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National Geographic Readers: George Washington

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Learn all about George Washington, one of the most important figures in American history.

6-8	15-30 mins	-	-
Age Range	Length	Lexile® Measure	AR Level

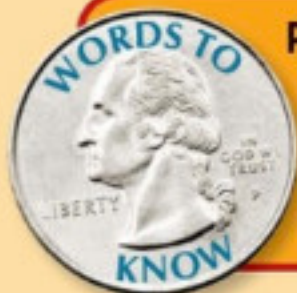
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Who Was George Washington?

George Washington was the first President of the United States. He was a farmer, a soldier, and a hero. He helped America become a free country.

Portrait of George Washington



PORTRAIT:
A picture or painting of a person



Growing Up

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George was born on February 22, 1732, on a farm in Virginia to a large family. He spent much of his time with his older brother Lawrence.

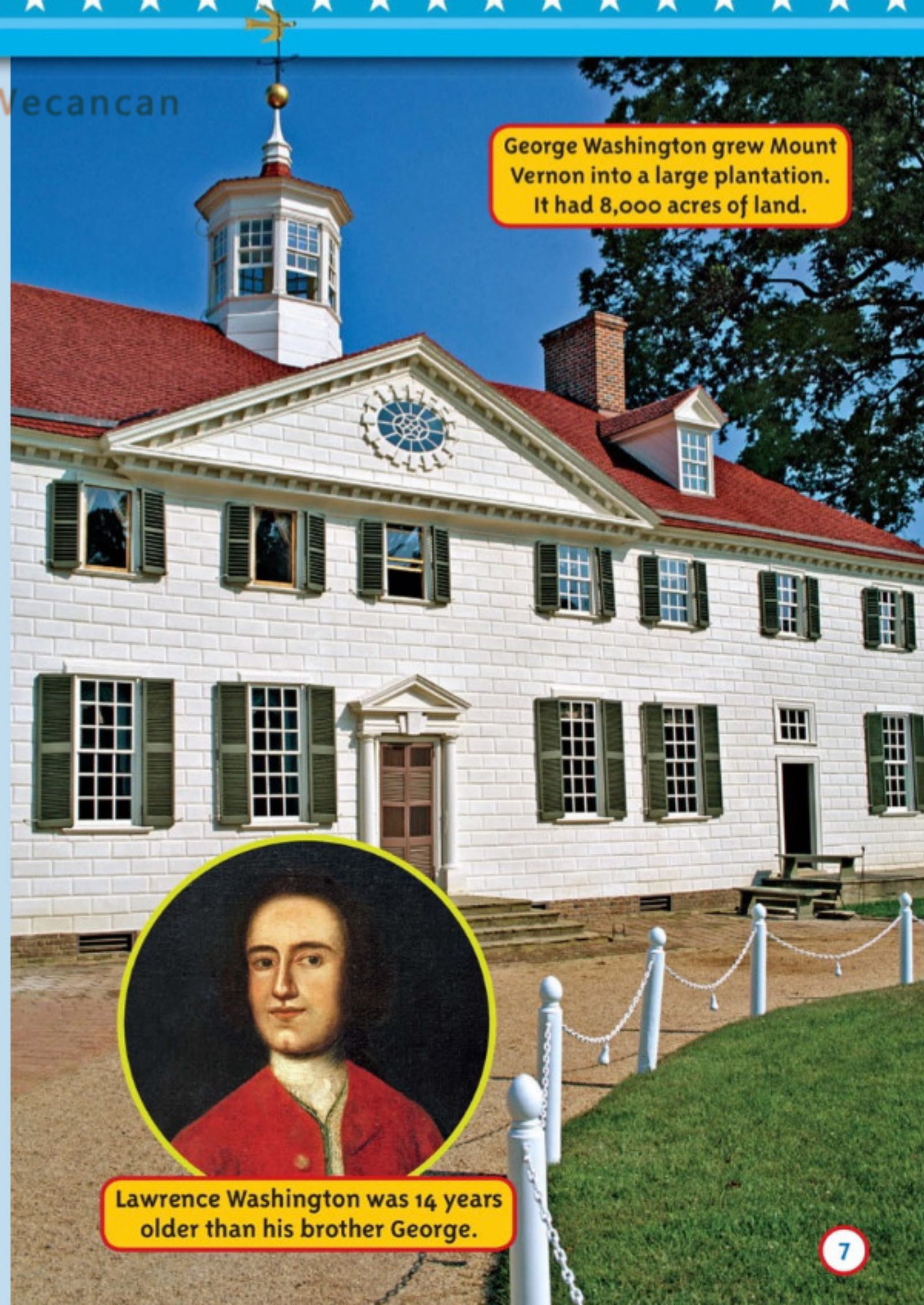
Lawrence lived on a plantation (plan-TAY-shun) called Mount Vernon. He was an army officer. George wanted to be just like him!



PLANTATION:
A large farm that grows plants for food and clothing

That's a Fact!

George Washington owned more than 30 foxhounds during his lifetime.



George Washington grew Mount Vernon into a large plantation. It had 8,000 acres of land.

Lawrence Washington was 14 years older than his brother George.

Teaching Himself

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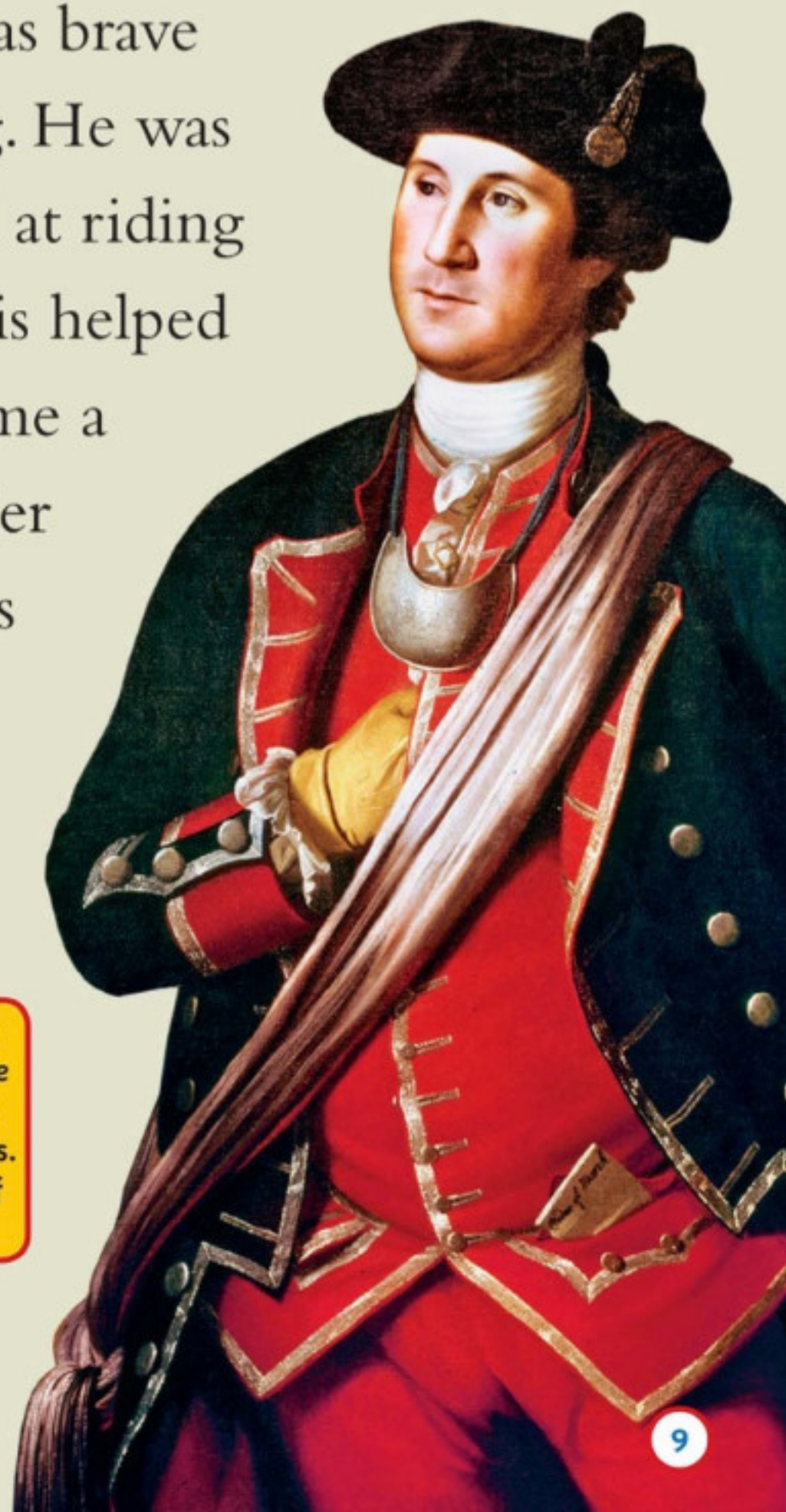
When George was 11, his father died. He had to stop going to school to help at home. But George read a lot and taught himself. When he was 17, he got a job measuring land to make maps.



Measuring land was called "surveying" (SIR-vay-ing). It was an important job, and George did it well.

George was brave and strong. He was very good at riding horses. This helped him become a great soldier a few years later.

When George was just 23 years old, he was asked to lead the Virginia soldiers. This is a portrait of him in uniform.



Becoming a Leader

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In the 1700s, America was not yet the United States of America. It began as just 13 colonies (COL-uh-nee-z) ruled by King George III in England.



King George III ruled England for 59 years! England is part of Great Britain. Wales and Scotland are also part of Great Britain.

People came on ships to live in America. They wanted more freedom than the king would give them in England.



COLONIES: What America's first 13 states were called before America became independent from Britain

In His Time

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Many things were very different in the 1700s.



Home

Many colonists (COL-uh-nists) lived on farms and built most of their own houses and furniture. They used homemade candles to light their rooms.

Food

Most people grew their own vegetables, such as squash and peas. They hunted animals, such as deer and rabbits, for meat.



Staying in Touch

There were no telephones. People used feather pens and ink to write long letters. The letters took weeks to reach the other person.



Chores and School

Children helped with farm chores. Most children did not go to school. They learned to read and write at home.

Mount Vernon

Sadly, when George was 20, his brother Lawrence died. Later, George became the owner of Mount Vernon.

In 1759, George married Martha Custis. They were happy together at Mount Vernon.

**That's
a
Fact!**

George Washington did not have a middle name.



Martha Custis and George Washington married ten months after they met.

The Making of a Hero

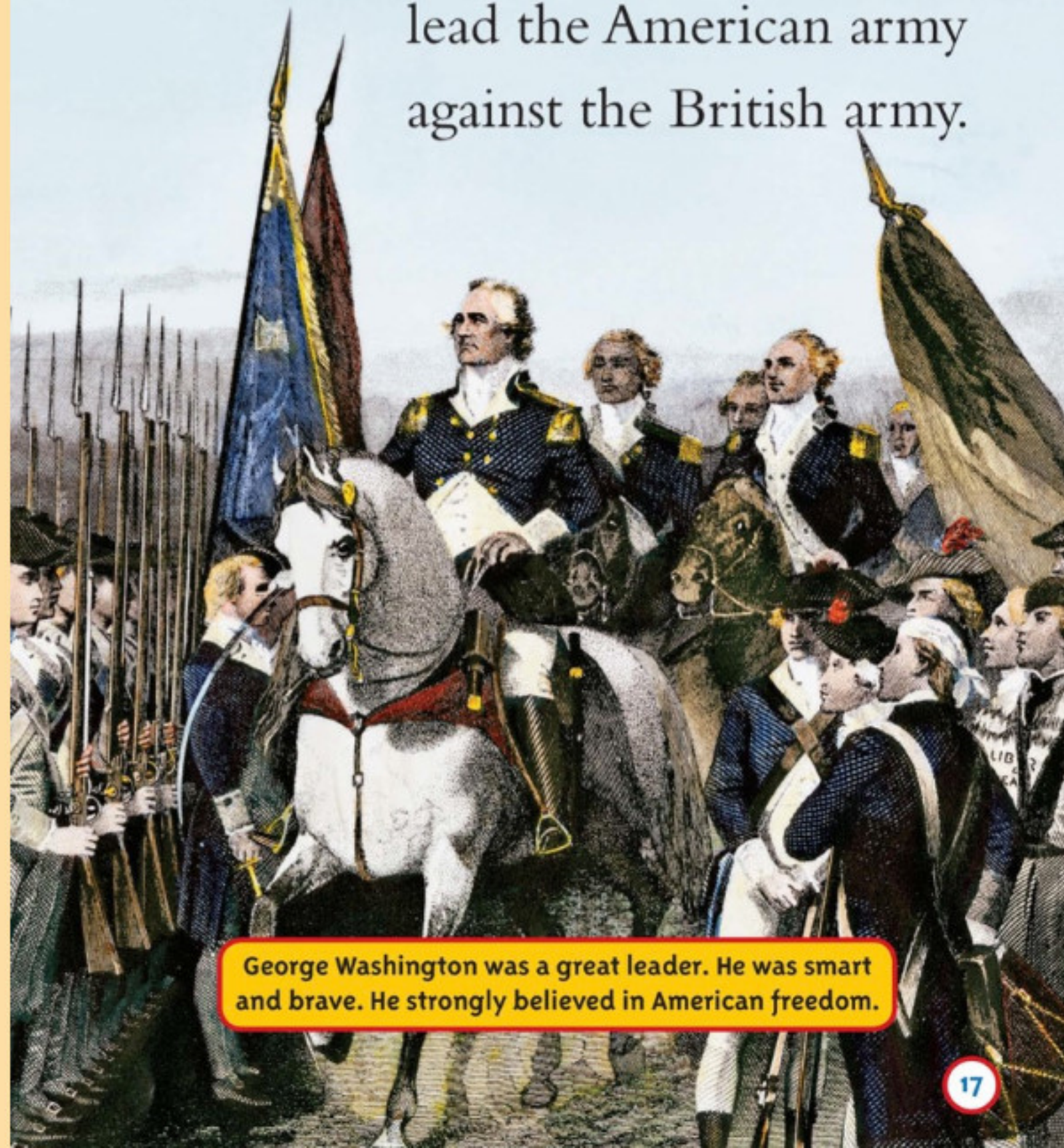
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This picture shows an event called the Boston Tea Party. To show they were unhappy with King George III, the colonists dressed up as American Indians. They threw British tea into the Boston Harbor.

In the 1760s, there was trouble coming. King George III made the colonists pay extra money for tea and other supplies they needed. The colonists didn't think it was fair. They were angry.

They wanted freedom from England. They asked George Washington to lead the American army against the British army.



George Washington was a great leader. He was smart and brave. He strongly believed in American freedom.

War and Peace

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The Revolutionary (rev-a-LOO-shuh-nair-ee) War started in 1775. The British thought they would win. They had more men and supplies.

American soldiers didn't have enough food or warm clothes. But they would do almost anything for freedom.

In 1776, America's leaders signed the Declaration of Independence (dek-luh-RAY-shun of in-duh-PEN-dunce). It said America had a right to be free and to make its own rules. The British didn't agree. They sent more troops to fight.

In Their Own Words

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."
—from the Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.
The thirteen united States of America

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

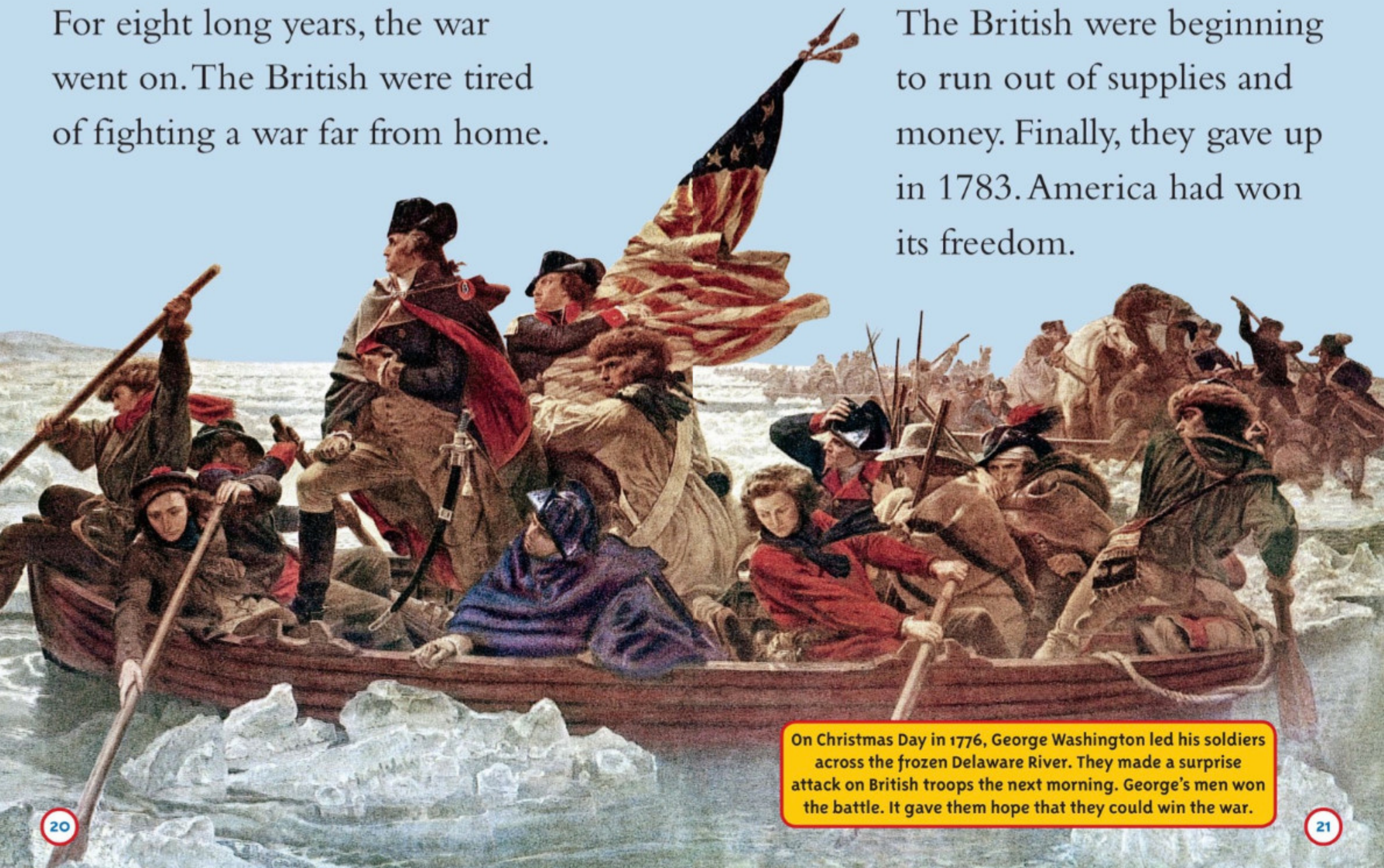


REVOLUTIONARY WAR:
America's fight for independence from Britain

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE: The statement written in 1776 that said Americans had the right to make their own decisions about their country and its people

For eight long years, the war went on. The British were tired of fighting a war far from home.

The British were beginning to run out of supplies and money. Finally, they gave up in 1783. America had won its freedom.



On Christmas Day in 1776, George Washington led his soldiers across the frozen Delaware River. They made a surprise attack on British troops the next morning. George's men won the battle. It gave them hope that they could win the war.

5 Cool Facts About George

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1



He had false teeth made from things like lead and ivory. He did not have wooden teeth!

2



He was born on February 22, but today most Americans celebrate his birthday on the third Monday of that month, often called President's Day.

3



He liked fox hunting on horseback. One of his favorite horses was named Blueskin.

4



He liked cornmeal pancakes (called "hoecakes") with butter and honey for breakfast.

5



He was very tall: almost 6'3". He had size 13 feet!

Very First President

How would this new country work? In 1787, men from each state came together to write new rules for the United States. They called these rules the Constitution (CONS-ta-TOO-shun).

Then, they had to choose a new leader. George Washington was elected (e-LEKT-ed) the first President of the United States in 1789. It was a big job to unite the new country.

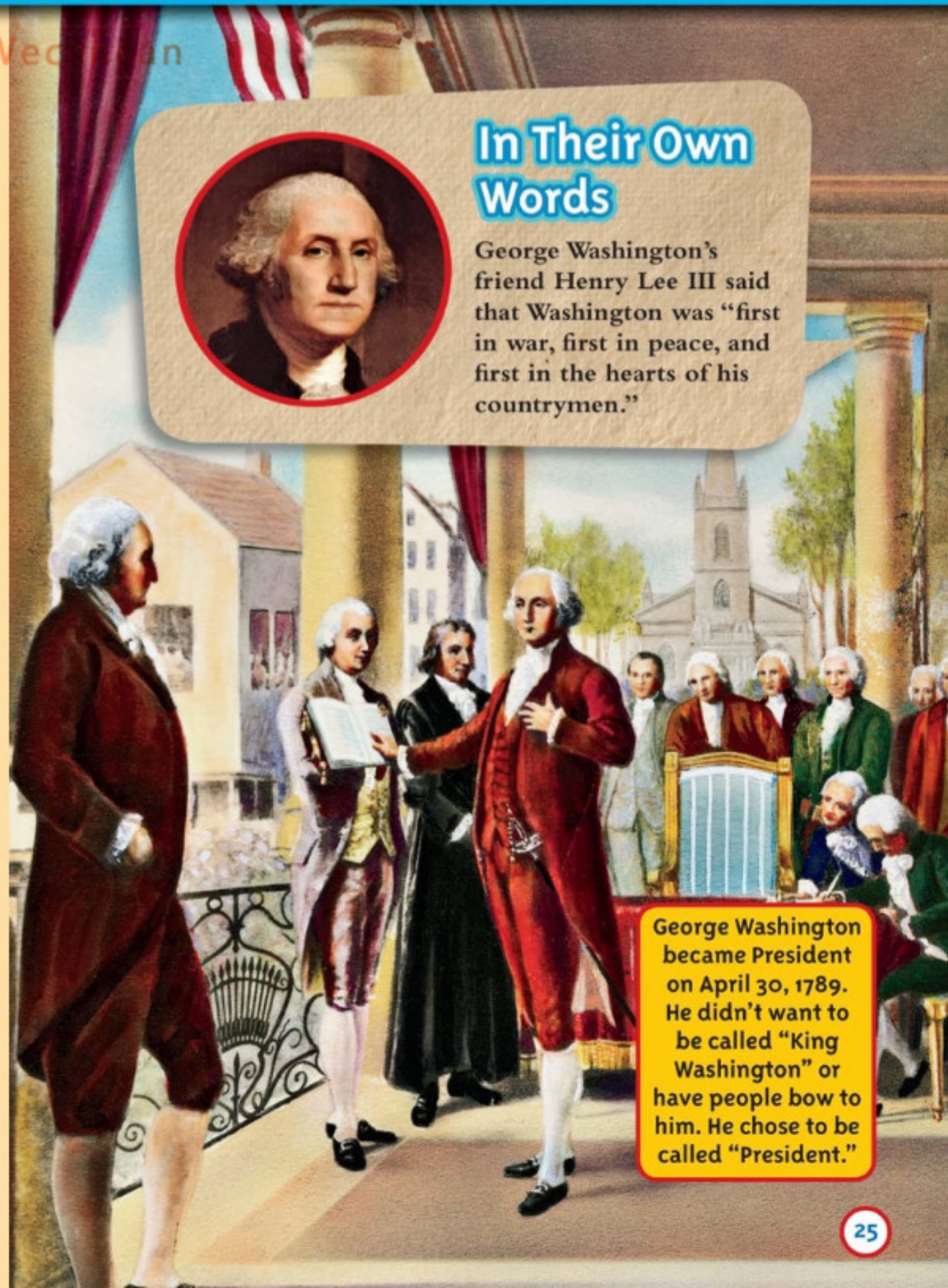


UNITE: To bring together



In Their Own Words

George Washington's friend Henry Lee III said that Washington was "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."



George Washington became President on April 30, 1789. He didn't want to be called "King Washington" or have people bow to him. He chose to be called "President."

Home Again

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After eight years as President, George gave up his power. He was happy to go home to Mount Vernon again. He had many visitors. He rode his horses every day.

In December 1799, George got sick with a bad sore throat. There was no medicine in his time to cure him. He was 67 years old when he died.



1732

Born
February 22
in Virginia

1749

Takes a job
measuring
land

1755

Becomes
leader of
the Virginia
army

1759

Marries
Martha
Custis

1775

Revolutionary
War begins

1776

Declaration of
Independence
written

1783

Revolutionary
War ends

1787

U.S.
Constitution
written

1789

Elected
first U.S.
President

1799

Dies
December
14

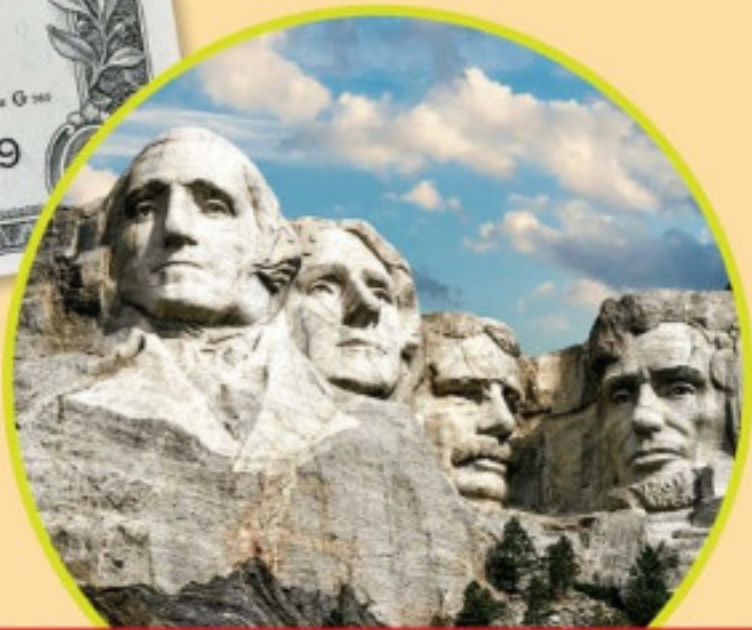
In His Honor

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George Washington was greatly loved. He is the only President to have a state named after him. His face is on the dollar bill, the quarter, and a U.S. postage stamp.



Washington, D.C., America's capital city, is also named for George.



George Washington is one of four Presidents carved in rock at Mount Rushmore National Memorial in South Dakota.

That's
a
Fact!

George Washington was the only President who did not live in the White House.

At 555 feet, the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C., is the world's tallest stone structure.

What in the World?

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WORD BANK

fox hunting Martha Washington horseback riding
Mount Vernon dollar bill Mount Rushmore

Here are close-up pictures from George Washington's time. Use the hints below to figure out what's in each picture. The answers are on page 31.



HINT: The main way George Washington traveled from place to place



HINT: Paper money with Washington's picture



HINT: George Washington's home in Virginia



HINT: George Washington's wife



HINT: One of Washington's favorite outdoor activities



HINT: A famous place where George Washington is honored

Answers: 1. horseback riding, 2. dollar bill, 3. Mount Vernon, 4. Martha Washington, 5. fox hunting, 6. Mount Rushmore



COLONIES: What America's first 13 states were called before America became independent from Britain



DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE: The statement written in 1776 that said Americans had the right to make their own decisions about their country and its people



PLANTATION: A large farm that grows plants for food and clothing



PORTRAIT: A picture or painting of a person



REVOLUTIONARY WAR: America's fight for independence from Britain



UNITE: To bring together