Standard 8.35 Lesson

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8.35 Analyze the major events of George Washington’s presidency, including Pinckney’s Treaty, Jay’s Treaty, Whiskey Rebellion, and precedents set in the Farewell Address. (G,P)

"Royals" - a parody of George Washington by Mr. Brett. He will tell you the difference between the English "Royals" and George Washington and the new government!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TSzroxUZSyw

George Washington

(Pictured Above: In this portrait, Washington at Window, circa 1948 (artist unknown), a thoughtful George Washington pauses from his writing for a moment.)
A brilliant group of political leaders emerged during the Revolutionary Era and the early years of the new nation. Collectively, they are called the FOUNDING FATHERS and their names are familiar — Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison.

Late 18th-century America still had a relatively small population, yet this group of major figures looms larger and appears more talented than any similar group at any other time in the country’s history. It seems clear that the momentous events of the period and their obvious significance, encouraged many, perhaps most, of these individuals to step beyond the bounds of ordinary life to achieve greatness.

(Pictured Above: This is a mid-19th century painting of George Washington at Valley Forge.)
Perhaps the most eminent of this group, and almost certainly the single most important for the success of the Revolution and the stability of the new nation, was GEORGE WASHINGTON. As an able delegate from Virginia, he participated in the First and Second Continental Congresses.

However, his role in the fight toward independence became crucial during the war itself when he served for its duration as the commander of the Continental Army. After a brief retirement from public service, he once again became a political leader at the Constitutional Convention in 1787, where he was elected the presiding officer. Once Washington somewhat reluctantly agreed to be a presidential candidate, his election in 1789 received almost universal support. Everyone knew that he was the obvious choice to be the first president of the United States.

What made Washington such a towering figure even among this group of outstanding leaders? How did his personality and personal experiences help shape not only his own public career, but also the country’s course in these critical founding years? Examining him in biographical detail can help us to understand many central elements of the creation of the nation. Washington’s path to greatness also suggests significant ways that American life and politics have changed dramatically since the nation’s founding in the late 18th century.
Mount Vernon - the home of George Washington

From the Mount Vernon website, learn about many aspects of the life of George Washington.

http://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/key-facts/

The First Administration

( Pictured Above: Nathaniel Currier and James Merritt Ives rendered this portrait titled The Inauguration of Washington in 1875.)

The Presidency of George Washington from www.whitehouse.gov
Washington happily resigned his military command at the end of the Revolutionary War in 1783. He saw himself living out his days as a farmer at Mt. Vernon. But he would be called on to lead the country again — this time not in war, but peace.

During the critical period of the 1780s Washington privately feared that the weak central government dictated by the Articles of Confederation threatened the long-term health of the nation. He supported the call for a Constitutional Convention and after some hesitation attended as a delegate where he was elected the presiding officer.

He took a relatively limited role, however, in the debate that created the proposed Constitution. Nor did he publicly favor ratification. It seems that his sense of personal reserve prevented him from actively campaigning. As he was likely to become the first president, he avoided the appearance of self-serving motivation by not aggressively supporting the Constitution in public.

The significance of the FIRST PRESIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATION under the Constitution is hard to overstate. The Constitution provided a bare structural outline for the federal government, but how it would actually come together was unclear. The precedent established by the first president would be enormous. Washington generally proceeded with great caution. For the most part he continued precedents that had been established under the Articles of Confederation. For instance, he carried over the three departments of the government that had existed before the Constitution.

But the nationalist Washington favored a stronger central government and made sure that executive authority was independent from total legislative control. For instance, Washington appointed his own head to each department of government whom the legislature could only accept or reject. Furthermore, Washington identified the three leaders (Thomas Jefferson as secretary of state, Alexander Hamilton of the treasury, and Henry Knox of war) as his personal "cabinet" of advisers, thus underscoring the executive’s domain. Particularly in his first term as president from 1789-1792, Washington’s enormous personal popularity and stature enhanced the legitimacy of the modest new national government.

Unfortunately for Washington, events in his second term somewhat clouded his extraordinary success. For one, his own cabinet split apart as Thomas Jefferson increasingly dissented from the economic policies proposed by Alexander Hamilton, most of which Washington supported.

Even more disturbing to Washington was the emergence of a new form of political activity where the public divided into opposing parties. Although now a fundamental feature of modern democracy, Washington and many others perceived organized opposition to the government as treasonous!
These clouds at the end of Washington’s public career, like the difficulties of his first military command in the 1750s, remind us that even this most stellar of the Founding Fathers hardly glided through public life without controversy. As impressive and even as indispensable as Washington had been to the creation of the new nation, he remained a leader with qualities that could not appeal to all of the people all of the time. Most interestingly perhaps, is that some of the personal qualities that made him extraordinarily effective are also ones that might make him extremely unpopular today.

Washington consciously cultivated a distance from the public and a personal reserve that made him aloof. He was a curious combination of late-18th century qualities — a regal republican whose disdain for democratic excess helped give life, power, and respectability to what would soon become the world’s first modern democracy.

WHISKEY REBELLION

The Whiskey Rebellion

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hX9gKS7uMZy

The Whiskey Rebellion was in response the tax, Alexander Hamilton pushed through Congress, on manufactured whiskey. Small, backcountry farmers were hit the hardest. Farmers made whiskey from the corn they grew. They used the whiskey to trade for goods they needed and traded it with foreign countries. Farmers gathered and protested the tax in Pennsylvania after a tax collector tried to collect the tax. George Washington knew he needed to keep order and prove he could enforce the law. This event was known as the whiskey rebellion and showed Americans that Washington was not going to tolerate this kind of behavior in the new republic.
PINCKNEY’S TREATY

The Pinckney’s Treaty

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCD5G-4BlBw

Spain disputed the border between the United States and Florida. Spain closed the New Orleans port to the U.S. in 1784. Washington sent Thomas Pickney to reduce the tensions along the frontier. The Spanish were hoping the U.S. would be desperate and sign a treaty that favored Spain, but Pickney waited them out. Pickney’s Treaty settled the border between the U.S. and Spain. The terms of the treaty are as follows:

• Spain would recognize the border at the 31st parallel as the northern border of Florida
• Americans would be allowed to travel freely on the Mississippi River
• The port of New Orleans would re-open, allowing the U.S. to store goods at the port with no customs duties (taxes)

JAY’S TREATY
Jay’s Treaty

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5PNBX7M5BGs

Great Britain and the US had several disputes during the early 1790s. One of these disputes was the British seizing American ships carrying goods to the French Indies. The US also objected to the British military posts along the US northern and western borders. Washington wanted to prevent any other disputes with Britain so he sent Supreme Court Justice John Jay to settle the disputes. The treaty settled the disputes and the terms are as follows:

• British would pay for damages to US ships
• British would abandon forts on the northwestern frontier
• US agreed to pay debts owed to the British

Many Americans did not agree with the treaty, but Washington felt it was the best that could be done at the time.

Farewell Address

George Washington’s Farewell Address

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6aX2-Zcp6w
Washington departed the presidency and the nation’s then capital city of Philadelphia in September 1796 with a characteristic sense of how to take dramatic advantage of the moment.

As always, Washington was extremely sensitive to the importance of public appearance and he used his departure to publicize a major final statement of his political philosophy. **WASHINGTON’S FAREWELL ADDRESS** has long been recognized as a towering statement of American political purpose and until the 1970s was read annually in the U.S. Congress as part of the national recognition of the first President’s birthday. Although the celebration of that day and the Farewell Address no longer receives such strenuous attention, Washington’s final public performance deserves close attention.

The Farewell Address definitely embodies the core beliefs that Washington hoped would continue to guide the nation. Several hands produced the document itself. The opening paragraphs remain largely unchanged from the version drafted by James Madison in 1792, while most of the rest was penned by Alexander Hamilton, whom Washington directed to remove the bitterness from an intermediate draft that the president himself had written. Although the drawn out language of the Address follows Hamilton’s style, there is little doubt that the core ideas were not only endorsed by Washington but were beliefs that he and Hamilton had developed together as the new nation’s leading nationalists.

The Address opened by offering Washington’s rationale for deciding to leave office and expressed mild regret at not having been able to step down after his first term. Unlike the end of his previous term, now Washington explained, "choice and prudence invite me to quit the political scene, patriotism does not forbid it." Washington was tired of the demands of public life, which had become particularly severe in his second term, and looked forward to returning to Mt. Vernon.

Although he might have closed the Address at this point, Washington continued at some length to express what he hoped could serve as guiding principles for the young country. Most of all Washington stressed that the "NATIONAL UNION" formed the bedrock of "collective and individual happiness" for U.S. citizens. As he explained, "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 distinctions.”

Washington feared that local factors might be the source of petty differences that would destroy the nation. His defense of national unity lay not just in abstract ideals, but also in the pragmatic reality that union brought clear advantages to every region. Union promised "greater strength, greater resource, [and] proportionately greater security from danger” than any state or region could enjoy alone. He emphasized, "your union ought to be considered as a main prop of your liberty.”
The remainder of the Address, delivered at CONGRESS HALL in Philadelphia, examined what Washington saw as the two major threats to the nation, one domestic and the other foreign, which in the mid-1790s increasingly seemed likely to combine. First, Washington warned of "the baneful effects of the spirit of party." To Washington political parties were a deep threat to the health of the nation for they allowed "a small but artful and enterprising minority" to "put in the place of the delegated will of the Nation, the will of a party."

Washington’s Farewell Address

March 5, 2012

- Beware the danger of Political Parties
- Lead to division & weaken government.
- Work out differences
  - Change Constitution through Amendments.
  - Respect public opinion.
- Avoid the accumulation of debt
  - Don’t force future generations to pay.
- Protect Independence
  - Avoid permanent alliances with foreign nations.

( Pictured Above; George Washington’s handwritten copy of his famous Farewell Address. Alexander Hamilton helped Washington edit his first draft.)

Yet, it was the dangerous influence of foreign powers, judging from the amount of the Address that Washington devoted to it, where he predicted the greatest threat to the young United States. As European powers embarked on a long war, each hoping to draw the U.S. to its side, Washington admonished the country "to steer clear of permanent Alliances." Foreign nations, he explained, could not be trusted to do anything more than pursue their own interests when entering international treaties. Rather than expect "real favors from Nation to Nation," Washington called for extending foreign "commercial relations" that could be mutually beneficial, while maintaining "as little political connection as possible." Washington’s commitment to NEUTRALITY was, in effect, an anti-French position since it overrode a 1778 treaty promising mutual support between France and the United States.

Washington’s philosophy in his Farewell Address clearly expressed the experienced leader’s sense that duty and interest must be combined in all human concerns whether on an individual level or in the collective action of the nation. This pragmatic sensibility shaped his character as well as his public decision-making. Washington understood that idealistic commitment to duty was not enough to sustain most men on a virtuous course. Instead, duty needed to be matched with a realistic assessment of self-interest in determining the best course for public action.