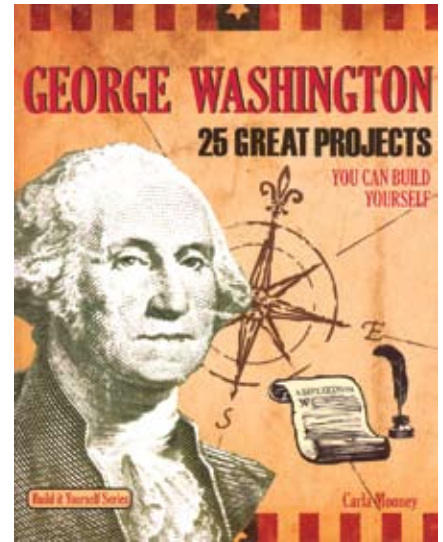


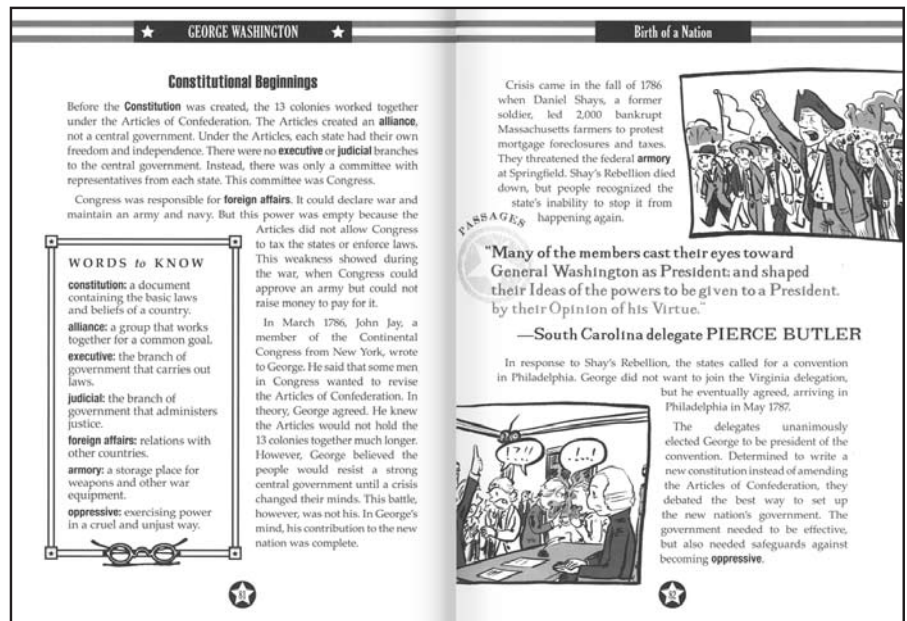
# George Washington: 25 Great Projects You Can Build Yourself

By Carla Mooney Illustrated by Samuel Carbaugh Nomad Press,  
White River Junction, VT 2010. 121 pages, paperback, \$15.95.

Book Review by Steven S. Lapham



This book is actually a children's biography of the father of our country, with craft projects suggested throughout. It opens with a timeline and a simple map of North America ca. 1700. The main text is carefully written, at a reading level appropriate for students in grades 4-7. At the back are a glossary, list of resources for further study, and index. Each chapter includes helpful sidebars that highlight vocabulary words, short quotes, bio-sketches of Washington's contemporaries, and short discussions of interesting topics, such as the story of young George and the cherry tree (it's a myth); "the upside of Valley Forge" (the elaborate drills and colorful personality of Baron Freidrich Wilhelm von Steuben that kept the Revolutionary troops distracted from their material misery); and "What if the Constitution freed the slaves?" (It was "a missed opportunity" to prevent a civil war.) Samuel Carbaugh's simple black-and-white drawings unify the look of the pages and avoid the anachronisms or cartoon goofiness that mar some juvenile books about the founders. Ironically, a bit more detail in the sketches showing how to do the crafts would have been helpful. Upper elementary or middle level students who read the book themselves will learn a good deal of history,



such as some of the complexities of Washington's eight-year presidency in a chapter of 14 pages. They can also try making a quill pen and writing with it—while using washable ink, please. Teachers in grades 1-3 may want to select just one or two of the simpler crafts as classroom activities (like a making a weather vane or a sewing-needle compass) to enhance an introductory lesson about George Washington. But teachers would be wise to avoid some of the more ambitious projects, such as

"creating your own sculpture of George" with a paste made of cornstarch and baking soda. Folding a model of the Washington Monument has a better chance of success. In short, this book is a welcome addition to the Build It Yourself Series, which currently has 28 titles. In this age of high-tech gadgets, it's still a lot of fun to poke holes in an orange with a toothpick and punctuate it with cloves to create a pomander, or to watch a needle, floating on a cork, ease around to the North. 🌐