

Dear Mom and Dad,

Today the Art Parents came into our class and showed us our **Masterpiece of the Month**. We learned about **Gilbert Stuart and his most famous portrait of George Washington, The Athenaeum**. Mr. Stuart lived during the **Colonial** period and was one of the most famous portrait painters of his time.

Mr. Stuart worked hard to capture the personality and character of his subjects in a realistic form. His charismatic personality helped relax his subjects so they could sit for many hours while he painted. He allowed them to move about while he worked. Being well like and easy to work with made him a popular portrait artist to commission.

However, he was a bit too charismatic, spending his money freely and living large. So, he came up with the idea to paint George Washington's portrait out of the need for money. Stuart painted a series of George Washington that became a hot commodity of his time. The most famous was The Athenaeum which is currently portrayed on the \$1 dollar bill. With the help of his daughter, they painted over 130 reproductions of The Athenaeum. It was said he could produce a George Washington portrait in 2 hours. He sold over 70 reproductions at \$100 each. Despite painting over a 1000 portraits of people, including the first 6 Presidents and creating the iconic portrait of George Washington, Mr. Stuart died a very poor man, leaving his family in debt.

We examined The Athenaeum closely noting that George Washington was portrayed very serious with his lips closed tightly. We read a funny book called George Washington's Teeth and learned that his teeth were terrible! In 1789 when he was elected President, he had only two teeth left and had to start wearing false teeth made of hippopotamus ivory and 8 human teeth. Ask me what Mr. Stuart did to George Washington before he painted the famous portrait!

We learned how to look at our subjects in detail to draw a portrait. And, how to draw the face by dividing it into sections. We picked a great subject to study and draw, **our teacher!** She sat in the front of the class while we studied the shape of her face and drew her portrait on a oversized dollar bill! *The face has many shapes including ovals, footballs, and arches?! Ask me to show you!*