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DOCUMENT GUIDE

Directions: Using Handout A, context clues and/or a dictionary, write a short definition for each of the following words. Then answer the questions that follow.

VOCABULARY:

1. liberal: _____
2. liberty of conscience: _____
3. immunities: _____
4. indulgence: _____
5. inherent: _____
6. natural rights: _____
7. bigotry: _____
8. sanction: _____
9. persecution: _____
10. demean: _____
11. effectual: _____
12. merit: _____

CONTEXT QUESTIONS:

1. Who wrote this document? _____
2. When was this document written? _____
3. What was the purpose of this document? _____

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

1. What does Washington believe will maintain Americans as a “great and happy people”?

2. What does Washington declare that all in America possess? _____
3. Put the following excerpt of Washington’s letter into your own words: *“It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights.”*

4. Put the following excerpt of Washington's letter into your own words: "... *the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance...* "

5. What, according to Washington, are the only requirements of citizenship?

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS:

1. Keeping in mind that "toleration" refers to a government policy, was Washington correct that we have moved from religious toleration to religious liberty?

2. Is there any significance in the fact that Washington closed his letter with a prayer?

3. One historian has described Washington's letter as articulating the "conscience of a nation" with respect to religious liberty. How would you assess that claim? Explain.

4. Religious conflict has been prevalent and bloody throughout world history. Why do you think that, with a few exceptions, Americans of various faiths have been able to live side by side in peace? Explain.
