



Washington's Newburgh Address



Intended Grade Level: Upper Elementary School

Lesson Purpose: This lesson plan will introduce students to the Newburgh Crisis and Washington's Newburgh Address through primary and secondary sources. Students will then write a persuasive essay that compares Washington's character to a person of their choosing who has overcome a difficult obstacle.

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will use video, worksheet text, and primary documents to discuss the character traits exhibited by George Washington during the Newburgh Crisis.
- Students will learn to conduct research through primary and secondary sources and proper citation of all sources.
- Students will write a persuasive essay using direct and indirect quotes to support their argument.

National Standards:

NSS-US.H.K-4.3 THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES: DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES AND VALUES AND THE PEOPLE FROM MANY CULTURES WHO CONTRIBUTED TO ITS CULTURAL, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL HERITAGE

- Understands how democratic values came to be, and how they have been exemplified by people, events, and symbols
- Understands the causes and nature of movements of large groups of people into and within the United States, now and long ago
- Understands the folklore and other cultural contributions from various regions of the United States and how they helped to form a national heritage

NSS-C.K-4.2 VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY

What are the Basic Values and Principles of American Democracy?

- What are the most important values and principles of American democracy?
- What are some important beliefs Americans have about themselves and their government?
- Why is it important for Americans to share certain values, principles, and beliefs?
- What are the benefits of diversity in the United States?
- How should conflicts about diversity be prevented or managed?
- How can people work together to promote the values and principles of American democracy?



NL-ENG.K-12.1 READING FOR PERSPECTIVE

Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

NL-ENG.K-12.7 EVALUATING DATA

Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

Timeframe: Approximately five class sessions

Background: Students should be familiar with source citation:

- Name of Video. Videocassette. Director First Name Last Name. Producer/Distributor, Year Created.
- Author's Last Name, First Name. Name of Book. City of Publication: Publisher, Year Published.
- Author's Last Name, First Name. Letter to ____/Name of Document. Day Month Year Written.

Procedures:

1. As a class, define the concepts of character traits, primary and secondary sources, direct and indirect quotations, and source citations.
2. View the A&E Biography, "[George Washington Founding Father](#)," or the Mount Vernon film, "[We Fight To Be Free](#)." After watching the film, have students fill out a Research Worksheet (included below) using the video as a secondary source.
6. Distribute the Newburgh Crisis background information (included below) to students. Read the contents aloud in order to answer any questions and define unfamiliar vocabulary. As a class, review the who, what, when, where, and why of the Newburgh Crisis to ensure student comprehension of this important event. Have students then fill out another Research Worksheet using the Newburgh Crisis worksheet as a secondary source.



7. Distribute transcriptions of Washington's Letter to Colonel Lewis Nicola and Washington's Newburgh Address (included below). Read the transcriptions aloud in order to answer questions and define unfamiliar vocabulary. Discuss these primary documents with students to ensure comprehension. Ask students if they would choose to be king or queen if given the opportunity. Distribute a Research Worksheet to students and explain that they will not need to fill out the "Indirect Quotation" section for this primary source. Have students choose one of the transcriptions to analyze for the worksheet.

8. As a class, brainstorm people and situations that resemble Washington in his handling of the Newburgh Crisis and make a list on the blackboard. The people can be from history or modern times, but must exhibit character traits similar to those the class has defined for Washington.

9. Distribute the 'A Person of Washington's Character' worksheet (included below) and have each student choose one of the people from the blackboard to be their research subject. Using the worksheet as a guide, have students find primary and secondary source material to support their comparison of Washington at Newburgh to a situation faced by their research subject. Make Research Worksheets available for them to record citations and quotes.

10. Have students write a persuasive essay comparing George Washington and his handling of the crisis at Newburgh to another person and situation in history. The 'A Person of Washington's Character Essay Outline' will help them structure their essay and organize their research. The primary and secondary source material should be cited throughout the paper and a full bibliography will be submitted with the essay.



*This has been adapted from a lesson by Stacia Smith,
George Washington Teachers Institute 2006.*



Research Worksheet

Source: (circle one) Primary Secondary

Citation: _____

Direct Quotation: _____

Indirect Quotation: _____

Character Traits:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



The Newburgh Crisis

After the British army lost at the Battle of Yorktown on October 19, 1781, most Americans believed that the Revolutionary War was over. General Washington warned his fellow military leaders and politicians that the British army still occupied Charleston, New York City, and Savannah. Washington also warned that the soldiers were upset because Congress and the states refused to honor promises to pay soldiers their salary and pension. The army built a camp at Newburgh, New York to wait for the results of Benjamin Franklin's peace talks with Britain.

On May 22, 1782, one of Washington's officers, Colonel Lewis Nicola, wrote to him that Congress was not an effective form of government and that Washington should become King of the United States. George Washington replied to Nicola immediately that, "You could not have found a person to whom your schemes are more disagreeable."

Later that year, there was an unsuccessful attempt to amend the Articles of Confederation in order to allow Congress to levy its own taxes rather than having to ask the states for money. As a result, the Congress was still unable to pay its debts including the money owed to the army. Talk began in Washington's army of leaving the country to defend itself against the British or of taking up arms against the government. In March 1783, Washington learned that his officers had planned a meeting to discuss their grievances against the Congress. Washington condemned and canceled the meeting, then scheduled his own meeting for Saturday, March 15.

Washington's speech to his officers at Newburgh would be one of the most important events in American history. He expressed his own concern for the army and promised to work with the Congress to see justice done. In his dramatic speech, Washington defended the rule of law, and prevented the army from either abandoning or tyrannizing the nation.

Many were surprised when Washington put on glasses to read his speech, for they had never before seen him wear them. It was this act, and the statement, "Gentlemen, you must pardon me. I have grown gray in your service and now find myself growing blind," that caught the officers off guard. Many officers upon seeing this act, wept. All thoughts of internal rebellion and conspiracy, ceased to exist.



Transcription: Letter from Washington to Colonel Lewis Nicola, May 22, 1782

Sir:

With a mixture of great surprise and astonishment I have read with attention the Sentiments you have submitted to my perusal. Be assured Sir, no occurrence in the course of the War, has given me more painful sensations than your information of there being such ideas existing in the Army as you have expressed, and I must view with abhorrence, and reprehend with severity. For the present, the communication of them will rest in my own bosom, unless some further agitation of the matter shall make a disclosure necessary.

I am much at a loss to conceive what part of my conduct could have given encouragement to an address which to me seems big with the greatest mischief that can befall my Country. If I am not deceived in the knowledge of myself, you could not have found a person to whom your schemes are more disagreeable; at the same time in justice to my own feelings I must add, that no Man possesses a more sincere wish to see ample justice done to the Army than I do, and as far as my powers and influence, in a constitutional way extend, they shall be employed to the utmost of my abilities to effect it, should there be any occasion. Let me conjure you then, if you have any regard for your Country, concern for yourself or posterity, or respect for me, to banish these thoughts from your Mind, and never communicate, as from yourself, or anyone else, a sentiment of the like Nature. With esteem I am.



Transcription: George Washington's "Newburgh Address," March 15, 1783

By an anonymous summons, an attempt has been made to convene you together. How inconsistent with the rules of propriety, how unmilitary and how subversive of all order and discipline let the good sense of the army decide.

In the moment of this summons, another anonymous production was sent into circulation, addressed more to the feelings of passions than to the reason and judgment of the army. The author of the piece is entitled to much credit for the goodness of his pen, and I could wish he had as much credit for the rectitude of his heart. For, as men, we see through different optics, and are induced by the reflecting faculties of the mind to use different means to attain the same end. The author of the address should have had more charity than to mark with suspicion the man who would recommend moderation or longer forbearance, or, in other words, who should not think as he thinks and act as he advises. But, he had another plan in view, in which candor and liberality of sentiment, regard for justice, and love of country have no part. And, he was right to insinuate the darkest suspicion to effect the blackest designs.

That the address is drawn with great art and is designed to answer the most insidious purposes, that it is calculated to impress the mind with an idea of premeditated injustice to the sovereign power of the United States and rouse all those resentments which must unavoidably flow from such a belief, that the secret mover of this scheme (whoever he may be) intended to take advantage of the passions while they were warmed by the recollection of past distresses without giving time for cool, deliberative thinking and that composure of mind which is so necessary to give dignity and stability to measures is rendered too obvious by the mode of conducting the business to need other proof than a reference to the preceding.

Thus much, Gentlemen, I have thought it incumbent on me to observe to you, to show upon what principles I opposed the irregular and hasty meeting which was proposed to have been held on Tuesday last, and not because I wanted a disposition to give you every opportunity, consistent with your honor and the dignity of the army, to make known your grievances. If my conduct heretofore has not evinced to you that I have been a faithful friend to the army, my declaration of it at this time would be equally unavailing and improper. But, as I was among the first who embarked in the cause of our common country, as I have never left your side one moment but when called on public duty, as I have been the constant companion and witness of your distresses and



not among the last to feel and acknowledge your merits, as I have ever considered my own military reputation as inseparably connected with that of the army, as my heart has ever expanded with joy when I heard its praises and my indignation has arisen when the mouth of detraction has been opened against it, it can scarcely be supposed, at this late stage of the war, that I am indifferent to its interests.

But, how are they to be promoted? The way is plain, says the anonymous addresser. If war continues, remove into the unsettled country, there establish yourselves, and leave an ungrateful country to defend itself. But, who are they to defend? Our wives, our children, our farms, and other property which we leave behind us. Or, in this state of hostile separation, are we to take the first two (the latter cannot be removed) to perish in a wilderness with hunger, cold and nakedness? If peace takes place, never sheath your sword, says he, until you have obtained full and ample justice. This dreadful alternative, of deserting our country in the extremest hour of her distress or turning our arms against it (which is the apparent object unless Congress can be compelled into instant compliance) has something so shocking in it that humanity revolts at the idea. My God! What can this writer have in view by recommending such measures? Can he be a friend to the army? Can he be a friend to this country? Rather is he not an insidious foe, some emissary, perhaps, from New York, plotting the ruin of both by sowing the seeds of discord and separation between the civil and military powers of the continent? And, what compliment does he pay to our understandings when he recommends measures in either alternative impracticable in their nature?

But here, Gentlemen, I will drop the curtain. And, because it would be as imprudent in me to assign my reasons for this opinion as it would be insulting to your conception to suppose you stood in need of them, a moment's reflection will convince every dispassionate mind of the physical impossibility of carrying either proposal into execution.

There might, Gentlemen, be an impropriety in my taking notice in this address to you of an anonymous production, but the manner in which that performance has been introduced to the army, the effect it was intended to have, together with some other circumstances, will amply justify my observations on the tendency of that writing. With respect to the advice given by the author to suspect the man who shall recommend moderate measures and longer forbearance -- I spurn it, as every man who regards that liberty and reveres that justice for which we contend undoubtedly must. For if men are to be precluded from offering their sentiments on a matter which may involve the most serious and alarming consequences that can invite the consideration of mankind, reason



is of no use to us. The freedom of speech may be taken away and, dumb and silent, we may be led like sheep to the slaughter.

I cannot, in justice to my own belief and what I have great reason to conceive is the intention of Congress, conclude this address without giving it as my decided opinion that that Honorable body entertain exalted sentiments of the services of the army and, from a full conviction of its merits and sufferings, will do it complete justice. That their endeavors to discover and establish funds for this purpose have been unwearied and will not cease till they have succeeded, I have no doubt. But, like all other large bodies where there is a variety of different interests to reconcile, their deliberations are slow. Why then should we distrust them and, in consequence of that distrust, adopt measures which may cast a shadow over that glory which has been so justly acquired and tarnish the reputation of an army which is celebrated through all Europe for its fortitude and patriotism? And for what is this done? To bring the object we seek nearer? No! Most certainly, in my opinion, it will cast it at a greater distance.

For myself (and I take no merit in giving the assurance, being induced to it from principles of gratitude, veracity and justice), a grateful sense of the confidence you have ever placed in me, a recollection of the cheerful assistance and prompt obedience I have experienced from you under every vicissitude of fortune, and the sincere affection I feel for an army I have so long had the honor to command, will oblige me to declare in this public and solemn manner that in the attainment of complete justice for all your toils and dangers and in the gratification of every wish, so far as may be done consistently with the great duty I owe my country and those powers we are bound to respect, you may freely command my services to the utmost of my abilities.

While I give you these assurances and pledge myself in the most unequivocal manner to exert whatever ability I am possessed of in your favor, let me entreat you, Gentlemen, on your part, not to take any measures which, viewed in the calm light of reason, will lessen the dignity and sully the glory you have hitherto maintained. Let me request you to rely on the plighted faith of your country and place a full confidence in the purity of the intentions of Congress that, previous to dissolution as an army, they will cause all your accounts to be liquidated as directed in their resolutions which were published to you two days ago, and that they will adopt the most effectual measures in their power to render ample justice to you for your faithful and meritorious services. And, let me conjure you in the name of our common country, as you value your own sacred honor, as you respect the rights of humanity, as you regard the military and national character of America, to express your utmost horror and detestation of the man who wishes, under any specious pretenses, to overturn the liberties of our country and who



wickedly attempts to open the floodgates of civil discord and deluge our rising empire in blood.

By thus determining, and thus acting, you will pursue the plain and direct road to the attainment of your wishes. You will defeat the insidious designs of our enemies, who are compelled to resort from open force to secret artifice. You will give one more distinguished proof of unexampled patriotism and patient virtue, rising superior to the pressure of the most complicated sufferings. And you will, by the dignity of your conduct, afford for posterity to say, when speaking of the glorious example you have exhibited to mankind: "Had this day been wanting, the world had never seen the last stage of perfection to which human nature is capable of attaining."



A Person of Washington's Character

Person: _____

Situation they faced that was similar to that faced by Washington at Newburgh:

Character Traits exhibited by that person:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Circle the character trait above that most closely resembles Washington at Newburgh.

Find a primary and a secondary source which demonstrates your person's character traits, then use two Research Worksheets to cite sources and record quotes. You will be using these sources to argue why the character trait's exhibited by your chosen person when faced with a difficult situation are similar to those displayed by Washington at Newburgh, so find quotes that will help your argument. Use the Essay Outline worksheet to structure your persuasive essay.



A Person of Washington's Character Essay Outline

A. Opening Paragraph

- I. Attention Getter (quote, describe the scene-anecdote, interesting fact(s))
- II. Transition from attention getter to describing the specific qualities of Washington that equipped him to pacify the Newburgh Crisis.
- III. Make a comparison between Washington and _____.
Name the obstacles they overcame. Introduce and explain the similar traits.
- IV. Thesis statement mentioning Washington and _____, but focused primarily on the similar character traits.

B. Body Paragraph #1

- I. Topic sentence about Washington and the Newburgh Crisis
- II. Describe and explain the Newburgh Crisis using quotes.
 - a. Facts (times, dates, location, events)
 1. Citation(s)
 - b. Describe the importance, significance, and/or danger:



2. Citation(s)

III. Describe Washington's character traits that equipped him to overcome the Newburgh Crisis.

3. Citation(s)

IV. Transition sentence to introduce your person.

C. Body Paragraph #2

I. Topic Sentence introducing your person and the obstacle they overcame:

II. Explain the obstacle they overcame using quotes.

a. Facts(times, dates, location, events)

1. Citation(s)

b. Describe the importance, significance, and/or danger:

2. Citation(s)



- III. Describe the character traits which they have in common with Washington, which allowed he/she to overcome the obstacle:

3. Citation(s)

- IV. Transition sentence comparing Washington to your person.

D. Body Paragraph #3

- I. Topic sentence which explains the existence of similarities as well as differences between Washington and your person.

- II. Describe the differences in personality and character.

1. Citation(s)

- III. Describe the difference between the Newburgh Crisis and your person's obstacle.

2. Citation(s)



IV. Transition sentence to explain that although there are differences, similarities are noticeable.

V. Describe the similarities between the crises using research not previously used.

3. Citation(s)

VI. Describe the similarities in personalities and character traits.

4. Citation(s)

E. Closing Paragraph

I. Restate the thesis.

II. Make a statement about the importance of character and personality at times of crisis.

III. Make a statement about how history would have been changed if these historical figures with distinct and similar personalities had not been there to intervene.