

## Learning Objectives

- 1) Know the history of the nation's capital, Washington, D.C. After the United States formed, the citizens decided that they needed a capital city, which would be the home of the federal government. First, Virginia and Maryland both gave up a little land along the Potomac River for the capital. The location of the city was extremely important to the people of the United States, because if the city was to be located just in one region, that region could potentially have more political power than the other did. It was also important that the capital not be part of a state, which would prevent one state from having power over the other states; for this reason George Washington made the capital a district, the District of Columbia (D.C.), after Christopher Columbus. The city was named after George Washington. After the land issues were worked out, George Washington commissioned Pierre L'Enfant to design the city, and then it was built.
  - 2) Understand the general layout of the city. It was designed so that the capitol building and a grassy park called the Mall are in the center. All other buildings and streets surround the center portion of the capitol.
  - 3) Know about the three major government buildings, the Capitol, the White House, and the Supreme Court, which are present in Washington.
    - a) The capitol building is home to the legislative branch of the United States government. The center portion of the building is called the rotunda, which connects the two branches of the capitol: the House of Representatives and the Senate.
    - b) The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, is the President's home. It took eight years to build and was burned down shortly after, during the war of 1812. It was rebuilt shortly after the war and painted white.
    - c) The Supreme Court building is a very beautiful building where the Supreme Court justices decide on many important cases.
  - 4) Realize that the United States government is divided into three separate branches, which include the Legislative, the Executive, and Judicial branches.
    - a) The legislative branch is represented by Congress and is made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Congress is responsible for the making of the country's laws, and it is elected by the people.
    - b) The executive branch, which is headed by the President along with the Vice President, sees that the laws made by congress are carried out.
    - c) The Supreme Court represents the judicial branch of the government and is composed of high-ranking judges. It is the job of the Supreme Court to make sure that laws passed by the government follow the rules set by the Constitution.
  - 5) Know about the monuments, memorials, and museums present in Washington.
    - a) The monuments in the capital were built to honor a specific person. One of these monuments is the Washington Monument, which is 555 feet tall and towers over the whole area.
    - b) There are special memorials present in and near the Mall that were built to remember those who were important to the country. The Vietnam War Memorial, which was built in memory of those who fought and died in the Vietnam War. Another Memorial, called the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, honors unidentified soldiers who died fighting for the United States; this solemn memorial is located in Arlington National Cemetery. Arlington National Cemetery is where many of the country's heroes, like President Kennedy are buried. The Jefferson Memorial honors the life of Thomas Jefferson, who wrote the Declaration of Independence and was the third president. The Lincoln Memorial remembers the life and accomplishments of our sixteenth president.
    - c) The Smithsonian Institute started as a single museum. Today, it is composed of thirteen separate museums, including the National Museum of Natural History and the National Air and Space Museum.
- 2) *After viewing the video:*
- a) **For younger students:** Write the following topics on 5" by 8" cards: White House, Capitol Building, Supreme Court, Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, Jefferson Memorial, Smithsonian Institute, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and the Declaration of Independence. Select a student to come to the front of the class and pick a card. He/she tells everything that he/she knows about the Washington building or memorial. Select students that can add information. Then choose another student to pick a card to continue the game.
  - b) **For older students:** divide the class into groups of three. Have a representative from each group select a card described in Activity A. As a group, write a paragraph about the topic on the card based on what was shown in the video and, possibly, what can be collected from the school library. When all the cards are complete, the teacher should check for accuracy. Then have each group share their information with the other students and have the class guess which Washington monument or memorial is being described.

## Vocabulary

**District** — An area defined for administrative purposes

**Mall** — Huge grassy park-like area in the center of Washington

**Monument** — Something special that serves to honor an important person

**Rotunda** — A large round room

**Vice President** — Part of the executive branch, serves in the president's place if he or she cannot perform

## Suggested Activities

- 1) *Before viewing the video:*
  - a) Ask if anyone in the class has visited Washington, D.C. Which sites did they visit? Which were their favorites? If no one has visited, what have they heard about the capital?

