George Washington’s Letter to Henry Knox about the Presidency

Mount Vernon April 1st 1789

My dear Sir,

…I feel for those Members of the new Congress, who, hitherto, have given an unavailing attendance at the theatre of business. For myself, the delay may be compared to a reprieve; for in confidence I can assure you- with the world it would obtain little credit- that 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 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… With best wishes for Mrs. Knox, & sincere friendship for yourself- I remain Your affectionate

Go: Washington


VOCABULARY

reprieve: to delay the punishment of  
quit: leave  
abode: house  
helm: a position of control
1. What type of primary source is this document? Choose the two best phrases from the document to support your answer.

2. Where and when did George Washington create this?

3. The word *theatre* on line 4 has multiple meanings. How is the word commonly used? __________
   What is the meaning of the word in the context of this document? ______________________
   Circle the best three words on lines 3-4 that helped you to understand the meaning of the word.

4. How does Washington feel about accepting the Presidency? ________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________
   Underline multiple pieces of evidence in the text to support your answer.

5. What reasons does he give for feeling this way? ________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________

6. Washington uses a sailing metaphor when discussing the Presidency. Place a checkmark next to any word that supports this statement.

7. Is this a reliable resource? Why or why not? Be ready to share your answer.