Rise of Political Parties during George Washington's Presidency

Lesson Overview | Preparation | Procedure | Evaluation

Overview

Students explore two primary source documents to investigate George Washington's feelings about the rise of political parties. In the first reading (a letter from 1792), George Washington expresses a hopeful and positive view of the new American republic. The second reading (the Farewell Address, issued near the end of Washington's second term) shows him to be extremely negative and pessimistic. Students will investigate the reasons for this change in mood and attitude.

Objectives

Students will:

- read a primary source letter for specific information;
- use the reading strategy “annolighting” (annotating and highlighting) text to identify evidence to support a hypothesis from the primary source;
- be able to use background knowledge of American history and George Washington to make sense of the primary source letters;
- understand that the primary sources help us see one perspective of the events from a certain time.

Time Required

20 minutes of one class period

Recommended Grade Level

Grades 11

Topic

United States Government

Era

US 3 - Revolution and the new nation (1754-1820s)
Format of Primary Sources Used

Music, Manuscript, Prints

Standards

Standard VUS.6a
The student will demonstrate knowledge of the major events during the first half of the nineteenth century by

a) identifying the economic, political, and geographic factors that led to territorial expansion and its impact on the American Indians (First Americans).

Essential Knowledge:
Political developments in the Early National Period
After George Washington’s presidency ended in the late 1790s, the first political parties emerged
Preparation

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Resources Used

Library of Congress Items


## Procedure

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1. Ask students to brainstorm ways to determine a person’s mood or outlook without being able to see that person. [Desired response: read something that person has written].

   **GW's Farewell Address--Unity of government et al.ppt**

2. Hand a hi-lighter and a copy of Washington’s 20 July 1791 letter to David Humphreys to each student. Ask the class to read the document and locate words that indicate Washington’s mood, attitude, or outlook on that date. After 5-10 minutes, ask the students to determine which words of emotion Washington used more than once [Sample responses: “confidence,” “pleasure/pleased/pleasing,” “tranquility,” “happy”]. Ask students to speculate on words that would describe Washington’s overall mood on that date [Sample responses: “optimistic”].

3. Hand out a copy of Washington’s 1796 Farewell Address to each student and ask the class to find similar words indicating Washington’s outlook on that date. After 5-10 minutes, again ask the students to determine which words Washington used more than once [Sample responses: “despotism,” “danger”]. Ask the students again to speculate on words that would describe Washington’s overall mood on that date [Sample responses: “pessimistic”].

4. Guide the students into a discussion of what reasons Washington gave for his overall mood [Desired response: political parties].

5. Preview next phase of lesson: Washington clearly feared that the rise of political parties during his presidency was threatening the very foundation of the new republic. But what issues/conflicts caused these parties to first form? Lead students into a discussion of this topic [Desired response: conflicts over differing visions, as seen in the disputes between Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson over Hamilton’s economic proposals for the new nation.]
**Evaluation**

[Lesson Overview] | [Preparation] | [Procedure] | Evaluation

**Evaluation**

- Teacher monitoring of students responses during discussion;
- Student highlighting of letters;
- Student responses that support observations from the documents with background knowledge.
(To the People of the United States.

Friends and Fellow-Citizens,

The period for a new election of a President 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.

I beg you, at the same time, to do me the justice to be assured, that this resolution has not been taken without a strict regard to all the considerations appertaining to the relation, which binds a dutiful citizen to his Country; and that, in withdrawing the tender of service which silence in my situation might imply, I am influenced by no diminution of zeal for your future interest; no deficiency of grateful respect for your past kindness, but am supported by a full conviction that the step is compatible with both.

The acceptance of, and continuance in office to which your suffrages have twice called me, have been a uniform sacrifice of inclination to the opinion of duty, and to a deference for what appeared to be your desire. I constantly hoped, that it would have been much earlier in my power, consistently with motives which I was not at liberty to disregard, to return...

http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mgw2&fileName=gwpage024.db&recNum=228
Philadelphia July 28, 1791

My dear Sir,

I have received your letters of the 16 of February and 3 of May, and am much obliged by your observations on the situation, manners, customs and dispositions of the Seminole nation. In this age of free inquiry and enlightened reason it is to be hoped that the condition of the people in every country will be improved and the happiness of mankind promoted. Spain appears to be so much behind the other nations of Europe in liberal policy that a long time will undoubtedly elapse before the people of that kingdom can taste the sweets of liberty and enjoy the natural advantages of their country.

I have mentioned my intention of visiting the southern states, which I have since accomplished, and have the pleasure to inform you that I performed a journey of 1837 miles without meeting with any interruption by sickness, bad weather, or any untoward accident. Indeed so highly were we favored that we arrived at each place, where I proposed to make any halt, on the
My dear Sir: I have received your letters of the 16 of February and 3 of May, and am much obliged by your observations on the situation, manners, customs and dispositions of the Spanish nation. In this age of free inquiry and enlightened reason it is to be hoped that the condition of the people in every Country will be bettered, and the happiness of mankind promoted. Spain appears to be so much behind the other Nations of Europe in liberal policy that a long time will undoubtedly elapse before the people of that kingdom can taste the sweets of liberty, and enjoy the natural advantages of their Country.

In my last I mentioned my intention of visiting the southern States, which I have since accomplished, and have the pleasure to inform you, that I performed a journey of 1887 miles without meeting with any interruption by sickness, bad weather, or any untoward accident. Indeed so highly were we favored that we arrived at each place, where I proposed to make any halt, on the very day I fixed upon before we set out. The same horses performed the whole tour, and, altho' much reduced in flesh, kept up their full spirits to the last day.

I am much pleased that I have taken this journey as it has enabled me to see with my own eyes the situation of the country thro' which we travelled, and to learn more accurately the disposition of the people than I could have done by any information.

The country appears to be in a very improving state, and industry and frugality are becoming much more fashionable than they have hitherto been there. Tranquillity reigns among the people, with that disposition towards the general government which is likely to preserve it. They begin to feel the good effects of equal laws and equal protection. The farmer finds a ready market for his produce, and the merchant calculates with more certainty on his payments. Manufacturers have as yet made but little progress in that part of the country, and it will probably be a long time before they are brought to that state to which they have already arrived in the middle and eastern parts of the Union.

Each days experience of the Government of the United States seems to confirm its establishment, and to render it more popular. A ready acquiescence in the laws made under it shews in a strong light the confidence which the people have in their representatives, and in the upright views of those who administer the government. At the
time of passing a law imposing a duty on home made spirits, it was vehemently affirmed
by many, that such a law could never be executed in the southern States, particularly in
Virginia and North Carolina. As this law came in force only on the first of this month
little can be said of its effects from experience; but from the best information I could get
on my journey respecting its operation on the minds of the people (and I took some pains
to obtain information on this point) there remains no doubt but it will be carried into
effect not only without opposition, but with very general approbation in those very parts
where it was foretold that it would never be submitted to by any one. It is possible,
however, and perhaps not improbable that some Demagogue may start up, and produce
and get signed some resolutions declaratory of their disapprobation of the measure.

Our public credit stands on that ground which three years ago it would have been
considered as a species of madness to have foretold. The astonishing rapidity, with which
the newly instituted Bank was filled gives an unexampled proof (here) of the resources of
our Countrymen and their confidence in public measures. On the first day of opening the
subscription the whole number of shares (20,000) were taken up in one hour, and
application made for upwards of 4000 shares more than were granted by the Institution,
besides many others that were coming in from different quarters.

For some time past the western frontiers have been alarmed by depredations committed
by some hostile tribes of Indians; but such measures are now in train as will, I presume,
either bring them to sue for peace before a stroke is struck at them, or make them feel the
effects of an enmity too sensibly to provoke it again unnecessarily, unless, as is much
suspected, they are countenanced, abetted, and supported in their hostile views by the B--
h. Tho' I must confess I cannot see much prospect of living in tranquillity with them so
long as a spirit of land jobbing prevails, and our frontier Settlers entertain the opinion that
there is not the same crime (or indeed no crime at all) in killing an Indian as in killing a
white man.

You have been informed of the spot fixed on for the seat of Government on the Potomac,
and I am now happy to add that all matters between the Proprietors of the soil and the
public are settled to the mutual satisfaction of the Parties, and that the business of laying
out the city, the grounds for public buildings, walks &c. is progressing under the
inspection of Major L'Enfant with pleasing prospects.

Thus much for our american affairs; and I wish I could say as much in favor of
circumstances in Europe. But our accounts from thence do not paint the situation of the
Inhabitants in very pleasing colours. One part exhibits war and devastation; another
preparations for war; a third commotions; a fourth direful apprehensions of commotions;
and indeed there seems to be scarcely a nation enjoying uninterrupted, unapprehensive
tranquillity.

The example of France will undoubtedly have its effects on other Kingdoms. Poland, by
the public papers, appears to have made large and unexpected strides towards liberty,
which, if true, reflects great honor on the present King, who seems to have been the
principal promoter of the business.
By the by, I have never received any letter from Mr. Littlepage, or from the King of Poland, which you say Mr. Carmichael informed you were sent to me last summer.

I yesterday had Mr. Jaudennes, who was in this country with Mr. Gardoqui, and is now come over in a public character, presented to me, for the first time by Mr. Jefferson. Colonel Ternant is expected here every day as minister from France.

[Note 22: José de Jaudenes. He was the Spanish chargés d'affaires.]

I am glad to learn that the air of Lisbon agrees so well with you. I sincerely hope you may long, very long enjoy the blessing of health, accompanied with such other blessings as may contribute to your happiness. I have been in the enjoyment of very good health during my journey, and have rather gained flesh upon it. Mrs. Washington desires her best wishes may be presented to you. You are always assured of those of, my dear Sir, etc.

[Note 23: From the "Letter Book" copy in the Washington Papers.]
Attitude, mood, demeanor, emotion, outlook, point-of-view

George Washington’s Farewell Address (1796)

Analyze the reasons underlying the advice George Washington gave to the country in his Farewell Address.