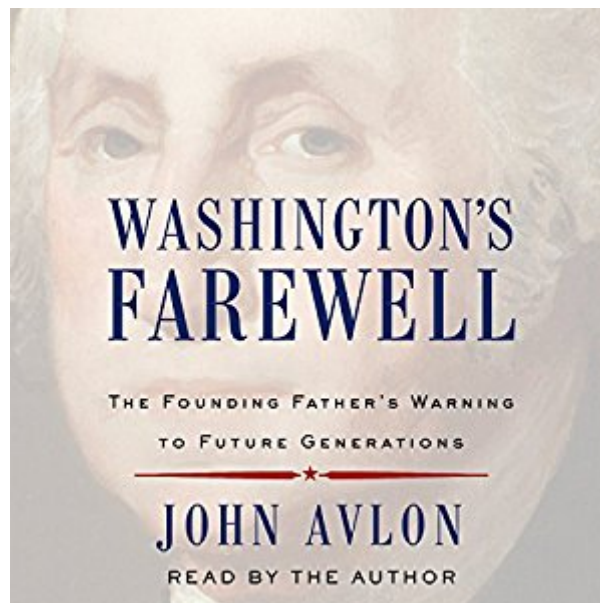




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Washington's Farewell: The Founding Father's Warning To Future Generations



Synopsis

George Washington's Farewell Address was a prophetic letter from a "parting friend" to his fellow citizens about the forces he feared could destroy our democracy: hyper-partisanship, excessive debt, and foreign wars. Once celebrated as civic scripture, more widely reprinted than the Declaration of Independence, the Farewell Address is now almost forgotten. Its message remains starkly relevant. In Washington's Farewell, John Avlon offers a stunning portrait of our first president and his battle to save America from self-destruction. At the end of his second term, Washington surprised Americans by publishing his Farewell message in a newspaper. The President called for unity among "citizens by birth or choice", advocated moderation, defended religious pluralism, proposed a foreign policy of independence (not isolation), and proposed that education is essential to democracy. He established the precedent for the peaceful transfer of power. Washington's urgent message was adopted by Jefferson after years of opposition and quoted by Lincoln in defense of the Union. Woodrow Wilson invoked it for nation-building; Eisenhower for Cold War; Reagan for religion. Now the Farewell Address may inspire a new generation to re-center our politics and reunite our nation through the lessons rooted in Washington's experience. As John Avlon describes the perilous state of the new nation that Washington was preparing to leave as its leader, with enduring wisdom, he reveals him to be the indispensable Founding Father.

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Customer Reviews

I for one never even knew this document existed. It was never discussed or taught or even reviewed upon in any of my history classes. Washington had an incredible foresight into what would come down our way with future generations. With the hyper partisanship that is strangling our government's very ability to govern itself it, I would daresay if not only our elected leaders but also the general public would at least read the original text, if not this extremely well written and very engaging book, we could perhaps bring ourselves back from the brink of a burgeoning autocracy that our hyper partisanship has opened the door for. Thank you John Avlon for this insightful and at times jaw dropping relevancy that Washington's Farewell most certainly is.

This nice overview examines not only the words of Washington's not short Farewell, but also puts it in the context of the times. The author laments that the Farewell is basically forgotten in our time. But that is the nature of such heartfelt writings; the appeal and durability of such is usually quite limited. It's entirely understandable that Washington felt compelled to write his Farewell. The 1790's were turbulent times. The US Constitution was constructed because the various states were in disarray. But even after the first government was formed, there were bitter divides over newly formulated policies. In addition, the French revolution was highly controversial. Washington knew that the American experiment was a fragile undertaking. His Farewell was in fact a warning that hyper-partisanship and ill-advised entanglements with foreign powers could be the undoing of the United States. The author examines other periods in our history: the Civil War, WWI, & WWII in terms of adherence to the Farewell. Of course, all of those times played out in their own way with the Farewell not being a consideration. It's not that the Farewell is totally irrelevant, but the world is a drastically different place. It is interesting to see how much Washington struggled with his address. He did have substantial help, primarily from Alexander Hamilton. Washington really had an on-again-off-again relationship with the public. He was ultra concerned with his reputation, but insisted on being low key. His Farewell was published in only one Philadelphia newspaper and then only after he had departed for Mt. Vernon. The Farewell does enhance his reputation.

Washington's farewell address has been of interest to me for some years, especially now with political parties in such disarray. Avlon points out his vision; he was prescient about the risks of partisanship, although the flowery language of colonial leaders in the 1700s does not make for easy reading (I counted 17 subordinate clauses in just one Washington sentence). Nevertheless, this subject makes for a much better understanding of what's going on in 2017 America. An important

read for anyone concerned about our nation's political direction; the author's background and research make it even more forceful.

This is an excellent book. There are so many details and problems Washington faced as President, a job he actually did not want. And, his critics, much to his regret, started referring to him as out new King George. Other notables of the period actually worked against him. All Washington wanted to do was leave politics and retire to his farm. It is especially interesting to compare Washington, his personality, and beliefs to current politicians. He was indeed a remarkable man.

Provides a deep understanding of the personal struggle to continue public service while the country needed his leadership to manage the class 5 political white water rivers. The insults published in papers and petty slurs from his own staff were beyond the pale. (the same politicians who helped convince him to stay for a second term) John Avalon is a gifted writer who lends a detailed account of the final farewell.

In this era of "tooth and claw" politics and leaders without grace, it was a pleasure to read about our first President, how thoughtful he was, how concerned about the survival of our Republic. A great place to go when today's political fray wears you down.

Just a great book. Really learned a lot. I highly recommend if you are interested in American history. It's amazing how a document from so long ago is relevant today.

This book should be a must read on every modern American's reading list. Anarchy is closer than any of us might suspect and George Washington wrote a very well thought out address to this issue that we should all consider with great care.

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