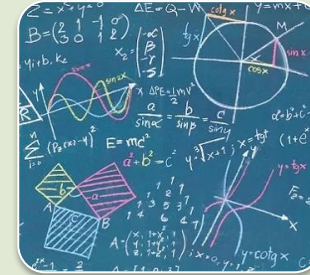
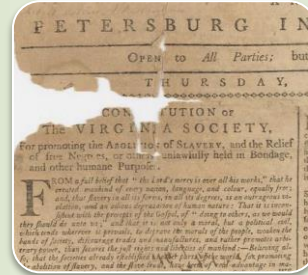


Expanding the Story
Beyond the Essential Knowledge

The Role of Virginians in the Founding of the New Nation

Lives and Perspectives: Six Virginians

The ideas and events of the early national era of the United States meant different things to different people. Although it is impossible to truly understand the perspectives and experiences of other human beings – especially people from other time periods and culture groups – it is similarly impossible to construct an authentic understanding of our past without exploring diverse perspectives. Here are six Virginians who lived during this time. They are individuals – not representatives of particular groups – and they left incomplete records behind. But what we do know about them can help us examine our past more fully. Introduce this chart to your students, perhaps using the thinking routine [Connect – Extend – Challenge](#). This chart will return throughout the unit, prompting students to explore multiple Virginians’ perspectives when encountering texts and events.



Oney
Judge

Formerly enslaved personal attendant of Martha Custis Washington, Judge freed herself by escaping in Philadelphia. She had three children, whom she outlived.

Ann-Elizabeth
Fossett Isaacs

The daughter of a cook and a blacksmith enslaved at Thomas Jefferson's plantation Monticello, Isaacs was later auctioned off, along with six of her siblings and her mother, to pay Jefferson's debts.

James
Langston

A Pamunkey leader who wrote a letter to the Governor of Virginia defending the Pamunkey's rights to their land. All adult men living on the reservation signed the letter.

Robert
Pleasants

Once a wealthy enslaver in Henrico County, Pleasants later fought to end slavery by creating a Virginia antislavery society. He tried, but failed, to invite leaders like James Madison to join.

Thomas
Fuller

Born in West Africa and sold into slavery in Virginia, Fuller became well-known as a talented mathematician, despite having no formal education.

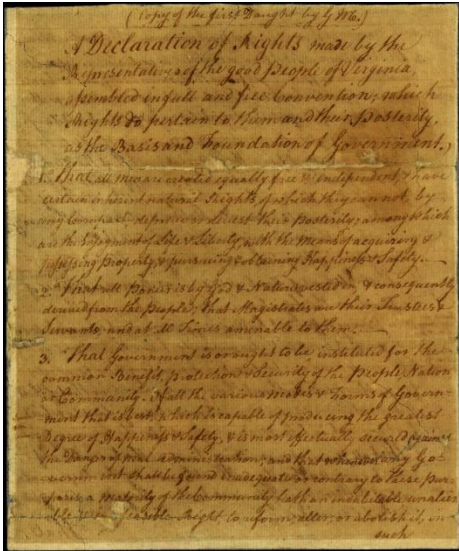
Mary
Willing Byrd

Wealthy enslaver and widow of a suspected British loyalist, Byrd spent the years after her husband's death defending her patriotism and trying to keep the estate she inherited.

Exercise Civic Responsibility

Demonstrate Critical Thinking

George Mason's Revolutionary Words



In 1776, George Mason traveled to Williamsburg as a delegate to the Virginia Convention. During that time, Mason began writing his own plan for government, including the Virginia Declaration of Rights (VDR). This document was the first of many founding documents to call for, “individual liberties such as freedom of religion and freedom of the press.” It is said that the “expressions of freedom and democracy in the VDR live on today” ([Gunston Hall](#)). However, at the time George Mason lived, did his words apply to all people who lived in 18th century Virginia?

Have students read and examine Article 1 of the Virginia Declaration of Rights and consider the question above.

Article 1. That all men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.

[Virginia Declaration of Rights](#)

Click the link above for a transcribed copy of the

Step In, Step Out, Step Back: What might someone living in Virginia just after the nation's founding think or feel about George Mason's ideas?

Invite students to choose one historical figure from the **Lives and Perspectives** on p. 21 chart to enact the “[Step In, Step Out, Step Back](#)” thinking routine.

- What do you think this person might feel, believe, know, or experience?
- What would you like or need to learn to understand this person's perspective better?
- What do you notice about your own perspective and what it takes to take someone else's?



Oney Judge

Formerly enslaved personal attendant of Martha Custis Washington, Judge freed herself by escaping in Philadelphia. She had three children, whom she outlived.



Thomas Fuller

Born in West Africa and sold into slavery in Virginia, Fuller became well-known as a talented mathematician despite having no formal education.



Robert Pleasants

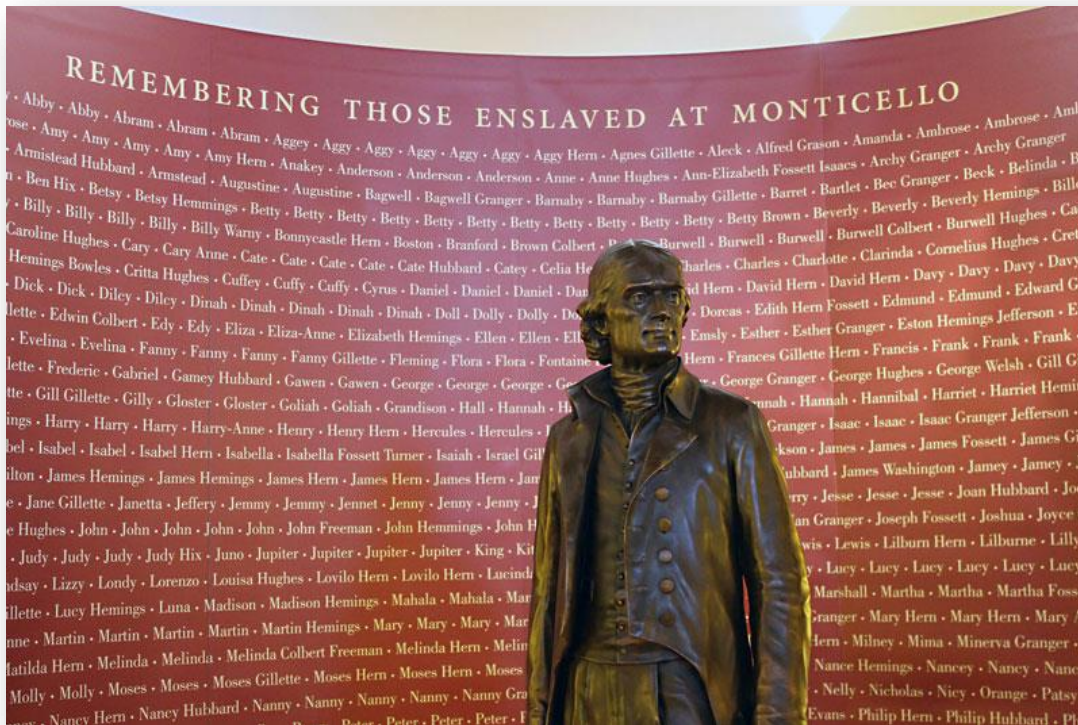
Once a wealthy enslaver in Henrico County, Pleasants later fought to end slavery by creating a Virginia antislavery society. He tried, but failed, to invite leaders like James Madison to join.

Who decides how we remember Thomas Jefferson?

In the previous learning experience, students examined Thomas Jefferson's tombstone and the accomplishments Jefferson wanted people to remember.

Support students in reflecting on these questions by presenting the image below and inviting them to engage in the [See – Think – Wonder](#) routine.

How might other Virginians who lived during his lifetime have remembered Thomas Jefferson? How should we remember him? And who decides?



Photograph of the *Paradox of Liberty* exhibit
Image credit: [Austin Chronicle](#)

See – Think – Wonder

Project this image on the board or offer digital or print copies to students. Support students in identifying Thomas Jefferson as the subject of the statue.

Invite students to engage in the routine by writing on post-its what they **SEE** in the text, what they **THINK** about it, and what it makes them **WONDER**.

Support students in sharing their ideas in small groups. Encourage students to engage in slow looking, recording all that they notice and any questions that they have.

Conclude with the reflection question below.

Reflection Question:

What is one important question that you have after examining this image? Why is that question important to you?