



# Washington's Farewell Address: Have His Warnings Been Heeded?

Washington MS A3

## Grades 6-8

United States History

### Objective

The students will:

1. evaluate "modern" sources such as newspapers, magazines and the recent history portion of the textbook to test if Washington's advice on foreign affairs has been followed.

BINARY PAIDEIA		
Segment of Society	Time Period	Segment of Society
<b>Federalist Party</b>	<b>Constitutional</b>	<b>Jeffersonian Republicans</b>
Constitutional Federal Republic	<i>Politeia/Regime</i>	Democratic State Assemblies
Upper-class White Males, Particularly Northern bourgeoisie	<i>Politeuma/Ruling Class</i>	Northern & Southern Planters, some Northern bourgeoisie
Constitution	<i>Paideia/What makes a society what it is</i>	Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights
Ordered Liberty	<i>Virtue/ The highest moral excellence</i>	Individual Liberty

### Background

In his farewell address, Washington ventured his personal warnings to Americans. In particular, he was concerned with the negative effects of party and of foreign alliances. His concerns about regional economic differentiation show clearly that the underlying stresses that would lead to civil war were in place at the earliest days of the republic.

**Materials:** Copy of Washington's address: <http://www.AmericanHistoryforHistory.org>

## Procedure

- I. Day of Lesson Procedure
  - a. Review Binary *Paideia* with students.
    - i. Make sure they understand the differences between how the Federalist Party defined themselves and how the Jeffersonian Republicans defined themselves. (MS A3a)
  - b. Warm-up: Read the following quote from George Washington and have students try to decipher what he is saying!

“The period for a new election of a citizen to administer the executive government of the United States being not far distant, and the time actually arrived when your thoughts must be employed in designating the person who is to be clothed with that important trust, it appears to me proper, especially as it may conduce to a more distinct expression of the public voice, that I should now apprise you of the resolution I have formed, to decline being considered among the number of those out of whom a choice is to be made.”

- c. Discuss with students the difficulty of Washington’s writing to increase their comfort level.
  - i. Selected students can verbalize how they made sense of the passage, giving other students a model.
- d. In small groups (3-5), students will read out loud an assigned selection from Washington’s farewell address. (MS A3b, c, d, e, f)
  - i. They will choose a research methodology to find evidence indicating whether or not Washington’s advice was followed.
  - ii. After a twenty-minute research period, each group will write on the board a description of the warning they looked at and a summary of the evidence they found.

### Group 1:

“As a very important source of strength and security, cherish public credit. One method of preserving it is to use it as sparingly as possible, avoiding occasions of expense by cultivating peace, but remembering also that timely disbursements to prepare for danger frequently prevent much greater disbursements to repel it, avoiding likewise the accumulation of debt, not only by shunning occasions of expense, but by vigorous exertion in time of peace to discharge the debts which unavoidable wars may have occasioned, not ungenerously throwing upon posterity the burden which we ourselves ought to bear.”

### Group 2:

“Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them.”

**Group 3:**

“It is important, likewise, that the habits of thinking in a free country should inspire caution in those entrusted with its administration, to confine themselves within their respective constitutional spheres, avoiding in the exercise of the powers of one department to encroach upon another. The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one, and thus to create, whatever the form of government, a real despotism.”

**Group 4:**

“There is an opinion that parties in free countries are useful checks upon the administration of the government and serve to keep alive the spirit of liberty. This within certain limits is probably true; and in governments of a monarchical cast, patriotism may look with indulgence, if not with favor, upon the spirit of party. But in those of the popular character, in governments purely elective, it is a spirit not to be encouraged.”

**Group 5:** “Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course. If we remain one people under an efficient government. the period is not far off when we may defy material injury from external annoyance; when we may take such an attitude as will cause the neutrality we may at any time resolve upon to be scrupulously respected; when belligerent nations, under the impossibility of making acquisitions upon us, will not lightly hazard the giving us provocation; when we may choose peace or war, as our interest, guided by justice, shall counsel. Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation? Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground?”

**e. Step: Group Discussion****i. Key Questions:**

1. Are Washington’s warning important today?
2. Which of these warnings is most relevant for our time?

**Homework**

How has the federal government followed this piece of Washington’s advice?

“Promote then, as an object of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened.”

**Assessments****Checking for Understanding**

- Move among groups to get a sense of whether or not they understand their selection. Pose additional guiding questions and suggestions to insure understanding.
- Note each groups board responses and pose follow-up questions to make sure each group understands what it wrote.

**Unit Test Question:**

In Washington’s farewell address, he warned the nation to beware of foreign alliances and the rise of parties and factions within American politics. (TRUE/FALSE)

**Extensions**

Examine the final speeches of other presidents as a comparison to the sentiments of Washington.

- Collect and inspect student cards for logical connections.