

# 21st Century Skills Activity

The logo for 'networks' features the word 'networks' in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font. A stylized graphic of intersecting lines, resembling a network or starburst, is positioned behind the letter 'o'.

## The Federalist Era

### Lesson 1 *The First President*

## Information Literacy: Recognizing Historical Perspectives

### Learning the Skill

The passage of time can affect how people view a historical event, place, or person. The selections below describe Washington, D.C., when it was first conceived and built and the city today. Read the selections and think about how people's perspectives of the nation's capital have changed.

### Then

Major Pierre-Charles L'Enfant was a well-known French engineer and architect when President George Washington appointed him to design the U.S. capital in 1791. L'Enfant surged ahead with an ambitious plan that included grand plazas, public squares, and parks connected by wide boulevards. L'Enfant, aided by African American Benjamin Banneker and others, did much of this work without authorization from his superiors. By 1792, President Washington dismissed him. L'Enfant's plans were set aside.

In 1901 the McMillan Park Commission revived L'Enfant's plans. Washington's streets are laid out like the spokes of wheels. The White House is at the center of one wheel; the Capitol is at the center of the other.

### Now

Much has changed since L'Enfant designed a city in the wilderness more than 200 years ago. In 1800 about 3,000 people lived in Washington, D.C. ; today it is home to nearly 600,000 people. Washington, D.C., is not only the seat of the federal government, it also attracts many tourists. Every year thousands of people visit the capital. To many, the city is a monument to the ability of Americans to govern themselves.

With the development of the automobile, highways and expressways were built to handle the massive amount of traffic to, from, and through the nation's capital. In 1976 the capital's subways system, called the Metro, began service. One of the Metro stations is L'Enfant Plaza.

# 21st Century Skills *Cont.*



## The Federalist Era

### Practicing the Skill

**Directions** Answer the questions. Use a separate sheet of paper if necessary.

**1. Explaining** Why did President Washington hire Pierre-Charles L'Enfant?

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**2. Analyzing** Why was L'Enfant dismissed from his job? What activity was it supposed to stop?

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**3. Identifying** What was the original design for Washington's streets?

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### Applying the Skill

**4. Drawing Conclusions** How have changes in transportation affected Washington, D.C.?

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**5. Making Inferences** Why do you think the founders of the United States wanted the capital to be so grand?

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**6. Evaluating** Why do people place so much importance on Washington, D.C.?

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