

Lesson 3, Day 1: Vocabulary

In a dictionary, look up the following words which pertain to this week's period in history, and write their definitions.

formidable -

sedition -

desolation -

Lesson 3, Day 2: To Read

Brandywine, Germantown, and Valley Forge

Washington spent the winter of 1776-7 at Morristown. In May he once more led his army out, and while the forces in the north, under Schuyler and then Gates, were defeating Burgoyne, he was holding his own against Howe's far more formidable army further south.

Howe had spent the winter at New York, which from the time of its capture to the end of the war, remained the British headquarters. In the spring he determined to capture Philadelphia, and began to march through New Jersey. But in every move he made he found himself checked by Washington. It was like a game of chess. Washington's army was only about half the size of Howe's, so he refused to be drawn into an open battle, but harried and harassed his foe at every turn, and at length drove Howe back to Staten Island.

Having failed to get to Philadelphia by land, Howe now decided to go by sea, and, sailing up Chesapeake Bay, he landed in Maryland in the end of August. But there again he found Washington waiting for him. And now, although his army was still much smaller than Howe's, Washington determined to risk a battle rather than give up Philadelphia without a blow.

With his usual care and genius, Washington chose his position well, on the banks of the Brandywine, a little river which falls into the Delaware at Wilmington about twenty-six miles from Philadelphia. On both sides, the battle was well fought. But the British army was larger, better equipped, and better drilled, and they gained the victory.

This defeat made the fate of Philadelphia certain, and Congress fled once more, this time to Lancaster. For a fortnight longer, Washington held back the enemy, and on the 26th of September the British marched into the city. Before they had time to settle into their quarters, Washington gave battle again, at Germantown, on the outskirts of Philadelphia.

It was a well contested battle, and seemed at first as if it might end in victory for the Americans. But Washington's plan of battle was a hard one for inexperienced troops to carry out. They were as brave as any men who ever carried rifles, but they were so ignorant of drill that they could not even form into columns or wheel to right or left in soldierly fashion. A thick fog, too, which hung over the field from early morning, made it difficult to distinguish friend from foe, and at one time two divisions of the Americans, each mistaking the other for the enemy, fired upon each other.

But although the battle of Germantown was a defeat for the Americans, it by no means spelled disaster. Another two months of frays and skirmishes followed. Then the British settled down to comfortable winter quarters in Philadelphia, and Washington marched his war-worn patriots to Valley Forge, about twenty miles away.

While the Americans had been busy with battles, Pitt in England was still struggling for peace and understanding between Britain and her colonies. "You can never conquer the Americans," he cried. "If I were an American, as I am an Englishman, while a foreign troop was landed in my country I would never lay down my arms, — never, never, never!"

But Pitt talked in vain. For the King was deaf to all the great minister's pleadings. In his eyes, the Americans were rebels who must be crushed, and Pitt was but the "trumpet of sedition."

Meanwhile, all Europe had been watching the struggle of these same rebels with interest and admiration. Now soldiers from many countries came to offer help to the Americans.

Lafayette was at this time only nineteen. He had much admiration for Washington, and after they met, they became lifelong friends. Lafayette later named his eldest son after Washington.

But the Americans owed more perhaps to Baron von Steuben than to any other foreigner. Von Steuben was a German, and had fought under Frederick the Great.

Washington had taken up winter quarters at Valley Forge, which was a scene of misery and desolation. The cold was terrible, the army ragged and hungry. The men had no coats, shirts, nor shoes, and often their feet and hands froze so that they had to be amputated. For days at a time they had just one poor meal a day. Even Washington saw no hope of help. "I am now convinced beyond a doubt," he wrote, "that unless some great and capital change takes place this army must inevitably be reduced to one or other of these three things: starve, dissolve, or disperse."

Much of this misery was due to the neglect of Congress. It had sadly changed from the brave days of the Declaration of Independence. It was filled now with politicians who cared about their own advancement rather than with patriots who sought their country's good. They refused to see that money was needed to keep a properly equipped army in the field. They harassed Washington with petty interference with his plans. They gave promotion to useless officers against his wishes. There was plenty of food in the country, stores of clothing were ready for the army's use, but they lay by the wayside, because there was no money to pay men to bring it to the army. Washington wore himself out in fruitless efforts to awaken Congress to a sense of its duty. And at length, utterly despairing of any support, weary of seeing his men suffer and dwindle day by day under the miseries of Valley Forge, he wrote out his resignation as Commander-in-Chief of the army. And it needed all the persuasions of his officers to make him tear it up.

It was to this camp of misery at Valley Forge that Baron von Steuben came. And the ragged, hungry, perishing army he drilled. To these men, brave enough, but not used to discipline, he taught what discipline meant. It was not easy. The Baron knew little English and the men he tried to teach knew not a word of French or German. Misunderstandings were many, and when one day a young American officer named Walker, who knew French, came to von Steuben and offered to act as interpreter he was overjoyed. "Had I seen an angel from heaven," he cried, "I could not have been more glad."

But even then, between his own mistakes and the men's mistakes, the Baron was often driven distracted, and lost his temper. Once, it is said, utterly worn out, he turned the troops over to Walker. "Come, my friend," he cried, "take them; I can curse them no longer."

In spite of all hindrances and failings, both men and officers learned so much from von Steuben that when the terrible winter was over the army went forth again to fight far more fit to face the foe than before.

Lesson 3, Day 4: Digging Out the Facts

Find the answers to the following questions, and write them in the space provided.

Why was Washington's position on the bank of the Brandywine River such a good spot to choose?

Do some research on Washington's army's winter at Valley Forge. Describe the conditions and what it would have been like to be a soldier there at this time.

Lesson 3, Day 5: Timeline of Events

Washington's army spent the difficult winter at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania in 1777 - 1778. Add this event to your timeline.

The Battle of Fort Mifflin
1776 AD

The Surrender at Saratoga
1777 AD

Washington's Winter at Valley Forge
1777 - 1778 AD

Here is a picture to add to your timeline.

