

## Lee Chapel and Museum

### A Lesson on Character

#### PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY

## **WHAT MAKES A GOOD CHARACTER?**

The pre-visit activity is designed to introduce the student to the concept of good character. A person of good character can easily be compared to one of our cape-wearing superheroes today, but what about the many men and women from our history books?

Together, or on their own, students should read the passages about George Washington and Robert E. Lee. They'll learn about both men's achievements, as well as their hardships. The reputation that both Lee and Washington for their good character has stood the test of time because of the values they lived by and taught to others. When finished reading, students should identify and define traits found in both passages. Afterwards, students will share their story as if they were a super hero by filling out the comic book.

Directions for putting the comic book together are found on the back cover. The pages are numbered as well. The comic book should be printed on one page front and back. To save paper the two short biographies can be printed front and back.

When finished, ask the students about their comic. How does their superhero self compare to Washington and Lee? Did they have any of the same hardships? What superpower did they pick? How about their superhero cover, how did they depict themselves? If Washington and Lee were found in a comic today what would they look like? Would Washington or Lee have capes or would they still be pictured in their uniforms?

#### **What You'll Need:**

- **Pencil**
- **Scissors**
- **Stapler**
- **Markers, crayons or colored pencils (optional)**

# George Washington

## *A Look at Washington's Character Development*

George Washington was born on February 22, 1732, in Westmoreland County, Virginia. His parents were Augustine Washington, a successful planter, and Mary Ball. Little is known about Washington's childhood, but when his father passed away, Washington became **responsible** for his mother and siblings. At just 11 years old, Washington helped maintain their plantation, Ferry Farm. Being the man of the house taught him the importance of **hard work**.


Due to financial distress experienced by his family, George Washington never attended college. His formal education ended at the age of 15, but that did not stop him. At the **ambitious** age of 17, Washington joined George William Fairfax as a surveyor in efforts to survey Virginia's frontier. At the age of 21, Washington was **entrusted** with a mission that would lead him 900 miles north of Virginia to what is now Buffalo, New York, to reclaim lands taken by the French. In 1758, the British regained control of the land and the French and Indian War ended.

One year later Washington made his home at Mt. Vernon when he married Martha Dandridge Custis, a wealthy widow with two children. Washington became an **innovative** farmer when he switched from tobacco to wheat as his main crop. He also expanded the farm's land, buildings and resources.

In 1775, George Washington went to war again. This time as commander of the Continental Army. Washington and his troops fought the British in our fight for independence. Through **determination** and **fortitude** and with the help of the French navy, Washington and his army were victorious over the British in 1783. That same year Washington gave up his position of power when he could've been crowned a king. Instead, he returned home to his family and farm.

Washington could not relax at Mt. Vernon for very long. In 1787 he presided over the Constitutional Convention which drafted our Constitution. In 1789, Washington was elected to serve as our first President. In that time he lead with **fairness** and **honesty**. He showed the public that you could lead with **integrity**. In 1797, believing that his civic duty had been done, Washington finally retired from the public service. His retirement was short-lived however. On December 12, 1799, George Washington passed away leaving a nation in mourning.

Washington took time to plan for what would happen in the future. He used his estate to **make a difference** in the lives of those he didn't know and would never meet. In 1796, Washington donated 100 shares of stock from the James River Canal Company to Liberty Hall Academy, a school on Virginia's frontier. The money the school received from the stock saved the school from financial ruin. Washington didn't believe he should accept the money to use for himself, instead he believed it could give young men the formal education he never received.



# Robert E. Lee

## *A Look at Lee's Character Development*

Robert E. Lee was born on January 19, 1807, at Stratford Hall in Westmoreland County, Virginia. His parents were Henry Lee III (Light Horse Harry Lee) and Anne Hill Carter. As a young man Lee attended West Point Academy, where he proved himself to be a **smart** and **ambitious** student. He graduated second in his class, a wonderful **achievement**. After graduating, Lee met Mary Randolph Custis and the two were married on June 30, 1831. Together the couple had seven children to **provide** and **care** for.

During the early years of their marriage Lee served as an engineer. Most of Lee's earliest projects were to design and build East Coast fortifications. One of Lee's most challenging jobs as an engineer was to improve the flow of the Mississippi River in St. Louis, Missouri. This saved the port of St. Louis and opened up the northern Mississippi River to navigation.

Lee's military schooling and critical attention to detail proved useful when he fought with **fortitude** in the Mexican-American War and in the Civil War. During the Civil War, 1861-1865, Lee showed that he had the **leadership skills** it took to command the Confederate forces. However, **the decision to command was not easy**. Lee knew it was his duty to fight on the side of his home state of Virginia, but he also knew it would tear apart what Washington fought and worked for. Lee gained **respect** from his men by proving he could win victories at Second Manassas, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. Lee also learned quickly from his defeats. When the Union forces could no longer be defeated, Lee rode to the Appomattox Courthouse to surrender to Ulysses S. Grant.

After the Civil War, Robert E. Lee and his family moved to Richmond in hopes of a peaceful life. Lee's **integrity** and **hardworking** nature were important factors in the decision of the trustees to ask him to serve as the 11th president of Washington College, once named Liberty Hall Academy. Lee and his family moved to Lexington, Virginia in the fall of 1865 to work for the same school Lee's idol, George Washington, donated funds to help save. As the school's president it was Lee's **responsibility** to hire more teachers and add more courses to the curriculum. Lee believed in a **practical** education that would allow students to find jobs outside of school that would help unite and rebuild our nation. Lee was **successful** in adding courses like engineering, journalism and astronomy to the school. Lee also asked that a gathering place for students and a place to house his office be built. Lee's wish was granted in 1868 when the Chapel was completed.

Robert E. Lee was president of Washington College from 1865-1870. In those five years he shaped the lives of many young men and gave them a **positive role model** to look up to. Lee passed away on October 12, 1870 in his home in Lexington. Many of Lee's accomplishments are still part of higher education today.

Now that you've finished reading, did you notice the bold-faced words? Both passages included bold-faced words that represent traits of having good character. Did you notice if Lee and Washington shared any common traits?

Skim both passages, this time pick out character traits that are found in both Lee and Washington's story. How many did you find? List them below.

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During your visit to Lee Chapel and Museum, your tour will talk about how Washington and Lee used the above traits. However, before you come it's important to know what those traits mean. Using a dictionary, define the words on the lines below.

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When your finished, complete the comic book. Many great men and women from our history could be seen as superheroes today. Fill out the comic book as if you were a superhero, but remember heroes are much more than their powers, it's their character that defines them.

Draw  
Your Cover  
Here



**In A Superheroes Guide to  
Character Building!**  
(Your Superhero Name)

# The Adventures of

*What is something you have gone through that has made you a stronger person?*

Blank writing area with horizontal lines for the response to the question above.

*Superheroes sometimes need an extra hand when trouble's around. They're happy to ask for help. Who would your sidekick be?*

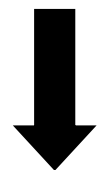


3. Fold the second set of pages on the vertical line. Fold the paper so that pages 4 and 5 are inward.

2. Fold on the vertical line so that pages 2 and 7 are inward.

4. Places pages 3-6 inside the other sheet. Staple the book's spine to hold the pages together.

1. Cut the dotted, horizontal line.



*Superheroes are often dedicated to helping the citizens of their town. However, we shouldn't forget that superheroes are citizens too! So what do good citizens do?*

*Good citizens are expected to communicate with their government by being an active voter and staying up to date on current issues.*

*They should also respect differing opinions and respect the rights of others. Being accountable and respecting the law is another way to be a good citizen.*

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*You've been given an award honoring your good work! Tell us what it means to have good character*

*As a citizen and superhero to your town, how can you help improve your community?*

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*What do you like to do during your free time?*

*What's your favorite subject in school?*

**What's Your Superhero's Secret Identity?**

*What grade are you in?*

*Heroes are known for their strength and agility, but what about their character? Pick a superpower below and define what it means to you.*

- Honest Responsible Kind Trustful**
- Ambitious Brave Thoughtful**

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