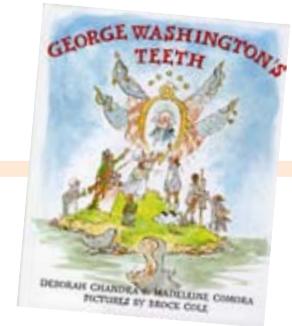


George Washington's Teeth

by Deborah Chandra and Madeleine Comora



Introduce *George Washington's Teeth*

All his life, George Washington had problems with his teeth. This story is about what really happened to our first president and his teeth.

Get kids curious about *George Washington's Teeth*. Bring in various dental hygiene items, such as a toothbrush, toothpaste, and dental floss. Talk about how each helps maintain dental health. Explain that in George Washington's time, people brushed their teeth with crushed brick. Ask *How well do you think that worked?*

Discuss *George Washington's Teeth*

After reading *George Washington's Teeth* aloud, ask kids whether they liked the book and why. Help them understand the plot and connect with the characters by asking:

1. Before hearing this story, did you know that George Washington worried about his teeth? What else do you know about our first president?
2. Why was George Washington afraid to smile when he was elected president? At the end of the story, did he like his new set of false teeth? Why?
3. Did you think the book was funny? Why or why not? Did you see any funny pictures? Which ones?
4. Do you remember losing your first baby tooth? How many other teeth have you lost? If you were missing all your teeth, what might you have difficulty doing?
5. If you were writing a history book for kids, who or what would you choose to write about? Why?

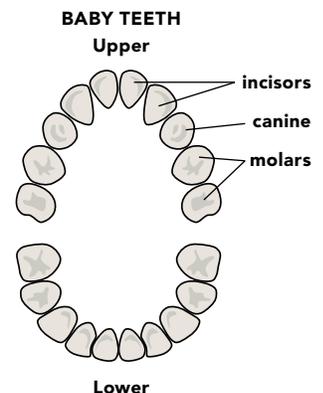
Optional: Ask *Who is our current president? Where does the president live? Who elects American presidents? Can you?*

Activities

Doing a hands-on activity that connects to the story makes the experience more personal and memorable for kids. Choose one (or more) of the activities below, or make up one of your own.

1. **Do a tooth survey.** Kids at this age are usually missing teeth. Have kids count how many teeth they have lost. How many teeth have the kids in your book club lost? Have kids try to smile, talk, or pretend to eat without showing any teeth. Brainstorm foods you can still eat with many teeth missing (*mashed potatoes, gelatin dessert, soup*). Have kids create and illustrate their own "Toothless Menu" for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.
2. **Learn about dental health.** Invite a local dentist or dental hygienist to talk to kids about dental hygiene, the names of teeth, and how each type of tooth helps us eat (e.g., molars crush food). Have kids look in a mirror and count their teeth, then draw pictures of them. Have older kids label their teeth (*incisors, canines, and molars*). Use the art on this page as a guide.

Optional: Visit **Mouth Power** on the American Dental Association's Web site at www.mouthpower.org for interactive games that help kids learn about cleaning teeth, healthy foods, baby and adult teeth, dental visits, and more. There are also dental health public service announcements (some are available in Spanish) kids can watch.



3. **Design a set of false teeth.** Ask kids *What would your own set of false teeth look like?* Have them draw and decorate them.

4. **Create a timeline.** Ask kids to make a timeline about their life, similar to the one at the back of *George Washington's Teeth*. It can include tooth-related events (e.g., when they lost their first tooth or first went to the dentist) and other important events in their lives (birthdays, family outings, etc.). If they remember the year, date, or their age or grade, have them write it on the timeline.

Optional: You can also have kids try the online timeline on the American Dental Association's Web site under **Your Tooth Story** at www.mouthpower.org

Get Involved

Kids are great teachers. Have them **teach a lesson on dental health** to a younger group. They can use the Tooth Care handout (available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog, and Vietnamese) on PBS's Arthur™ Web site under Open Wide! at pbskidsgo.org/arthur/parentsteachers/lesson/health/#open. Make sure they practice their roles. Have kids review the handout with the younger group. Then have them ask the younger kids to draw and color a large picture of their teeth and a toothbrush, cut out the toothbrush, and use it to pretend to brush the drawing of their teeth.

Web Explorations

Visit one or more of these sites to further explore the themes and topics from the book.

pbskidsgo.org/zoom/activities/sci/toothdecay.html

Take part in the **Tooth Decay** survey. Find out who has the most cavities in your group—boys or girls? Submit your survey results to ZOOM®.

pbskidsgo.org/wayback

George Washington had tooth problems. But what about our other presidents? Learn little-known tidbits about past presidents at **Secrets about the Presidents**.

Also see bowties, banners, mugs, walking sticks, and other interesting items presidential candidates used to get people to vote for them at **Hit the Trail**.

pbskidsgo.org/democracy

Be President for a Day. Kids make interactive online choices to create a schedule for their first day as president while learning how actual presidents plan their days. Discuss what daily activities seemed most interesting or important.

More Suggested Books

Read about presidents, including little-known nuggets of information:

A Big Cheese for the White House: The True Tale of a Tremendous Cheddar
by Candace Fleming

So You Want to Be President? by Judith St. George

Read about colonial history:

And Then What Happened, Paul Revere? by Jean Fritz

Read about teeth:

Arthur's Tooth by Marc Brown