

GEORGE vs. GEORGE



This lesson will use portraiture to introduce students to two leaders on opposite sides of the American Revolution and ask them to consider similarities and differences in both their portrayal and in their life experiences.

This activity is excerpted from Unit 5 of the *Through Their Eyes: Major Causes and Events of the American Revolution* Teacher Resource Guide. To see the full lesson and all supporting materials, visit: www.amrevmuseum.org/teacher-resource-guides

CONTEXT

King George III and George Washington were both well-known public figures within British North America during the American Revolution, and, for many, remain so today. While on opposite sides of this political and military conflict, they shared a number of similarities within their personal lives. Learning about these similarities, and other details of their lives, can help us to see the real people beyond the big names.

AIMS/OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Identify and describe historical figures by investigating primary source images
- Compare and contrast the life experiences of historical figures.

MATERIALS

Primary Sources:

Painting: *George Washington* by Charles Wilson Peale, 1776 (Brooklyn Museum, Dick S. Ramsay Fund)

Painting: *King George III* by Allan Ramsay, ca. 1762-1766 (Courtesy of the Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields)

Other Resources:

MoAR Virtual Museum “Rule Britannia” and “A Brawl in Harvard Yard” Galleries: <http://www.amrevmuseum-virtualtour.org/>

Student Response Worksheet

PROCEDURES

- First, have students explore the “Rule Britannia” and “A Brawl in Harvard Yard” galleries within the Museum’s **Virtual Tour**, searching for the largest framed portrait in each one. Ask students to examine both closely, making observations about each on the accompanying worksheet.
- Next, have students attempt to answer the following questions with or without a partner: What similarities and differences do you notice between the two portraits? What did each artist hope to convey about each of these individuals – their personalities and their lives – and what do you see that makes you say that? Who is featured in each portrait? What details in each portrait provide clues to their identity?
- Have students read the accompanying Primary Source Cards to learn more about these individuals after they attempt to answer the questions. Ask students to answer the following questions on the accompanying worksheet or in conversation with each other or an adult: In what ways are these men’s lives similar to and different from one another, especially in the time before the Revolutionary War? How do you think their experiences may have impacted their behavior during the American Revolution? Are any of the details of their stories surprising to you, or do they help you to see these men in a new way? Why or why not?
- Have students submit their student response worksheet for review.

EXTENSIONS

- Continue the conversation by asking students to reflect on the following questions: What do these two men have in common with other members of the British Empire? Who else do they think was a part of the British Empire? Who else do they think was involved in the Revolution? Use this to transition to further lessons on the diverse peoples of the American Revolution.
- Share an image of a “Rubin vase,” an optical illusion that shows both a vase and two faces, depending on what the eyes focus upon. Ask students to make observations about what they see in the image and to discuss or reflect on how it might be possible for people to see the same thing but have different interpretations of it. Ask students to share how they think this might relate to George Washington and King George III’s understanding of the events leading up to the Revolution. How might it relate to our understandings of King George III and George Washington?