EXCERPT #1

“Like other planters of the Tidewater, Washington embraced a life very like that of the English gentry. English by ancestry, he was, in dress, manner, and his favorite pastimes, as close to being an English country gentleman as was possible for an American of the day, and intentionally. His handsome green coach with its brass fittings and leather lining had been custom built in England to his specifications. He ordered his clothes from England, and only the finest English wools and linens and latest fashions would do. He wore English boots, English shoes, and Morocco leather slippers, all made to order for him in London. The books on his shelves, including the military treatises, were published in London. The very glass in the windows through which he viewed his domain was imported English glass.

Only the year before taking command at Boston, Washington had begun an ambitious expansion of his Virginia home, Mount Vernon, which, when completed, would double its size. He was adding a library and building a two-story dining room, or banquet hall, suitable for entertaining on a grand scale. He was a builder by nature. He had a passion for architecture and landscape design, and Mount Vernon was his creation, everything done to his own ideas and plans. How extremely important all this was to him and the pleasure he drew from it, few people ever understood. He had an abiding dislike of disorder and cared intensely about every detail…..”

From 1776 by David McCullough

EXCERPT #2

“Arriving at Brooklyn, Washington was outraged by what he saw, and in a letter written later in the day, he lectured Old Put *(Israel Putnam)* as he might the greenest lieutenant. All “irregularities” must cease at once. “The distinction between a well-regulated army and a mob is the good order and discipline of the first, and the licentious and disorderly behaviour of the latter.”

Seeing things as they were, not as he would wish they were, was known to be one Washington’s salient strengths, and having witnessed firsthand the “loose, disorderly, and unsoldierlike” state of things among the troops at Brooklyn, …he might have ordered an immediate withdrawal back to New York while there was still time.”

From 1776 by David McCullough

EXCERPT #3

“With the situation as grim as it could be, no one was more conspicuous in his calm presence of mind than Washington, making his rounds on horseback in the rain. They must be “cool but determined,” he had told the men before the battle, when spirits were high. Now, in the face of catastrophe, he was demonstrating what he meant by his own example. Whatever anger or torment or despair he felt, he kept to himself.

Since he first arrived in New York in April, the essence of Washington’s policy had been to keep close watch and make decisions according to circumstances. Sometime before noon, having heard General Mifflin’s report, as well as the strongly expressed views of Joseph Reed, and having looked things over himself, he made a momentous decision.”

From 1776 by David McCullough

EXCERPT #4

“The most graphic piece of visual evidence about the legendary winter at Valley Forge happens to be true. No less a source than Washington himself described the shoeless soldiers tracking blood on the snow. ‘To see men without cloathes to cover their nakedness, without blankets to lay on, without shoes, by which their marches might be traced by the blood from their feet,’ he recalled, ‘is a mark of patience and obedience which in my opinion can scarce be paralleled.’ Most of the horses died from starvation or exposure, and their decaying carcasses filled the air with a stench that joined with the blood in the snow to create sensory scenes that Washington never forgot.

From His Excellency by Joseph Ellis

EXCERPT #5

Washington viewed Native Americans as formidable adversaries fighting for their own independence: in effect, behaving pretty much as he would do in their place. Washington devised a policy designed to create several sovereign Indian “homelands.” He insisted that the ‘independent tribes of Indians ought to be considered as foreign nations, not as the subjects of any particular state.’ Treaties with these tribes ought to be regarded as binding contracts sanctioned by the federal government…’Indians being the prior occupants possess the right of the soil…to dispossess them …would be a gross violation of the fundamental Laws of Nature and of that distributive Justice which is the glory of a nation.’ A more coercive policy of outright confiscation, Washington believed, would constitute a moral failure that “would stain the character of the nation.’”

From His Excellency by Joseph Ellis

EXCERPT #6

“But of all the theatrical productions he had seen it was *Cato,* by the English author Joseph Addison, that Washington loved best. One line in particular he was to think of or quote frequently in his role now as commander-in-chief: ‘Tis not in mortals to command success, but we’ll do more, Sempronius, we’ll deserve it.’”

From 1776 by David McCullough

EXCERPT #7

“I never say anything *of* a man that I have the smallest scruple of saying *to* him.”

George Washington

“Remember that it is the *actions,* and not the commission, that make the officer, and that there is more expected from him, than the title.”

George Washington

“Guard against the impostures of pretended patriotism”

George Washington

“Associate with men of good quality, if you esteem your own reputation; for it is better to be alone than in bad company.”

George Washington