

Name _____

George Washington's Complex Views on Slavery

Open-Ended Response Answer Key

1. George Washington's views on slavery were complex because he owned enslaved individuals but also expressed discomfort with the institution. Factors that influenced his stance included societal norms, economic considerations, and the practical challenges of addressing slavery during his lifetime.
2. George Washington's will is significant as it revealed his desire for the eventual freedom of his enslaved people. While he did not take immediate action to abolish slavery, the will provided a plan for their emancipation upon his wife's death, reflecting his evolving views on the issue.
3. George Washington faced the challenge of societal dependence on slavery for economic reasons and the opportunity to use his position to advocate for change. However, practical constraints and the social fabric of the 18th century South made it difficult to address slavery actively.
4. In the 18th century, slavery was a deeply entrenched institution in American society, and societal norms and economic factors played a significant role in shaping attitudes toward it. Prominent figures like George Washington grappled with these complexities as they considered their own roles in addressing slavery.

