



# George Washington's Birthday: A Mostly True Tale

*Margaret McNamara , Barry Blitt (Illustrator)*

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**George Washington's Birthday: A Mostly True Tale** Margaret McNamara , Barry Blitt (Illustrator)

From award-winning author Margaret McNamara and *New Yorker* artist Barry Blitt comes this partly true and completely funny story of George Washington's 7th birthday. In this clever approach to history, readers will discover the truths and myths about George Washington. Did George Washington wear a wig? No. Did George Washington cut down a cherry tree? Probably not. Readers young and old who are used to seeing George Washington as an old man, will get a new look at the first president—as a kid. Perfect for classrooms, Presidents' Day, or as a birthday gift.

## George Washington's Birthday: A Mostly True Tale Details

Date : Published January 10th 2012 by Schwartz & Wade (first published January 1st 2012)

ISBN : 9780375844997

Author : Margaret McNamara , Barry Blitt (Illustrator)

Format : Hardcover 32 pages

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Historical, Historical Fiction, Politics, Presidents, Humor



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## **From Reader Review George Washington's Birthday: A Mostly True Tale for online ebook**

### **Sean Fowler says**

This book was a fun look at a young version of Washington. The book tell of many tales we all know of Washington, such as him chopping down the apple tree. The simple narrative of the book makes it easy to read for those at a young age. The illustrations in the book were terrific. There was so much going on in every page. This is a great book to use as a start to learning about our first president.

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### **Laura says**

In this charmingly illustrated picture book, Margaret McNamara describes George Washington's fictional 7th birthday. The multigenre text includes an obviously (to adults) fictionalized account of the day along with fact boxes to clear up what really happened.

This would be a great text to use to introduce children to the idea of historical fiction and reality versus story/legend. Ultimately, I don't care for it because it reinforces so many commonly held misconceptions about Washington. He didn't cut down a cherry tree, he didn't live in a huge house growing up. I was also bothered by some other ideas that were introduced -- colonial children didn't celebrate their birthdays with parties and young George did not wear a wig.

This is not a great first choice for school libraries and I recommend using it as a teaching tool only with great care. But that's just my two (very picky) cents on this particular historical fiction picture book.

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### **Amanda says**

This cute introduction to the early life of George Washington is a great addition to any picture book collection on Presidents. The book is mostly true, but there are wonderful inserts on each page that give true facts about George Washington, and how some of the legends surrounding him came to be. The watercolor's used to create these caricature style illustrations are engaging and students will find them inviting.

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### **Stephanie Croaning says**

This book is an interesting combination of a fictional story about George Washington on his 7th birthday, and facts about the man and his life. McNamara has combined factual information with myths from George Washington's life and presented them all in the course of this one day. For example, she shows what kind of student he was, as well as including the cherry tree chopping myth. The illustrations fit the story well in their style, but aren't compelling to young readers.

As an adult reader, I understood that she was combining a wide variety of George Washington stories, from different times in his life, into one story. I think this might be confusing and uninteresting to young readers.

There is a note from "George" at the end of the book which explains how everything is tied together and its significance. I did learn many new and interesting facts about the President!

Overall, I don't think this book will have a very high interest level with its intended audience.

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### **Angela says**

There are a LOT of myths out there about George Washington! Let's go back to when he was just a 7-year-old boy, it's his birthday and we are about to debunk some of these myths!

What a fun book about a guy who usually seems to be kind of boring!

The illustrations are quite funny--what 7-year-old wore a white, powdered wig?!

The story of George's birthday is told in the context of everyone forgetting that it's his special day. What makes it really fun and informative is the little FACT callout boxes that *debunk* the assumptions and myths we all have about what his life was like.

The best backstory is the one about George chopping down the cherry tree and the lie. Love the way the author wove this into the story about everyone forgetting his birthday.

What a wonderful book to ignite some interest in history in a very unique way--much better for elementary students than a traditional fact-filled textbook.

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### **Liz says**

I like to have strong feelings about a book, either positive or negative, when I review that book. George Washington's Birthday has been on my shelf for several months. I read it when I first received it and thought "meh." Today I set out to write a review of the book. I'm still having the "meh" reaction.

The book is about George Washington's seventh birthday. No one in his family seems to know or care that it's his birthday. That's the plot for "Sixteen Candles," the 1984 John Hughes film. It doesn't quite fit with a biography of the child who became one of the most skilled leaders in US history.

Perhaps Margaret McNamara wanted kids to be able to see themselves in Washington, and so she played up Washington's fear that his birthday had been forgotten, assuming this is a near-universal fear among children. First, there's no indication that Washington actually thought his family would forget his birthday. Second, the logical extension of McNamara's approach is that if you are afraid your family has forgotten your birthday you too could grow up to be president of the United States. The premise doesn't hold.

Many of the pages have glimpses of Washington's future life as well as future myths about Washington's childhood. Margaret McNamara cleverly uses small boxes to separate fact from myth. Of course there's the myth of Washington chopping down a cherry tree. There's also the myth of Washington throwing a rock across the Rappahannock River. Both of these myths are accompanied by a small "myth" box identifying the stories as untrue. The seven-year-old boy is interested in the weather outside, and a small box labeled "fact" explains that Washington was always interested in the weather.

George Washington was a powerful figure in US history. He was a strong and charismatic general, a skilled politician, and the first president of the United States. In this book he is a cute little boy who is afraid everyone has forgotten his birthday. I'd be more excited about the book if by reading it I got a sense of

Washington's greatness.

The wonderfully whimsical illustrations are the only part of the book that moved me from "meh" to "wow." The illustrations are humorous. They add a sweetness to the book and they bring the little boy to life. It's worth reading the book just to see the illustrations.

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### **Tracie says**

Young George Washington is excited to turn 7, but his family is so busy that it seems they don't even notice. Will anyone ever remember George Washington's birthday?

This is a cute story, and a perfect introduction to George Washington. What I really admire about this book is that it is self-conscious: text boxes and a follow-up note help the reader differentiate the "facts" from the "fiction." Share this book in the classroom around Presidents' Day, and engage young readers in a discussion about symbolism and characterization by asking them why the author would incorporate myths into a seemingly factual story. Teaching children to analyze this book will help them understand the importance of approaching every text with an open and questioning mind.

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### **Tam says**

The inside cover said this book is for ages 4 - 8. Most pages have a little side note saying if something is a fact or a myth. The end of the book has a page written as if George wrote it. It gave more information about his life. It also had a list of things he said like: Think before you speak. When you sit down, keep your feet firm and even; keep your nails clean and short; etc. He really did write a list that he called "110 Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior".

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### **Shannon says**

I'd love to study this book alongside JOHN, PAUL, GEORGE, AND BEN to talk about historical legends. This book has one of the best Historical Notes at the end that I've read in a while, told from George Washington's point of view. Each spread includes a FACT box telling what parts of the story are pulled from historical documents.

I support independent bookstores. You can use this link to find one near you or order GEORGE WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY on IndieBound: <http://www.indiebound.org/book/978037...>

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## **Abigail says**

A delightful mixture of historical fiction and historical fact, George Washington's Birthday imagines the activities of its eponymous hero on his seventh birthday. Although the events chronicled are fictitious - George's conversations with his parents and his half-brother Augustine, his chopping down of the cherry tree - each two-page spread contains the factual information behind the fictional imagining of that day. In the scene in which young George begins to write a list of approved behaviors, for instance, the accompanying information reveals that by the time he was sixteen, the real Washington had written "110 Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior" that he kept on him at all times, as a reminder. The final page of the book presents a "letter" from Washington, with further historical background on the subject...

As someone who read and greatly enjoyed Ron Chernow's magisterial adult biography, Washington: A Life, I was curious to see how author Margaret McNamara would handle her partly fictional / partly factual narrative. I was quite pleased in the end, and think that young readers will come away, not just with a better knowledge about George Washington, but a better understanding of the idea that history is a story, one that is just as influenced by myth as by fact. I was particularly pleased to see that the author mentions, in her afterword (George's letter) that the myth of the cherry tree was promulgated by Parson Weems, in his early 19th-century pamphlet on Washington, as we had to study this hagiographic work in a college course I took on American culture during that century. The accompanying artwork here, done by Barry Blitt in watercolor, is humorous and appealing. All in all, a wonderful picture-book, one I would recommend to those looking to introduce young children to the subject of George Washington. Perhaps it could be read on President's Day, which (as I'm sure every citizen knows) is indeed George Washington's birthday...

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## **Jessica says**

The tale of George Washington and what he did on his birthday when he believed everyone forgot. I love the pictures that told the story as well.

Lexile Measure: AD720L

DRA Level: 20

Six Traits: Ideas, Voice

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## **Angie says**

Hmmm. Other people liked this more than I did.

Just sort of confusing. Why write a picture book that mixes so much fact and fiction? Kids will get confused. Is it true or is it not?

Not a fan of the illustration style, either.

That said ... I did not know that G.W. wrote a list of things he needed to remember to be a gentleman. Or that he didn't have much in the way of formal schooling ... mostly just his older half-brother.

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### **babyhippoface says**

This may be my favorite of all the books about presidents I've ever read. It's cute and funny and has some terrific lines that will fly right over the heads of its intended audience but that I loved. When his older brother instructs him in his schoolwork, George mutters "*Tyrant*" under his breath. Love it.

George wakes up the morning of his seventh birthday and wishes himself a happy birthday--which is good because it seems no one else remembers. His mother serves him breakfast without a word about his special day, his older brother insults him over his lessons, and his father makes him work in the orchard. Along the way some of the myths we've always heard about Washington are addressed, and insets tell the truth behind the stories. There is a one-page "appendix" written in the voice of Washington that summarizes what is true and what is not in the book.

This book would make a terrific addition to elementary studies of Washington and the presidents. Very well written and lots of fun, too.

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### **Kristin McIlhagga says**

This fictional biography is a lovely addition to the books that I will be sharing with my children's literature course.

The text of the very first pages invites readers of all ages to connect with this giant of an American historical figure with the sentence, "When George Washington went to sleep Friday night, he was six years old. When he woke up on Saturday he was seven."

The whimsical water color and pen illustrations by Barry Blitt and include subtle references iconic Washington items throughout. A highlight is the wordless double-page spread in the middle of the book showing the well-known tree chopping myth about Washington.

True facts about Washington are included on most pages in small, unobtrusive text-boxes. I especially appreciate the way that they clarify myth, reality, and fiction. This a key feature of the book that makes it a great example of the genre. The note at the end told in first-person by Washington about truth and fiction make this a great book for teachers to use with students from elementary and middle school.

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### **Angela says**

Oh how I miss The 39 Apartments of Ludwig Van Beethoven! Blitt's illustrations brought back my emotional attachment to the book in an instant.

This is no replacement, but it's certainly a welcome book. An interesting combination of fact and fiction. Should be good for schools, classrooms and one that helps bring down-to-earth Presidential birthdays.

Pair with Lane Smith's John, Paul, George and Ben and Anne Rockwell's President's Day for a winning trio.

