**PEOPLE IN HISTORY – GEORGE WASHINGTON – 1732-1799**

**BACKGROUND:**

George Washington was born in Virginia in 1732. He inherited a huge plantation at Mount Vernon on the death of his brother, making him a very wealthy man. In 1759 he married Martha Dandridge who was also very wealthy. This made him one of the largest landowners in Virginia.

He fought with the British Army during the French and Indian War and narrowly escaped death many times. He gained great experience during this war. He was an impressive man and was tall, strong, and muscular. He was also very calm and dignified, and this would prove invaluable in the years ahead.

**HIS VIEWS & FIRST & SECOND CONTINENTAL CONGRESS:**

He attended the First Continental Congress in 1774 where he expressed his belief that the colonies should break away from Britain. He was also critical of Britain’s decision to tax Americans.

At the Second Continental Congress in 1775 he was chosen as commander-in-chief of the American army. The Declaration of Independence was passed by Congress in 1776 and was written by Thomas Jefferson.

**MAIN EVENTS OF REVOLUTION (IN WHICH WASHINGTON TOOK PART):**

After the first shots were fired in Lexington, Washington arrived in Boston and bombarded the city with cannons. He brought order and discipline to the American army and defeated the British.

He was defeated at Long Island, New York in 1776. However, he won at Trenton, New Jersey in the same year, when he surprised the British by attacking them on Christmas Day.

Following a defeat at Philadelphia, Washington spent the winter at Valley Forge where he trained his army with the help of Baron Friedrich von Steuben. He turned them into a professional army. Conditions were harsh there and many soldiers died from cold and hunger. Events at Valley Forge and the Americans’ success at Saratoga were turning points in the war. After this the French decided to join in and support the Americans

With the help of the French, Washington defeated General Cornwallis and the British troops at Yorktown in 1781. This brought an end to the War of Independence.

**AFTERMATH & RESULTS:**

The independence of the USA was recognised at the Treaty of Versailles. The US was now a republic and the people could elect their own government (democracy). America now had its own Constitution and Bill of Rights. Other countries were inspired to look for similar changes in their countries. George Washington became the first president and served for two terms. He retired in 1797, a rich and respected man, and died two years later. He is regarded as the father of the American nation.