

Inaugurating the Republic: Congress and George Washington's First Inaugural Address

Center for Legislative Archives

Worksheet 1, Group 1: Translating President Washington's Words

1. Read the excerpt in its original form:

Fellow Citizens of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Among the **vicissitudes** incident to life, no event could have filled me with greater anxieties...I was summoned by my Country, whose voice I can never hear but with **veneration** and love, from a retreat which I had chosen ... as the **asylum** of my declining years.

Unfamiliar words in this excerpt:

Vicissitude [vi-**sis**-i-tood]

Veneration [ven-**uh-rey**-shuhn]

Asylum [**uh-sahy**-luhm]

(Pronunciation source: dictionary.com)

2. Consult a dictionary to define each of the unfamiliar words.

Vicissitude: _____

Veneration: _____

Asylum: _____

3. Fill the blanks in the following version of the excerpt by inserting short versions of the definitions:

Among the _____ incident to life, no event could have filled me with greater anxieties...I was summoned by my Country, whose voice I can never hear but with _____ and love, from a retreat which I had chosen ... as the _____ of my declining years.

4. Collaboratively, translate the excerpt into everyday language you would use today. Copy this answer onto Worksheet 2 in the row for your group number.
5. Briefly summarize the idea President Washington was conveying to his audience.

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Worksheet 1, Group 2: Translating President Washington's Words

1. Read the excerpt in its original form:

All I dare hope, is, that, if in **executing** this task I have been too much swayed by a grateful **remembrance** of former instances, ...of the confidence of my fellow-citizens; ... my error will be **palliated** by the motives which misled me, and its consequences be judged by my Country, with some share of the **partiality** in which they originated.

Unfamiliar words in this excerpt:

Executing [**ek**-si-kyoot-ing]

Remembrance [ri-**mem**-bruhns]

Palliated [**pal**-ee-yet-ed]

Partiality [pahr-shee-**al**-i-tee]

(Pronunciation source: dictionary.com)

2. Consult a dictionary to define each of the unfamiliar words.

Executing: _____

Remembrance: _____

Palliated: _____

Partiality:

3. Fill the blanks in the following version of the excerpt by inserting short versions of the definitions:

All I dare hope, is, that, if in _____ this task I have been too much swayed by a grateful _____ of former instances, ...of the confidence of my fellow-citizens; ... my error will be _____ by the motives which misled me, and its consequences be judged by my Country, with some share of the _____ in which they originated.

4. Collaboratively, translate the excerpt into everyday language you would use today. Copy this answer onto Worksheet 2 in the row for your group number.
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Worksheet 1, Group 3: Translating President Washington's Words

1. Read the excerpt in its original form:

It would be... 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** aids 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.

Unfamiliar words in this excerpt:

Fervent [**fur**-vuhnt]

Supplications [suhp-li-**key**-shuhns]

Providential [prov-i-**den**-shuhl]

Benediction [ben-i-**dik**-shuhn]

Consecrate [**kon**-si-kreyt]

(Pronunciation source: dictionary.com)

2. Consult a dictionary to define each of the unfamiliar words.

Fervent: _____

Supplications: _____

Providential: _____

Benediction: _____

Consecrate: _____

3. Fill the blanks in the following version of the excerpt by inserting short versions of the definitions:

It would be... improper to omit in this first official Act, my _____
to that Almighty Being who rules over the Universe, who presides in the Councils of
Nations, and whose _____ aids can supply every human defect, that his
_____ may _____ 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.

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Worksheet 1, Group 3 Continued

4. Collaboratively, translate the excerpt into everyday language you would use today. Copy this answer onto Worksheet 2 in the row for your group number.
5. Briefly summarize the idea President Washington was conveying to his audience.



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Worksheet 1, Group 4: Translating President Washington's Words

1. Read the excerpt in its original form:

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**.

Unfamiliar words in this excerpt:

Character [**kar**-ik-ter]

Providential [prov-i-**den**-shuhl]

Agency [**ey**-juhn-see]

(Pronunciation source: dictionary.com)

2. Consult a dictionary to define each of the unfamiliar words.

Character: _____

Providential: _____

Agency: _____

3. Fill the blanks in the following version of the excerpt by inserting short versions of the definitions:

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 _____ of an independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of _____.

4. Collaboratively, translate the excerpt into everyday language you would use today. Copy this answer onto Worksheet 2 in the row for your group number.
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Worksheet 1, Group 5: Translating President Washington's Words

1. Read the excerpt in its original form:

In the important revolution just accomplished in the system of their United Government, the **tranquil deliberations** and voluntary consent of so many distinct communities, from which the event has resulted, cannot be compared with the means by which most Governments have been established, without some return of **pious** gratitude.

Unfamiliar words in this excerpt:

Tranquil [**tr**ang-kwil]

Deliberations [dih-lib-uh-**rey**-shuhn]

Pious [**pa**hy-uhs]

(Pronunciation source: dictionary.com)

2. Consult a dictionary to define each of the unfamiliar words.

Tranquil: _____

Deliberations: _____

Pious: _____

3. Fill the blanks in the following version of the excerpt by inserting short versions of the definitions:

And in the important revolution just accomplished in the system of their United Government, the _____ and voluntary consent of so many distinct communities, from which the event has resulted, cannot be compared with the means by which most Governments have been established, without some return of _____ gratitude.

4. Collaboratively, translate the excerpt into everyday language you would use today. Copy this answer onto Worksheet 2 in the row for your group number.
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Worksheet 1, Group 6: Translating President Washington's Words

1. Read the excerpt in its original form:

I **behold** the surest pledges, that ... no local **prejudices**, or attachments; no separate views, nor party **animosities**, will misdirect the comprehensive and equal eye which ought to watch over (Congress) this great assemblage of communities and interests: ... (The) foundations of our National policy will ... be **exemplified** by all the **attributes** which can win the affections of its Citizens, and command the respect of the world.

Unfamiliar words in this excerpt:

Behold [bih-**hohld**]

Prejudices [**prej-uh-dis**]

Animosities [an-uh-**mos-i-tee**]

Exemplified [ig-**zem-pluh-fahy**]

Attributes [**a-truh-byoots**]

(Pronunciation source: dictionary.com)

2. Consult a dictionary to define each of the unfamiliar words.

Behold: _____

Prejudices: _____

Animosities: _____

Exemplified: _____

Attributes: _____

3. Fill the blanks in the following version of the excerpt by inserting short versions of the definitions:

I _____ the surest pledges, that ... no local _____, or attachments; no separate views, nor party _____, will misdirect the comprehensive and equal eye which ought to watch over (Congress) this great assemblage of communities and interests: ... (The) foundations of our National policy will ... be _____ by all the _____ which can win the affections of its Citizens, and command the respect of the world.

4. Collaboratively, translate the excerpt into everyday language you would use today. Copy this answer onto Worksheet 2 in the row for your group number.
5. Briefly summarize the idea President Washington was conveying to his audience.

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Worksheet 1, Group 7: Translating President Washington's Words

1. Read the excerpt in its original form:

There is no truth more thoroughly established, than that there exists in the economy and course of nature, an **indissoluble** union between virtue and happiness, between duty and advantage, between the genuine **maxims** of an honest and **magnanimous** policy, and the solid rewards of public prosperity and **felicity**: Since we ought to be no less persuaded that the **propitious** smiles of Heaven, can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right, which Heaven itself has **ordained**...

Unfamiliar words in this excerpt:

Indissoluble [in-di-sol-yuh-buhl]

Maxims [mak-sim]

Magnanimous [mag-nan-uh-muhs]

Felicity [fi-lis-i-tee]

Propitious [pruh-pish-uhs]

Ordained [awr-deyn]

(Pronunciation source: dictionary.com)

2. Consult a dictionary to define each of the unfamiliar words.

Indissoluble: _____

Maxims: _____

Magnanimous: _____

Felicity: _____

Propitious: _____

Ordained: _____

3. Fill the blanks in the following version of the excerpt by inserting short versions of the definitions:

There is no truth more thoroughly established, than that there exists in the economy and course of nature, an _____ union between virtue and happiness, between duty and advantage, between the genuine _____ of an honest and _____ policy, and the solid rewards of public prosperity and _____: Since we ought to be no less persuaded that the _____ smiles of Heaven, can

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Worksheet 1, Group 7 Continued

never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right, which Heaven itself has _____ ...

4. Collaboratively, translate the excerpt into everyday language you would use today. Copy this answer onto Worksheet 2 in the row for your group number.
5. Briefly summarize the idea President Washington was conveying to his audience.



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Worksheet 1, Group 8: Translating President Washington's Words

1. Read the excerpt in its original form:

It will remain with your (Congress') judgment to decide, how far an exercise of the occasional power delegated by the Fifth article of the Constitution is rendered **expedient** at the present **junction** by the nature of objections which have been urged against the System, or by the degree of **inquietude** which has given birth to them.

Unfamiliar words in this excerpt:

Expedient [ik-**spee**-dee-uhnt]

Juncture [**juhngk**-cher]

Inquietude [in-**kwahy**-i-tood]

(Pronunciation source: dictionary.com)

2. Consult a dictionary to define each of the unfamiliar words.

Expedient: _____

Juncture: _____

Inquietude: _____

3. Fill the blanks in the following version of the excerpt by inserting short versions of the definitions:

It will remain with your (Congress') judgment to decide, how far an exercise of the occasional power delegated by the Fifth article of the Constitution is rendered _____ at the present _____ by the nature of objections which have been urged against the System, or by the degree of _____ which has given birth to them.

4. Collaboratively, translate the excerpt into everyday language you would use today. Copy this answer onto Worksheet 2 in the row for your group number.
5. Briefly summarize the idea President Washington was conveying to his audience. (Also, write your answer to this item in the appropriate space on Worksheet 2.)

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Worksheet 1, Group 9: Translating President Washington's Words

1. Read the excerpt in its original form:

I shall again give way to my entire confidence in your (Congress') **discernment** and pursuit of the public good: For I assure myself that **whilst** you carefully avoid every alteration which might endanger the benefits of an United and effective Government, ... a **reverence** for the characteristic rights of freemen, and a regard for the public harmony, will sufficiently influence your deliberations...

Unfamiliar words in this excerpt:

Discernment [dih-surn-muhnt]

Whilst [hwahylst]

Reverence [rev-er-uhns]

(Pronunciation source: dictionary.com)

2. Consult a dictionary to define each of the unfamiliar words.

Discernment: _____

Whilst: _____

Reverence: _____

3. Fill the blanks in the following version of the excerpt by inserting short versions of the definitions:

I shall again give way to my entire confidence in your (Congress') _____ and pursuit of the public good: For I assure myself that _____ you carefully avoid every alteration which might endanger the benefits of an United and effective Government, a _____ for the characteristic rights of freemen, and a regard for the public harmony, will sufficiently influence your deliberations...

4. Collaboratively, translate the excerpt into everyday language you would use today. Copy this answer onto Worksheet 2 in the row for your group number.
5. Briefly summarize the idea President Washington was conveying to his audience.

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Worksheet 1, Group 10: Translating President Washington's Words

1. Read the excerpt in its original form:

I shall take my present leave; but not without resorting once more to the **benign** parent of the human race, in humble **supplication** that since he has been pleased to favour the American people, with opportunities for **deliberating** ...on a form of Government, for the security of their Union, and the advancement of their happiness; so his divine blessing may be equally **conspicuous** in the ... the wise measures on which the success of this Government must depend.

Unfamiliar words in this excerpt:

Benign [bih-nahyn]

Supplication [suhp-li-key-shuhn]

Deliberating [dih-lib-uh-reyt]

Conspicuous [kuhn-spik-yoo-uhs]

(Pronunciation source: dictionary.com)

2. Consult a dictionary to define each of the unfamiliar words.

Benign: _____

Supplication: _____

Deliberating: _____

Conspicuous: _____

3. Fill the blanks in the following version of the excerpt by inserting short versions of the definitions:

I shall take my present leave; but not without resorting once more to the _____ parent of the human race, in humble _____ that since he has been pleased to favour the American people, with opportunities for _____ ...on a form of Government, for the security of their Union, and the advancement of their happiness; so his divine blessing may be equally _____ in the ... the wise measures on which the success of this Government must depend.

4. Collaboratively, translate the excerpt into everyday language you would use today. Copy this answer onto Worksheet 2 in the row for your group number.
5. Briefly summarize the idea President Washington was conveying to his audience.

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Worksheet 2:

Ideas from President George Washington's First Inaugural Address in your Words

Instructions: Write your response to question #4 from Worksheet 1 in the row whose number is the same as the group number you were assigned.

Group 1	
Group 2	
Group 3	
Group 4	
Group 5	
Group 6	
Group 7	
Group 8	
Group 9	
Group 10	

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Worksheet 3: Review and Reflection Questions

1. What does President Washington say about each of the following?

His desire for the presidency	
The importance of public support	
Divine assistance for the U.S.	
"The invisible hand"	
A revolution in government	
Political parties	
Balance and order in government	
Constitutional Amendments	
Amendments that might change the government vs amendments that protect rights	
What God should grant to the government	

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Worksheet 3: Review and Reflection Questions Continued

2. How did the President promote the idea of a government by the people in his address?
3. What mistakes does he indirectly warn Congress against?
4. For what part of America's success did Washington give credit to divine favor?
5. What statement does Washington make about the importance of virtuous behavior in governing?
6. Would you describe Washington's goal in this address as primarily establishing his presidency or establishing a republic under the Constitution? Why?

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