

Exploring Leadership with “George Did It!”

Overview

In this activity, students will gain understanding of the qualities of a leader.

Grades

2-8

Activity Type

Whole group or small group

Materials

- Chart or board to record students’ responses
- Post-It Notes (optional)
- Copy of *George Did It!* by Suzanne Jurmain

George Did It! Synopsis

Everyone wanted George Washington to be the president. He was responsible, led the army in a fight against the British, and helped write the Constitution. But being the president is a very important job, and George was too nervous. So, to everyone's surprise, he said no! However, George had many supporters, and with the help of the cheering crowds and loyal advisers and dignitaries, George realized that he didn't have time to think about how nervous he was, he just had to do his job. With little-known facts and a bit of humor, Suzanne Tripp Jurmain gives readers a glimpse into the more personal side of the first president of the United States.

Duration

One 45 minute session

Instructions

Pre-Reading Activity

1. Have class members discuss and record in pairs: What makes a good leader? What are the qualities of a leader?
2. Invite students to share their responses and record them on the board.

Reading Activity

3. Tell students:
“I’m going to share with you a wonderful picture book that tells the story of our nation’s first leader—George Washington. As I read, I want you to pay attention to two things in particular:
(1) What surprises you? What do you learn about this important leader that you did not expect?
(2) What qualities made George Washington a good leader? Why did people around him pick George to lead the new nation?”

4. Read the story. If you are working with Grades 2-4, you will want to stop periodically to support the students in attending to (1) and (2) above. You may choose to provide two colors of Post-It Notes so that students can make notes regarding (1) above on one color and (2) above on another color.

Post-Reading Activity

5. Invite students to reflect and write their responses to the two major questions you posed regarding George Washington as a leader. Then ask students to share their responses with the class.
6. To bring closure, ask "What did you learn about leadership? What new ideas/insights do you take away from today's activity?" That is, close by encouraging students to explore something of personal meaning regarding the role of a leader and the qualities/ humanity of a leader.

Extension Activity

Another Early American leader had this to say about a leader: "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader." -- John Quincy Adams

There are numerous possible discussions to conduct using this quote:

- Invite students to ponder Adams' words in light of George Washington as a leader.
- Think of someone whom you consider to be a good leader. Can you apply Adams' ideas to this person?
- Can you recall a time when YOU have inspired others or helped others to achieve more than they thought they could?
- Consider the following: Are leaders born or are leaders made?

Closing Comments

Leaders are persons like you and me who demonstrate special qualities that other people recognize and appreciate. Many times leaders take action, even when they have doubts -- we call that the courage of leadership. Part of being a strong leader means confronting situations that are uncomfortable and you may not like, but leaders rise to the challenge.