



2004 Shaping the World: Conversation on Democracy The Presidential Debate of 1804

Section IV - Democracy, Slavery and Women

Women



The role of women in the American Revolution was diverse. As camp followers they cooked, mended clothing, washed clothes, and nursed the sick. Other women dressed as men and fought for the American cause. With Washington's request to Congress in 1775 for female nurses, many homes became hospitals to care for the wounded. With their men at war, women continued the work their husbands had been doing such as carpentry, blacksmithing, weaving, and running other businesses.

Many women sewed uniforms and shirts, rolled bandages, and knitted stockings for the soldiers. Some women were spies and others protected their homes from the British invaders.

Match these images to services or alleged services of women in the American Revolution.

Match these Women with Their Roles



Betsy Ross

a female Paul Revere announcing the British's arrival



Mary Ludwig Hayes

captures Tories who had murdered her neighbor



Nancy Hart

camp follower, loads and fires cannons



Abigail Adams

supplied water to the troops becoming known as “Molly Pitcher”



Deborah Sampson

spy



Margaret Cochran Corbin

enlisted in army as Timothy Thayer and later as Robert Shurtieff



Margaret Hill Morris

seamstress of the America Flag



Sybil Ludington

As a Quaker she was against war, but cared for the sick and wounded on both sides.



Lydia Darragh

organized women to raise money to purchase linen for shirts and delivered the shirts to the troops at Valley Forge



Sarah Franklin Bache

an advocate for women’s rights, “If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies, we are determined to foment a Rebellion...”

Select one of the women above to research and make a full report to the class on their services in the American Revolution.

Have female students step into the shoes of one of the above women and write journal entries about a day in her life? Have male students as television reporters or newspaper reporters conduct interviews of female students portraying the women and write television or newspaper features about the women in the American Revolution.

Read the newspaper article "[The tale about Betsy Ross and the American flag is still not all sewn up](#)" written in December 5, 1999. Write a follow-up newspaper article outlining any new evidence that might have surfaced.

The tale about Betsy Ross and the American flag is still not all sewn up

By Ron Avery
Knight Ridder Newspapers

PHILADELPHIA — Unless the issue is who makes the best cheesesteaks, few debates arouse the passion that surrounds the question: Who made the first American flag?

Certainly, no Philadelphia controversy has had the longevity of the Betsy Ross debate — 130 years with no end in sight.

Addressing tourists in front of the instantly recognizable brick house at 239 Arch St., guide Ed Mauger says, "Everything you have heard about the Betsy Ross House is true — except she never lived here and probably never sewed the flag."

Minutes later, another group arrives, and a guide in colonial garb assures his flock that George Washington himself visited the seamstress at this very location to place an order for a flag with 13 stripes and 13 stars in a circle.

Such pronouncements give history buff Christian Johnson heartburn. "Francis Hopkinson designed the flag! The stars were not arranged in a circle, and Betsy Ross actually lived a few doors away. The house is still standing," he says.

In addition to doubts about Betsy sewing the flag and whether the house is the correct house, no one can be sure if the bones buried under the tombstone in the Betsy Ross House garden are really those of Betsy and her third husband, John Claypoole.

All the hullabaloo started in 1870 when Betsy's grandson, William Canby, read a paper to the Pennsylvania Historical Society. For the first time Americans heard of a "secret flag committee" composed of Washington, Robert Morris, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and war financier, and George Ross, uncle of Betsy's late husband, John Ross.

In 1870, Betsy — a hearty soul who lived to age 86 — had been dead for

34 years and the alleged episode was 94 years old. Canby was only 11 when Betsy died, but he remembered grandmom's story.

There were doubts from the beginning because Canby next got affidavits from Betsy's daughter, a niece and a granddaughter. All swore that the old girl frequently talked about the committee's visit and how she suggested five-pointed stars displayed in a circle.

There is no doubt that Betsy sewed flags. A bill she sent to Pennsylvania for sewing ships' flags still exists.

The problem with Canby's tale was the timing and the unlikeliness of three such important patriots taking time out to personally order a flag.

Didn't Washington have a war to fight? And, there is no record of a "secret flag committee" of the Continental Congress.

Betsy's kin dated Washington's visit to May or June 1776, even before America declared its independence.

Yet, it was a full year later, June 14, 1777, that the Congress approved a resolution declaring: "that the flag of the United States be made of 13 stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be 13 stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation."

In 1780, Francis Hopkinson, signer of the Declaration and a very creative fellow, submitted a bill, that still exists, for designing the "the flag of the United States, a great seal for the United States" and other designs.

Hopkinson sought "a quarter cask of the public wine" as symbolic payment for all his art work.

Most historians agree that Hopkinson was, indeed, the flag's designer.

Flag authority Robert Coykendall, writes the whole tale would make a lot more sense if the year was 1777 and instead of Washington, Hopkinson visited the Ross house.

The writer suggests that the Ross

descendants were truthful but got details mixed up.

The person most responsible for making Betsy a celebrity and her house a shrine was Charles H. Weisgerber, an obscure painter.

Weisgerber painted a large picture of the three patriots visiting Ross, which was displayed in the Pennsylvania pavilion at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893.

He formed an organization to make the Ross house shine, lived in the building for 36 years as caretaker and named his son Vexil Domus, "flag house" in Latin.

Weisgerber raised money for the house by collecting dimes from children who got a certificate featuring his picture.

Despite selling two million certificates that raised \$20,000, the house was "on the verge of ruin" in 1936.

It was millionaire radio manufacturer Atwater Kent who invested more than \$100,000 to rehabilitate the house, which was then given to the city.

In the 1930s, several houses next to the Ross house were torn down to create a small park. Some historians argue that the real Betsy Ross house was destroyed. The confusion was created by changes in the street numbering system.

A Betsy Ross House Web site presents lengthy evidence supporting the current house site and Betsy's role in creating the flag.

Then there is the problem of Betsy's bones. In 1975 it was decided to move Betsy from Mount Moriah Cemetery in West Philadelphia to the small park next to the house. Her body had already been moved once from a Quaker burial ground. Diggers found nothing under her old tombstone. But after two days of digging in the Claypoole family plot a few old bones were identified as "possibly" those of Elizabeth and John Claypoole and moved to the house site.

Women played many roles in the American Revolution. Were any women in politics? What is Mr. Jefferson's and President Washington's opinion of women's roles in the new nation? What roles and positions do women hold today in America? Research and report on women in the fields of government, science, technology, ministry and other traditional male jobs.

Recent articles about women's roles in civil rights:

- [Margie Jumper](#)
- [Rosa Parks \(I\)](#)
- [Rosa Parks \(II\)](#)
- [Women in Civil Rights Movement](#)

Slavery

Use the [Written Document Analysis Worksheet](#) to analyze the document below.

BLACK PIONEER OATH

I _____ do swear that I enter freely & voluntarily into His Majesty's Service, and I do enlist myself without the least compulsion or persuasion into the Negro Company commanded by Capt. MARTIN, and that I will demean myself orderly & faithfully, and will cheerfully obey all such directions as I may receive from my said Captain, or the Officers under his Command, and that I will continue to serve His Majesty in all such Services as I may be employed in during the present Rebellion in America –

So help me God

Do additional research on the Black Pioneers. Have students give reports to the class.

Use the following documents (**original with transcription links**) to determine George Washington's stand on slaves' and free blacks' service in the American Revolution.

George Washington, General Orders November 12, 1775	(link to transcription)
George Washington to Congress December 31, 1775	(link to transcription)
George Washington to Henry Laurens & Thomas Burke, March 18, 1779	(link to transcription)
George Washington to Henry Laurens March 20, 1779	(link to transcription)
George Washington, General Orders October 25, 1781	(link to transcription)

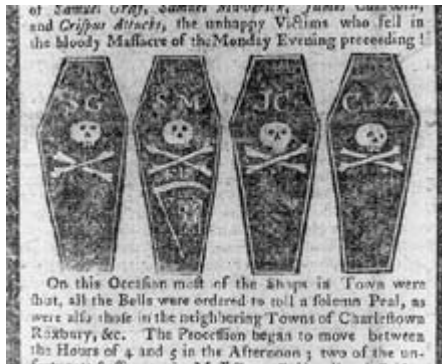
Discuss your findings in class.

If you were a slave during the American Revolution, which side would you have fought on? Elaborate on your decision.

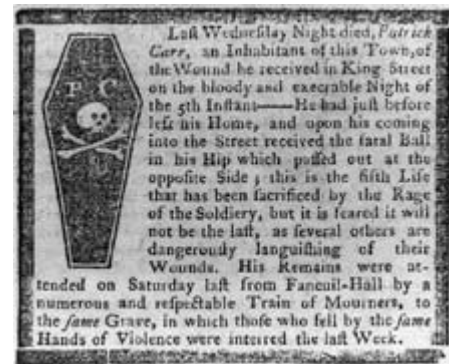
Runaway slave Crispus Attucks (c. 1723-1770) was the first casualty of the American Revolution at the "Boston Massacre." William Brown had placed an ad in the Boston Gazette and Country Journal in 1750 for his runaway slave.... "A Mulatto fellow, about 27 Years of Age, named Crispus, 6 feet 2 inches high, short cur'l hair, his knees nearer together than common....And all Matters of Vessels and others, are hereby cautioned against concealing or carrying off said Servant on Penalty of Law."



How old was Crispus Attucks when he was shot and killed in Boston?



John Adams would defend the British soldiers of the murder of five men.



Have students re-enact this court trial. Student roles can include:

The accused soldiers:

- Captain Thomas Preston
- Corporal William Wemms
- James Hartigan
- William McCauley
- Hugh White
- Matthew Kilroy
- William Warren
- John Carrol
- Hugh Montgomery

Counsel for the Prosecution:

- Samuel Quincy
- Robert Treat Paine

Counsel for the Defense:

- John Adams
- Robert Auchmuty, Jr.
- Josiah Quincy, Jr.
- Sampson Salter Blowers

Witnesses for the Defense:

- John Frost
- Benjamin Lee
- Richard Palmes
- Andrew, servant to Oliver Wendell
- Dr. John Jeffries

Witnesses for the Crown:

- William Wyat
- Daniel Calef
- Samuel Hemmingway

Jury List:

- Joseph Mayo, Foreman
- Nathan Davis
- Edward Pierce
- Abraham Wheeler
- Isaiah Thayer
- Benjamin Fisher
- Samuel Davenport
- Joseph Houghton
- Consider Atherton
- Jacob Cushing, Jr.
- Josiah Lane
- Jonathan Burr

Judges of the Superior Court of Judicature
presiding:

- Chief Justice Benjamin Lynde, Jr.
- Justice Edmund Trowbridge
- Justice John Cushing
- Justice Peter Olive

Teacher should share with the Counsel for Defense and Counsel for the Crown the trial records and newspaper accounts in order that they might prepare their case, prepare their witnesses and make final closing arguments. The judges should preside, keep order and make rulings. The jury will give the verdict and recommend sentencing. Some students should be reporters covering the trial.

Compare the student jury's decision with the actual trial outcome. Only men were counsel, judges and jurymen in colonial America. With female students taking on some of the positions in the re-enactment, do you think the trial's outcome was affected? Why or why not?

Both Washington and Jefferson became slave owners when their fathers died. Washington was 11 years old and Jefferson was 14 years old. Use the quotes below to determine Jefferson's and Washington's thoughts on the institution of slavery. Do their opinions change over time?

Washington Quotes Pertaining to Slavery:

Fairfax County (Virginia) August 11, 1761.

Ran away from a Plantation of the Subscriber's, on *Dogue Run* in *Fairfax*, on Sunday the 9th Instant, the following Negroes,

Peros, 35 or 40 Years of Age, a well-set Fellow, of about 5 Feet 8 Inches high, yellowish Complexion, with a very full round Face, and full black Beard, his Speech is something slow and broken, but not in so great a Degree as to render him remarkable. He had on when he went away, a dark colour'd Cloth Coat, a white Linen Waistcoat, white Breeches and white Stockings.

Jack, 30 Years (or thereabouts) old, a slim, black, well made Fellow, of near 6 Feet high, a small Face, with Cuts down each Cheek, being his Country Marks, his Feet are large (or long) for he requires a great Shoe: The Cloathing he went off in cannot be well ascertained, but it is thought in his common working Dress, such as Cotton Waistcoat (of which he had a new One) and Breeches, and Osnabrig Shirt.

Neptune, aged 25 or 30, well set, and of about 5 Feet 8 or 9 Inches high, thin jaw'd, his Teeth stragling and fil'd sharp, his Back, if rightly remember'd, has many small Marks or Dots running from both Shoulders down to his Waistband, and his Head was close shaved: Had on a Cotton Waistcoat, black or dark colour'd Breeches, and an Osnabrig Shirt.

Cupid, 23 or 25 Years old, a black well made Fellow, 5 Feet 8 or 9 Inches high, round and full faced, with broad Teeth before, the Skin of his Face is coarse, and inclined to be pimply, he has no other distinguishable Mark that can be recollected; he carried with him his common working Cloaths, and an old Osnabrigs Coat made Frockwise.

The two last of these Negroes were bought from an *African Ship* in *August 1759*, and talk very broken and unintelligible *English*; the second one, *Jack*, is Countryman to those, and speaks pretty good *English*, having been several Years in the Country. The other, *Peros*, speaks much better than either, indeed has little of his Country Dialect left, and is esteemed a sensible judicious Negro.

As they went off without the least Suspicion, Provocation, or Difference with any Body, or the least angry Word or Abuse from their Overseers, 'tis supposed they will hardly lurk about in the Neighbourhood, but steer some direct Course (which cannot even be guessed at) in Hopes of an Escape: Or, perhaps, as the Negro *Peros* has lived many Years about *Williamsburg*, and *King William County*, and *Jack* in *Middlesex*, they may possibly bend their Course to one of those Places.

Whoever apprehends the said Negroes, so that the Subscriber may readily get them, shall have, if taken up in this County, Forty Shillings Reward, beside what the Law allows; and if at any greater Distance, or out of the Colony, a proportionable Recompence paid them, by

George Washington.

N.B. If they should be taken separately, the Reward will be proportioned.

Printed in Maryland Gazette (Annapolis), 20 August 1761

Mount Vernon, July 2, 1766

To Capt Josiah Thompson of the Schooner Swift

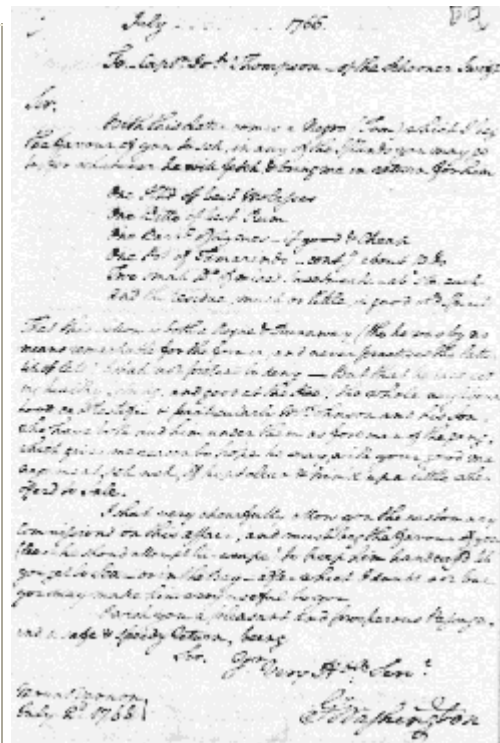
Sir: With this Letter comes a Negro (Tom) which I beg the favour of you to sell, in any of the Islands you may go to, for whatever he will fetch, and bring me in return from him

- One Hhd of best Molasses
- One Ditto of best Rum
- One Barrl of Lymes, if good and Cheap
- One Pot of Tamarinds, contg. about 10 lbs.
- Two small Do of mixed Sweetmeats, abt. 5 lb. each.
- And the residue, much or little, in good old Spirits.

That this Fellow is both a Rogue and a Runaway (tho' he was by no means remarkable for the former, and never practised the latter till of late) I shall not pretend to deny. But that he is exceeding healthy, strong, and good at the Hoe, the whole neighbourhood can testifie and particularly Mr. Johnson and his Son, who have both had him under them as foreman of the gang; which gives me reason to hope he may, with your good management, sell well, if kept clean and trim'd up a little when offerd for Sale.

I shall very chearfully allow you the customary Commissions on this affair, and must beg the favour of you (lest he shoud attempt his escape) to keep him handcuffd till you get to Sea, or in the Bay, after which I doubt not but you may make him very useful to you.

I wish you a pleasant and prosperous Passage, and a safe and speedy return, being Sir, etc.



To Josiah Thompson, schooner Swift, in the West Indies trade
July 2, 1766

...reluctance in offer these people at public venue . . . if these poor wretches are to be held in a State of Slavery I do not see that a change of masters will render it more irksome, provided husband & wife, and Parents & children are not separated from each other, which is not my intention to do.

To Farm Manager
1779



I never mean (unless some particular circumstance should compel me to it) to possess another slave by purchase; it being among my first wishes to see some plan adopted by the legislature, by which slavery in this Country may be abolished by slow, sure & imperceptible degrees.

To John Francis Mercer
September 9, 1786

I can only say, that there is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a plan adopted for the abolition of it--but there is only one proper and

effectual mode by which it can be accomplished, & that is by Legislative authority; and this as far as my suffrage will go, shall never be wanting.

To Robert Morris
1786

The benevolence of your heart my Dr. Marqs. is so conspicuous upon all occasions, that I never wonder at any fresh proofs of it; but your late purchase of an estate in the colony of Cayenne, with a view of emancipating the slaves on it, is a generous and noble proof of your humanity. Would to God a like spirit would diffuse itself generally into the minds of the people of this country; but I despair of seeing it. Some petitions were presented to the Assembly, at its last Session, for the abolition of slavery, but they could scarcely obtain a reading. To set them afloat at once would, I really believe, be productive of much inconvenience and mischief; but by degrees it certainly might, and assuredly ought to be effected; and that too by Legislative authority.

To Marquis Lafayette
May 10, 1786

I have no scruple to disclose to you, that my motives to these sales . . . are to reduce my income, be it more or less, to specialties, that the remainder of my days may, thereby, be more tranquil & freer from cares; and that I may be enabled . . . to do as much good with it as the resource will admit; for although, in the estimation of the world I possess a good, & clear estate, yet, so unproductive is it, that I am oftentimes ashamed to refuse aids which I cannot afford unless I was to sell part of it to answer the purpose. . . Besides these, I have another motive which makes me earnestly wish for the accomplishment of these things, it is indeed more powerful than all the rest. namely to liberate a certain species of property--which I possess, very repugnantly to my own feelings; but which imperious necessity compels . . . until I can substitute some other expedient, by which expences not in my power to avoid (however well disposed I may be to do it) can be defrayed.



To Tobias Lear
1794

Item. Upon the decease of my wife, it is my Will and desire that all the Slaves which I hold in my own right, shall receive their freedom. To emancipate them during her life, would, tho' earnestly wished by me, be attended with such insuperable difficulties on account of their intermixture by Marriages with the Dower Negroes . . .

Washington's Will
July 9, 1799

Jefferson Quotes Regarding Slavery:

The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other.

Notes on the State of Virginia
1782

This unfortunate difference of color, and perhaps of faculty, is a powerful obstacle to the emancipation of these people. Many of their advocates, while they wish to vindicate the liberty of human nature, are anxious also to preserve its dignity and beauty. Some of these, embarrassed by the question, "What further is to be done with them"? join themselves in opposition with those who are actuated by sordid avarice only. Among the Romans emancipation required but one effort. The slave, when made free, might mix with, without straining the blood of his master. But with us a second is necessary, unknown to history. When freed, he is to be removed beyond the reach of mixture.

Notes on the State of Virginia
1782



There were ten States present; six voted unanimously for it, three against it, and one was divided; and seven votes being requisite to decide the proposition affirmatively, it was lost. The voice of a single individual of the State which was divided, or of one of those which were of the negative, would have prevented this abominable crime from spreading itself over the new country. Thus we see the fate of millions unborn hanging on the tongue of one man, and heaven was silent in that awful moment! But it is to be hoped it will not always be silent, and that the friends to the rights of human nature will in the end prevail.

To Jean Nicolas de Meunier
1786

What a stupendous, what an incomprehensible machine is man! who can endure toil, famine, stripes, imprisonment, and death itself, in vindication of his own liberty, and, the next moment, be deaf to all those motives whose power supported him through his trial, and inflict on his fellow men a bondage, one hour of which is fraught with more misery than ages of that which he rose in rebellion to oppose.

To Jean Nicolas de Meunier
June 26, 1786

I am very sensible of the honor you propose to me of becoming a member of the society for the abolition of the slave trade. You know that nobody wishes more ardently to see an abolition, not only of the trade, but of the condition of slavery; and certainly nobody will be more willing to encounter every sacrifice for that object. But the influence and information of the friends to this proposition in France will be far above the need of my association. I am here as a public servant, and those whom I serve, having never yet been able to give their voice against this practice, it is decent for me to avoid too public a demonstration of my wishes to see it abolished. Without serving the cause here, it might render me less able to serve it beyond the water. I trust you will be sensible of the prudence of those motives, therefore, which govern my conduct on this occasion.

To J. P. Brissot de Warville
Feb. 1788

No body wishes more than I do to see such proofs as you exhibit, that nature has given our black brethren, talents equal to those of other colours of men, & that the appearance of a want of them is owing merely to the degraded condition of their existence.

To Benjamin Banneker
Aug. 30, 1791

I have long since given up the expectation of any early provision for the extinguishment of slavery among us. There are many virtuous men who would make any sacrifices to effect it, many equally virtuous who persuade themselves either that the thing is not wrong, or that it cannot be remedied, and very many with whom interest is morality. The older we grow, the larger we are disposed to believe the last party to be. But interest is really going over to the side of morality. The value of the slave is every day lessening; his burden on his master daily increasing. Interest is, therefore, preparing the disposition to be just; and this will be goaded from time to time by the insurrectionary spirit of the slaves. This is easily quelled in its first efforts; but from being local it will become general, and whenever it does, it will rise more formidable after every defeat, until we shall be forced, after dreadful scenes and sufferings, to release them in their own way, which, without such sufferings we might now model after our own convenience.

To William A. Burwell
Jan. 1805

I congratulate you on the approach of the period at which you may interpose your authority constitutionally, to withdraw the citizens of the United States from all further participation in those violations of human rights which have been so long continued on the unoffending inhabitants of Africa, and which the morality, the reputation, and the best interests of our country, have long been eager to proscribe. Although no law you may pass can take prohibitory effect till the first day of the year one thousand eight hundred and eight, yet the intervening period is not too long to prevent, by timely notice,

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© Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest

expeditions which cannot be completed before that day.
The Sixth Annual Message to Congress
Dec. 1806

There is nothing I would not sacrifice to a practicable plan of abolishing every vestige of this moral and political depravity.
To Thomas Cooper

Sep. 10, 1814



My opinion has ever been that, until more can be done for them, we should endeavor, with those whom fortune has thrown on our hands, to feed and clothe them well, protect them from ill usage, require such reasonable labor only as is performed voluntarily by freemen, and be led by no repugnances to abdicate them, and our duties to them. The laws do not permit us to turn them loose, if that were for their good; and to commute them for other property is to commit them to those whose usage of them we cannot control.

To Edward Coles
1814

I can say with conscious truth that there is not a man on earth who would sacrifice more than I would to relieve us from this heavy reproach in any practicable way. The cession of that kind of property, for so it is misnamed, is a bagatelle which would not cost me a second thought, if, in that way, a general emancipation and expatriation could be effected; and, gradually, and with due sacrifices, I think it might be. But, as it is, we have the wolf by the ear, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other.

To John Holmes
1820

Research the following questions:

- How many slaves did Washington's Will actually free? Who were the "Dower" slaves? Did Washington's Will free the "Dower" slaves?
- How many slaves did Jefferson free in his Will?

Upon the decease of my wife it is my Will & desire that all the Slaves which I hold in my own right, shall receive their freedom. — To emancipate them during her life, would tho' earnestly wished by me, be attended with such insuperable difficulties on account of their intermixture by Marriages with the Dower Negroes, as to

Excerpt from Washington's will

Democracy



What advice did George Washington give the country in his [Farewell Address on September 17, 1796](#)?

Click here for translation:
<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/washing.htm>

What Rights does the Declaration of Independence set forth? Define what these Rights are. What Responsibilities should go along with these Rights?



Examine the [Constitution](#) and the [Bill of Rights](#). Make a list of Rights guaranteed by the First Ten Amendments and give an example of how these Rights affect you as a citizen of the United States.

As a United States Citizen what are your Responsibilities?

Define Citizenship.

Look in the newspaper for evidence of good citizenship happening in your community. Bring the articles to class to share. Have the class list on the board good citizenship activities they have been engaged in.

Have students bring in newspaper articles pertaining to current issues on the Bill of Rights. Discuss these issues in class.

Current Event: Compare the United States Constitution with the proposed Constitution in Iraq. Click here to read Iraq's Constitution: <http://www.cpa-iraq.org/government/TAL.html>

Additional information on the draft constitution and the constitutional referendum can be found at this White House site: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/>

Have students bring in newspaper or National Public Radio reports about Iraq and the Constitution for discussion in class.

Current Event on Iraq's Constitution: <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=1212360>

Current Event on Iraq's Constitution:
<http://www.journalstar.com/articles/2005/10/26/nation/doc435e7828b12be370539922.prt>
(Full text of President Bush's speech: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/10/20051025.html>)

Assign each student a country to determine if the country has a Constitution and if so when was the Constitution adopted? Have students make a list of the Rights listed in the country's Constitution.

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Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division LC-USZ62-45587 (newspaper obituary)
The Papers of George Washington (slave ad)
General Research & Reference Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations (slave auction)
Mount Vernon Ladies' Association (Washington on horse in field)
General Research & Reference Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations (slave in field)
The Granger Collection, New York (slaves)
Library of Congress, George Washington Papers (farewell address)
The National Archives and Records Administration (mural)



Washington and his family
Courtesy, Copyright 1996, [Virginia Historical Society](http://www.vhsc.org), Richmond, Virginia