

# Research Posters in the Humanities

*Student Research and Creative Endeavor Symposium—Workshop*

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# Posters Serve Two (and a half) Purposes

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**1. Standalone introduction to and overview of your research and findings**

**2. Starting point for a conversation about your research and findings**

- Contact information
  - QR Code



# Poster Sections / Flow

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## STEM Poster / Humanities Poster

- Title ✓
- Abstract ✓
- Introduction ✓
- Methods
- Results *Body / Key Findings*
- Conclusion ✓
- Literature Cited ✓
- Acknowledgements ✓

# Poster Sections / Flow

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- **Title**
- **Abstract**
- **Introduction**
- **1-3 Case Studies**
- **Conclusion**
- **Literature Cited**
- **Acknowledgements**

# Key Considerations

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- Remember your audience
  - Multi-disciplinary, non-experts—avoid jargon
- Think about your title
  - Needs to convey a tangible, purpose-oriented message with as few words as possible
- Posters are a visual medium
  - Use color, images, visualized text (e.g., bulleted lists)
  - Do not:
    - Copy your paper directly onto your poster
    - Feature nothing but big blocks of dense text
    - Lay text over a complicated background that impedes readability

# Key Considerations

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- **Use design elements to clarify flow**
  - Columns that read from top to bottom, left to right
  - Clear section headings
  - Ample white space between sections
- **Poster should be comprehensible from 4+ feet away**
- **Less is almost always more**
  - Poster should tell a self-contained story, but it likely will not / cannot / should not reflect the totality of your research
  - Remember: The poster is the introduction to your research and the starting point for a conversation

# Sample Humanities Poster

## Who are the Founding Fathers?

Historians, Political Scientists, writers, and politicians have defined the concept of the "Founding Fathers" in a variety of ways, and have developed a great number of different lists and criteria for who is and who is not a Founder. Ohio senator Warren G. Harding introduced the term — Founding Fathers — in a speech at the 1916 Republican National Convention, but the concept had been around since the 1820s. On the broadest level, the term encompasses anyone who:

1. signed the Declaration of Independence;
2. played a prominent role in the American Revolution;
3. served an important political role during the Revolution or Confederation periods;
4. signed the Constitution of the United States; or
5. helped guide the new government formed under the Constitution in the 1790s.

These criteria point to a very large list of Founding Fathers. In 1973, historian Richard B. Morris argued that the accomplishments and legacies of seven men designated them as the nation's true Founding Fathers:



John Adams Benjamin Franklin Alexander Hamilton John Jay



Thomas Jefferson James Madison George Washington

## Resources

### Case Studies

- Jeffrey J. Malanson, *Addressing America: George Washington's Farewell and the Making of National Culture, Politics, and Diplomacy, 1796-1852* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2015).
- Jeffrey J. Malanson, "The Congressional Debate over U.S. Participation in the Congress of Panama, 1825-1826: Washington's Farewell Address, Monroe's Doctrine, and the Fundamental Principles of U.S. Foreign Policy," *Diplomatic History* 30 (Nov. 2006): 813-38.
- Jeffrey J. Malanson, "If I Had It in His Hand-Writing I Would Burn It!: Federalists and the Authorship Controversy over George Washington's Farewell Address, 1808-1859," *Journal of the Early Republic* 34 (Summer 2014): 219-42.
- Jeffrey J. Malanson, "George Washington, the founder of American independence, and Abraham Lincoln, the liberator of the slave": The Founding Fathers and the Election of 1864," article manuscript currently under review.

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## Why Do Americans Care About the Founding Fathers?

Jeffrey J. Malanson, Ph.D. — Department of History



INDIANA UNIVERSITY  
PURDUE UNIVERSITY  
FORT WAYNE

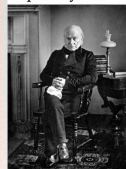
### Statement of the Question



Since the 1780s, when the American people began referring to George Washington as the "Father of his Country," they have maintained a deep well of reverence for the nation's Founding Fathers. This reverence has manifested itself in a wide variety of ways over time. As a society we remain steeped in the Founders, and the necessary, but often unasked question, is why? The case studies that follow reveal that nineteenth-century Americans used the lives and legacies of the Founders to make sense of the world in which they lived. When they confronted difficult questions affecting the nation's politics, diplomacy, security, and future, they looked to the Founders and the wisdom they had to offer. Certainly, as time went on, some people sought to capitalize on the Founders' influence to bring about outcomes that the Founders would not have endorsed, but such manipulations were possible because of the degree to which the American people had dedicated themselves to upholding the Founders and their work.

### Case Study 1: George Washington's Farewell Address and U.S. Foreign Policy

When George Washington made the decision in early 1796 to retire from the presidency, he turned to his closest advisor, Alexander Hamilton, to help him draft a message to the American people explaining his decision and giving them advice on how to move forward as a people and a nation. In this Farewell Address, Washington discussed the importance of maintaining the Union of the states and he warned against the dangers of organized political parties, but his most important advice dealt with U.S. foreign policy. He urged the people, and especially the makers of foreign policy, to always honestly assess American interests when carrying out diplomacy. Do not let love of one country or hatred of another, he warned, blind them to America's true interests. An important element of the Farewell Address was its flexibility. As the United States grew and became more powerful, its interests would change and so to would its foreign policy.



John Quincy Adams



Henry Clay



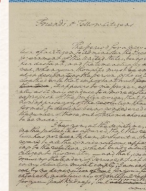
James K. Polk



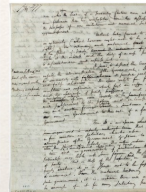
Woodrow Wilson

One of the principles Thomas Jefferson expressed in his first inaugural address was to pursue "entangling alliances with none," which people saw as a reiteration of the Farewell Address. The problem was that "entangling alliances with none" was a rigid prescription for a permanent foreign policy of virtual isolation. The flexibility of the Farewell Address was gone. For the next one hundred years, presidents and secretaries of state clung to this very isolationist interpretation of the Farewell Address. As late as the debates surrounding U.S. entry into World War I and the League of Nations, policymakers were citing Washington's isolationism as justification for their decisions.

### Case Study 2: Who Wrote the Farewell Address?



Washington's Draft of the Farewell Address



Hamilton's Draft of the Farewell Address

One of George Washington's great strengths was the recognition of his own weaknesses. One of those weaknesses was his poor skill as a writer. When he began the process of writing his Farewell Address, he turned to Alexander Hamilton to help him craft a polished and persuasive message to the American people. When the Farewell Address was published, only Washington's name appeared on it; Hamilton's involvement remained a secret.

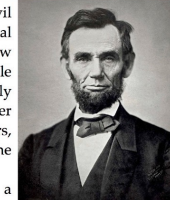
In 1808 or 1809, a Philadelphia lawyer by the name of William Lewis began circulating a rumor that Washington's Farewell Address had been written entirely by Hamilton. As proof, he cited the existence of a draft of the Address in Hamilton's handwriting. Members of the Federalist Party acted quickly to quash the rumor before it got public traction. The Federalists had been Washington's most vocal supporters during his presidency (even though he considered himself above partisanship), and they continued to use their association with him and their devotion to his Farewell Address as a mark in their favor. They deeply feared that a public revelation that Washington had not written the Farewell Address could undermine the document with the American people, and thus undermine the Party itself.

The Federalists and then Washington's family after them, succeeded in keeping Hamilton's involvement a secret until a book was published in 1859 detailing the true nature of their collaboration.

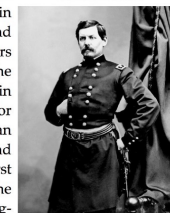
### Case Study 3: The Founding Fathers and the Presidential Election of 1864

Abraham Lincoln's reelection in 1864 — in the midst of Civil War — is significant in American history. Given Lincoln's historical reputation, it can be surprising to modern Americans to learn just how much in doubt his reelection was early in 1864, as he faced multiple challenges from within his own party, and the Democrats were highly confident in their candidate, General George B. McClellan. Another remarkable aspect of the election was the degree to which orators, newspaper editors, and the American people at large used the Founding Fathers to make sense of the choices facing the nation.

George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were cited on a weekly and even daily basis, with both parties claiming that the Founders would stand with them in the contest. (Confederates got in on the act, too, as they framed the entire Civil War as a second American Revolution aimed at upholding the principles the Founders had fought so hard to establish.) While the question of upholding the Founders' principles was essential, at times the Founders were used in more superficial ways. In September 1864 a common rallying cry for the Democrats was "Three cheers for the three Georges!" — an allusion to the fact that George Washington, George McClellan, and vice presidential candidate George Pendleton all shared the same first name. The frequent use of the Founders — the argument that the voters should make a decision based upon the teachings of men long-since dead — reveals how significant those men still were.



Abraham Lincoln



George McClellan

## Good

- Title
- Color and visuals
- Self-contained pieces

## Less Good

- Too much text
- Font too small
- Not enough white space
- Too much text