

Document #3

“Poem to Washington.” Written by Phillis Wheatley and published in the *Pennsylvania Magazine* (edited by Thomas Paine), April 1776. Page 193.

SIR.

I Have taken the freedom to address your Excellency in the enclosed poem, and entreat your acceptance, though I am not insensible of its inaccuracies. Your being appointed by the Grand Continental Congress to be Generalissimo of the armies of North America, together with the fame of your virtues, excite sensations not easy to suppress. Your generosity, therefore, I presume, will pardon the attempt. Wishing your Excellency all possible success in the great cause you are so generously engaged in. I am,

Your Excellency’s most obedient humble servant,

PHILLIS WHEATLEY.

Providence, Oct 26, 1775.

His Excellency Gen. Washington

(Dedication).

...

[Last four lines of poem included here:]

Proceed, great chief, with virtue on thy side,
Thy ev’ry action let the goddess guide.
A crown, a mansion, and a throne that shine,
With gold unfading, WASHINGTON! be thine.

Questions for Document #3:

1. What is the significance of when this poem was written?
2. Why do you think Wheatley chose to write about Washington?
3. What do you think his response was to this praise?
4. What is ironic about this praise?