

## **Family Tree**

The family is the basic unit in society. Traditionally, the family has been thought to have as its nucleus two or more adults living together and cooperating in the care and rearing of their own or adopted children. After Thomas Jackson's parents died, his family consisted of his uncle Cummins, his step-grandmother, and his brother and sister. Although these adults were not his parents, they and the children lived together as a family in one household.

### **Note to Teacher**

This is an activity that will be interesting and fun for students to complete. Emphasis is *not* placed on how far back a child can trace his/her ancestors. It is suggested that students trace only as far back as great-grandparents (if possible). Special care should be taken with those students who are adopted, whose families contain step-brothers and sisters, or whose family is different from a traditional, nuclear family. Remember, this activity is offered so that children can learn more about their ancestors and their origins and enjoy the learning experience. It is not intended to cause any child embarrassment.

Discuss various forms that families can take. Some students may live with their grandparents, with step-parents and step-brothers and sisters, or with other "extended family." Many may live in single parent households. Thomas Jackson's own family had many of these elements, and students may feel particularly comfortable studying someone "like them."

Examine the Jackson family tree with students. Note how marriages, children, birth, death, and marriage dates are constructed and organized.

As homework, ask the students to make their own family tree, tracing no further than great-grandparents. The students should also prepare a brief family history based on their discussions with their parents and/or grandparents.

## **The Family of Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson**

Thomas Jonathan Jackson was born on January 21, 1824, in the western Virginia town of Clarksburg (now West Virginia). Jackson’s father, Jonathan Jackson, was a popular but struggling lawyer and businessman who gambled and died in debt. Jackson’s mother, Julia Neale, was an intelligent and educated daughter of the prosperous merchant Thomas Neale of Parkersburg, Virginia. The two wedded happily on September 28, 1817, but Jonathan Jackson was soon borrowing extensively against his home, livestock, and even household furniture.

Thomas Jackson was the third of four children. The first child, Elizabeth, died of typhoid fever on March 6, 1826, at only six years old. After tending to the ailing Elizabeth, Thomas’ father also contracted the fever and passed away on March 26. The day after her husband’s death, Thomas’ mother gave birth to her fourth child, Laura, and so was left to support three young children alone. To cover Jonathan’s accumulated debts, Julia sold all her possessions, including the family home in Clarksburg, and attempted to support her children through teaching and sewing. Despite her efforts, the Jackson family lived in poverty for four years, after which Julia married Blake Woodson, a well-educated yet struggling lawyer on November 4, 1830.

After Julia’s death a few years later, Thomas and Laura left to live with their uncle Cummins Jackson at Jackson’s Mill, while their brother Warren remained with the Neales at Parkersburg. The mill was a large establishment bustling with industry and commerce, and Thomas was introduced to practical lessons in farming, timber work, and horsemanship. He lived an independent and lonely life at Jackson’s Mill, but thrived on the constant activity of the estate. Thomas quickly grew close to Uncle Cummins.

Life on Jackson’s Mill was disrupted, however, when Thomas’ step-grandmother passed away on August 19, 1835. Without a maternal figure, the Mill became a poor environment to raise children, and Laura was sent to Parkersburg to live with Warren and the Neale family. Thomas, in turn, was sent to his Aunt Polly and Uncle Isaac Brake near Clarksburg. Thomas was unhappy with the Brakes, and within a year he fled their home and returned to Jackson’s Mill and Uncle Cummins.

Shortly after his return to Jackson’s Mill, Thomas’ older brother Warren arrived to visit. A successful schoolteacher at the age of sixteen, Warren nonetheless felt compelled to visit his siblings Thomas and Laura. Thomas accompanied his older brother Warren to Parkersburg, and after visiting with Laura, the two brothers went down the Ohio River in the spring in 1836, now planning to start a business supplying timber to riverboats. Despite their persistent efforts, the venture failed, for the timber work demanded too much labor and provided too little pay for the two boys. After six months, the brothers contracted fevers and finally quit the business. Thomas returned to Jackson’s Mill around February 1837 and fully recovered. Warren never fully recuperated and died a few years later, leaving Laura as Thomas’ last surviving family member.

## Jackson Family Genealogy (short version)

