

COLLECTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

James Armistead Lafayette by John B. Martin, 1824



ERA

Mid 19th Century

THEMES

Revolution,
Richmond

CITATION INFORMATION

Martin, John B., James Armistead Lafayette portrait, 1824, oil on canvas, The Valentine.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What do you notice about this portrait?
2. Upon receiving his manumission papers, what freedoms did Armistead Lafayette receive?
3. How were his rights similar or different from the white patriots he fought alongside?

CONTEXT

James Armistead was born enslaved in 1748. During the American Revolution, he volunteered with the patriot forces under the French officer, the Marquis de La Fayette. Working as a spy, Armistead was able to infiltrate British General Cornwallis' camp and provided valuable information that led to the Franco-American Victory at Yorktown in 1781. Because he was a spy, he did not benefit from the Act of 1783, which emancipated any enslaved soldiers who fought for the Revolution. Armistead instead began petitioning Congress for freedom, finally receiving his manumission in 1787.

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The Valentine, Richmond, Virginia.