

The Impact of Benjamin Franklin and George Washington



Educator Guide & Lesson Plan inspired by *Guests of Honor from the Musée du Louvre: Jean-Antoine Houdon's Portraits of Americans in the Age of Enlightenment*



LEFT: Jean-Antoine Houdon (French, 1741–1828). *Benjamin Franklin*, 1778. Terra cotta. Musée du Louvre, Paris. © RMN-Grand Palais.; **RIGHT:** Jean-Antoine Houdon (French, 1741–1828). *George Washington*, 1786. Terra cotta. Musée du Louvre, Paris. © RMN-Grand Palais.

Learning Target

Using Jean-Antoine Houdon's portraits of Benjamin Franklin and George Washington at the Detroit Institute of Arts, students will explore the life stories of these figures to deepen their understanding of the importance of individual political and social contributions during the American Revolutionary period.

Student Outcomes

Students will

- Reflect on the various roles Benjamin Franklin and George Washington played as citizens and leaders of the American Revolution and the young United States.
- Understand the ways in which under represented groups, such as women, slaves, free blacks, and indigenous peoples, impacted the Revolutionary War.
- Use artful objects to make inferences about colonial life.
- Reflect on their learning, connecting the exhibit to the classroom and beyond.

5th Grade Michigan State Social Studies Standards Alignment

5 – U3.1.6

Identify the role that key individuals played in leading the colonists to revolution, including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams, John Adams, and Thomas Paine.

5 – U3.1.7

Describe how colonial experiences with self-government and ideas about government influenced the decision to declare independence.

5 – U3.2.3

Compare the role of women, African Americans, indigenous peoples, and France in helping shape the outcome of the war.

Common Core Standards Alignment

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.9

Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

21st Century Learning Skills Connection

- Critical Thinking
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Social Skills

Pre-visit Activities

Activity One

1. Introduce students to the American Revolution and the events that occurred in the following years as presented in your curriculum. In preparation for your visit to the Detroit Institute of Arts, read one of the following stories from each category out loud to students, or allow time for students to do their own research.

Suggested Reading Materials

Benjamin Franklin Biographies

- Benjamin Franklin: Writer, Inventor, Statesman by Pamela Hill Nettleton
- The Amazing Life of Benjamin Franklin by James Cross Giblin

George Washington Biographies

- George Washington: A Picture Book Biography by James Cross Giblin
- The Presidency of George Washington: Inspiring a Young Nation by Danielle Smith-Llera

2. Instruct students to draw an original picture depicting today's story that answers the question "How did these men contribute to the American Revolution?" Ask students to write one sentence that explains their drawing. In pairs or small groups, allow students time to explain their works of art to their partners, explaining their reasoning for decisions made.

Activity Two

1. To review the impact of women, African Americans, indigenous people, and France on the war, tell students they will create a concept map using the *Generate, Sort, Connect, Elaborate* thinking routine. In pairs, students use the topic of “Influencing the War’s Outcome” and follow the instructions on the graphic organizer.

2. When the concept maps are complete, reflect with the class on their work. The questions below can serve as a guide to your class discussion.

- What are the TWO most important actions you and your partner chose to include in your concept map? Why?
- What are TWO actions you and your partner chose to leave out of your concept map? Why?
- What story does your map tell about the ways various groups impacted the outcome of the American Revolutionary War?
- What questions or issues arose for you and your partner as you worked through this activity?

Self-Guide

Note: If you have a large group, Activity One and Two can be done out of order.

Activity One: Instruct students to use their maps to begin in the 17th Century New England Decorative Arts gallery in American. Using “Understanding Colonial America Through Art,” students will explore objects from the decades leading up to the American Revolution.

Activity Two: Once students view the Houdon busts, have them explore using the graphic organizer on the back.

Post-Visit Activities

Inform students they will write a letter to a friend or family member about their visit to the Houdon exhibit. Encourage students to use their graphic organizer from their visit as a reference. Students who are less familiar with how to write a letter may need one modeled for them before they begin this assignment.