

Name _____

Class _____ Date _____

George Washington's Letter to Henry Knox about the Presidency

1 My dear Sir,

Mount Vernon April 1st 1789

2 ...I feel for those Members of the new Congress, who, hitherto, have given an unavailing
3 attendance at the theatre of business. For myself, the delay may be compared to a reprieve; for
4 in confidence I can assure *you*- with the *world* it would obtain *little credit*- that my movements
5 to the chair of Government will be accompanied with feelings not unlike those of a culprit who
6 is going to the place of his execution: so unwilling am I, in the evening of a life nearly
7 consumed in public cares, to quit a peaceful abode for an Ocean of difficulties, without that
8 competency of political skill- abilities & inclination which is necessary to manage the helm. I
9 am sensible, that I am embarking the voice of my Countrymen and a good name of my own, on
10 this voyage, but what returns will be made for them- Heaven alone can foretell. Integrity &
11 firmness is all I can promise- these, be the voyage long or short... With best wishes for Mrs.
12 Knox, & sincere friendship for yourself- I remain Your affectionate

13 Go: Washington

14 *Source: The Papers of George Washington Presidential Series 2, April-June 1789, pg. 2.*

VOCABULARY

reprieve: to delay the punishment of

abode: house

quit: leave

helm: a position of control

1. What type of primary source is this document? Choose the *two best phrases* from the document to support your answer. _____

2. Where and when did George Washington create this? _____

3. The word *theatre* on line 4 has multiple meanings. How is the word commonly used? _____

What is the meaning of the word in the context of this document? _____

Circle the *best three words* on lines 3-4 that helped you to understand the meaning of the word.

4. How does Washington feel about accepting the Presidency? _____

Underline multiple pieces of evidence in the text to support your answer.

5. What reasons does he give for feeling this way? _____

6. Washington uses a sailing metaphor when discussing the Presidency. Place a checkmark next to any word that supports this statement.

7. Is this a reliable resource? Why or why not? Be ready to share your answer.