

During the Revolutionary War, British military forces hired about 30,000 German soldiers, known as Hessians. The word “Hessian” came from the German states of Hesse-Cassel and Hesse-Hanau, where some of the “Hessians” came from.

Germany was much different in 1776 than it is today. Then, it was made up of various states, each of which was ruled by a landgrave (prince). Men who lived within each state were often forced into the landgrave’s army at an early age. The landgrave could increase his fortune by renting out these armies to foreign powers in their times of need. The individual soldier had no say in the matter. Payment for the soldiers was sent directly to each state’s landgrave. In this way, the fate of Hessian soldier is sometimes compared to the practice of slavery, although the soldiers were paid well.

The “Hessians” that fought in the Revolutionary War gained a reputation for savagery and were greatly feared amongst the ranks of Continental soldiers. Curiously, several diaries gathered from Hessian soldiers in the field, revealed that they, in fact, were horrified by the way the British soldiers destroyed civilian property and executed prisoners. Despite their military prowess, British soldiers also feared and mistrusted the Hessians, and thus treated them badly.

While the Hessians fought in every battle of the Revolutionary War, they are best remembered in America for their defeat at the hands of George Washington and his soldiers on December 26, 1776. In the battle, Washington’s men crossed the icy Delaware River on Christmas night and marched nine miles to Trenton, staging an ambush on the sleeping Hessians. Many of Washington’s men lacked shoes and the soldiers were said to have left a trail of blood all the way to Trenton. In all, Washington captured about 1,000 Hessian soldiers, who were paraded through the streets in an effort to raise the morale of the beleaguered Patriot cause. Captured German soldiers were sent to area farms to work as farm hands. Other Hessian soldiers were sent to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where they were treated well. Many of the Hessians sent to Lancaster stayed permanently rather than returning to their dreadful existence in Germany. Of the 30,000 Hessian soldiers that fought in America, approximately 3,000-5,000 stayed to live in the United States.

**1. Why was the life of a Hessian soldier comparable to that of a slave?**

- A. Because Hessian soldiers had to fight without payment
- B. Hessian soldiers were forced into the military and rented out to foreign powers
- C. Hessian soldiers were forced to wear shackles and chains
- D. Hessian soldiers were disliked by both American and British soldiers

**2. Which of the following IS NOT true about Hessian soldiers?**

- A. They had a reputation for savagery
- B. About 1,000 Hessians were captured by General Washington at the Battle of Trenton
- C. Only 3,000-5,000 Hessian soldiers decided to return to Germany
- D. About 30,000 Hessian soldiers fought alongside the British in the Revolutionary War

**3. Which of the following is an example of irony?**

- A. Captured Hessian soldiers were paraded through the streets to improve the morale for those supporting the Patriot cause
- B. Although the Hessians earned a reputation for savagery, many were appalled by the British practices of destroying property and executing prisoners
- C. Even though they were good soldiers, Hessian soldiers were mistrusted by British soldiers
- D. Hessian soldiers were often forced into the military at an early age

**4. Define “prowess” in the following sentence?**

Despite their military prowess, British soldiers also feared and mistrusted the Hessians, and thus treated them badly.

- A. decisions
- B. supplies
- C. talents
- D. mysteries

**5. The Hessians...**

- A. played a major role in the British military during the Revolutionary War.
- B. played a major role in the American military during the Revolutionary War.
- C. played a minor role in the British military during the Revolutionary War.
- D. fought in some battles of the Revolutionary War.

**6. Which of the following best describes the events that occurred at Trenton?**

- A. The Hessians ambushed Washington’s army but were ultimately defeated
- B. The Hessians ambushed and defeated George Washington’s army on the day after Christmas in 1776
- C. Washington and his men crossed the icy Delaware River and marched nine miles to Trenton before ambushing the Hessians on Christmas Eve in 1776
- D. Washington’s men ambushed and defeated the Hessians after a nine-mile march to Trenton on the day after Christmas in 1776

**7. If the entire passage was limited to the second paragraph, what could be its title?**

A. Germany in 1776

B. Military tactics used by Hessian soldiers

C. Armies for Rent: How Landgraves Became Rich Lending Fighters

D. The Hessian Soldier: Fighting for Freedom