

Continental Army - Lexile 800

Name _____

Colonies as Separate Nations

For the first 160 years, the colonies in what is now the United States acted more like separate countries than one united group. So, when tensions with England grew and war seemed likely, there wasn't a big "national" army ready to fight the British. Instead, each colony had its own local militia made up of regular people like farmers and workers who also fought as soldiers. These militias didn't have much military training.

Forming the Continental Army

After the Battles of Lexington and Concord in 1775, the colonies formed an army with 26 groups of soldiers, called regiments. Smaller groups were also formed in New England and New York. On June 14, 1775, the Continental Congress officially created the Continental Army and made George Washington its leader. Many people didn't like the idea of a permanent army, but it was seen as necessary to fight the British.

Struggles in the Continental Army

The Continental Army had a lot of problems during the war. The soldiers were new to fighting, and they didn't have enough weapons, clothes, shoes, or food. Many soldiers left the army, and morale was very low. At places like Morristown and Valley Forge, soldiers faced sickness, hunger, and cold weather. At Valley Forge, one in six soldiers died from diseases like typhoid and pneumonia because the conditions were so bad. The soldiers often had to eat a simple, hard bread made from flour and water, cooked over a fire.

Improvement and Victory

Even with all the challenges, the army stayed together under George Washington's leadership. In 1778, a man named Baron von Steuben arrived at Valley Forge and taught the soldiers how to train, march in formation, and fight better. The army became much stronger. In their first battle after Valley Forge, they fought the British to a draw at Monmouth Courthouse. With help from French soldiers, the Continental Army defeated the British at Yorktown in 1781, ending the war.

1. Why did the colonies not have a strong, united army at the start of the war with Britain?

- A) The colonies didn't want to fight against Britain.
- B) The colonies acted more like separate nations and did not have a national army.
- C) The colonies had too many trained soldiers but no weapons.
- D) The colonies were waiting for help from other countries.

2. What was one major problem faced by soldiers in the Continental Army during the war?

- A) They were well-trained and equipped with the best weapons.
- B) They had too much food and resources.
- C) Many soldiers lacked proper clothing, food, and weapons.
- D) They quickly defeated the British in every battle.

3. How did George Washington's leadership impact the Continental Army during the war?

- A) His leadership made the army completely disband.
- B) He helped keep the army together despite hardships and low morale.
- C) He defeated the British on his own without the help of other soldiers.
- D) He did not provide leadership, and the army struggled without him.

4. What role did Baron von Steuben play in improving the Continental Army?

- A) He brought food and supplies to the soldiers.
- B) He taught the soldiers military tactics, formations, and discipline.
- C) He helped the soldiers build stronger shelters.
- D) He fought in the battles alongside the soldiers.

5. What was the significance of the Continental Army's victory at Yorktown in 1781?

- A) It was the first time the Continental Army lost a battle.
- B) It marked the end of the Revolutionary War with the British surrendering.
- C) It led to the colonies joining together with France in peace talks.
- D) It was a small battle that had little impact on the war.

Answers

1. B
2. C
3. B
4. B
5. B

Answers:

- 1.) D
- 2.) D
- 3.) C
- 4.) B
- 5.) B