Washington’s Farewell Address, 1796
(Modified Excerpts)

(1) The name of American, which belongs to you in your national capacity, must always exalt (promote) the just pride of patriotism more than any appellation (label or name) derived from local discriminations. With slight shades of difference, you have the same religion, manners, habits, and political principles. You have in a common cause fought and triumphed together; the independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint counsels (meetings), and joint efforts of common dangers, sufferings, and successes.

(2) In contemplating the causes which may disturb our Union, it occurs as matter of serious concern that any ground should have been furnished for characterizing parties by geographical discriminations, Northern and Southern, Atlantic and Western; whence designing (manipulative) men may endeavor (try) to excite a belief that there is a real difference of local interests and views.

(3) Let me now take a more comprehensive (complete) view, and warn you in the most solemn (serious) manner against the baneful (negative) effects of the spirit of party generally. The disorders and miseries which result gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose (rest) in the absolute power of an individual; and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction (group), more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation, on the ruins of public liberty.

(4) Promote then, as an object of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion (spread) of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened (educated).

(5) The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop. It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world.

Source: George Washington’s Farewell Address, originally published as “The Address of General Washington To The People of The United States on his declining of the Presidency of the United States” in the American Daily Advertiser, September 19, 1796.
Guiding Questions

Use excerpts from George Washington’s Farewell Address to answer the questions below. You may have to re-read the address 3-4 times and look up unfamiliar words.

BEFORE READING: Sourcing/Contextualizing
1. When was Washington’s Farewell Address written? Who do you think he wrote it for and why?

CLOSE READING: WASHINGTON’S ADVICE
2. In paragraph 1, what is Washington advising against? Find a quote to support your claim:

3. In paragraphs 2-3, what is Washington advising against and why? Find a quote to support your claim:

4. In paragraph 5, what is Washington advising against? Find a quote to support your claim:

AFTER READING: Contextualizing/Corroborating
5. Has the United States followed Washington’s 3 pieces of advice? Why do you think that is?