

George Washington: A Man of Precedent

Learning Unit: US History I

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National Endowment for the Humanities

George Washington and His Legacy: Myths, Symbols & Reality

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George Washington: A Man of Precedent

Unit Overview

The purpose of this learning unit is to teach 10th grade US History I students the important role George Washington played in shaping the presidency and establishing the power of the Federal Government within the American political system during its infancy. As a man of precedent, George Washington forever influenced American politics by laying the framework in which the Federal Government dealt with domestic and foreign affairs while serving as the nation's president from 1789 to 1797.

At the completion of this learning unit, the students will be able to:

- 1) Describe George Washington's views towards the presidency by reading his First Inaugural Address
- 2) Describe the role of the Washington's Cabinet and identify its key members by participating in a mock cabinet meeting
- 3) Explain the three major issues that divided Washington's Cabinet (Debt, Whiskey Rebellion and the Jay Treaty) through the continuation of the cabinet activity
- 4) Analyze and discuss the key points from Washington's Farewell Address by completing the carousel activity
- 5) Explain Washington's views on slavery by participating in the class discussion and reviewing Washington's Last Will and Testament

This learning unit will take five days to complete on a 55 minute class schedule. During this learning unit, students will be assessed through a variety of means, including homework assignments, quizzes, cooperative learning activities, primary document analysis and a culminating assignment in the form of a 2 page position paper. Furthermore, each of these lessons can easily be modified to be taught to all learning levels so that the learning objectives can be completed.

Title: Launch Lesson: “Mr. President: Washington as the nation’s 1st Commander in Chief”

US History I

Date: TBA

Expected # of Students: 15 - 25

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Discuss the life of George Washington after completing the pre-reading article by Joseph Ellis, “American Majesty” from “U.S. News and World Report”
- Describe George Washington’s views towards the presidency by reading/analyzing his First Inaugural Address

Learning Standard(s) to which the lesson refers:

USI.7, 11 – 16 and 21

Materials Needed for the Lesson: Joseph Ellis article from “U.S. News and World Report”, “American Majesty” and George Washington’s “First Inaugural Address”.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES (Means of Presenting)

Launch Segment (10 – 15 minutes)

Motivation/Lead-in: KWL: After reading Joseph Ellis’s article, what did we already know about George Washington from our previous studies (Am. Rev)? What do you want to know about George Washington? What do you want to learn?

Benefits/Relevance: The purpose of this lesson is give students a greater understanding of George Washington and the major precedents he set for future leaders as president of the United States. By the end of this learning unit, students will recognize the significance of Washington’s leadership while serving as president and how his actions shaped the political identity of the United States.

Introduce Information/Concepts/Examples (Est. time: 35 min.)

Part I: Brief Notes – How/Why was Washington Chosen as President? (10 min)

- Unanimously Selected
- Demonstrated ability to lead during the American Revolution

- Well respected
- Ideal leader

Guided Practice and Feedback (Est. time: 25 min.)

Part II: Analyze George Washington’s First Inaugural Address

Handout copies of George Washington’s First Inaugural Address and read it as a class. You may want to make notes in the margins and highlight key discussion points (see below) to coach the students while reading this primary document. Prior to reading, pose the question: What does his address tell you about Washington’s views towards the Presidency? What does he pledge to do while in office?

Discussion points:

- 1) Almost immediately, what does Washington profess his love for?
- 2) How would you describe Washington’s tone? Try to imagine him reading this aloud to you. How would you describe him?
- 3) At the bottom of pp 731, what republican values or themes can be found in Washington’s address?
- 4) What does he mean by “I behold the surest of pledges that is on one side, no local prejudices, no attachments, no separate views, nor party animosities..(continued) – pp 732
- 5) What does he mean by “Instead of undertaking particular recommendations on this subject, in which I could be guided by no lights derived from official opportunities, I shall again give way to my entire confidence in your discernment and pursuit of the public good...” – pp 733
- 6) What does “public good” mean?

Evaluation/Closure (Est. time: 5 min.)

Ticket Out the Door: Describe 3 main points from Washington’s Inaugural Address

Enrichment/Remediation/Indep. Practice

HW: Read Washington’s Letter to James Madison written on May 5th, 1789 – What was his main point to Madison? Explain in 2 – 3 sentences and be prepared to discuss it in class.

TEACHING NOTES/CONTENT TO BE INTRODUCED

**[Outline of Declarative Knowledge (definitions, names, dates, etc.)
or Procedural Knowledge (steps to follow, activities, ways to check work, etc.)]**

Declarative Knowledge:

George Washington

President

Republicanism

Procedural Knowledge:

Joseph Ellis article, "American Majesty"

Analysis/Discussion of Washington's Inaugural Address

Washington's Letter to James Madison

Title: Lesson #2: "Washington's Cabinet – Part I"

US History I

Date: TBA

Expected # of Students: 15 - 25

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Explain the purposes of the Cabinet and the relationship between its members and the President by taking the notes and participating in the mock cabinet activity
- Identify the key members of Washington's Cabinet and their role by participating the mock cabinet activity

Learning Standard(s) to which the lesson refers:

USI.7, 11 – 16 and 21

Materials Needed for the Lesson: Name tags, Cabinet Bio Work Sheet/Issues Sheet (See attached)

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES (Means of Presenting)

Launch Segment (10 minutes)

Motivation/Lead-in: Quick HW Recap – What was the main point of emphasis in Washington's letter to James Madison?

Ice Breaking Question: What is the purpose of the President's cabinet?

Benefits/Relevance: The purpose of this lesson is to establish student understanding of the importance of Washington's Cabinet during his first administration and the impact its key members had on him and American politics

Introduce Information/Concepts/Examples (Est. time: 0 min.)

Following terms will be covered in the activity

- **Cabinet**
- **Alexander Hamilton – Sec. of Treasury**
- **Thomas Jefferson – Secretary of State until 1793**
- **Henry Knox – Secretary of War**
- **Edmund Randolph – Attorney General until 1793, replaced Jefferson as Sec of State**
- **John Adams – Vice President (not a member)**

Guided Practice and Feedback (Est. time: 30 min.)

Mock Cabinet Activity:

- 1) In the center of the room, arrange 5 desks so that they create a meeting table. At each desk place a name tag of each cabinet member. President Washington should be at the head of the table. Just outside the door of the classroom, place a desk for John Adams. The pieces are set.
- 2) Next, choose a student to play the role of each character in this activity. Afterwards, distribute the graphic organizer to each student.
- 3) Define what the cabinet is and its purpose within the Executive Branch. Students should record this definition on the worksheet provided.
- 4) Afterwards, the instructor should explain the role of each key character in Washington's Cabinet. Meanwhile, the students should fill in the appropriate information in the graphic organizer for each character as each one is being described by the instructor.
- 5) Be sure to place emphasis on the exclusion of Vice President John Adams, who is seated outside the room.

Evaluation/Closure (Est. time: 5 min.)

Preview to Tomorrow: Tomorrow, the Cabinet will reconvene and debate the following issues:

- 1) Domestic and Foreign Debt (1789)
- 2) Whiskey Rebellion (1794)
- 3) Jay Treaty (signed in 1794, passed 1795)

Enrichment/Remediation/Indep. Practice

In preparation for tomorrow, read Ch 6, sec 1 in The Americans and be prepared to discuss the issues above during the continuation of the Mock Cabinet Activity.

TEACHING NOTES/CONTENT TO BE INTRODUCED

**[Outline of Declarative Knowledge (definitions, names, dates, etc.)
or Procedural Knowledge (steps to follow, activities, ways to check work, etc.)]**

Declarative Knowledge:

Cabinet

Thomas Jefferson/Secretary of State

Alexander Hamilton/Secretary of Treasury

Edmund Randolph/Attorney General

Henry Knox/Secretary of War

John Adams/Vice President (not a member)

Procedural Knowledge:

Cabinet Activity

Name: _____

Date: _____

Mr. Fust

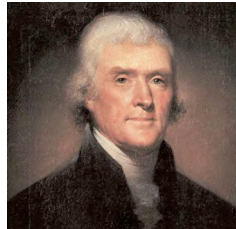
Per: _____

U.S. History I

Mock Cabinet Activity: Part I

Directions: On this side of the Mock Cabinet Activity Worksheet, fill in the necessary biographical information, position and core political views for each of the members of the Cabinet below. Be sure to fill in the necessary information for President Washington and John Adams (not a member) as well.

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Title: Lesson #3: "Washington's Cabinet – Part II"

US History I

Date: TBA

Expected # of Students: 15 - 25

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Explain three major issues that divided Washington's Cabinet (Debt, Whiskey Rebellion and the Jay Treaty) through the continuation of the Cabinet Activity

Learning Standard(s) to which the lesson refers:

USI.7, 11 – 16 and 21

Materials Needed for the Lesson: Name tags, Cabinet Bio Work Sheet/Issues Sheet (See attached)

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES (Means of Presenting)

Launch Segment (2 minutes)

Motivation/Lead-in: Quick Recap: Who were the 4 members of Washington's Cabinet? Who did Washington exclude? Afterwards, reconvene the Cabinet and resume the activity from yesterday.

Benefits/Relevance: This portion of the activity will show how certain issues divided Washington's Cabinet and the impact on American politics.

Introduce Information/Concepts/Examples (Est. time: 0 min.)

The following terms will be covered in the continuation of the Mock Cabinet Activity

- 1) National Debt and Foreign Debt (1789)
- 2) Whiskey Rebellion (1794)
- 3) Jay Treaty (signed 1794, ratified in Senate in 1795)

Guided Practice and Feedback (Est. time: 40 min.)

Mock Cabinet Activity (Continued):

- 1) After reconvening the Cabinet, explain to the students how to fill in the issue sheet on the back of the graphic organizer from yesterday.
- 2) For each issue that is discussed among the Cabinet and the class, the students should fill in the proper information and note the impact it had on individual relationships within the Cabinet.
- 3) To begin the discussion, the teacher should coach George Washington to introduce each issue to his cabinet members. The issues are as follows:
 - a. Debt (Domestic and Foreign, along with means to erase it)
 - b. Whiskey Rebellion (source of problem, how should the Federal Government react)
 - c. Jay Treaty (The positives and negatives of signing a treaty with Britain, role of John Jay, etc)
- 4) After the issue is presented by Washington, guided by the instructor, the discussion should begin with Cabinet member whose department deals with that particular issue (i.e. Debt/Alexander Hamilton).
- 5) Guided by the instructor, the discussion should initially start among the Cabinet members and eventually open up to the rest of the class.
- 6) While the discussion continues, the students should be recording the necessary information in the worksheet provided.
- 7) Be sure to close the discussion of each issue by noting how they were resolved by Washington and his Cabinet.

Should note that Cabinet members do resign and new members fill in those positions

Evaluation/Closure (Est. time: 5 min.)

- 1) Ticket Out the Door – What precedent did Washington and his Cabinet members set in dealing with each of the issues discussed today?

Enrichment/Remediation/Indep. Practice

Study for the quiz tomorrow.

TEACHING NOTES/CONTENT TO BE INTRODUCED

**[Outline of Declarative Knowledge (definitions, names, dates, etc.)
or Procedural Knowledge (steps to follow, activities, ways to check work, etc.)]**

Declarative Knowledge:

National Debt

Foreign Debt

Federal Excise Tax

Tariff

Government Bonds

National Bank

Whiskey Rebellion

Jay Treaty

Procedural Knowledge:

Continuation of the Mock Cabinet Activity

Name: _____

Date: _____

Mr. Fust

Per: _____

U.S. History I

Mock Cabinet Activity: Part II

Directions: During the Mock Cabinet Activity and the class discussions, record the necessary information for each issue in the table below. Be sure to record all key historical data (i.e. specific detail, views of members of the Cabinet towards these issues, etc.) and the outcome of each issue.

Issue	Historical Data	Outcome/Impact
Debt (Domestic and Foreign)		
Whiskey Rebellion (1794)		
Jay Treaty (1794 signed, 1795 ratified by the Senate)		

Title: Lesson #4: “Washington’s Farewell Address”

US History I

Date: TBA

Expected # of Students: 15 - 25

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Analyze and discuss the key points from Washington’s Farewell Address by completing the carousel activity
- Discuss the impact Washington’s Farewell Address had on American political policy through taking notes and participating in the class discussion

Learning Standard(s) to which the lesson refers:

USI.7, 11 – 16 and 21

Materials Needed for the Lesson: Washington’s Farewell Address

ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY: Quiz – (10 minutes)

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES (Means of Presenting)

Launch Segment (2 minutes)

Motivation/Lead-in: Recap: What precedent has been set by Washington in dealing with the three major issues discussed yesterday during the Mock Cabinet Activity?

Benefits/Relevance: Students will understand the importance of Washington’s Farewell Address and the impact it had on American politics.

Introduce Information/Concepts/Examples (Est. time: 3 min.)

Notes:

- 1) Washington’s Farewell Address

Guided Practice and Feedback (Est. time: 30 min.)

Carousel Activity –

- 1) Divide the class into 5 groups.
- 2) Give each group an excerpt of Washington's Farewell Address to analyze.
- 3) For 5 - 6 minutes, have each group read their excerpt of Washington's Farewell Address and write down the main point of that section into their notes. The instructor should rotate among the groups and help them as needed while they read the document.
- 4) After 5 – 6 minutes, rotate the excerpts between groups. Repeat steps 3 and 4 until all sections have been examined by each group.
- 5) After all groups have read each section, bring the class back together to discuss the main points of Washington's Farewell Address.

Evaluation/Closure (Est. time: 5 min.)

Ticket Out the Door/Recap: What were Washington's main points stressed within his Address?

- 1) Remain neutral/Stay out of European interests and affairs (37)
- 2) Avoid permanent alliances (40)
- 3) Taxes are necessary to erase debt (30)
- 4) Checks and Balances are essential to avoid the domination of the Federal Government by one branch/If necessary, the Constitution can be revised (26)
- 5) As Citizens, we should always exalt the just pride of patriotism (10)

Enrichment/Remediation/Indep. Practice

HW: In what way do you think has Washington's words and main points stressed in his farewell address have affected American politics today? Do you think we (as citizens and politicians) still follow the political advice he gave in his farewell address?

HW: Read the Joseph Ellis Article, "Master of Mount Vernon"

TEACHING NOTES/CONTENT TO BE INTRODUCED

**[Outline of Declarative Knowledge (definitions, names, dates, etc.)
or Procedural Knowledge (steps to follow, activities, ways to check work, etc.)]**

Declarative Knowledge:

Washington's Farewell Address

Procedural Knowledge:

Carousel Activity

Excerpts From Washington's Farewell Address

10 For this you have every inducement of sympathy and interest. Citizens, by birth or choice, of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affections. The name of American, which belongs to you, in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of Patriotism, more than any appellation derived from local discriminations. With slight shades of difference, you have the same religion, manners, habits, and political principles. You have in a common cause fought and triumphed together; the Independence and Liberty you possess are the work of joint counsels, and joint efforts, of common dangers, sufferings, and successes.

26 It is important, likewise, that the habits of thinking in a free country should inspire caution, in those intrusted 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. A just estimate of that love of power, and proneness to abuse it, which predominates in the human heart, is sufficient to satisfy us of the truth of this position. The necessity of reciprocal checks in the exercise of political power, by dividing and distributing it into different depositories, and constituting each the Guardian of the Public Weal against invasions by the others, has been evinced by experiments ancient and modern; some of them in our country and under our own eyes. To preserve them must be as necessary as to institute them. If, in the opinion of the people, the distribution or modification of the constitutional powers be in any particular wrong, let it be corrected by an amendment in the way, which the constitution designates. But let there be no change by usurpation; for, though this, in one instance, may be the instrument of good, it is the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed. The precedent must always greatly overbalance in permanent evil any partial or transient benefit, which the use can at any time yield.

30 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 exertions in time of peace to discharge the debts, which unavoidable wars may have occasioned, not ungenerously throwing upon posterity the burthen, which we ourselves ought to bear. The execution of these maxims belongs to your representatives, but it is necessary that public opinion should cooperate. To facilitate to them the performance of their duty, it is essential that you should practically bear in mind, that towards the payment of debts there must be Revenue; that to have Revenue there must be taxes; that no taxes can be devised, which are not more or less inconvenient and

unpleasant; that the intrinsic embarrassment, inseparable from the selection of the proper objects (which is always a choice of difficulties), ought to be a decisive motive for a candid construction of the conduct of the government in making it, and for a spirit of acquiescence in the measures for obtaining revenue, which the public exigencies may at any time dictate.

37 Europe has a set of primary interests, which to us have none, or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves, by artificial ties, in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities

40 It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world; so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it; for let me not be understood as capable of patronizing infidelity to existing engagements. I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs, that honesty is always the best policy. I repeat it, therefore, let those engagements be observed in their genuine sense. But, in my opinion, it is unnecessary and would be unwise to extend them.

Title: Lesson #5: “Hypocrite or Man of Precedent”

US History I

Date: TBA

Expected # of Students: 15 - 25

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Explain Washington’s views on slavery by participating in the class discussion and reviewing Washington’s Last Will and Testament

Learning Standard(s) to which the lesson refers:

USI.7, 11 – 16 and 21

Materials Needed for the Lesson: Washington’s Last Will and Testament

Can be found at <http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/documents/will/index.html>

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES (Means of Presenting)

Launch Segment (2 minutes)

Motivation/Lead-in: What do you think about George Washington as a slave holder after reading the Joseph Ellis article, “Master of Mount Vernon”?

Benefits/Relevance: This lesson will demonstrate the complexity of the issue of slavery at the time of the nation’s founding and the personal struggle Washington endured in deciding whether or not to emancipate his slaves.

Introduce Information/Concepts/Examples (Est. time: 10 min.)

Notes:

- 1) Washington owned thousands of acres of land → needed slaves to work that land
- 2) He personally owned slaves
- 3) Acquired dower slaves through his marriage to Martha Washington
- 4) At the end of the American Revolution, he demanded that the British return runaway slaves that joined the Loyalist cause back to their rightful owners

- 5) Freed **his** slaves in his will but legally could not free dower slaves

Guided Practice and Feedback (Est. time: 30 min.)

Discussion Questions: For the class, we will discuss the issue of George Washington as a slave owner. To start the discussion, here are some questions to begin with:

- 1) Does the fact Washington owned several slaves make him a hypocrite to the ideals of republicanism and liberty? Why or Why not?
- 2) Do you think the fact that he, along with other founding fathers, owned slaves should condemn these men to shame and disgrace? Why or Why not?
- 3) Is it fair to say that there was little or nothing Washington could do about the issue of slavery as President? Why or Why not?
- 4) Why do you think George Washington waited until his death to free the slaves that he rightfully owned?
- 5) Can we consider Washington an early advocate of abolition? What precedent do you think he set by freeing his slaves in his will?

Evaluation/Closure (Est. time: 5 min.)

Distribute the paper assignment.

Enrichment/Remediation/Indep. Practice

The paper assignment (see attached) will be due in 3 days. Cite as necessary.

TEACHING NOTES/CONTENT TO BE INTRODUCED

**[Outline of Declarative Knowledge (definitions, names, dates, etc.)
or Procedural Knowledge (steps to follow, activities, ways to check work, etc.)]**

Declarative Knowledge:

Procedural Knowledge:

Washington's Last Will and Testament

George Washington: A Man of Precedent



Over the past few days, we have taken a close look at George Washington, his views, and the issues that confronted him and his Cabinet during his presidency. Based on the primary documents we have examined, especially Washington's Farewell Address, what precedents (examples) do you think set during his time as president? Also, how did those precedents shape American politics? State your argument in two typed double spaced pages. Be sure to cite as necessary and include a work cited page. This will be worth a test grade of 100 pts. Good luck!

Sources and Materials Used

Ellis, Joseph, J. "American Majesty" in "U.S. News & World Report Special Edition: Secrets of the Presidents". Washington D.C.: U.S. News & World Report Inc. 2009. 12 – 16.

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