

# Washington's 1799 Will and Testament Concerning National Education

1 That as it has always been a source of serious regret with me, to see the youth of these  
2 United States sent to foreign Countries for the purpose of Education, often before their  
3 minds were formed, or they had imbibed any adequate ideas of the happiness of their  
4 own; contracting, too frequently, not only habits of dissipation & extravagance, but  
5 principles unfriendly to Republican Governmt and to the true & genuine liberties of  
6 Mankind... For these reasons, it has been my ardent wish to see a plan devised on a  
7 liberal scale, which would have a tendency to sprd systemactic ideas through all parts of  
8 this rising Empire, thereby to do away local attachments and State prejudices...from our  
9 National Councils. Looking anxiously forward to the accomplishment of so desirable an  
10 object... the establishment of a UNIVERSITY in a central part of the United States, to  
11 which the youth of fortune and talents from all parts thereof might be sent for the  
12 completion of their Education in all the branches of polite literature; in arts and  
13 Sciences, in acquiring knowledge in the principles of Politics & good Government...

14 Item I give and bequeath in perpetuity the fifty shares which I hold in the Potomac  
15 Company (under the aforesaid Acts of the Legislature of Virginia) towards the  
16 endowment of a UNIVERSITY to be established within the limits of the District of  
17 Columbia, under the auspices of the General Government, if that government should  
18 incline to extend a fostering hand towards it...

19 *Source:* [http://www.mountvernon.org/educational-resources/primary-sources-2/article/george-](http://www.mountvernon.org/educational-resources/primary-sources-2/article/george-washingtons-1799-will-and-testament/)  
20 [washingtons-1799-will-and-testament/](http://www.mountvernon.org/educational-resources/primary-sources-2/article/george-washingtons-1799-will-and-testament/)

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## VOCABULARY

*imbibed:* learned

*perpetuity:* to go on forever

*contracting:* getting

*auspices:* endorsements

*dissipation:* thoughtless spending

1. What type of primary source is this? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Who created it? \_\_\_\_\_ When was it created? \_\_\_\_\_

3a. What did the author of this document regret?  
\_\_\_\_\_

3b. What reasons does the author give to support your answer in 3a? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. The word *liberal* on line 7 has multiple meanings. What is the meaning of the word in the context of this document?

a. free

b. progressive

c. big

d. tolerant

5. Circle the three best words or phrases in lines 1-9 that help you to understand them meaning of the phrase *rising Empire* on line 8.

6. What does the author of this document want to create? \_\_\_\_\_  
Provide evidence from the text to support your answer.

7. What is specifically mentioned in his will, in lines 14-18, that would allow this to happen?  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Moving forward, George Washington was thinking about the future of our country as the United States, not as thirteen individual states. How would the creation of a national university and sending our future leaders there for an education be beneficial to our country? Provide evidence from the text to support your answer.  
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