



# Dumbarton House Family Book Club





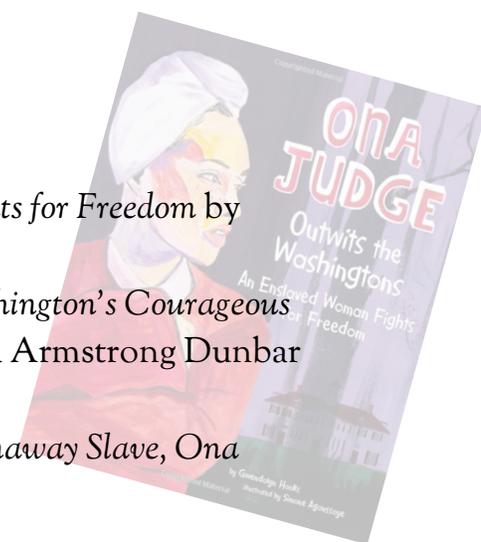
# Book Club: Ona Judge

Dumbarton House is a Federal period house museum and headquarters of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of American (NSCDA). Founded in 1891, the NSCDA is dedicated to inspiring patriotism, preserving history, and promoting education. The NSCDA invites you to explore the rich history of our nation and reflect on the wisdom and bravery of those who contributed to our country's founding.

This multigenerational bookclub is designed to allow participation from all members of a household. After reading any or all of the books listed below, use the guiding questions and specific questions for each book to lead a discussion among your friends and family.

## Books

- *Ona Judge Outwits the Washingtons: An Enslaved Woman Fights for Freedom* by Gwendolyn Hooks (for children ages 8-12)
- *Never Caught, the Story of Ona Judge: George and Martha Washington's Courageous Slave Who Dared to Run Away; Young Readers Edition* by Erica Armstrong Dunbar (for children ages 13-17)
- *Never Caught: The Washingtons' Relentless Pursuit of Their Runaway Slave, Ona Judge* by Erica Armstrong Dunbar (for adults)



## Guiding Question 1

From 1804-1813, Dumbarton House was home to Joseph Nourse and about 10 indentured and enslaved workers. Indentured servants were men and women who signed a contract or agreement in which they agreed to work for a certain number of years in exchange for transportation to American and, once they arrived, food, clothing, and shelter. Enslaved people were people of African descent who were considered property and forced to work without freedom or pay.

Joseph Nourse worked for the U.S. government. George Washington was our first President. As you read these books, think about how people like Joseph and George fought the British for freedom for white Americans, while enslaving African Americans.



## Guiding Question 2

Once Ona Judge ran away, was she free?

Yes and no. Ona had more freedom to work for pay, choose who she married, and what she did on a daily basis, but she was always afraid of the Washington family capturing her. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1793, which George Washington signed into law, allowed the government to return escaped enslaved people back to the people who enslaved them. African Americans could be re-enslaved until the 13th amendment abolished slavery in 1865.

## Questions for *Ona Outwits the Washingtons*

1. As a small child, Ona had a lot of hard and dangerous work to do. What kinds of chores did she have? Why are these not safe for a child to do? What other skills did she have?

*(Hint: there was no running water, so Ona had to get water from the well and she knew how to take care of farm animals and sew.)*

2. Ona had to leave her family and travel with George Washington when he became President. What two cities did she travel to with the President and why did she go there?

*(Hint: She went to New York City and Philadelphia because they were both the capital of the United States before Washington DC was created.)*

3. Why do you think Ona wanted to be free?

*(Hint: As an enslaved person, Ona could not choose when to do anything and did not get paid for any of her work. As a freed person, Ona could earn her own money, buy what she wanted, and do what she wanted like eat what she wanted for dinner, take walks, and spend time with her family.)*

## Questions for *Never Caught, the Story of Ona Judge*

1. In 1789, George Washington was elected president and moved to New York. Ona Judge and other enslaved people accompanied him. How did New York differ from Virginia and what impact did this have on Ona?
2. Benevolent means well-meaning and kind. Why do you think George Washington considered himself a “benevolent slave owner”? Do you agree with Washington’s view? How did Washington’s efforts to get Ona back affect your opinion? How did keeping Ona as a slave restrict her life?
3. The authors wrote, “People like Martha Washington had a stubborn belief in the negative stereotype of black people that they were lazy, rebellious, and unreasonable.” A stereotype is a widely held, fixed, and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing. Why can stereotyping be so problematic?
4. What does Ona’s story tell us about the lives of fugitive slaves? How does her life change in New Hampshire? What are some of the new challenges that Ona faced?



A sign in the reconstructed President’s House at Independence National Historical Park tells the story of Ona Judge. Judge lived on the site with the President during his time in Philadelphia.



## Questions for *Never Caught* (adults)

1. In chapter two, you read that, “Slave owners, including George Washington, referred to their human property as ‘servants,’ not slaves. Perhaps even way back then, among people who supported slavery wholeheartedly, this choice of words implied that somewhere, deep in their conscience, they knew it was wrong.” How would using the word servant justify the institution of slavery in the minds of slave owners? Why might they be uncomfortable with the word slaves?

2. George Washington attempted to recapture Ona. What tactics did he use? Were you surprised that he behaved in this way? Do his actions fit with what you learned about George Washington in school?

*(Hint: Washington signed the Fugitive Slave Act into law and then tried to circumvent the law to avoid controversy and bring Ona back to him by asking personal friends to help kidnap her. One reason he wanted Ona back so badly was that she was Dower property - belonging to Martha Washington’s family from her husband’s legacy and George would have to reimburse Martha’s estate if Ona did not return.)*

3. The author, Erica Armstrong Dunbar, wrote, “While all of this can be uncomfortable to read about and discuss, we must do so. If we want to build a better present and future, we must recognize and understand the problems of the past.” What do you think Dunbar meant by this statement? How can history impact the present?

Continue reading about this topic with your family by reading.

- *Moses* by Carole Boston Weatherford
  - *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt* by Deborah Hopkinson
  - *A Picture of Freedom* by Patricia McKissack
  - *I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly* by Joyce Hansen
  - *Buried Lives: The Enslaved People of George Washington’s Mount Vernon* by Carla Killough McClafferty
  - *Answering the Cry of Freedom: Stories of African Americans and the American Revolution* by Gretchen Woelfle
  - *Chains, Forge, and Ashes* all by Laurie Halse Anderson
  - *Sugar Changed the World* by Marc Aronson and Marina Budhos
  - *Capital Days: Michael Shiner’s Journal and the Growth of our Nation’s Capital* by Tonya Bolden
  - *Copper Sun* by Sharon M. Draper
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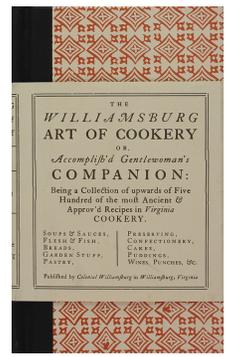
# Activities

Ona escaped to Portsmouth on a ship. Black people sometimes found freedom on ships by becoming sailors. Make a ship using materials at home:

- Base: egg carton, Styrofoam bowl, takeout container, Styrofoam produce or meat container
- Sail: popsicle stick or straw and piece of paper, glue or tape
- Decorations: stickers and markers

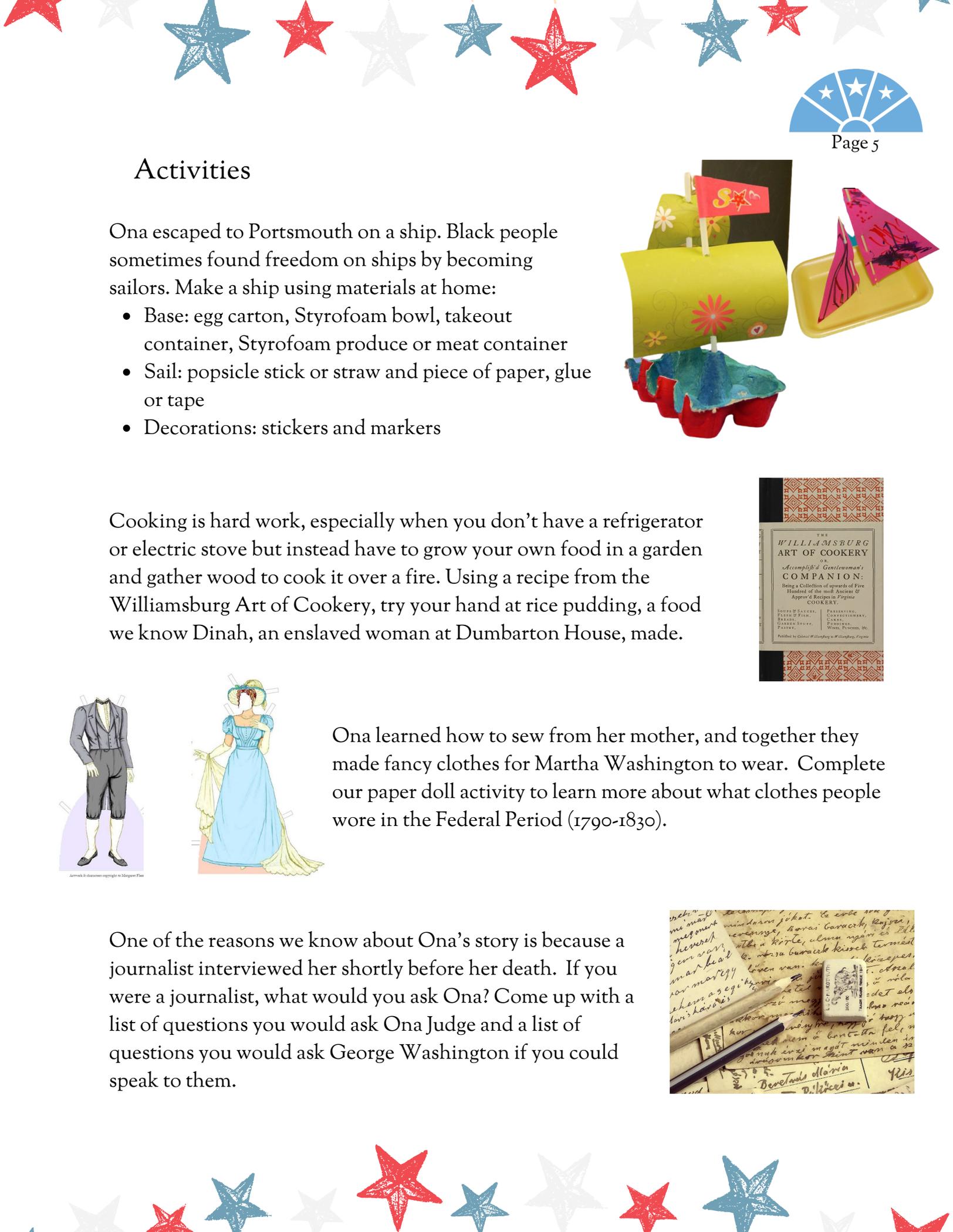


Cooking is hard work, especially when you don't have a refrigerator or electric stove but instead have to grow your own food in a garden and gather wood to cook it over a fire. Using a recipe from the Williamsburg Art of Cookery, try your hand at rice pudding, a food we know Dinah, an enslaved woman at Dumbarton House, made.



Ona learned how to sew from her mother, and together they made fancy clothes for Martha Washington to wear. Complete our paper doll activity to learn more about what clothes people wore in the Federal Period (1790-1830).

One of the reasons we know about Ona's story is because a journalist interviewed her shortly before her death. If you were a journalist, what would you ask Ona? Come up with a list of questions you would ask Ona Judge and a list of questions you would ask George Washington if you could speak to them.



## Rice Pudding Recipe

### Ingredients

- 1/2 pound of rice
- 2 cups of milk
- Nutmeg
- Cinnamon
- 3 Apples
- Minced Lemon Peel
- 1.5 egg yolks
- 1/4 cup sugar
- Melted Butter
- Clean dish cloth to boil the pudding in



### Recipe

- Rinse and drain the rice
- Combine with the milk
- Boil, stirring to ensure it doesn't stick or burn
- Remove from heat, put in a large bowl, add chopped apples and some finely minced lemon peel. Add egg yolks, sprinkle in cinnamon and nutmeg, add sugar, and mix until well-combined
- Transfer to a bowl lined with a clean dish towel. Tie towel into a parcel and submerge it in a large pot of boiling water for 1 hour 15 minutes.
- Top with melted butter and sugar

On August 5, 1804, Joseph Nourse wrote his wife Maria a letter in which he says Dinah, his enslaved cook, “prepared fried bacon, an apple dumpling, [and] a rice pudding.”