

Lesson Plan for George Washington's Farewell Address

MATERIALS

Copy of speech for each student (click [here](#) for online version)
Highlighters

TIME ALLOTMENT

Three 50 minute class periods, possibly spilling into a fourth

PROCEDURE

1. Give students two pre-thinking questions. These questions can be presented in class on the first day of the lesson, posted in an online discussion forum for student discussion prior to the lesson, or given as a homework assignment prior to the discussion. Students' responses should be shared, either as part of a whole-class discussion or online.
 - a. If someone was voluntarily resigning from an important job, what do you think he or she might say in a speech or an email?
 - b. In what ways are historical documents, such as those written at the country's founding, still significant in our society today?
2. On the day of the lesson, provide students with the historical context for Washington's Farewell Address. Have students briefly skim just the document. Ask the class for their first impressions. Create a class list of the obstacles this text might present to understanding, and then discuss possible actions for overcoming those obstacles. The list may include: lack of background knowledge, density of language, complex sentence structure, vocabulary, and length of text.
3. Explain to students the **OBJECTIVES** of the lesson:
 - a. To develop ability to read complex, pre-20th century texts
 - b. To analyze rhetorical language and arguments
 - c. To understand and be able to analyze interconnected relationship of elements of SOAPStone
 - d. To deepen knowledge of American historical documents
4. Ask students to consider these questions as they read the document:
 - a. What elements of writing can I learn from Washington's address?
 - b. What elements of argument can I learn from Washington's address?
 - c. In what ways is this document relevant or important today? Or is it not?
5. Ask students to also consider the elements of SOAPStone as they read:
 - a. S = Speaker
 - b. O = Occasion
 - c. A = Audience
 - d. P = Purpose
 - e. S = Subject
 - f. Tone = Tone
6. Be ready for groans, but tell the students they will be reading the text three times. Explain why: re-reading is a critical, necessary, and essential factor to understanding older, complex documents. The first reading will be conducted in class, with the teacher reading the text aloud and stopping after each paragraph to offer a brief summary (or ask students to do so). As the students follow along with their copies, they are to do the following:
 - a. begin to develop an ear for the rhythm of the language

- b. using pencil, indicate by drawing a star next to any moments they feel are important (key word being “feel” – there is no right or wrong, so no need to hold back)
 - c. using pencil, indicate by writing a question mark next to specific moments of questions (key word being “specific” – they can’t just put a giant question mark alongside a paragraph)
 - d. using pencil underline words to look up in a dictionary before the second reading
7. Students will complete the second reading on their own, most likely as a homework assignment (perhaps given two nights to complete). As they read, they will do the following, using a pen:
 - a. summarize longer sections
 - b. write definitions of words they looked up
 - c. answer or ask more questions
 - d. make comments on moments they think are significant
 8. In class, the text is read a third time. This time, the teacher asks for student observations or questions for each section. By this point, students should be able to draw conclusions, discuss tone, and analyze diction.
 9. To conclude this lesson, students should be asked to revisit some of the original questions presented. Whether they provide their answers in class, online, or through a written assignment is at the teacher’s discretion. Here are the questions again, plus others for consideration:
 - a. Is George Washington’s address still significant to our society today? How so or why not?
 - b. What elements of writing have I learned from Washington’s address?
 - c. What elements of argument have I learned from Washington’s address?
 - d. How do today’s modern forms of communication affect the elements of SOAPStone that may shape the farewell address President Obama may give at the end of his term? How do you think President Obama’s farewell address may be similar or different from President Washington’s?

Assessment Options

1. Giving students credit for their annotations
2. Giving students credit for their classroom or online participation
3. Written analysis assignment that draws from their annotations and class discussion
4. Answering questions at the conclusion of the unit (see 9. above)

Common Core Standards Addressed

Depending on implementation, this lesson can address all of the Reading Informational Text strands, several strands in Speaking and Listening, Vocabulary Acquisition and Use, and many strands in the History/Social Studies category. If analytical writing assignments are made that ask the student to provide textual evidence, the standards of Writing would be applicable as well.