Name _____ Class_____ Date____

George Washington's Letter to Henry Knox about the Presidency

1 My dear Sir,

Mount Vernon April 1st 1789

2 ... 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 3 4 in confidence I can assure *you*- with the *world* it would obtain *little credit*- that my movements 5 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 6 consumed in public cares, to quit a peaceful abode for an Ocean of difficulties, without that 7 8 competency of political skill- abilities & inclination which is necessary to manage the helm. I 9 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 & 10 firmness is all I can promise- these, be the voyage long or short... With best wishes for Mrs. 11 12 Knox, & sincere friendship for yourself- I remain Your affectionate 13 Go: Washington

14 *Source:* The Papers of George Washington Presidential Series 2, April-June 1789, pg. 2.

VOCABULARY

reprieve: to delay the punishment of *quit:* leave

abode: house *helm:* a position of control

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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 <i>theatre</i> 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.