The session will start shortly. Please note:

- Your video and audio will automatically turn off.
- You can participate through the Q&A function.
- If you have technical difficulties, please email firstfriday@gilderlehrman.org so we can assist you.
CLASSROOM-READY RESOURCES:
- Spotlight on Primary Source: George Washington’s First Inaugural
- Spotlight on Primary Source: George Washington’s letter to Henry Knox, April 1, 1789
- Essay: “‘No Event Could Have Filled Me with Greater Anxieties’: George Washington and the First Inaugural Address, April 30, 1789,” by Phillip Hamilton
- Images: Newspaper account of Washington’s Inauguration
- Images & Transcript: Pages from the first draft of George Washington’s Inaugural Address
- Images & Transcript: Opinions on Taking the Oath of Office

NEW RESOURCES! TRANSCRIPTIONS OF NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS OF WASHINGTON’S INAUGURATION:
- Transcript: Address of the Citizens of Alexandria congratulating George Washington, April 16, 1789
- Transcript: Answer of George Washington to the citizens of Alexandria, April 16, 1789
- Transcript: Address of the Citizens of Baltimore congratulating George Washington, April 17, 1789
- Transcript: Answer of George Washington to the citizens of Baltimore, April 17, 1789
- Transcript: Address of the Pennsylvania State Society of the Cincinnati congratulating George Washington, April 20, 1789
- Transcript: Answer of George Washington to the Pennsylvania State Society of the Cincinnati, April 20, 1789
- Transcript: Address of the President and Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania congratulating George Washington, April 20, 1789
Panelists

- Sandy Trenholm - Collection Director
- Kevin Cline - 2016 National History Teacher of the Year
- Sabrina Imamura, *Hamilton*
- Allison Kraft - Assistant Curator
During the Session

- If you would like to ask a question, you can **use the Q&A feature**, which is at the bottom of your screen.
- **Viewing in full screen** is recommended to see the presenters and the presentation at the same time.

For Security and Privacy

- Your microphone is automatically muted.
- Your camera is automatically turned off.
Today’s Documents

- Letter from Henry Knox to George Washington
- Letter from George Washington to Henry Knox
- George Washington’s First Inaugural Address
The Election of 1788

December 15- January 10
States select the electors.

March 4
The first Congress was *supposed* to begin.

April 1
Enough congressmen arrived for the session to begin.

April 4
Electors met in their states to cast their votes.

April 6
Electoral College reports votes to Congress.

April 14
Washington is notified he is President.

April 16
Washington leaves Mount Vernon for the capital.

April 23
Washington arrives in NYC.

April 30
Washington is inaugurated.
Preparing for the Inauguration

Washington seeks advice about how to take the oath of office from

- Henry Knox
- Alexander Hamilton
- Edmund Randolph
- Thomas Jefferson

The Gilder Lehrman Collection
"a culprit who is going to the place of his execution"

"my movements to the chair of Government will be accompanied with feelings not unlike those of a culprit who is going to the place of his execution: so unwilling am I, in the evening of a life nearly consumed in public cares to quit a peaceful abode for an Ocean of difficulties, without that competency of political skill – abilities & inclination which is necessary to manage the helm"
18th-Century Language

Very different

• Spelling
• Grammar
• Syntax
• Formality
• Complexity

Strategies for Decoding Text

• Skim the text - is there anything that pops out right away?
• Break it down - start crossing out filler text and phrases
• Mark it up - use highlighter or underline what you think the most important words and phrases are
• Translate it - look up words you do not know, but also consider how would you say it to friends
• Pay attention to tone
Translation

“my movements to the chair of Government will be accompanied with feelings not unlike those of a culprit who is going to the place of his execution: so unwilling am I, in the evening of a life nearly consumed in public cares to quit a peaceful abode for an Ocean of difficulties, without that competency of political skill – abilities & inclination which is necessary to manage the helm”

I sooo don’t want to do this

UGH! I’m old and I just wanted to chill at home. Do you have any idea how hard this is going to be?

I’m not a politician. I’m not even sure I can do it.
“Integrity & firmness is all I can promise”

“I am sensible, that I am embarking the voice of my Countrymen and a good name of my own, on this voyage, but what returns will be made for them – Heaven alone can foretell. – Integrity & firmness is all I can promise – these, be the voyage long or short, never shall forsake me although I may be deserted by all men. – For of the consolations which are to be derived from these (under any circumstances) the world cannot deprive me.”
Writing the Speech

- George Washington and David Humphreys wrote a 73-page inaugural address.
- Fairly detailed on policy
- It *could* offer insight into Washington’s views.
- It was completely discarded and a new version was written.
• In 1827, historian Jared Sparks discovered the draft and consulted with James Madison.
• They decided to suppress it.
• It then became “the victim of the most horrendous historical vandalism.” (James Flexner)
• Sparks tore it into pieces and distributed it to friends and family.
• Of the 73 pages, only 12 full leaves survive.
Washington’s Inaugural Address

Themes and topics in the Address:
- He expresses the honor and anxiety of becoming president.
- He will not dictate policy to Congress.
- He advises against having local prejudices or party animosities.
- He encourages promoting the common good of the country.
- He doesn’t want to be paid.
FELLOW-CITIZENS OF THE SENATE,
AND OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

AMONG the vicissitudes incident to life, no event could have filled me with greater anxieties, than that of which the notification was transmitted by your order, and received on the 14th day of the present month.—On the one hand, I was summoned by my country, whose voice I can never hear but with veneration and love, from a retreat which I had chosen with the fondest predilection, and in my flattering hopes, with an immutable decision, as the asylum of my declining years; a retreat which was rendered every day more necessary as well as more dear to me, by the addition of habit to inclination, and of frequent interruptions in my health to the gradual waste committed on it by time. On the other hand, the magnitude and difficulty of the trust to which the voice of my country called me, being sufficient to awaken in the wisest and most experienced of her citizens, a distrustful scrutiny into his qualifications, could not but overwhelm with despondence, one, who, inheriting inferior endowments from nature, and unpractised in the duties of civil administration, ought to be peculiarly conscious of his own deficiencies. In this conflict of emotions, all I dare aver, is, that it has been my faithful study to collect and deepen my first impressions of the character of the empire, that I might at last be enabled, with some degree of confidence, to receive, if at all, the functions of the office.
“The circumstances under which I now meet you, will acquit me from entering into that subject, farther than to refer to the great constitutional charter under which you are assembled; and which, in defining your powers, designates the objects to which your attention is to be given.”

“Instead of undertaking particular recommendations on this subject, in which I could be guided by no lights derived from official opportunities, I shall again give way to my entire confidence in your discernment and pursuit of the public good....”
“In those honorable qualifications, I behold the surest pledges, that as on one side no local prejudices, or attachments; no separate views, no party animosities, will misdirect the comprehensive and equal eye which ought to watch over this great assemblage of communities and interests....”
“the foundations of our national policy”

“that the foundations of our national policy will be laid in the pure and immutable principles of private morality; and the pre-eminence of free government, be exemplified by all the attributes which can win the affections of its citizens, and command the respect of the world.”

“I dwell on this prospect with every satisfaction which an ardent love for my country can inspire. Since 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....”
William McClay’s description of the Inauguration

“This great man was agitated and embarrassed more than ever he was by the leveled cannon or pointed musket. He trembled, and several times could scarce make out to read, though it must be supposed he had often read it before. He put part of the fingers of his left hand into the side of what I think the tailors call the fall of the breeches..., changing the paper into his left [right] hand. After some time he then did the same with some of the fingers of his right hand. When he came to the words **all the world**, he made a flourish with his right hand, which left rather an ungainly impression.... He was dressed in deep brown, with metal buttons, with an eagle on them, white stockings, a bag, and sword.”

Courtesy of the Library of Congress
Upcoming Programs

● *Inside the Vault*, Thursday, January 21 at 7 pm ET (4 pm PT)
  ○ We will be discussing primary source documents that reveal information about the lives of enslaved people.

● *Book Breaks*, December 10 at 2 pm ET (11 am PT) *new time!*
  ○ Marcus Nevius discusses his book *City of Refuge*.

● Visit [gilderlehrman.org](http://gilderlehrman.org) for free resources for students, teachers, families, and history enthusiasts of all ages.