

Teacher's Primary Source Analysis: *George Washington* by Gilbert Stuart

1. OBSERVE

a. What kind of primary source is it?

The primary source is an art work, painting of George Washington, portrait, etc.

b. What do you see in the image? Note details of your observation.

Students might describe varying levels of details. Teachers can model critical observation habits by affirming various physical details of the portrait. Students might note details about the portrait being of an older Washington, various facial features and colors, the period attire worn by Washington, and the dark background. Students might also share the quality of painting that they observe, such as Washington's gazing out to the viewer, his appearing stately, rosy cheeks that make him look vital and strong, etc.

c. Read the text below the image. What information do you get from the text?

The painting's title identifies George Washington as the person being painted. The name of the painter is Gilbert Stuart, and the approximate ("ca.") year, 1798, is when the painting was created. The owner of the painting is noted as the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association.

2. REFLECT

a. What can you learn from studying this primary source?

Students might share what they know and think of George Washington, instead of having learned something new. Some possible new knowledge might be that it is owned by the Mt. Vernon Ladies Association and not by the government; how many paintings of Washington there might be, etc.

b. What do you know about the subject of the primary source? List two or more.

*Students might name various historical events related to Washington. When reviewing student answers to this question, teachers can refer to the "**Timeline**" section of **The George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress** website; or **George Washington Biography** interactive at the Mount Vernon website. Also teachers can clarify and correct any myths about Washington that students might mention. For popular myths about George Washington, teachers can refer to **The Man & Myth**, a website by Mount Vernon.*

c. What do you know about life at the time when the primary source was created? List two or more.

Washington finished his second presidential term a year before on March 4, 1797. The United States was an independent and agricultural nation. Slavery was legal in most of the U.S. territories. People traveled mostly on foot and on horses, and didn't shower, etc. Teachers can help students relate some of their knowledge to the health conditions of the late 18th century.

3. QUESTION

a. What would you like to know more about, after having observed and reflected on the primary source?

Answers will vary.