A Choice That Lasted

How one president's decision guided later leaders

5.C.7.1.B "precedent of not seeking a third term"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline Washington's choice and circle the word that means an example others may follow. Write 1 beside a sentence about later presidents following his example and 2 beside a sentence about a later written limit.

Washington Steps Aside

1 In 1796, George Washington faced a choice. He had served two terms as the first president of the United States. Some people wanted him to run again. Washington decided not to seek a third term. He believed the new country could choose another leader and keep its government strong. After the election, John Adams became president in 1797. Washington's choice showed that a leader could step aside peacefully.

2 At the time, the Constitution did not set a limit of two terms for presidents. Washington's choice became a precedent, an example later presidents could follow. Many presidents stopped after two terms, even though the law did not require it. This practice helped show that the presidency belonged to the people, not to one person for life. A president's power could pass to someone else.

3 The precedent was a custom, not a rule written into the Constitution. Franklin D. Roosevelt broke it when he ran for and won a third term in 1940. He later won a fourth term in 1944. In 1951, the Twenty-Second Amendment became part of the Constitution. It generally limits a person to being elected president twice. Washington's example shaped choices long before that law existed.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What choice did Washington make in 1796, and how did it set a precedent?

2. Why could later presidents choose whether to follow Washington's example?

3. What did Roosevelt do that showed Washington's precedent could be broken? Why was that possible?

4. How did the Twenty-Second Amendment change the two-term custom?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you lead a new school council, and its rules allow you to serve for as many years as students elect you. In three sentences, describe a choice you could make that follows Washington's example and explain how it might become a precedent for future council leaders.

ANSWER KEY

A Choice That Lasted

GRADE 5 · 5.C.7.1.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline Washington's choice and circle the word that means an example others may follow. Write 1 beside a sentence about later presidents following his example and 2 beside a sentence about a later written limit. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What choice did Washington make in 1796, and how did it set a precedent?	**He chose not to seek a third term. His choice gave later presidents an example to follow.**
2	Why could later presidents choose whether to follow Washington's example?	**The Constitution did not then limit presidents to two terms, so Washington's example was a custom, not a law.**
3	What did Roosevelt do that showed Washington's precedent could be broken? Why was that possible?	**Roosevelt ran for and won a third term in 1940. The two-term precedent was a custom, not a written rule.**
4	How did the Twenty-Second Amendment change the two-term custom?	**It made a written rule that generally limits a person to being elected president twice.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

After two years as council leader, I would not run again, even though the rules allow it. Future leaders might follow my example and step aside after two years. That custom would give more students a chance to lead without changing the written rules.

For the marking job, accept the sentence stating that Washington decided not to seek a third term, the circled word "precedent," the sentence about many presidents stopping after two terms, and the sentence about the Twenty-Second Amendment's limit. For Your Turn, accept a different voluntary choice if the response explains how later leaders might follow it without a rule requiring them to do so.