

LESSON 4 - GEORGE WASHINGTON

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Sometimes even close friends can disagree with one another. But even when you disagree, it helps to remember that the other person is your friend. Friends are people with whom you can disagree while you still trust and like one another. Here is a true story about friendship and trust between a group of soldiers and their general, George Washington. In this story, George Washington uses his spectacles to help him talk to his friends. *Spectacles are*

eyeglasses. How do you think his spectacles help George Washington talk to his friends?



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[Ask students to describe the way George Washington looks in this picture.]

George Washington's enslaved person, Billy Lee, was worried. He had never before seen a look such as this one on Washington's face. Billy thought, "For the first time, General Washington looks old. It's this hard war he's been fighting, I guess, but he has never looked like this."



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Billy was right. George Washington looked tired. Before the war, George Washington had been known for his strength and bravery. On horseback, he could jump over logs or fences that were too risky for other horsemen, and he could bend an iron horseshoe with his bare hands. For eight years now, Washington had led the Continental Army, trying to free America from having to follow the orders of the king of Great Britain. All this time, although he became more and more tired, Washington had seemed like a man whose courage would always be strong.



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With Washington leading them, his soldiers kept going even when they lost some battles, or when they did not have enough food or blankets during freezing cold winters. Finally, Washington had led them when they defeated the biggest army the British king had sent to fight against them. *Defeated means won against, or beat, in a game, contest, or battle.* Now George Washington was not only tired, but also restless. He thought, "How strange! We defeated our enemies, but now my friends may ruin everything I have worked for." *What do you think George Washington meant by this?*



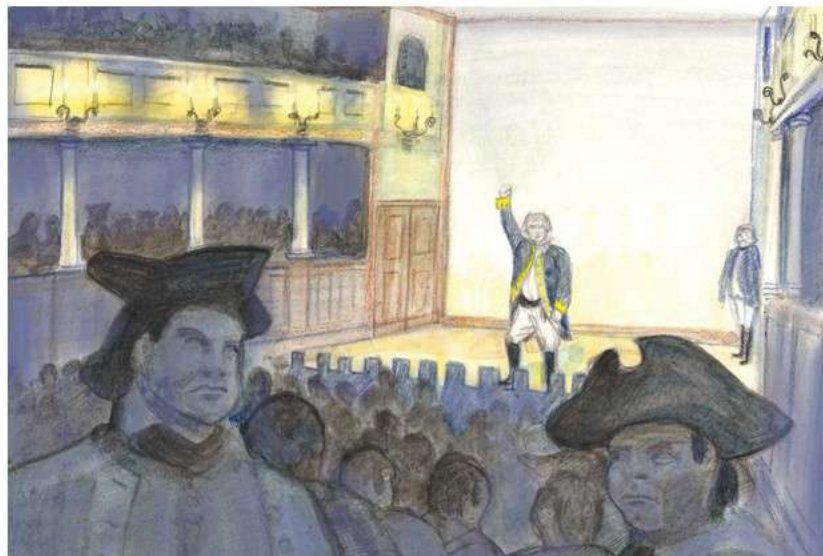
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Washington picked up some papers from his desk and slipped them into his pocket. He asked impatiently, "Where are my spectacles, Billy?" Billy handed him the reading glasses Washington had begun using only a week before. *George Washington began wearing glasses because his eyesight was getting worse. Many people wear glasses for all sorts of reasons.* Placing them in his coat pocket, Washington went outside where a soldier had his horse ready. Billy watched the general and the soldier ride away.



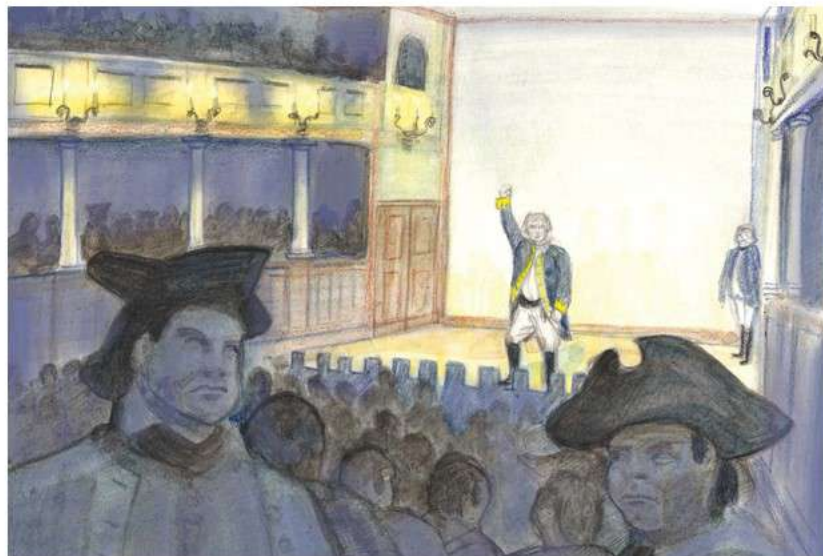
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Soon they reached a large building, where Washington dismounted *or got down from his horse*. Handing the reins of his horse to the soldier, Washington entered the building through a side door. He could hear the loud voice of General Horatio Gates, *[Point to the man on the stage.]* who was a very important officer in the army. General Gates thought that he, not Washington, should be the army's chief. *You learned about a chief in our study of Native Americans. What is a chief? (the person in charge of a group)* Now General Gates was trying to convince the other soldiers to change the way their new nation, the United States of America, would work. *Gates was trying to lead the soldiers to think the way he did.*



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Washington wanted to stop this from happening. He thought, "I hope I am not too late," as he stepped onto the stage where General Gates was standing.



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Facing the stage were many soldiers who had been with Washington through the long, dangerous war. When they saw him, they gasped in surprise. "Why has he come?" they wondered.

General Gates was surprised, too, and left the stage. Washington looked out at the soldiers he knew so well. "They look angry," he thought.

He was right. For years, these soldiers had been away from home, risking their lives to win the American Revolution so that they, their families, and their friends would be free to start a new country.



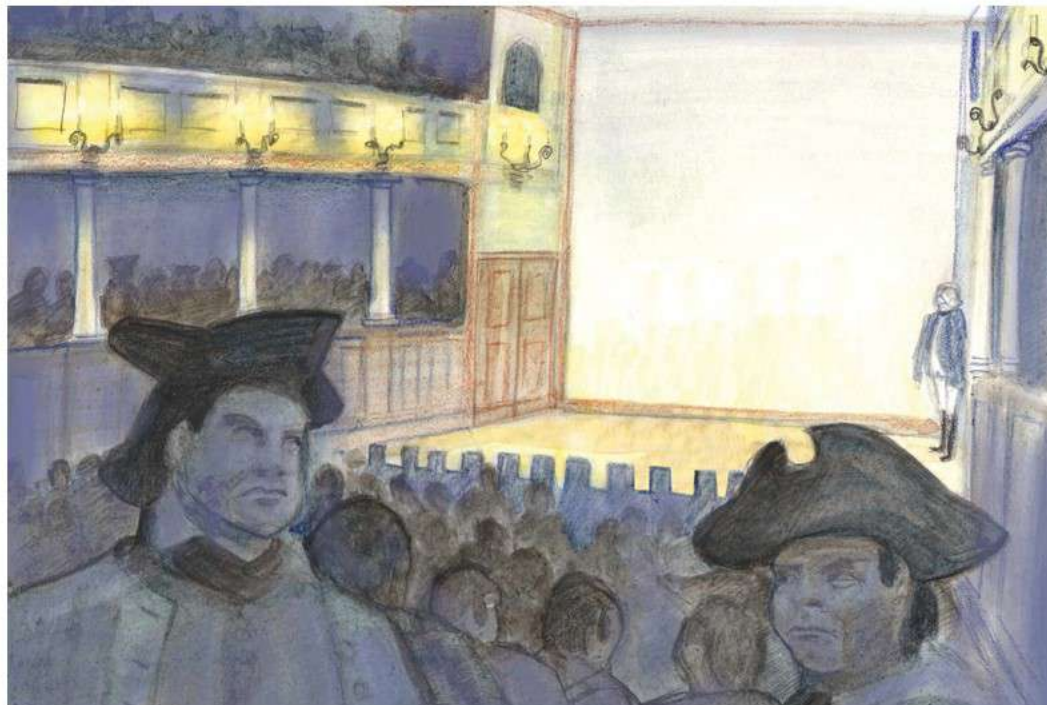
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The soldiers missed their families, but they knew this was important work, so they had kept at it. George Washington had led them the whole time. Now they had defeated, or beaten, the largest group of British soldiers yet. Some of Washington's friends were meeting with British leaders to end the war. But Washington thought, "The British still have one army left. Until they sign the paper agreeing that we are free to begin our own country, they could change their minds and attack again. We have to make sure the war is really over before we all go home."



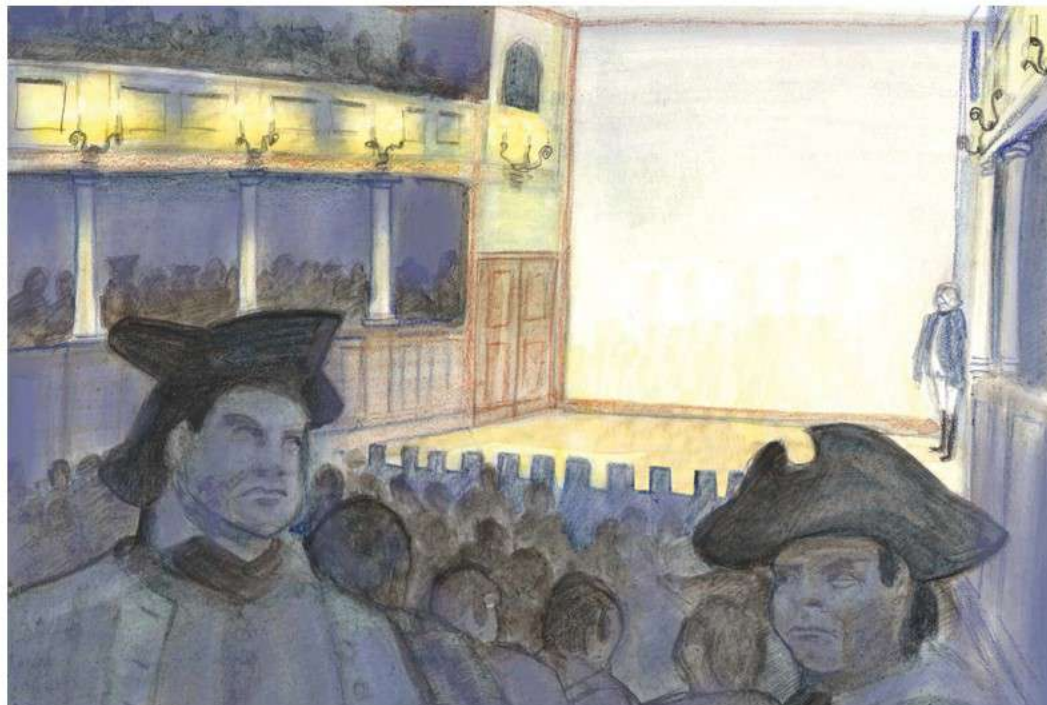
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But while all this had been happening, something else had not happened. The new American government had not paid the soldiers in a long time. Some soldiers had been unpaid for as many years as you have been alive! Now some of them, led by General Gates, were mumbling, "Maybe we should take over the new country. Then we know we'll be paid. We have our guns. We could make everyone do what we want them to do." *Do you think that the soldiers taking over the country would be a good idea?*



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George Washington had heard about this. He thought, "I am proud of being a soldier, but I do not want soldiers to use their guns to tell other people what to do. That would be no better than the old kind of rule *or leadership* of a monarchy or a king. We want a country in which the people decide together what to do, not kings or queens or armies. I will work to make sure my soldiers get paid, but first I must stop them from trying to take over our government."



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Washington took out some of the papers he had brought along and began to read them aloud. When he finished, no one cheered or clapped. "I failed!" he thought. "They are too angry to listen to what I say." Then he remembered something. "Wait!" he told the soldiers, "I have one more paper to read to you." He took out that paper, but the writing was smaller than on the other papers, and he could not see it clearly. He held it away from himself, then closer, but nothing helped.



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Then, to the soldiers' surprise, Washington took out the spectacles they had never before seen him use. *Why does Washington need his spectacles?* Fumbling to open them, Washington said, "Gentlemen, you will permit me to put on my spectacles, for I have not only grown gray, but almost blind, in the service of my country."



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In that moment, his soldiers felt ashamed. They remembered how strong George Washington had always been, and how he had always helped them. Like Billy Lee, they thought, "He has worn himself out fighting for our freedom. He has given up as much as we have." Many of the soldiers were so ashamed that they began to cry. They told one another, "If George Washington can wait a little longer to get paid, we can, too. He is right: the important thing is to make sure we start a country in which the people work together to help make decisions, not just a king or queen or an army."



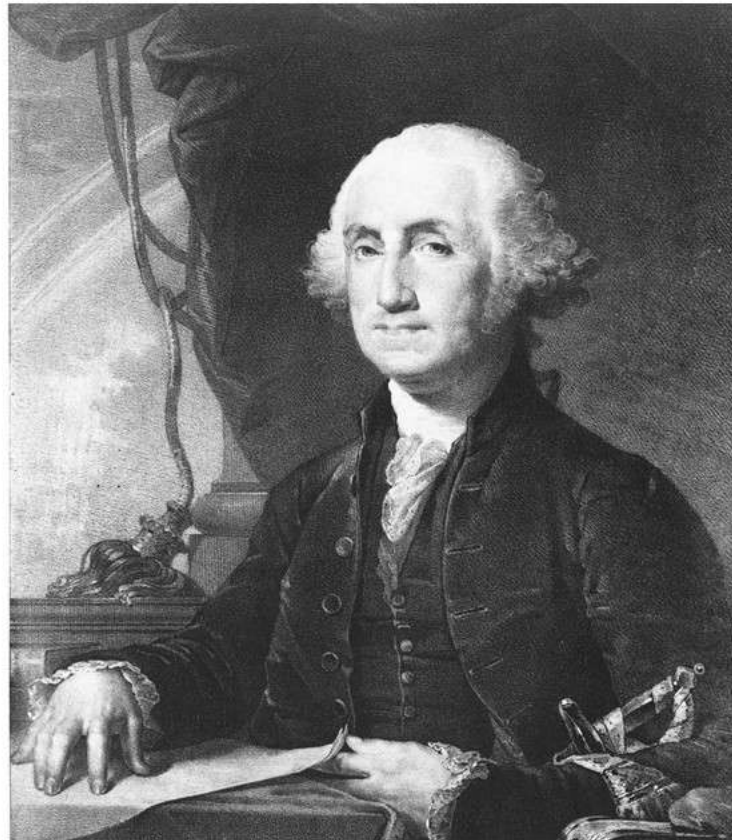
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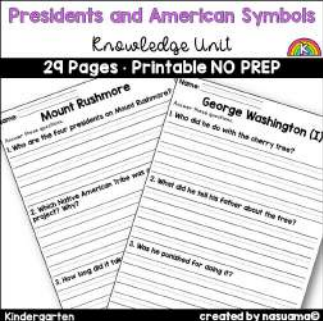
What the words written on those pages had not done, Washington had done by putting on his spectacles. *How did Washington's spectacles show how much he had sacrificed for the country?* The soldiers agreed to do as he asked, and later they did get paid.



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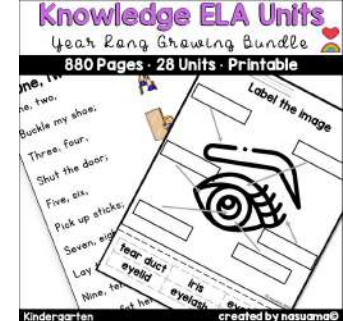
A few years later, after the war was over and Americans were choosing the first president of the United States of America, people knew whom they could trust. They asked George Washington to be the first president. "We need you just a little while longer," they told him, "not as a general, but as our president." And, as always, when the American people needed him, George Washington said yes.





PRESIDENTS AND AMERICAN SYMBOLS

BUNDLE



Name: _____

George Washington (III)

Answer these questions.

1. What did Billy notice?

2. What did General Gates want?

DO YOU NEED EXTRA ACTIVITIES?

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