

## TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT

### *Lesson Title – The First State of the Union Address From Dona Stratton*

Grade-8

Length of class period-60 minutes

Inquiry-What were the major concerns about the new nation that President George Washington expressed in his first State of the Union Address?

#### Objectives

1. Students will read and analyze the document to determine the President's assessment of the state of the new nation.
2. Students will determine the concerns expressed in the address and decide if those concerns are still valid today.

Materials - a copy of the address as it appeared in the Worcester Gazette on January 21, 1790 and a copy of the text of the address. Document analysis sheet.

#### Activities -

Teacher will present historical background:

Background info: Washington's first ever State of the Union Address began a historic tradition that continues to today; it also set the tone for a President's appearing before Congress in a formal setting.

Washington was elected in April of 1789, and addressed the Congress in the beginning of the following year. He expressed his philosophy of the governance of a new nation, and listed the actions he felt Congress should take in the year ahead. The speech was given on January 8, 1790.

Students will read the document, in pairs or small groups; I would also divide the address into sections, and have a small group read a section, then share information with the class.

How will you assess what students learned during this lesson?

Students will complete the document analysis worksheet; teacher will informally assess students as they read and share with other groups and the class.

Connecticut Framework Performance Standards-  
Grade 8

4.1 Explain how specific individuals and their ideas and beliefs influenced U.S. history.



# Massachusetts S P D: Or, The Worcester Gazette.

"The Liberty of the Press is essential to the Security of Freedom."—*La Liberté de la Presse est essentielle au soutien de la Liberté Publique.*  
Ἡ ἐλευθερία τοῦ ἑμπορίου ἐστὶν ἀπαραίτητος τῆς ἀσφάλειας τῆς δημοκρατίας.—*A facultate loquendi palam, vel scribendi, pendet Reipublicæ Libertas.*

VOL. XVIII.] WORCES R; THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 1790. [No. 876.

FRIDAY, January 3.

Mr. Wynnop appeared this day, and took his seat.

The House being assembled, adjourned to the Senate Chamber. At 11 o'clock, The President of the United States, attended by his Aids, and Secretary, was received by the two Houses of Congress in the Senate Chamber, when he was pleased to make the following Speech:

**FELLOW CITIZENS of the SENATE, and HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES,**

EMBRACE with great satisfaction the opportunity, which now presents itself, of congratulating you on the present favourable prospects of our public affairs. The recent accession of the important State of North Carolina to the Constitution of the United States (of which official information has been received)—the rising credit and respectability of our country—the general and increasing good will towards the government of the union, and the concord, peace and plenty, with which we are blessed, are circumstances auspicious, in an eminent degree, to our national prosperity.

In reviewing your consultations for the general good, you cannot but derive encouragement from the reflection, that the measures of the last session have been as satisfactory to your constituents as the novelty and difficulty of the work allowed you to hope.—Still further to realize their expectations, and to secure the blessings which a gracious Providence has placed within our reach, will in the course of the present important session, call for the cool and deliberate exertion of your patriotism, firmness, and wisdom.

Among the many interesting objects which will engage your attention, that of providing for the common defence will merit particular regard. To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace.

A free people ought not only to be armed but disciplined; to which end a uniform and well digested plan is requisite: And their safety and interest require that they should promote such manufactures, as tend to render them independent on others, for essential, particularly for military supplies.

The proper establishment of the troops which may be deemed indispensable, will be entitled

to mature consideration. In the arrangements which may be made respecting it, it will be of importance to conciliate the comfortable support of the officers and soldiers with a due regard to economy.

There was reason to hope, that the pacific measures adopted with regard to certain hostile tribes of Indians, would have relieved the inhabitants of our southern and western frontiers from their depredations. But you will perceive, from the information contained in the papers, which I shall direct to be laid before you, (comprehending a communication from the Commonwealth of Virginia) that we ought to be prepared to afford protection to those parts of the Union; and, if necessary, to punish aggressors.

The interests of the United States require, that our intercourse with other nations should be facilitated by such provisions as will enable me to fulfil my duty, in that respect, in the manner which circumstances may render most conducive to the publick good: And to this end, that the compensations to be made to the persons who may be employed, should, according to the nature of their appointments, be defined by law; and a competent fund designated for defraying the expenses incident to the conduct of our foreign affairs.

Various considerations also render it expedient, that the terms on which foreigners may be admitted to the rights of Citizens, should be speedily ascertained by a uniform rule of naturalization.

Uniformity in the currency, weights and measures of the United States, is an object of great importance, and will, I am persuaded, be duly attended to.

The advancement of agriculture, commerce, and manufactures, by all proper means, will not, I trust, need recommendation. But I cannot forbear intimating to you the expediency of giving effectual encouragement as well to the introduction of new and useful inventions from abroad, as to the exertions of skill and genius in producing them at home; and of facilitating the intercourse between the distant parts of our country by a due attention to the Post Office and Post Roads.

Nor am I less persuaded, that you will agree with me in opinion, that there is nothing which can better deserve your patronage, than the promotion of Science and Literature. Knowledge is in every country the fount of publick happiness. In one, in which the measures of government receive their impression so immediately from the sense of the community, as in ours, it is proportionably essential. To the security of a free Constitution it contributes in various ways: By convincing those who are entrusted with the publick administration, that every valuable end of government is best answered by the enlightened confidence of the people: And by teaching the people them-

selves to know, and to value their own rights; to discern and provide against invasions of them; to distinguish between oppression and the necessary exercise of lawful authority; between burthens proceeding from a disregard to their convenience, and those resulting from the inevitable exigencies of society; to discriminate the spirit of liberty from that of licentiousness, cherishing the first, avoiding the last, and uniting a speedy, but temperate vigilance against encroachments, with an inviolable respect to the laws.

Whether this desirable object will be best promoted by affording aids to seminaries of learning already established, by the institution of a national university, or by any other expedients, will be well worthy of a place in the deliberations of the Legislature.

*Gentlemen of the House of Representatives,*

I SAW with peculiar pleasure, at the close of the last session, the resolution entered into by you, expressive of your opinion, that an adequate provision for the support of the publick credit, is a matter of high importance to the national honour and prosperity.—In this sentiment, I entirely concur.—And to a perfect confidence in your best endeavours to devise such a provision as will be truly consistent with the end, I add an equal reliance on the cheerful cooperation of the other branch of the Legislature.—It would be superfluous to specify inducements to a measure in which the charac<sup>r</sup> and permanent interests of the United States are so obviously and so deeply concerned; and which has received to explicit a sanction from your declaration.

*Gentlemen of the Senate, and House of Representatives,*

I HAVE directed the proper officers to lay before you respectively such papers and estimates as regard the affairs particularly recommended to your consideration, and necessary to convey to you that information of the state of the union, which it is my duty to afford.

The welfare of our country is the great object to which our cares and efforts ought to be directed.—And I shall derive great satisfaction from a cooperation with you, in the pleasing though arduous task of ensuring to our fellow citizens the blessings which they have a right to expect, from a free, efficient and equal government.

G. WASHINGTON.

UNITED STATES, January 3, 1790.

The President then retired—and the House returned to their own room: When the President's Speech being read by the Clerk, it was voted that the House would tomorrow take the same into consideration in a Committee of the whole on the state of the Union.—On motion, it was voted to proceed to ballot for a Chaplain, when the votes being collected, it appeared, that the Rev. Dr. Linn was re-elected. Adjourned until tomorrow, 11 o'clock.

Friday, January 8, 1790

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In reforming your consultations for the general good, you cannot but derive encouragement from the reflection, the measures of the last session have been as satisfactory to your constituents as the novelty and difficulty of the work allowed you to hope.-- Still further to realize their expectations, and to secure the blessings which a gracious Providence has placed within our reach, will in the course of the present important session, call for the cool and deliberate exertion of your patriotism, firmness and wisdom.

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George Washington, January 8, 1790

The First State of the Union Address - Document Analysis  
President-George Washington  
January 8, 1790

What does the speech say about:

"providing for the common defense"

Compensation for those employed by the government and/or engaged in foreign affairs

Rules of naturalization

Encouraging inventions from abroad

Promotion of science and literature

Post offices and roads

Self-sufficiency

Teaching people to know and value their own rights

After reading the speech and noting the themes, decide what was important to President George Washington in terms of the new nation. What future did he see for the United States of America? Did the future he envisioned materialize?

Has this future become reality? Why or why not?