

Quotes

Quotes are wonderful things! They make excellent tools for uncovering history. Below, you will find two categories of quotes pertaining to George Washington. Use these quotes to complete the activities in the curriculum.

The first category of quotes is Washington's Words. George Washington's words tell us how he felt, what he believed and his personal hopes and goals for the United States. They come from his journals, his prayers and the letters he wrote to friends, family and colleagues.

Words of Others are quotes from people who knew George Washington. Their words give evidence to George Washington's actions. Between the two groups, we can begin to get a complete picture of George Washington.

George Washington's Words:

"No Man has a more perfect reliance on the all-wise and powerful dispensations of the Supreme Being than I have, nor thinks His aid more necessary."

~George Washington, letter to William Gordon, May 13, 1776

For myself the delay [in assuming the office of the President] may be compared with a reprieve; for in confidence I assure you, with the world it would obtain little credit that my movements to the chair of Government will be accompanied by feelings not unlike those of a culprit who is going to the place of his execution: so unwilling am I, in the evening of a life nearly consumed in public cares, to quit a peaceful abode for an Ocean of difficulties, without that competency of political skill, abilities and inclination which is necessary to manage the helm.

~George Washington comment to General Henry Knox, March 1789

The liberty enjoyed by the people of these states of worshiping Almighty God agreeably to their conscience, is not only among the choicest of their *blessings*, but also of their rights.

~George Washington, Message to Quakers, 1789

No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand, which conducts the Affairs of men more than the People of the United States. Every step, by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency.

~George Washington First Inaugural Address, April 30, 1789

Among the vicissitudes incident to life no event could have filled me with greater anxieties than that of which the notification was transmitted by your order, and received on the fourteenth day of the present month. On the one hand, I was summoned by my country, whose voice I can never hear but with veneration and love...

~George Washington First Inaugural Address, April 30, 1789

Such being the impressions under which I have, in obedience to the public summons, repaired to the present station, it would be peculiarly improper to omit in this first official act my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe; who presides in the councils of nations; and whose providential aid can supply every human defect; that his benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the People of the United States, a Government instituted by themselves for these essential purposes, and may enable every instrument employed in its administration to execute with success the functions allotted to his charge.

~George Washington First Inaugural Address, April 30, 1789

I walk on untrodden ground. There is scarcely any part of my conduct which may not hereafter be drawn into precedent.

~President George Washington, letter to Catherine Sawbridge Macaulay Graham, January 9, 1790

All see, and most admire, the glare which hovers round the external trappings of elevated office. To me there is nothing in it, beyond the lustre which may be reflected from its connection with a power of promoting human felicity.

~George Washington, Letter to Catherine Sawbridge Macaulay Graham, January 9, 1790

It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.

~George Washington to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island
August 18, 1790

May the Children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid. May the father of all mercies scatter light and not darkness in our paths, and make us all in our several vocations useful here, and in his own due time and way everlastingly happy.

~George Washington to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island
August 18, 1790

"The situation in which I now stand for the last time, in the midst of the representatives of the people of the United States, naturally recalls the period when the administration of the present form of government commenced, and I cannot omit the occasion to congratulate you and my country on the success of the experiment, nor to repeat my fervent supplications to the Supreme Ruler of the Universe and Sovereign Arbiter of Nations that His providential care may still be extended to the United States, that the virtue and happiness of the people may be preserved, and that the Government which they have instituted for the protection of their liberties may be perpetual."

~Washington's final annual message to congress - December 7, 1796

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.

~George Washington, Farewell Address, September 17, 1796

If the freedom of speech is taken away then dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter.

~George Washington

The very atmosphere of firearms anywhere and everywhere restrains evil interference - they deserve a place of honor with all that's good.

~George Washington

By the all-powerful dispensations of Providence, I have been protected beyond all human probability and expectation; for I had four bullets through my coat, and two horses shot under me, yet escaped unhurt, altho' death was levelling my companions on every side.

~GEORGE WASHINGTON, letter to John A. Washington, Jul. 18, 1755

Remember that it is the *actions*, and not the commission, that make the officer, and that there is more expected from him, than the *title*.

~GEORGE WASHINGTON,

Address to the Officers of the Virginia Regiment, Jan. 8, 1756

"Associate with men of good quality if you esteem your own reputation; for it is better to be alone than in bad company."

— George Washington

"There is an option still left to the United States of America, that it is in their

choice and depends upon their conduct, whether they will be respectable and prosperous or contemptible and miserable as a Nation"

— George Washington

"It is impossible to rightly govern a nation without God and the Bible."

— George Washington

"The Constitution is the guide which I never will abandon"

— George Washington

Quotes About George Washington:

"If he does that, he will be the greatest man in the world."

~King George III at the end of the Revolutionary War in 1783 upon hearing that Washington planned to retire to private life at his plantation Mt. Vernon.

He seemed to enjoy a triumph over me. Methought I heard him think, "Ay! I am fairly out and you are fairly in! See which of us will be the happiest!"

~John Adams, in a letter to his wife, Abigail Adams, expressing his *impression* of George Washington at Adam's inauguration, March 4, 1797.

To The Memory Of The Man, First In War, First In Peace, And First In The Hearts Of His Countrymen.

~Henry Lee, Eulogy on Washington, Dec. 26, 1799

On the whole, his character was, in its mass, perfect, in nothing bad, in few points indifferent; and it may truly be said, that never did nature and fortune combine more perfectly to make a man great, and to place him in the same constellation with whatever worthies have merited from man an everlasting remembrance.

~Thomas Jefferson, on George Washington,
Letter to Dr. Walter Jones, January 2, 1814

"I felt on his death, with my countrymen, that 'verily a great man hath fallen this day in Israel.'"

~Thomas Jefferson, on George Washington, 1814

When people talk of the freedom of writing, speaking or thinking I cannot choose but laugh. No such thing ever existed. No such thing now exists; but I hope it will exist. But it must be hundreds of years after you and I shall write and speak no more.

~John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 1818