

Ona Judge (DAY 1)

Summary: The students will see a short video of Ona Judge, interpreted by Brenda Parker. In this video they are going to see the slave Ona “Oney” Judge Staines serve as personal servant to Martha Washington until she escaped from the president’s mansion in Philadelphia and relocated to Portsmouth, New Hampshire in 1796. The students will see Judge’s life in comparison to Washington’s other slaves, as well as George Washington’s frustrated attempts to recover her after she ran away.

Standards:

- **SOC.9-12.USI.T1.8** - Describe the Constitutional Convention, the roles of specific individuals (e.g., Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, George Washington, Roger Sherman, Edmund Randolph), and the conflicts and compromises (e.g., compromises over representation, slavery, the executive branch, and ratification).
- **SOC.9-12.USI.T7.5** - Analyze the causes and course of growing role of the United States in world affairs from the Civil War to World War I, researching and reporting on one of the following ideas', policies, or events, and, where appropriate, including maps, timelines, and other visual resources to clarify connections among nations and events.
- **SOC.8-12.USI.7** - Explain the roles of various founders at the Constitutional Convention. Describe the major debates that occurred at the Convention and the "Great Compromise" that was reached.
- **SOC.8-12.USI.7.D** – slavery

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to identify events and put them in chronological order.
2. Students will be able to recount the sequence of events in Ona Judge’s history.
3. By the end of this lesson, Students will be able to place important events of their lives in the order in which they occurred and explain why these events are important.

Activities:

1. The students will see a short video of Ona Judge, interpreted by Brenda Parker:
<https://www.mountvernon.org/video/view/2041130/>
2. The students will read aloud in pairs from the attached story of Ona Judge.
 - a. Group 1 will read the “Early Years”
 - b. Group 2 will read the “Escape”
 - c. Group 3 will read the “Later Years”
3. Students will identify and answer the questions provided within their section, using a not taking method (highlighting, underlining, etc.)
4. Each group will present the answer from their section to the class.
5. Answer the essay questions that follow the reading.

(DAY 2)

1. The students will have 20 to 25 minutes to identify the 10 important events of Ona Judge’s life from the timeline attached. Discuss why each event was significant.
2. The teacher will provide each group with an envelope with the most important events from

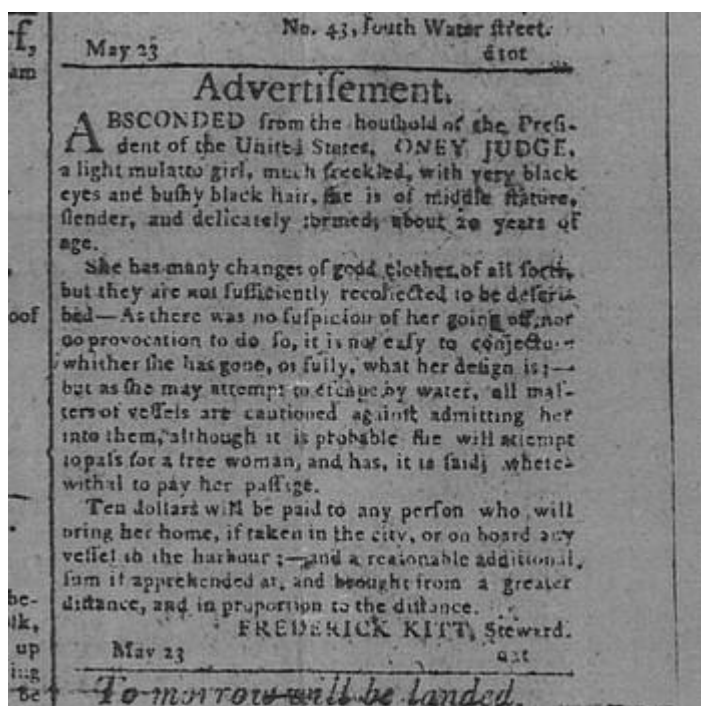
the timeline. Students will put them in chronological order on the board, competing with each group.

- a. When was she born?
 - b. When does she become Martha Washington's slave?
 - c. When does she escape from the mansion?
 - d. When was the ad for Ona's capture published?
 - e. When did Ona meet Joseph?
 - f. When did she get married?
 - g. When did she send her daughters to work?
 - h. When was the interview in New Hampshire?
 - i. When was the interview in Boston?
 - j. When did Ona die?
3. The students will explain the importance of each event to the class.
 4. The teacher will present her timeline to the class.

(DAY 3)

1. The teacher will review her timeline of the day before.
2. Each student will choose 10 important events from their own lives using the form provided.
3. Students will complete their own timeline using approximate dates and a description of each event.
4. The teacher will ask for volunteers to present their timeline to the class.
5. Discuss why timelines are important in life. Explain how history repeats itself! Knowledge of history can prevent repetition, i.e. trauma, abuse, etc.

https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Judge_Oney_ca_1773-1848



Advertisement for Runaway Oney Judge

Oney Judge (ca. 1773–1848)

Contributed by [Brendan Wolfe](#)

Oney Judge was the enslaved personal attendant of Martha Custis Washington when she ran away from the President's House in Philadelphia in 1796. Born about 1773 at Mount Vernon, Judge began laboring in the mansion when she was ten years old. After [George Washington](#) was elected president in 1789, she accompanied the family to New York and then, when the federal capital moved, to Philadelphia. On May 21, 1796, she escaped from the president's mansion while the family ate dinner and boarded a ship for Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Washington's agents tracked her there, twice speaking with her, in 1796 and 1799, but failing to apprehend her. Judge married the free black sailor John Staines in 1797 and the couple had three children before his death in 1803. Oney Judge Staines lived the rest of her life in poverty. In 1845 and 1847 she gave interviews to abolitionist newspapers, recounting the story of her life with the Washington family and her escape

Early Years



The East Front of Mount Vernon

Judge was born about 1773 at Mount Vernon, the Fairfax County plantation of George Washington. She is listed as twelve years old in an inventory of slaves prepared by Washington and dated February 18, 1786. A newspaper report from 1845 noted that her name at the time of her escape had been Ona Maria Judge. Oney is a nickname that appears in Washington's papers and in advertisements for her return. In a 1796 letter Washington referred to "Oney Judge as she called herself while with us." Judge was the daughter of Betty, an enslaved seamstress, and probably the English tailor Andrew Judge, an [indentured servant](#) who labored at Mount Vernon from 1772 until about 1780. Through her mother, Judge had four half siblings: Austin, whose father is unknown; Tom Davis and Betty Davis, the children of an indentured weaver named Thomas Davis; and Philadelphia (later Philadelphia Costin).



[Martha Washington](#)

Judge recalled receiving no [education](#) or religious instruction as a child. At the age of ten she became the body servant of Martha Washington. On February 4, 1789, George Washington was elected president, and in April he left for New York, the federal capital. On May 16, Martha Washington and her household, including Judge, Austin, and five other slaves, left Mount Vernon to

join him. They lived in New York for just more than a year, returning to Mount Vernon for an extended visit on August 30, 1790. In the meantime, the capital had moved to Philadelphia, where the Washingtons traveled in November, again with Judge and her half-brother.

In the spring of 1791 George Washington learned that Pennsylvania law complicated his ability to hold slaves in the state. Passed in 1780, "[An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery](#)" required that any slaves living in Pennsylvania for six uninterrupted months be freed. In a [letter to his personal secretary](#), dated April 12, 1791, Washington ordered that his slaves be sent back to Virginia before their six months expired in May, and then returned to Philadelphia. It is unclear whether he was aware of a [1788 amendment](#) to the Pennsylvania act that prohibited exactly this means of subverting the law. There also was some confusion at the time over whether federal officials were exempt from the law's requirements and, if they were not, whether Pennsylvania would enforce them in such a politically sensitive situation.



[Daniel Parke Custis](#)

Whatever the case, Washington took no chances, explaining to his secretary that the movement of his slaves ought to be accomplished "under pretext that may deceive both them and the Public." Washington worried that should his slaves learn of the law they might be tempted by freedom. He also noted that all but two of his slaves in Philadelphia, including Judge and Austin, were dower slaves, meaning that they had come to the marriage with his wife and were technically owned by the estate of her first husband, [Daniel Parke Custis](#). Should he lose them, Washington wrote, he would be forced to reimburse the Custis estate.

For the next five years Judge remained in Philadelphia, with discreet trips out of state occurring every six months. On March 21, 1796, Martha Washington's granddaughter, [Elizabeth Parke Custis](#), married Thomas Law, an Englishman twenty years her senior. Judge learned that she was to be given to the couple as a gift, perhaps after the Washingtons' death. She later told a reporter that she was "determined" never to be the slave of Elizabeth Custis Law.

Escape



Washington's House, High Street.

Judge fled the President's House in Philadelphia on May 21, 1796, while the family ate dinner. Soon after, she boarded the *Nancy*, a sloop captained by John Bowles and bound for Portsmouth, New Hampshire. There she likely found aid with the city's free black population. Notices offering a \$10 reward for her return appeared on May 24 in the *Philadelphia Gazette and Universal Daily Advertiser* and, a day later, in *Claypoole's American Daily Advertiser*. Washington alerted various friends and associates to Judge's escape, and on June 28, Thomas Lee, the son of Richard Henry Lee, wrote to inform the president that his slave had been sighted in New York. Later in the summer, another report placed her in Portsmouth. Elizabeth Langdon, the daughter of U.S. senator John Langdon and a past visitor to Mount Vernon, recognized Judge on the street.



Oliver Wolcott Jr.

On September 1, 1796, Washington wrote to his secretary of the Treasury, Oliver Wolcott Jr., demanding that he engage the customs collector at Portsmouth to apprehend the missing slave. Judge, he wrote, should be seized and—in an apparent violation of the Fugitive Slave Act, which required that fugitive slaves appear before a local magistrate—be immediately sent to Alexandria. Washington apologized to Wolcott for the request, "but the ingratitude of the girl," he wrote, "who was brought up & treated more like a child than a servant (& Mrs. Washington's desire to recover her) ought not to escape with impu[nity] if it can be avoided."

Joseph Whipple, the customs collector, succeeded in interviewing Judge on the ruse that he was interested in hiring her as a maid. He even arranged for her to travel to Virginia, but she failed to appear at the designated time. In a letter to Wolcott, dated October 4, 1796, Whipple wrote that Judge was willing to return only if she were promised her freedom upon the Washingtons' death. Otherwise, she possessed "a thirst for compleat freedom" and "should rather suffer death than return to Slavery." Washington wrote directly to Whipple on November 28 that if Judge returned voluntarily, with no promise of freedom, "her late conduct will be forgiven by her Mistress." If not, then she should be removed forcibly. In a reply dated December 22, Whipple apologized for his failure to apprehend Judge, promised to do his best, and, remarkably, advocated for the gradual abolition of slavery.



Governor John Langdon House

Washington made one final attempt to capture his slave before his death in December 1799. On August 11 of that year, he wrote his wife's nephew, Burwell Bassett Jr., who was then serving in the Senate of Virginia, requesting that he travel to New Hampshire. While taking care to avoid anything "unpleasant, or troublesome," Washington wrote, he should find Judge and bring her back to Virginia. In Portsmouth Bassett stayed with Senator Langdon, who told him where Judge lived. Like Joseph Whipple before him, Bassett was unable to convince her to leave. Also like Whipple, he did not immediately take her into custody, and when at some unknown time he returned to her home she was gone.

Later Years

On January 8, 1797, Judge and the free black sailor John Staines, known as Jack, received a certificate of marriage in Greenland, New Hampshire. The ceremony was performed by Samuel Haven, minister of the South Church Congregational church of Portsmouth. The couple had two daughters and a son.

After Jack Staines's death in 1803 the family became impoverished, moving in with the Jacks, a free black family in Greenland. In August 1816 Oney Staines sent her daughters to labor as indentured servants with a neighbor. Her son became a sailor. All three children were dead by 1845, when Thomas H. Archibald, a Baptist minister, visited Staines. In his interview, which appeared on May 22 in the *Granite Freeman*, an abolitionist newspaper published in Concord, New Hampshire, Staines described her life with the Washingtons and her escape from Philadelphia: "When asked if she was not sorry she left Washington, as she had labored so much harder since than before, her reply is, 'No, I am free, and have, I trust, been made a child of God by the means.'" A second interview, conducted by Benjamin Chase, appeared in the abolitionist paper the *Liberator* on January 1, 1847.

The teacher will ask several questions during the reading.

1. Where was Ona Judge born?
2. In what year was she born?
3. Who was Ona Judge?
4. Who were her father and mother?
5. Where did she live in her early years?
6. Why did Ona Judge run away?
7. When did she escape?
8. Did she get married?
9. Who was John Staines?

10. What happened to him?
11. How many children did she have?
12. Did she have grandchildren? Why or why not?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Grade: SPED 9 - 12

Ona Judge

Instructions: Answer the following questions in a paragraph with no less than 5 complete sentences.

What would you do if you were George Washington and your slave ran away? Why?

If the Washingtons were going to give you away as a wedding gift, what would you do? Why?

Ona Judge Timeline

| DATES | EVENTS |
|-------------------|--|
| ca. 1773 | Oney Judge is born enslaved at Mount Vernon, the daughter of Betty, a seamstress, and probably the English tailor Andrew Judge, an indentured servant. |
| March 1, 1780 | The Pennsylvania legislature passes "An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery." |
| ca. 1783 | Oney Judge becomes the body servant of Martha Washington at Mount Vernon. |
| March 29, 1788 | The Pennsylvania legislature passes "An Act to Explain and Amend an Act Entitled "An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery." |
| February 4, 1789 | George Washington is unanimously elected the first U.S. president by electors chosen by votes of individual state assemblies. |
| April 16, 1789 | George Washington, just elected U.S. president, leaves Mount Vernon for the capital, New York City. |
| May 16, 1789 | Martha Custis Washington and her household leave Mount Vernon to join George Washington in New York City. |
| May 27, 1789 | President George Washington meets his wife and family in Elizabethtown, New Jersey. They have just arrived from Mount Vernon. |
| August 30, 1790 | President George Washington and his family leave New York City and return to Mount Vernon for an extended visit. |
| November 1790 | President George Washington and his family move to Philadelphia, site of the new federal capital. |
| April 5, 1791 | In a letter to George Washington, Tobias Lear informs the president of a Pennsylvania law that complicates his holding of slaves in the federal capital. |
| April 12, 1791 | In a letter to Tobias Lear, George Washington asks his secretary to temporarily relocate his slaves from Philadelphia to Mount Vernon. |
| March 21, 1796 | Elizabeth Parke Custis and Thomas Law, an Englishman twenty years her senior, marry at Hope Park, in Fairfax County. |
| May 21, 1796 | Oney Judge, the enslaved body servant to Martha Custis Washington, escapes from the President's House in Philadelphia while the family is eating dinner. |
| May 24, 1796 | An advertisement seeking the capture of Oney Judge is published in the Philadelphia Gazette and Universal Daily Advertiser. |
| May 25, 1796 | An advertisement seeking the capture of Oney Judge is published in Claypool's American Daily Advertiser. |
| June 28, 1796 | Thomas Lee writes George Washington that the fugitive slave Oney Judge has been sighted in New York City. |
| September 1, 1796 | George Washington writes to Oliver Wolcott Jr. about the fugitive slave Oney Judge. |
| October 4, 1796 | In a letter to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., Joseph Whipple writes about his meeting with the fugitive slave Oney Judge. |
| November 28, 1796 | In a letter to Joseph Whipple, George Washington articulates the terms on which his fugitive slave may return. |
| December 22, 1796 | In a letter to George Washington, Joseph Whipple promises to do his best to capture the fugitive slave Oney Judge. |
| January 8, 1797 | John Staines and Oney Judge marry in Greenland, New Hampshire. They will have three children. |
| August 11, 1799 | In a letter to Burwell Bassett, George Washington requests his help in capturing the fugitive slave Oney Judge. |
| December 14, 1799 | George Washington dies at Mount Vernon after a short illness. |
| May 3, 1803 | The death of John Staines, the husband of Oney Judge, is announced in the New- Hampshire Gazette. |
| August 1816 | Oney Judge Staines sends her daughters to labor as indentured servants with a neighbor. |
| May 22, 1845 | An interview with Oney Judge is published in the Granite Freeman, an abolitionist newspaper in Concord, New Hampshire. |
| January 1, 1847 | An interview with Judge appears in the Liberator, an abolitionist newspaper in Boston. |
| February 25, 1848 | Oney Judge Staines dies in Greenland, New Hampshire. |

Name: _____ Date: _____

Grade: SPED 9 - 12

Timeline

Instructions: Make a list of 7 to 10 events of your life.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Using the list above, draw a timeline of your life in the order in which these events occurred.