

# George Washington and the Cherry Tree

by Mark Binder

This story is from Mark Binder's *Bedtime Story Book* – due out this Fall. A version of this story appears on Mark's award-winning CD, *Classic Stories for Boys and Girls* (available online at [cdbaby](http://cdbaby.com), on iTunes Music Store, and at many toy stores, including Creatovity in Providence.)

***Once upon a time, America had a President named George, who was honest. Nearly every historian agrees that this tale is pure fiction. Enjoy!***

When George Washington, the first President of the United States of America, was just a boy, he was given a hatchet for his sixth birthday. Now that's not the kind of a gift a six year-old is likely to receive these days. But in Virginia back then if you wanted a fire to cook breakfast you needed wood, and they liked to train their young 'uns early.

Well, George, like most little boys, loved his hatchet. He used it constantly. From morning until night, he would chop at just about anything he met. He chopped at tree stumps and fallen logs, at little branches and at big branches.

One day he was tired of chopping away at dead wood. It was a beautiful day, and he found himself standing out on the edge of his father's orchard.

There he found a beautiful young English cherry tree with its flowers all ablossom.

One thing led to another, and George took his little hatchet and started a whacking.

Chopping down even a small cherry tree is hard work, especially for a six-year old boy with just a little hatchet. He spent the entire day there in the orchard, chop chop chopping away. That evening, he could barely keep his eyes open during dinner. His mother was quite surprised when young George went up to bed and without even the littlest fuss fell fast asleep.

The next morning, his father happened to be strolling around the orchard when he found the poor cherry tree (which happened to be one of his favorites) lying sideways across the path.

He asked in the servants and slave quarters who might have done the horrific deed, and even offered five guineas for information leading to the arrest of the guilty party. No one spoke a word, and Mr. Washington had a suspicion why.

So, he hid himself behind an apple tree, and waited to see if the culprit might show himself. Not long after, who should arrive but little George carrying his little hatchet.

George was very surprised to see his father looking so stern.

"Tell me, George," his father asked. "Do you know who killed the most beautiful cherry tree in my orchard?"

George stopped in his tracks and hesitated. He knew the truth, and was afraid of the penalty. Then he stood up straight and tall and said, "I can not tell a lie. Father, it was I. I cut down your cherry tree with my little hatchet."

George's father looked stern, and raised his hand to strike the boy, but then he thought better of it.

"George, my son, I am not pleased that you chopped down my cherry tree. But by telling me the truth, you have shown bravery and heroism worth a thousand cherry trees."

The father hugged his son close, and little George Washington felt very proud.

Two lessons can be learned from this tale. First, always tell the truth.

Second, there are consequences to every action -- to atone for his deed, young George went to bed tired every day that week, because his father made him chop enough wood to fill the woodpile for the entire winter.

THE END.

**Story of the Month:** Contributor [Mark Binder](#) is an author, award-winning storyteller, and founder of the [American Story Theater](#). He lives in Providence, RI, and is available for workshops and performances.

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