

## CLASS LESSON

# Lee Family Matters

### What You'll Need:

- Write Utensil
- Shoes, cans, clothing, etc. (optional)
- Post-it notes (optional)

**Activity 1:** Students should review the Lee family tree and answer the question. At the bottom is a small key that indicates how members relate to each other. Once students have examined the Lee family tree, they should use the blank tree to make their own family tree. Students should include as many family members as possible, when finished, they should answer the question.

**Activity 2:** Students should read the short passage about the Lee family. Students may notice words they don't recognize in bold. The bold-faced vocabulary words are defined on the next page. When students have finished reading about the Lee family, they should move on to answer the questions on the next page.

**Activity 3:** Students should read the short passages on Mary Anna Randolph Custis Lee (Mrs. Lee) and Mary Custis Lee (eldest daughter). Both women were unusual women of their time. Students should complete the questions on the next page after finishing the readings.

**Optional Disability Activity:** Have students step into the shoes of someone with a disability. Have students pretend they've been in an accident and have lost an arm. Students should take one arm and put it behind their back. While keeping one arm behind their back, students should try to perform everyday activities only using their free hand. Students could try tying their shoes, buttoning a shirt, or opening a can or boxed item.

**Activity 4:** Lee was known to write letters to his family while away. On the provided lines, students should write a letter to someone in their family. Students should pretend that they are away from their family. They need to decide where they are and why they're there. For example, they could be at Lee Chapel and Museum because they're attending a fieldtrip. While writing, students should give their family advice on what to bring and what to do should they visit the location.

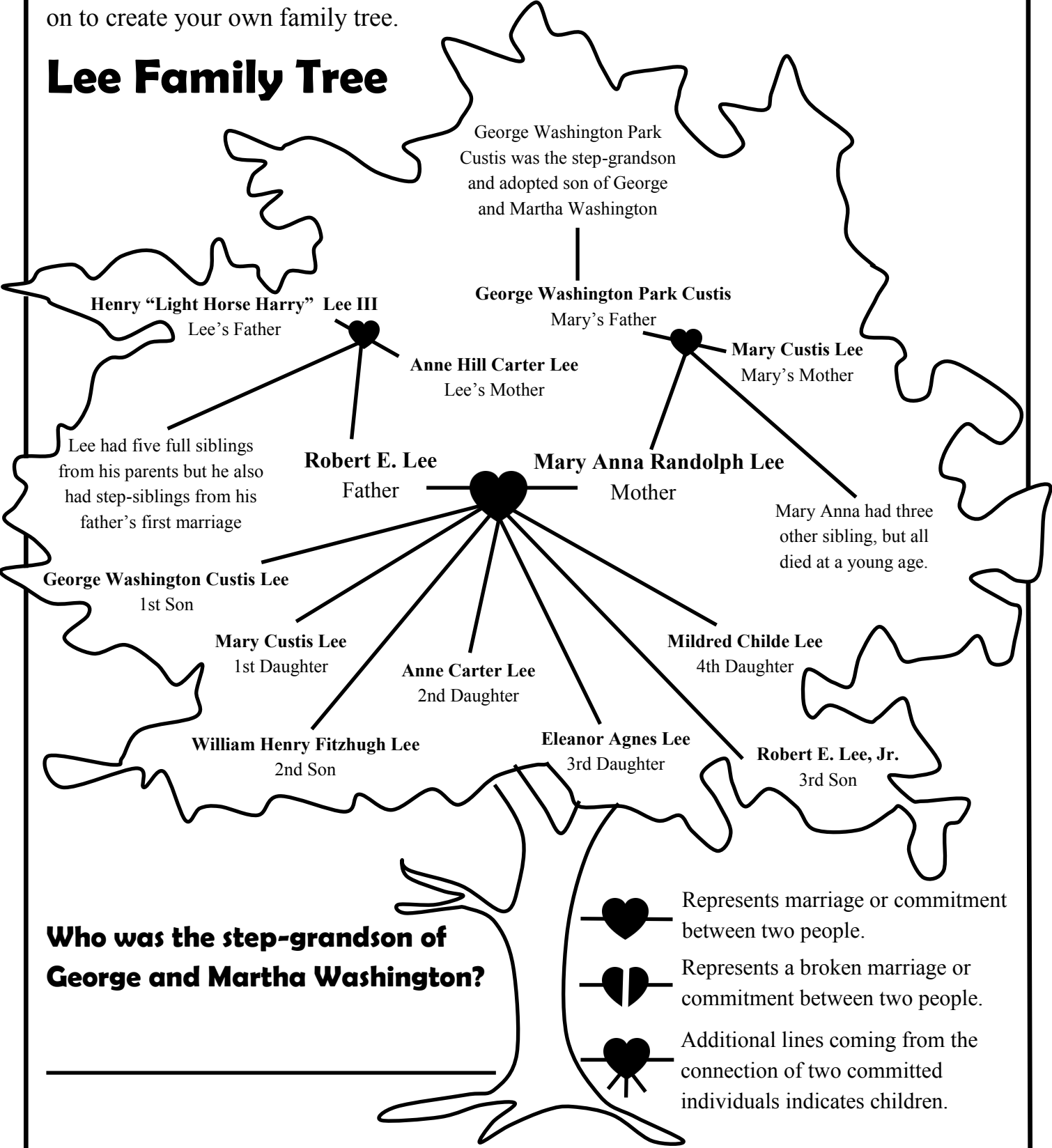
**Activity 5:** Finish up the lesson by answering questions about peace and honor. Lee found peace in helping Washington College and because of his work the school honors him.

**Optional Peace Activity:** The definition of peace and finding peace differs with each person. Have students close their eyes and think about what peace means to them. What do they see if their mind? Have students write their answers on a post-it note. When everyone is finished, post the notes together, and read a few or all of them out loud.

# Lee Family Matters

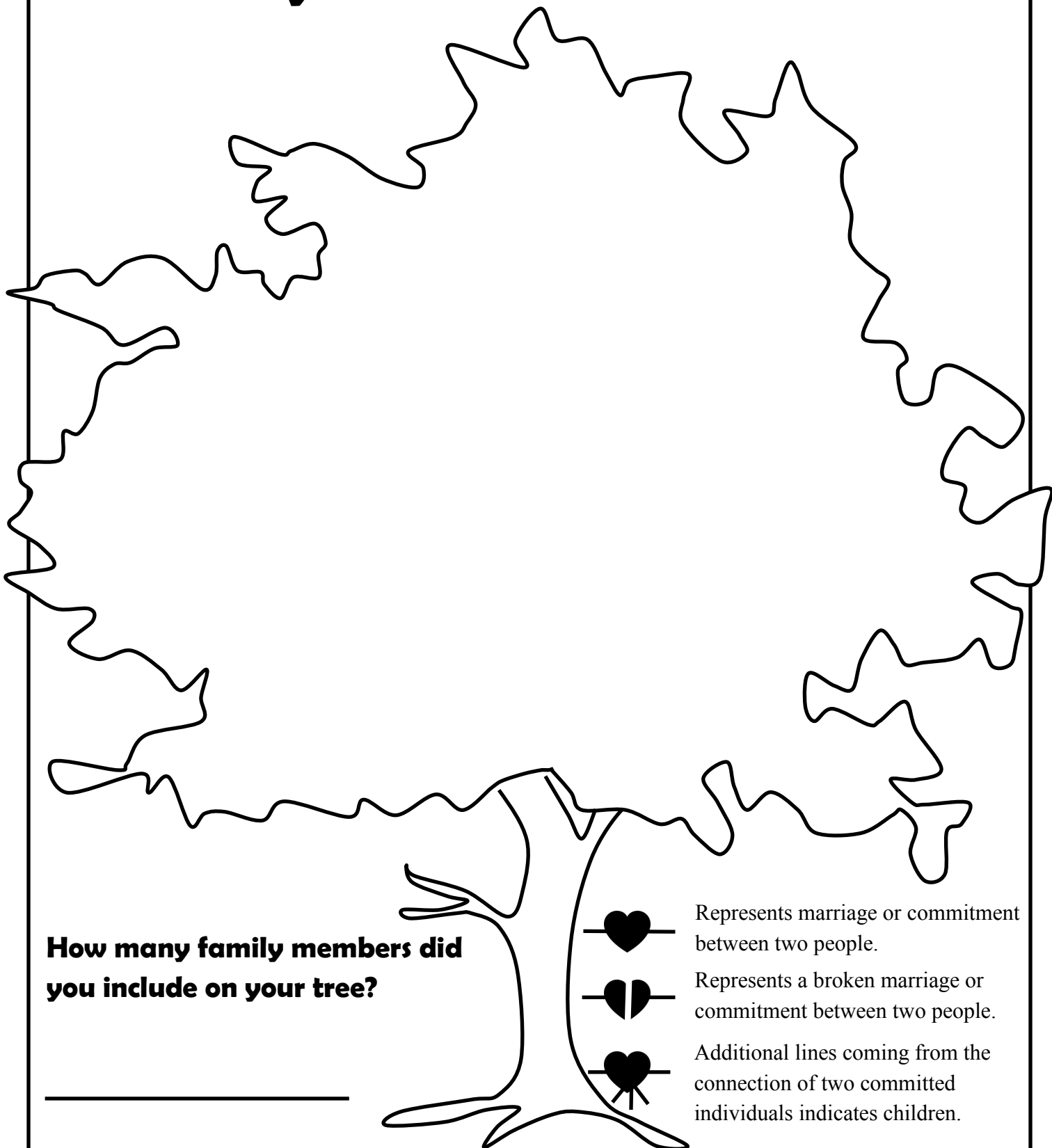
During this lesson, you'll learn all about members from Robert E. Lee's family. While we mostly learn about Lee's history, his family is made up of unique members that wrote their own stories. Below is the Lee family tree, review the names and relationships before moving on to create your own family tree.

## Lee Family Tree



On the tree below, fill in your family tree from memory. Make sure to include you, your siblings, your parents and grandparents from each side of your family. If your family consists of step-parents or step-siblings make sure to include them!

## Your Family Tree



# Lee Family Matters

**Read the passage about the Lee family below. On the next page, answer the questions.**

Robert E. Lee was born January 19, 1807, at Stratford Hall in Virginia. He was born to Henry and Anne Hill Carter Lee. Lee's father, Henry Lee III, or "Light Horse Harry" Lee, was a **Calvary** Commander in the Revolutionary War. Henry Lee's role and success in the war caught the eye of George Washington and the two became longtime friends. However, after the war and his term as **governor** of Virginia, Henry Lee suffered from financial distress due to poor **investments**; some of which strained his friendship with George Washington. The stress Henry caused his wife and children forced the them to take time apart until he could resolve the financial issues. This left Anne Carter and her children to depend on other members of the family for help.

One member of the family that was always by his mother's side was their son, Robert E. Lee. Lee grew up learning from his father's mistakes. He enrolled in West Point Academy in New York and studied engineering. In 1829, Lee graduated from West Point second in his class and soon after married Mary Anna Randolph Custis, the great-granddaughter of Martha Washington. Together the two had seven children, four daughters and three sons. His daughters, Mary Custis (Daughter), Anne Carter (Annie), Eleanor Agnes (Wig), and Mildred (Precious Life), all helped around the house performing daily chores. George Washington Custis (Custis), William Fitzhugh (Rooney) and Robert Edward (Rob Jr.), Lee's sons, helped manage and care for the home when Lee was away. Since Lee was an Army **Engineer** he was often stationed away from his family. Lee used his income as an engineer to provide for his family and the home in **Arlington**, Virginia.

When Lee was away, Mrs. Lee was responsible for playing both parents. She managed the household by herself. When possible, Lee wrote to his children advising them to respect their mother, help around the house and above all, study hard in school. Each of Lee's children **flourished**. During the Civil War, Lee's sons decided to follow in their father's footsteps and join the military, while Lee's daughters grew to be young, independent women.

At the time of Lee's surrender to Ulysses S. Grant in Appomattox, Virginia, Lee was already dealing with loss. His daughter, Annie got sick and passed away in North Carolina. With the loss of their daughter, the Civil War, and their home in Arlington, the Lee family had to start their lives over. While staying at a friend's cottage in the outskirts of Richmond, Virginia, the family's prayers were answered.

In the Fall of 1865, Lee became the 11th president of Washington College. Lee immediately went to work to provide students with a practical education. He hoped that after graduation, the students would help **rebuild** and **reunite** the country. Lee worked as president for five years with his wife Mary beside him. When he passed away on October 12, 1870, the school was renamed Washington and Lee University in honor of his achievements and the example he set for the students.

**Answer the passage questions below. At the bottom of the page, you'll find vocabulary words used in the text.**

Who was the passage about?

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In what state did the Lee family live?

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What did Mrs. Lee do when Lee went to war?

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What did Lee advise his children to do in his letters?

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Which one of Lee's children did not outlive him?

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## **Vocabulary Definitions:**

- **Cavalry**-part of a military force composed of troops that serve on horseback.
- **Governor**-the elected leader of the government of a state.
- **Investment**-the action of investing money for profit or material result.
- **Engineer**-a person who designs, builds, or maintains engines, machines, or public works.
- **Arlington**-a city located in Northern Virginia that is settled along the Potomac River. Arlington is home to the Arlington House, the Lee's family home up until the Civil War.
- **Flourished**-a person, animal, or living organism that develops in a healthy or vigorous way.
- **Rebuild**-to build something again after it has been damaged or destroyed.
- **Reunite**-a cause to come together again after a period of separation.

## **Mary and Mary, Not Your Average Women**

### **Mary Anna Randolph Custis Lee (Mrs. Lee)**

Born on October 1, 1808, Mary was the only surviving child of George Washington Parke Custis and Mary Lee Fitzhugh Custis. At the age of 23, Mary married Robert E. Lee. The couple had seven children together. Mary was an avid gardener, painter and gracious hostess. She was very well-read and kept up with politics by reading the newspapers which was unusual for a woman at the time. However, Mary's life wasn't easy. Mary developed rheumatoid arthritis in adulthood. The arthritis made painting and gardening difficult and even painful to do. Those that suffer from arthritis find that their joints deconstruct and can become deformed. Mary's case of arthritis only worsened with age. By the end of the Civil War (1861-1865), Mary was had to use a wheelchair to get around. Mary was responsible for raising the children herself since Lee was often stationed in other states. During the Civil War, her husband, Robert E. Lee, was away commanding confederate forces. Although fighting a disability, Mary worked hard to support her husband. She and her daughters knitted hundreds of socks for the confederate war effort. She was also responsible for managing the household and at anxious times during the war, Mary tried to make the household feel as normal and welcome as possible. She did find some relief from arthritis by visiting hot springs to soothe her sore joints. When Lee became president of Washington College in 1865, Mary was finally able to depend on him for care and comfort. Mary passed away at the age of 66 in 1873.

### **Mary Custis Lee (Daughter)**

Robert E. Lee's eldest daughter was born in 1835 at the Lee family home in Arlington, Virginia. Although Mary was the oldest, she did not assume many of the responsibilities expected of her. Instead of doing household chores or babysitting her younger sisters, Mary was often out traveling or hanging out with her wide circle of friends. Considered the most outspoken of her siblings and a little bossy, Mary preferred life in the city, instead of life at Arlington House. While the family lived in Lexington, Mary organized many activities at their church to raise money for a new building. Mary inherited her father's bravery. As an adult, Mary traveled almost full time, most of the time alone. Mary filled scrapbooks with pictures and postcards from Europe and the Middle East. She once bribed her way into St. Sophia, a Turkish mosque which no woman was ever to step foot in. Mary never saw herself filling the expected role of housewife. She never married and never showed any interest in doing so. She was an extremely independent woman for her time. Mary passed away in 1918 at 83 years old.

Disabilities can be mental or physical. In Mrs. Lee's case she had a physical disability. Do you know someone that lives with a disability? Try stepping into the shoes of a person with a disability. How would it feel?

**Try This!** Imagine that you have lost an arm in an accident. Place one of your arms around your back and keep it there. Using your free arm, try performing everyday tasks. For example, try tying your shoes with one hand or buttoning a shirt or jacket.

**How did it feel to do those things? Did you need help?**

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Even though Mrs. Lee had arthritis, she was still responsible for the household. Luckily, she had help from her daughters.

**In what ways do you help your parents around the house?**

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Mary, Lee's eldest daughter, was just the opposite of her mother. Mary represents how a woman's role has changed over time. **What roles did women play prior to the Civil War?**

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**What kind of opportunities do women have today?**

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# Communicating with Your Family

Robert E. Lee was known to write letters to all his children with advice, especially in the time of war. Pretend that you are away from your family. Decide where you want to be. On the lines below, write a letter to your family explaining where you are and why you are there. Give your family advice on what to bring and what to do should they ever visit this place.

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*Sincerely,* \_\_\_\_\_

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# Finding Peace

Dealing with the heavy loss of the Civil War, Robert E. Lee turned his attention to rebuilding Washington College, located in Lexington, Virginia. The school was in desperate need of more teachers, further enrollment, campus maintenance and a better curriculum. Lee devoted himself to providing the school with all of those things. Lee used the last five years of his life rebuilding a school that he hoped would help reunite the country. In this way, he found peace for himself and helped promote peace for the United States.

**Try This!** What does peace mean to you? When you close your eyes and think of peace what do you see? Everyone in your class should write down what they see on a post-it note. When finished, everyone should post their notes together in one area. Have your teacher read aloud some of the definitions. This is a great way to learn how

All the work Lee completed at Washington College is still remembered today. To honor Lee's accomplishments as president, the school was renamed Washington and Lee University. One way Lee's family decided to honor him was through a memorial statue. Mrs. Lee worked with Virginia sculptor Edward Valentine to design the statue. Together the two came up with the 'Recumbent Lee,' a marble statue of Lee resting on the battlefield, as he often did. The 'Recumbent Lee' is located within the statue chamber at Lee Chapel and Museum. Our tours give visitors an up close look at the life-size statue.

What does honor mean to you?

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What is one way you can honor your family?

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Have you ever seen a memorial statue in person? If so, what or who was it memorializing?

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