

# History Dinner Table: Who Would You Invite!

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## Purpose:

Imagine if you could gather a group of people who were instrumental to American history and freedom to dinner. Who would you invite? Chances are many immediately think of George Washington, James Madison, Martin Luther King, Jr. and others that we learned about in history class. This lesson seeks to have students research and identify some of American history's activists whose stories are not so well known but are important to the development of American democracy. Students are then asked to research and prepare to attend a history dinner-table and act out their activist and contribute to a history time-capsule in which their story will be preserved.

## Objectives:

1. Students will describe characteristics of important citizens in order to discuss the role of individuals in the cause of liberty.
2. Students will examine biographies of Casimir Pulaski and Thaddeus Kosciuszko in order to determine their roles in the establishment of American Democracy.
3. Students will research the role of citizen action throughout American history in order to defend their inclusion in a history dinner-table.

## Materials:

1. PowerPoint Presentation- *Preparing for the American History Dinner table*
2. Student Resource Sheet- *Individuals in Action: Pulaski and Kosciuszko*
3. Student Resource Sheet- *Individuals in Action: Research Guide*
4. Student Assessment Sheet- *Dinner Table Inclusion Sheet*

## Suggested Resource:

Wales, Dirk. *Twice a Hero: Polish American Heroes of the American Revolution*.

Great Plains Press: Chicago, 2007. (Comes with a short DVD)

(Can be ordered at [www.GreatPlainsPress.com](http://www.GreatPlainsPress.com))

## Sources:

Kopczewski, Jan. *Kosciuszko and Pulaski*. Interpress Publishers: Warsaw, 1976.

Haiman, Miecislaus. *Polish Past in America*. The Polish Museum of America-Library: Chicago, 1991.

Haiman, Miesislaus. *Kosciuszko in the American Revolution*. The Kosciuszko Foundation and The Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences: New York, 1975.

Procedure:

Warm Up/Motivator: Using Slides 1-4 from the PowerPoint Presentation have students brainstorm who is included as a Founding Father from the Howard Chandler Christy painting, *The Signing of the Constitution of the United States*. The imbedded link in screen two will take you to another copy of the painting, if you wish you can roll over each figure and the name will appear. Discuss with students why these men are referred to as the Founding Fathers. What characteristics do they have in common?

1. Display slide 5 of the PowerPoint. Have students create a list of characteristics of the people in the painting. Comments will appear include: Bravery, intelligence, work for change, positive, good leadership skills, ability to communicate, ability to see solutions, and in the right place at the right time- students can add other answers as suitable.
  2. Ask the students to make suggestions as to who else could be added to the painting of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Ask them to think of people throughout history who have worked to promote the cause of freedom and liberty. Record the answers on the board or overhead. (Slide 6)
  3. Display Slide 7. Use the questions on the slide to discuss what the students see or can infer in the artwork. Do the same thing with Slide 8. Most students will have little or no knowledge of either gentleman. The point of the activity is to highlight the idea that many American heroes have been forgotten throughout history.
  4. Distribute the student resource sheet, *Individuals in Action: Pulaski and Kosciuszko* and direct them to highlight the answers to the guide questions found at the end of each biography. For lower level readers, use the suggested resource- *Twice a Hero* with the accompanying DVD to highlight the achievements of both men. Summarize the activity by asking students to write a sentence or two on the following questions:
    - What did each man do to promote the cause of liberty in America?
    - Why do you think more is not known about their actions?
1. Using Slide 9, introduce students to the concept of an American History Dinner-Table. Each student will be asked to research and role-play a person who has influenced American democracy and history but is not traditionally recognized. It is up to the students to choose who to research but a suggested list might include:

Distribute student resource, *Individuals in Action: Research Guide* and ask students to complete the graphic organizer with their research. Another option is to have students research two individuals and choose one to invite to the dinner table.

Assessment: Host a History Dinner Table. Students should come in character prepared to defend their inclusion at the table and bringing an object to be included in a time capsule of American History. Ask each student to introduce him/herself and describe the object brought and why it will help history to remember his/her actions. As a group discuss:

- Why do you think our group has not traditionally been included in popular discussions of American history?
  - What contributions did we make to the promotion of freedom and democracy?
  - What lessons can we take from this table?
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Student Resource

### Individuals in Action: Pulaski and Kosciuszko

#### Casimir Pulaski

Casimir Pulaski was born March 6, 1745 in Warsaw, Poland. His father, Józef Pulaski, was a well-respected lawyer in the area and a deputy to the Polish Sejm (Parliament). The family owned an estate in Warka, south of Warsaw, where young Casimir grew up. Early in his youth, Casimir Pulaski was sent to Warsaw, where he studied at the local college of Theatines. At a young age he began studying the military crafts which would become his legacy.

A skilled military commander and a son of one of the notable families, Pulaski became one of the co-founders of the Bar Confederation, together with his father, on February 29, 1768. The confederation, aimed to curtail Russian hegemony over the Commonwealth, was actively opposed by the Russian forces stationed in Poland. In November 1771, an attempt was made to take the king hostage. However, the attempt failed, and the Confederation was disbanded soon afterwards. Pulaski was blamed for the attempt, made a public enemy, and eventually sentenced to death in absentia, though he maintained until the end of his life that he had nothing to do with the abduction. He fled the country, eventually moving to France. There he met Benjamin Franklin — the representative of the American Congress who persuaded him to go to America and gave him a letter of recommendation to George Washington.

There, he became a soldier and military commander who fought in the American Revolution under the command of George Washington. Pulaski was a noted cavalryman and played a large role in training Revolutionary troops, with Congress naming him "Commander of the Horse." From 1777 until his death, Pulaski fought in the American Revolutionary War for the independence of the United States. He created Pulaski's Legion, one of the few cavalry regiments in the American Continental Army. He took part in the defense of Charleston and of the siege of Savannah and fought in the battles of Brandywine, Warren Tavern, Germantown, and Haddonfield. He is today considered by many historians to be the "Father of the American Cavalry."

On October 9, 1779, Pulaski – during a cavalry charge, while encouraging the troops to renew their attack during the Battle of Savannah – was gravely wounded. Several days later, without having regained consciousness, he died of his wounds.

Many tributes have been made to Pulaski starting on November 11, 1779 when Washington ordered that the challenge and response in all Army units for the day had to be "Pulaski" and "Poland."

Today Pulaski's memory and contributions to American independence are remembered on "General Pulaski Memorial Day," October 11 of each year. Numerous statues, memorials, parks, streets, and schools around the United States are named in his honor and in recognition of the ultimate sacrifice he made in the name of his adopted nation, the United States. On May 10, 1910 the Pulaski monument was dedicated in Washington.

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Student Resource

Guide Questions:

- What did Pulaski do to promote the cause of American freedom?
- What should Americans remember about Casimir Pulaski?
- How have Pulaski's contributions to the nation been commemorated?

## Thaddeus Kościuszko

Thaddeus Kościuszko was born [February 4, 1746](#), in Poland, to the noble family of [Ludwik Tadeusz Kościuszko](#). By the time Thaddeus was born, however, the family had fallen upon hard times and the village with its small [manor](#) was their only property.

He attended Cadet Academy in Warsaw before studying to become an engineer. In 1776, after being recruited by Benjamin Franklin in France, he came to America to offer his engineering services in the colonies' struggle for independence. He initially served as a volunteer, but on [October 18, 1776](#), Congress commissioned him a Colonel of Engineers in the Continental Army.

He was sent to [Pennsylvania](#) for his work with the Continental Army. Shortly after arriving, he read the [United States Declaration of Independence](#). Kościuszko was moved by the document because it encompassed everything in which he believed; he was so moved, in fact, that he decided to meet [Thomas Jefferson](#), the principal author of the Declaration. The two met in [Virginia](#) a few months later. After spending the day discussing philosophy, and other things they shared in common, they became very close friends. Kościuszko was a guest at [Monticello](#) on many occasions, and spent prolonged visits there.

Kosciusko's first task in America was the fortification of [Philadelphia](#). His first structure was the construction of [Fort Mifflin](#). On [September 24, 1776](#), Kościuszko was ordered to fortify the banks of the [Delaware River](#) against a possible [British](#) crossing. In the spring of 1777 he was attached to the [Northern Army](#) under General [Horatio Gates](#). As the chief engineer of the army he commanded the construction of several forts and fortified military camps along the [Canadian](#) border. His work made significant contributions to the American successful retreat from the [battle of Ticonderoga](#) and [victory at Saratoga](#) in 1777. After the battle, Kościuszko, then regarded as one of the best engineers in American service, was put in charge by [George Washington](#) of military engineering works at the stronghold in [West Point](#) on the [Hudson River](#).

After seven years of service, on [October 13, 1783](#), Kościuszko was promoted by [Congress](#) to the rank of [brigadier general](#). He was also granted American citizenship, 2.5 square kilometers of land in America, and a large sum of money. He used the money to help some black [slaves](#) gain their freedom and acquire an education. He was also admitted to the prestigious [Society of the Cincinnati](#) and to the [American Philosophical Society](#).

After the American colonies won their independence, Kościuszko returned to Poland in 1784 to help his own country fight for independence from the surrounding European powers. Upon his departure he charged his friend, Thomas Jefferson with the task of disposing of his property. Kosciuszko asked that the money from the sale of his property be used to purchase the freedom of slaves- including Jefferson's. Although this was not accomplished, it demonstrates the Kosciuszko's belief in the freedom of all Americans. He became a national hero for his efforts, and today is recognized for his contributions to both American and Polish freedom, and numerous memorials in both countries serve to remember his work.

Guide Questions:

- What did Thaddeus Kosciuszko do to promote the cause of American freedom?
  - What do you think Americans should remember about Thaddeus Kosciuszko?
  - How have Kosciuszko's contributions to American democracy been commemorated?
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Individuals in Action: Research Guide

American history activist  
#1

American history activist #2

Name

Date and  
place

of birth

Nationality

What did this person do that makes him significant?

How was this person instrumental to American history?

(include specific dates and locations)

What can he/she donate to the table?

What specific issues would he discuss?

Note any specific personality traits or unique views he/she has:

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*Time Capsule Inclusion Sheet*

Who would you chose to put in a time capsule?

Why do you think he is important?

What would you ask this person and how would this person respond? (Minimum of 3 questions)

1.

2.

3.

If you could give that person a nickname what would it be?



Why do you think his story is not so well known among Americans? How would you interest people in his story? What makes him fascinating and unusual?

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*List of possible individuals to research*

*This is just a sample list of people to point you in the right direction. Feel free to choose anyone else you find interesting.*

Thaddeus Kosciuszko

Casimir Pulaski

Haym Salomon

Joseph Plumb Martin

Francis Marion

Frances Wright

Bernardo De Galvez

Von Stueben

Coretta Scott King

Alexander Crummel

Samuel Huntington

Nathan Hale

Hercules Mulligan

Dominique L'Eclise

Jacob Barsimson

Edward S. Salomon

Lucretia Mott

Mother Jones

Susan Brownell Anthony

Amelia Jenks Bloomer

Linda Chavez-Thompson

Myrlie Ever-Williams

Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Bruce S. Gordon

Molly Pitcher

*Helpful websites:*

<http://www.infoplease.com/biography/activists.html>

<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/whmbios3.html>

<http://www.fau.edu/library/brodytoc.htm>

<http://www.americanrevolution.com/MartyrsandHeroes.htm>

<http://www.georgewashingtonsunshungheroes.com/>

<http://www.pbs.org/now/youramerica/meet.html>