractions. For an optional extension activity - visit the historic recipes pages and find a recipe to make. What fractions of ingredients are needed?
- Look at a dinner menu from February 4, 1799. Circle the amount of foods you recognize and search for pictures of the ones you do not. Predict how long you think it would take to make the meals listed in an 18th century kitchen.
- Read about the day in the life of an enslaved cook and conduct a See, Think, Wonder about the day.
- Watch a video on Doll and draw a timeline of her life, starting before she arrived at Mount Vernon. Be sure to include the different types skills she must have had and record information about her family.
- Explore the Dining Room. Create a list of objects within the room that the enslaved individuals would have interacted with while serving the Washingtons and their guests.
The American Revolution at Mount Vernon

When George Washington left for war, Mount Vernon’s role as a plantation did not change, despite the threat of British takeover. How is Mount Vernon an example of patriot life during the Revolutionary era?

**Washington’s Bedchamber**

Martha Washington followed George Washington to his military encampments every winter. When she was home, the bedchamber served as her office, work space and sanctuary. Here, she would have written to George about life at Mount Vernon, instructed enslaved house servants about duties, and connected to her large family through letters.

- Watch a video on Martha Washington’s life. Make a t-chart comparing her responsibilities at Mount Vernon to her responsibilities at the war front.
- Martha Washington often quilted and did needlepoint, both at the house and at the war front; she often brought a needle case and pincushion wherever she went. Find where these objects were kept in the Washington’s bedchamber (hint: look at the “Closets” discovery point!). Then, draw a picture of what you would bring with you on a journey, and explain why.
- Martha used her desk to write and read letters with George while he was at war. Watch a video about life at Valley Forge, and write a short letter describing the living conditions of the camps in the American Revolution.
- Watch a video about the Lafayette bedchamber and listen for the reasons why it was built for the Marquis de Lafayette. Design a bedroom for a best friend or beloved historical figure and explain your reasoning behind its design.
- Look at Lafayette’s portrait, and make careful observations by Looking Ten Times Two. Compare it to Washington’s portrait, and note the similarities and differences in a Venn Diagram. Why might Washington and Lafayette be depicted differently?

Washington considered the Marquis de Lafayette to be family; it is believed that Lafayette stayed in this room while visiting in 1784. Lafayette served alongside Washington throughout the American Revolution.

**The Lafayette Room**

**The Slave Quarters**

Enslaved life at Mount Vernon continued throughout the Revolutionary War. The Slave Quarters housed the male and female enslaved populations that worked at the Mansion House Farm. Some individuals decided to seek their own freedom during the war, while others chose to remain to be with their families.

- The enslaved population continued to labor at the mansion and outlying farms during the Revolutionary War. View the wartime drawing of Washington’s house plans. Visit the Database of the Enslaved, and look through the list of skills the enslaved population possessed at Mount Vernon. Create a glossary of the specific skills that were needed for these wartime renovations.
- View a list of 17 escaped individuals from 1781 who fled on a British warship that docked at Mount Vernon. Conduct an Unveiling Stories thinking routine to discuss the resistance of the enslaved during a war that was fought to ensure that “all men have certain unalienable rights.”
- Many enslaved peoples were heavily affected by the war. In small groups, Seek to See the the stories of Billy Lee, James Lafayette, and Harry Washington, and present to the class how each individual resisted enslavement for themselves and their families.
The Little Parlor

- Find the “illustrious personages” in the Little Parlor and research one of the people that Charles Willson Peale painted for Washington. Then, choose three people in your life that you would hang portraits of in a room for visitors to see.
- Watch a video about Nelly's harpsichord and listen to a song played on the harpsichord. Make a song of your own that describes George Washington’s legacy. Or, use the George Washington in Song lesson plan to create your own lyrics to Yankee Doodle about an event from Washington’s life.
- Find Washington’s birdcage and read about the animals the Washingtons owned. Choose an animal and create a flip-book on its needs for survival and why the Washingtons wanted it at Mount Vernon.

Washington originally used this room as a bedroom - after his presidency, he renovated it to become a music room for his granddaughter, Nelly. It sometimes served as a guest room, when extra space was needed for family members and close friends.

The Study

- Research items from Washington’s Presidency and select three to present on. Write captions for each, explaining why you included in your collection and what the objects say about Washington’s Presidency.
- Play the Explanation Game as a whole group to analyze Washington's Uncommon Chair in the Study, writing answers down on the board.
- Create a plan for a new form of class government and convince classmates that yours is the best. Why have you chosen your plan, and how might it succeed or fail?
- Locate Washington’s “Secretary” within the study. Draw a picture of a book that you would give to Washington to put on the Secretary shelf, and explain your book choice in a short caption.
- Write a list of reasons why Washington didn’t want to become king. Then, watch the video and correct your original list. Extend this with Parts, People, Interactions.

The Slave Memorial

The Slave Memorial marks where both free and enslaved peoples were buried at Mount Vernon. George Washington freed over 100 enslaved individuals in his will. He was not legally able to free everyone, as over half were bound to Martha’s first husband’s estate.
- Make a class t-chart comparing the Slave Memorial to Washington's New Tomb. Then, create your own memorial for the enslaved peoples at Mount Vernon or for George Washington.
- Read about archaeology at Mount Vernon and look through the objects found at the cemetery and other archaeological sites. Choose an object and draw a picture of it, explaining what it might be and how it may have ended up there.
- Explore the Lives Bound Together Virtual Exhibit to discover the lives of the enslaved population at Mount Vernon and choose one person featured in the exhibit to research.