

DISCOVER AMERICA

Teacher Guide



Winter Trials at Valley Forge: Courage and Resilience in America's History

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Key Themes

- Resilience and Endurance
- Unity and Camaraderie
- Adversity and Sacrifice
- Innovation and Survival
- Leadership and Strategy

Core Values

- Community
- Life
- Liberty



Students will be able to

- Identify significant events from 1777 and discuss their impact on American history.
- Analyze the challenges faced by soldiers during the winter of 1777.
- Recognize the contributions of Baron von Steuben to the Continental Army.
- Describe the significance of Valley Forge in American history.
- Explain the challenges faced by the Continental Army at Valley Forge and their perseverance.



Students will be able to

- Discuss the living conditions and resource challenges at Valley Forge.
- Understand the broader context of the Revolutionary War and its impact on the colonies.
- Describe the leadership and strategic decisions made by General George Washington.
- Explain the strategic importance of Valley Forge's location.
- Understand the dire conditions and resource challenges faced by the soldiers at Valley Forge.

Key Terms

- 0 1 **Conway Cabal:** a loosely organized attempt by a group of military officers and members of Congress to remove General George Washington from command of the Continental Army and replace him with Major General Horatio Gates.
- 0 2 **diplomat:** a person whose job is to handle relations with the governments of other countries.
- 0 3 **dire:** describes situations or events that cause great fear and worry.
- 0 4 **inoculation:** a vaccination that prevents illness in the future.
- 0 5 **morale:** the state of mind of a person or group.
- 0 6 **musket:** a heavy gun with a long barrel carried over a soldier's shoulder.
- 0 7 **resilience:** the ability to bounce back after challenges and tough times.
- 0 8 **scabies:** a skin condition caused by tiny mites that burrow into the skin, leading to intense itching and sores.
- 0 9 **smallpox:** a serious and often deadly viral infection that is contagious — meaning it spreads from person to person — and can cause permanent scarring.

Introduction

TELL Students

Today, we're going to play a fun game to uncover a mysterious historical event. I have a series of clues, and your job is to work together to figure out what historical event we are learning about.

ASK Students

Are you ready?

TELL Students

Let's make this a bit more exciting. I'm going to dim the lights. Here is a special envelope labeled "Mystery Clues." Inside, we have the clues that will help you solve the mystery. Let's start with the first clue. [Pull out the first teacher prepared clue card with "1777" written on it.] This clue gives us a year: 1777.

ASK Students

What important events happened in 1777?

TELL Students

Now, let's look at the second clue. [Pull out the second clue card describing a harsh winter with soldiers facing cold and hunger.] This clue talks about a very harsh winter where soldiers were cold and hungry. [Show a picture of a snowy landscape or a log cabin.]

ASK Students

What challenges do you think soldiers might have faced during a winter in 1777?

TELL Students

Here is the third clue. [Pull out the third clue card with a description of a famous leader who later became the first President of the United States.] This clue describes a famous leader who became the first President of the United States. [Show a picture of George Washington.]

ASK Students

Who is this important leader?

Introduction

TELL Students

That is right! This is George Washington. Let's move on to the fourth clue. [Pull out the fourth clue card describing a Prussian military expert who helped train the soldiers.] This clue mentions a Prussian military expert who trained the soldiers. [Show a picture of Baron von Steuben or a musket replica.]

ASK Students

Who do you think this military expert was, and what was his role?

TELL Students

Now for the final clue. [Pull out the fifth clue card with a map of Pennsylvania and a marker showing a location 18 miles northwest of Philadelphia.] This clue shows a location in Pennsylvania, 18 miles northwest of Philadelphia. [Show a map of Pennsylvania.]

ASK Students

Can you identify this location? Now, put all the clues together and tell me what you think the historical event is.

TELL Students 📷 🔑

That's right! The event is the winter encampment at Valley Forge during the American Revolutionary War. Let's discuss why Valley Forge is significant in American history. Imagine going back to a cold day in 1777. Picture yourself as a soldier with General George Washington's army. You've walked for miles through snowy fields and thick forests. You carry a musket and feel your heavy gear on your tired shoulders. A **musket** is a heavy gun with a long barrel carried over a soldier's shoulder. The air is chilly, and as you come over a hill, you see Valley Forge ahead. This is how soldiers felt as they walked toward Valley Forge. Valley Forge is more than just a spot on a map. **[Reference Valley Forge Image]** It's a very important time in American history. It was a big test for the soldiers in the Continental Army to be strong, brave, and work together. [Show students Pennsylvania on a U.S. map.] Here in Pennsylvania, you and the other soldiers are about to face one of the hardest parts of the Revolutionary War.

Introduction

ASK Students

How do you think the soldiers felt as they headed to Valley Forge?

TELL Students

As you get closer to the camp, you see smoke from small log houses made quickly by tired hands. The ground is frozen, and every step is like a fight with the cold. You hear orders shouted, the sound of metal hitting wood as houses are built, and sometimes laughter or songs. Even in tough times, there are moments of friendship.

ASK Students

What are some sounds that you may have heard at Valley Forge?

TELL Students

Valley Forge is a place where hope and bravery are as bright as the fires in those log houses. Here, General Washington and his soldiers will go through a tough winter, not having enough food and clothes, and not knowing what will happen next. **[Reference George Washington Image]** But they will also make strong bonds of loyalty and courage that will help them through the hardest times of the war.

ASK Students

Are you ready to join the ranks of history, to learn from those who braved the cold and uncertainty at Valley Forge?

TELL Students

During the Revolutionary War for America's independence from Britain, General Washington and 12,000 soldiers arrived at Valley Forge on December 19, 1777. They were tired but hopeful, knowing they faced a tough winter ahead. They knew it would be hard, but they were proud of how far they had come in the war. The first thing they did at Valley Forge was build log cabins to live in. They made about 1,500 cabins to keep warm. **[Reference Valley Forge Cabins]** At first, the soldiers at Valley Forge had enough food and warm clothes. But soon, they didn't have enough supplies. It was hard to bring food and clothes to Valley Forge because it was far away and there wasn't much money.

Introduction

TELL Students (continued)

Some days, the soldiers didn't have enough to eat. They didn't have warm clothes either. General Washington saw soldiers without clothes, blankets, or shoes. He saw their bloody footprints in the snow. Let's watch another episode of Star Spangled Adventures to learn more about the brave soldiers at Valley Forge.

WATCH ▶

Star Spangled Adventures Cartoon [Ep. 31: Valley Forge](#)



Lesson

TELL Students

In the fall of 1777, the colonies were deeply engaged in their fight for independence from Great Britain. This struggle began with the Battles of Lexington and Concord in April 1775, but the roots of dissatisfaction with British rule went back even further. In July 1776, the Second Continental Congress formally declared independence by adopting the Declaration of Independence. Despite the colonists' desire to become their own country, Britain was strongly against losing its valuable North American colonies. Having recently won the Seven Years' War and gained territories from France, Britain was determined to keep control of the colonies. The colonists understood that they had to fight hard for their independence, especially as the harsh winter of 1777 approached.

ASK Students

Why did the colonies want to become their own country in 1776, and why did Britain oppose it?

TELL Students

Please read the following passage with a neighbor to learn more. [Please print and distribute fifth grade student text to each student.]

One of the big challenges was their army's lack of experience compared to the well-trained British soldiers. Leading the Continental Army was General George Washington, a wise leader from Virginia. Less than a year earlier, he had surprised the British with a victory in Trenton on Christmas night. But after this victory, the British aimed to crush their opponent's spirit by capturing Philadelphia, the new country's capital. In August 1777, British troops under General William Howe marched towards Philadelphia and took control of it by September 26. The Continental Congress had to flee to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and things looked grim for the Americans. Losing their capital city made winning the war seem almost impossible. However, General Washington was determined to use the winter months, when fighting was difficult due to the weather, to train his army and plan for future victories.

ASK Students

Why was General George Washington determined to train his army during the winter of 1777?

TELL Students

In late October, General Washington asked local officers and leaders for help in choosing a place for his soldiers to spend the winter.

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

He wanted a location near Philadelphia but far enough away from the British. After talking to many people, Washington considered Wilmington, Delaware; Lancaster, Pennsylvania; and Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. He decided on Valley Forge, which was 18 miles northwest of Philadelphia. Valley Forge had high ground to see if enemies were coming and was close to the Schuylkill River, which flowed toward Philadelphia.

ASK Students

Why do you think General Washington dedicated Valley Forge as the winter camp for his soldiers instead of Wilmington or Lancaster?

TELL Students

Upon arriving at Valley Forge, General Washington instructed his soldiers to build wooden huts for themselves. He provided detailed instructions for building the huts and each would house 12 men. He hoped the huts would keep the soldiers warm during the cold winter. In the early days of winter at Valley Forge, the soldiers had enough supplies to keep warm and well-fed. However, as the war continued, financial resources dwindled and it became difficult to transport supplies to the camp. This led to soldiers without enough food or warm clothing. General Washington witnessed firsthand the hardships: soldiers lacking clothes, blankets, and shoes.

ASK Students

What challenges did George Washington and his troops face at Valley Forge?

TELL Students 🗝️

Please read the following passage independently to learn more.

*In the spring, conditions at Valley Forge began to improve slightly after members of Congress visited and witnessed the dire situation firsthand. However, despite their efforts, sickness continued to spread due to the lack of adequate food and clean water. Soldiers suffered from scabies and lice infestations, both of which contributed to poor health and discomfort. **Scabies** is a skin condition caused by tiny mites that burrow into the skin, leading to intense itching and sores. In addition to these issues, many soldiers contracted serious illnesses such as typhus, typhoid fever, dysentery, pneumonia, and influenza.*

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

The presence of dead horses, which were not properly disposed of, exacerbated the unsanitary conditions and created a bad smell throughout the camp. To combat these health hazards, General Washington implemented strict rules regarding sanitation, including designated areas for waste disposal to prevent the spread of disease and maintain some level of hygiene among the troops.

ASK Students

Why did sickness spread at Valley Forge, even though some help came from Congress in the spring?

TELL Students 🔑

To stop smallpox from spreading, General Washington told his soldiers to get a shot in January 1777. **Smallpox** is a serious viral infection that is highly contagious — meaning it spreads from person to person — and can cause permanent scarring and even death. George Washington had gotten smallpox when he was 19 years old while visiting Barbados. This helped provide immunity from further smallpox attacks later in his life. However, many colonists were not exposed to the disease which created a widespread epidemic in the army ranks. The deadly disease greatly impacted the army's effectiveness so General Washington made the controversial decision to inoculate the army. This was one of the first times in American history that a lot of people got shots to stay healthy. Even with all these efforts, about 2,000 soldiers died from sickness during the six months at Valley Forge.

ASK Students

Why did General Washington want his soldiers to get inoculated in 1777, and how did it help during the hard winter at Valley Forge?

TELL Students 🔑

An **inoculation** is a vaccination that prevents illness in the future. General Washington wanted his soldiers to get inoculated against smallpox in 1777 to protect them from getting sick with the disease.

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

By getting the shot, called an inoculation, the soldiers were less likely to get sick with smallpox during the hard winter at Valley Forge. This helped keep more soldiers healthy so they could keep fighting for America's freedom. During this harsh winter at Valley Forge, the soldiers faced many difficulties. They didn't have enough food or warm clothes, and sickness spread through the camp. General Washington and his officers worked hard to keep everyone strong and hopeful.

ASK Students

What disease did General Washington want his soldiers to be inoculated against?

TELL Students

Please read the following passage independently to learn more.

Meanwhile, General Washington faced a new challenge: some leaders doubted his ability to lead. Despite support from his soldiers, including those fighting under his command, certain military officials and members of Congress started to question General Washington's leadership. In October 1777, General Horatio Gates won an important battle at Saratoga, which made some people think he should lead instead. They even created a Board of War to supervise General Washington. Major General Thomas Conway, believing Gates was stronger, wrote letters criticizing Washington's leadership. This disagreement ended when a letter was leaked by one of Washington's friends, making Conway resign in early 1778. Even so, General Washington felt pressure to prove he was a strong leader and earn the trust of everyone who doubted him.

ASK Students

Why do you think some leaders doubted General Washington's ability to lead, even though his soldiers supported him?

TELL Students

In February 1778, a man named Baron Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben arrived at Valley Forge from Europe. **[Reference Baron von Steuben Image]** He was a general from Prussia, a country in Europe known for its strong military tradition. Baron von Steuben was already a seasoned military expert, with more than 30 years of experience. His arrival was thanks to Benjamin Franklin, who was in charge of securing international support for America.

Lesson

TELL Students (continued) 🗣️

Franklin, who was serving as the diplomat to France, had sent a letter to the Continental Congress recommending Steuben. A **diplomat** is a person whose job is to handle relations with the governments of other countries. Franklin understood the importance of having skilled military leaders to train the Continental Army and knew that Steuben's experience could be invaluable.

ASK Students

Why did Benjamin Franklin think it was important to bring skilled military leaders like Baron von Steuben to help the Continental Army at Valley Forge?

TELL Students 🗣️

When Baron von Steuben arrived at Valley Forge, he immediately recognized the dire conditions the soldiers were enduring. **Dire** refers to situations or events that cause great fear and worry. There were severe shortages of supplies, and the camp was dirty and disorganized. Steuben even remarked that no European army could have survived in such conditions. Observing Steuben's deep understanding of military leadership, General Washington appointed him as a temporary inspector general to help train the soldiers.

ASK Students

What did Baron von Steuben notice about the conditions at Valley Forge, and how did General Washington respond to Steuben's arrival?

TELL Students

Steuben brought with him rigorous European military drills and techniques, which he began teaching to the Continental Army. Despite the language barrier — Steuben spoke little English — he managed to effectively communicate with the soldiers through the help of interpreters like Alexander Hamilton. His training focused on discipline, battlefield tactics, and the efficient use of weapons. Steuben's impact was profound, transforming the ragtag Continental Army into a more professional and effective fighting force.

Lesson

ASK Students

How did Baron von Steuben train the soldiers at Valley Forge despite not speaking much English, and what was the result of his training?

TELL Students

Despite Baron von Steuben's limited English skills, he carefully documented military drills and combat techniques. Alexander Hamilton and other aides translated these instructions into English so that the soldiers could understand and implement them effectively. Steuben fully immersed himself in the training process, working closely with the soldiers and teaching them new methods of warfare and resilience. His hands-on approach and friendly nature made the soldiers like him, fostering a sense of respect. Thanks to Baron von Steuben's diligent efforts and instructional prowess, the soldiers significantly improved. They became more disciplined, and capable in coordinating their efforts, ultimately transforming into an efficient fighting force.

ASK Students

How did Baron von Steuben teach the soldiers at Valley Forge, even though he didn't speak English well?

TELL Students

Steuben also wrote a special book called *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States*. This book helped train American soldiers for many years after Valley Forge. Baron von Steuben's time at Valley Forge showed how important it is to work together and learn from others, even if they come from far away. His efforts helped the soldiers become stronger and more ready to keep fighting for America's freedom.

ASK Students

How did Baron von Steuben's book help American soldiers after Valley Forge, and what do you think General Washington thought about its importance?

Lesson

TELL Students

*During the difficult winter at Valley Forge, Martha Washington joined her husband, General George Washington, at the camp. **[Reference Martha Washington]** She played a crucial role as his advisor and supporter, helping to run their household and boosting the morale of the soldiers. **Morale** means the state of mind of a person or group. Despite the challenging conditions at Valley Forge, Martha showed great bravery and strength by staying with her husband in such a difficult place.*

ASK Students

What role did Martha Washington play at Valley Forge?

TELL Students

Meanwhile, General Howe, the leader of the British army, opted to remain in Philadelphia rather than launch an attack on Valley Forge. This strategic decision allowed General Washington and his troops the opportunity to concentrate on training under the expert guidance of Baron von Steuben. After enduring a long and harsh winter, the Continental Army emerged from Valley Forge on June 19, 1778, exactly six months after their arrival. The soldiers were now significantly better trained and more organized than before. Their first major test came soon at the Battle of Monmouth, where they faced a considerably larger British force. Under General Washington's leadership, the Continental Army fought with renewed vigor and discipline, demonstrating the effectiveness of the rigorous training they had undergone. This battle showed how strong the soldiers had become, proving that their time spent at Valley Forge had helped transform them into a more powerful and effective army.

ASK Students

Why did General Howe's decision to stay in Philadelphia instead of attacking Valley Forge help General Washington and his soldiers get ready for the Battle of Monmouth?

TELL Students

The Battle of Monmouth was a turning point. Congress, which had once questioned General Washington's abilities, praised him for leading the army to victory. This victory silenced any doubts people had about him, including those who had been part of the Conway Cabal.

Lesson

Tell Students (continued) 🔑

The **Conway Cabal** refers to a loosely organized attempt by a group of military officers and members of Congress to remove General George Washington from command of the Continental Army and replace him with Major General Horatio Gates.

ASK Students

What was the Conway Cabal?

TELL Students 📷 🔑

The winter at Valley Forge was a severe test of General Washington's determination and leadership skills. Despite severe shortages of food and supplies and the rampant spread of disease among the soldiers, he never wavered. His unwavering leadership and spirit inspired the soldiers to persevere, and as a result, they emerged from Valley Forge stronger and more united.

[Reference General Washington Image] General Washington's ability to maintain discipline during such harsh conditions was crucial in keeping the army intact. Under Washington's leadership, the Continental Army continued to fight bravely against the British. His strategic acumen and steadfast commitment to the cause of independence kept the army focused and determined. The soldiers' resilience and the rigorous training they underwent during the harsh winter months at Valley Forge paid off in subsequent battles. This period of intense hardship forged a sense of unity and strength within the Continental Army that would prove essential in their fight for independence. Ultimately, their determination culminated in the British surrender at Yorktown, which was a decisive victory that led to America gaining its independence. This triumph not only demonstrated the military prowess of the Continental Army but also showcased the strength and resilience of the American people under General Washington's command.

Resilience, the ability to bounce back after challenges and tough times, was a key quality that defined the American struggle for independence and ensured their eventual success.

General Washington's leadership during the winter at Valley Forge remains a powerful testament to his enduring legacy as a leader and the enduring spirit of the American people. Let's watch another Patriot of the Week to learn more!

WATCH 📺

Patriot of the Week: [Baron von Steuben](#)



Learning About Valley Forge

NAME: _____ DATE _____

Instructions: Read and answer the following questions based on what you have learned about Valley Forge during the American Revolutionary War.

Imagine being a soldier at Valley Forge

Describe how you would feel walking through snowy fields and thick forests with a heavy musket on your shoulder.

Sounds at Valley Forge

What are some sounds you might have heard at Valley Forge?

General Washington's Leadership

Why was General George Washington's leadership important during the winter at Valley Forge?

Learning About Valley Forge

NAME: _____ DATE _____

Hardships Faced

List three challenges that soldiers faced at Valley Forge.

Significance of Valley Forge

Why is Valley Forge significant in American history?

Health and Sanitation

Why did sickness spread at Valley Forge?

Learning About Valley Forge

NAME: _____ DATE _____

Inoculation Against Smallpox

Why did General Washington want his soldiers to get inoculated in 1777, and how did it help during the hard winter at Valley Forge?

Baron von Steuben's Role

Who was Baron von Steuben and what was his role at Valley Forge?

Training the Continental Army

How did Baron von Steuben train the soldiers at Valley Forge despite not speaking much English, and what was the result of his training?

Learning About Valley Forge

NAME: _____ DATE _____

Martha Washington's Contribution

What role did Martha Washington play at Valley Forge?

Strategic Decisions

Why did General Howe's decision to stay in Philadelphia instead of attacking Valley Forge help General Washington and his soldiers get ready for the Battle of Monmouth?

Conway Cabal

What was the Conway Cabal?

Learning About Valley Forge

NAME: _____ DATE _____

Winter at Valley Forge

Explain how the winter at Valley Forge tested General Washington's determination and leadership skills.

Resilience and Unity

How did the hardships at Valley Forge help build resilience and unity within the Continental Army?

Historical Legacy

What does General Washington's leadership during the winter at Valley Forge tell us about his legacy and the spirit of the American people?

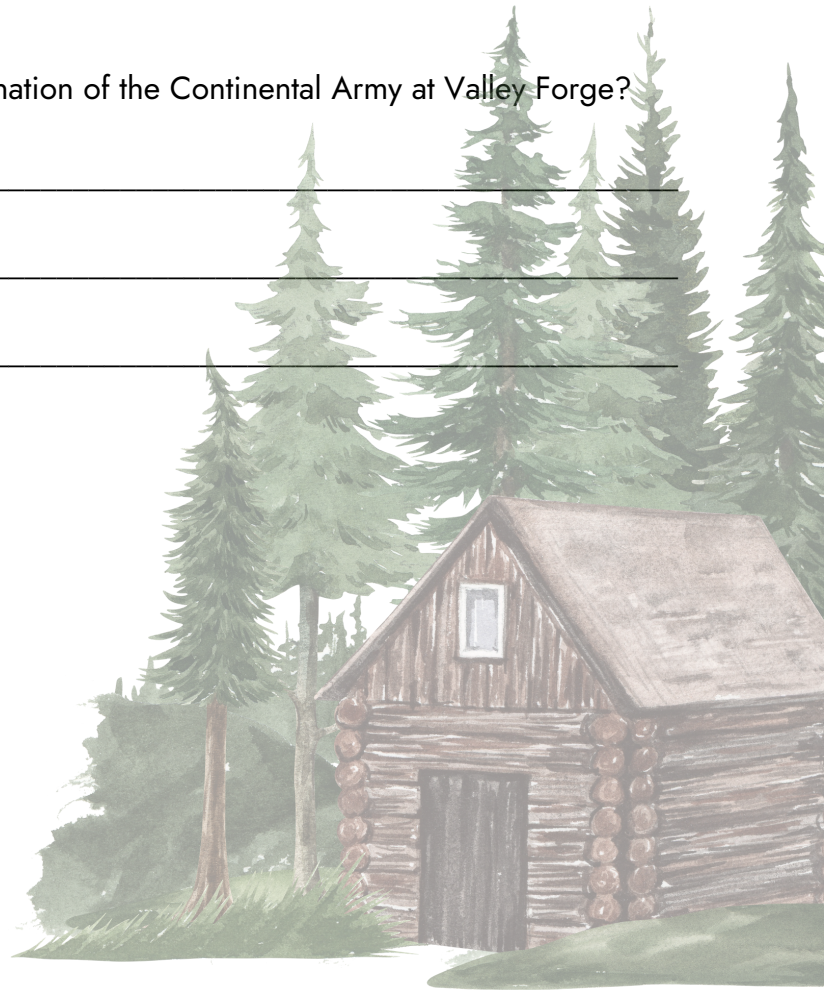
Learning About Valley Forge

NAME: _____ DATE _____

Reflection

How did learning about Valley Forge help you understand the challenges faced by the soldiers during the Revolutionary War?

What can we learn from the resilience and determination of the Continental Army at Valley Forge?



Answer Key: Learning About Valley Forge

Imagine being a soldier at Valley Forge

Describe how you would feel walking through snowy fields and thick forests with a heavy musket on your shoulder.

Answer: Possible answers include feeling cold, tired, heavy, exhausted, and burdened by the weight of the musket and gear. The air is chilly, and the journey is difficult and uncomfortable.

Sounds at Valley Forge

What are some sounds you might have heard at Valley Forge?

Answer: Possible answers include the sound of orders being shouted, metal hitting wood as cabins are built, laughter, songs, and the crackling of campfires.

General Washington's Leadership

Why was General George Washington's leadership important during the winter at Valley Forge?

Answer: General Washington's leadership was crucial because he inspired the soldiers to keep going despite the harsh conditions. His determination and ability to maintain morale helped the Continental Army emerge stronger and more united.

Hardships Faced

List three challenges that soldiers faced at Valley Forge.

Answer: Three challenges include lack of food, insufficient clothing, and the spread of diseases.

Significance of Valley Forge

Why is Valley Forge significant in American history?

Answer: Valley Forge is significant because it was a crucial period where the Continental Army endured severe hardships, trained, and emerged stronger, which was instrumental in their fight for independence.

Health and Sanitation

Why did sickness spread at Valley Forge?

Answer: Sickness spread due to a lack of adequate food and clean water, scabies and lice infestations, and unsanitary conditions exacerbated by the presence of dead horses and improper waste disposal.

Answer Key: Learning About Valley Forge

Inoculation Against Smallpox

Why did General Washington want his soldiers to get a shot in 1777, and how did it help during the hard winter at Valley Forge?

Answer: General Washington wanted his soldiers to get inoculated to protect them from smallpox. This helped reduce the spread of the disease, keeping more soldiers healthy and able to fight during the winter.

Baron von Steuben's Role

Who was Baron von Steuben and what was his role at Valley Forge?

Answer: Baron von Steuben was a Prussian military expert who trained the Continental Army at Valley Forge, transforming them into a more disciplined and effective fighting force.

Training the Continental Army

How did Baron von Steuben train the soldiers at Valley Forge despite not speaking much English, and what was the result of his training?

Answer: Steuben used interpreters like Alexander Hamilton to translate his drills and training techniques. His rigorous training led to the soldiers becoming more organized, disciplined, and capable.

Martha Washington's Contribution

What role did Martha Washington play at Valley Forge?

Answer: Martha Washington was an advisor and supporter to General Washington, helped run their household, and boosted the morale of the soldiers by showing bravery and strength.

Strategic Decisions

Why did General Howe's decision to stay in Philadelphia instead of attacking Valley Forge help General Washington and his soldiers get ready for the Battle of Monmouth?

Answer: General Howe's decision allowed Washington and his troops to focus on training under Baron von Steuben, improving their readiness and organization for future battles.

Conway Cabal

What was the Conway Cabal?

Answer: The Conway Cabal was a loosely organized attempt by some military officers and members of Congress to replace General Washington with General Horatio Gates as the leader of the Continental Army.

Answer Key: Learning About Valley Forge

Winter at Valley Forge

Explain how the winter at Valley Forge tested General Washington's determination and leadership skills.

Answer: The winter tested Washington's leadership as he had to maintain morale, manage scarce resources, and ensure the health and readiness of his troops despite severe hardships and disease.

Resilience and Unity

How did the hardships at Valley Forge help build resilience and unity within the Continental Army?

Answer: The shared hardships and rigorous training fostered a sense of camaraderie, discipline, and determination among the soldiers, uniting them and building their resilience.

Historical Legacy

What does General Washington's leadership during the winter at Valley Forge tell us about his legacy and the spirit of the American people?

Answer: Washington's leadership at Valley Forge showcases his unwavering determination and ability to inspire resilience. It highlights the enduring spirit of perseverance and unity that defined the American struggle for independence.

Reflection

How did learning about Valley Forge help you understand the challenges faced by the soldiers during the Revolutionary War?

Answer: Learning about Valley Forge provides insight into the severe conditions and challenges the soldiers endured, emphasizing their resilience and determination in the fight for independence.

What can we learn from the resilience and determination of the Continental Army at Valley Forge?

Answer: We can learn the importance of perseverance, teamwork, and strong leadership in overcoming adversity and achieving significant goals.



Building Shelter: Investigating Cabin Construction at Valley Forge



Objective

To engage fifth graders in an interactive learning activity where they investigate the best methods for building cabins during the winter at Valley Forge using online resources.

Materials Needed:

- Computers or tablets with internet access
- Research worksheets
- Poster boards, markers, and other art supplies
- Building materials for a model cabin (craft sticks, glue, small logs, cardboard, etc.)
- Measuring tools (rulers, tape measures)

Introduction to the Task:

- Students are divided into small groups (3-4 students per group).
- Each group is tasked with investigating and figuring out the best way to build cabins suitable for winter conditions, similar to those built at Valley Forge.

Research Phase:

- Using computers or tablets, each group will research the following topics:
- Historical context of Valley Forge and the winter conditions faced by the soldiers.
- Traditional cabin construction methods of the 18th century.
- Materials used for building cabins during the Revolutionary War.
- Design features that help cabins withstand cold weather and provide insulation.
- Groups will use a research worksheet to gather and organize their findings.

Research Worksheet:

- What were the winter conditions like at Valley Forge?
- What materials were available to soldiers for building cabins?
- How were cabins constructed to provide warmth and shelter?
- Find at least two historical examples or images of cabins from the 18th century.
- What design features are important for building a sturdy and warm cabin?





Building Shelter: Investigating Cabin Construction at Valley Forge

Design and Planning:

- After completing their research, each group will design a blueprint for their cabin.
- Groups will use poster boards to draw and label their cabin designs, including the materials and design features that make them suitable for winter conditions.
- Each group will prepare a brief presentation explaining their design choices based on their research.

Model Building:

- Using craft materials (craft sticks, glue, small logs, cardboard), each group will build a small model of their cabin according to their blueprint.
- Groups will use measuring tools to ensure their models are to scale and accurately represent their designs.

Presentation:

- Each group will present their cabin model and blueprint to the class.
- Presentations should include:
 - An explanation of the winter conditions at Valley Forge.
 - The materials chosen for the cabin and why they were selected.
 - Key design features and how they help the cabin withstand winter conditions.
- After each presentation, allow time for questions and discussion.

Reflection:

- After all presentations, students will reflect on the following questions:
 - What challenges did soldiers face when building cabins at Valley Forge?
 - How did the design of the cabins help soldiers survive the winter?
 - What did you learn about the importance of shelter and resourcefulness during historical events?

Assessment:

- Participation in research and group work
- Accuracy and creativity of the cabin blueprint
- Quality and detail of the cabin model
- Clarity and completeness of the presentation

This interactive activity allows students to explore historical context, apply research skills, and engage in hands-on learning while understanding the challenges and ingenuity required for building cabins during the winter at Valley Forge.

Student Text

Please read the following paragraphs to learn more.

One of the big challenges was their army's lack of experience compared to the well-trained British soldiers. Leading the Continental Army was General George Washington, a wise leader from Virginia. Less than a year earlier, he had surprised the British with a victory in Trenton on Christmas night. But after this victory, the British aimed to crush their opponent's spirit by capturing Philadelphia, the new country's capital. In August 1777, British troops under General William Howe marched towards Philadelphia and took control of it by September 26. The Continental Congress had to flee to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and things looked grim for the Americans. Losing their capital city made winning the war seem almost impossible. However, General Washington was determined to use the winter months, when fighting was difficult due to the weather, to train his army and plan for future victories.

In the spring, conditions at Valley Forge began to improve slightly after members of Congress visited and witnessed the dire situation firsthand. However, despite their efforts, sickness continued to spread due to the lack of adequate food and clean water. Soldiers suffered from scabies and lice infestations, both of which contributed to poor health and discomfort. Scabies is a skin condition caused by tiny mites that burrow into the skin, leading to intense itching and sores. In addition to these issues, many soldiers contracted serious illnesses such as typhus, typhoid fever, dysentery, pneumonia, and influenza. The presence of dead horses, which were not properly disposed of, exacerbated the unsanitary conditions and created a bad smell throughout the camp. To combat these health hazards, General Washington implemented strict rules regarding sanitation, including designated areas for waste disposal to prevent the spread of disease and maintain some level of hygiene among the troops.

Meanwhile, General Washington faced a new challenge: some leaders doubted his ability to lead. Despite support from his soldiers, including those fighting under his command, certain military officials and members of Congress started to question General Washington's leadership. In October 1777, General Horatio Gates won an important battle at Saratoga, which made some people think he should lead instead. They even created a Board of War to supervise General Washington. Major General Thomas Conway, believing Gates was stronger, wrote letters criticizing Washington's leadership. This disagreement ended when a letter was leaked by one of Washington's friends, making Conway resign in early 1778. Even so, General Washington felt pressure to prove he was a strong leader and earn the trust of everyone who doubted him.

Resources

- <https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/essays/british-occupation-of-philadelphia/#:~:text=Howe%20was%20responsible%20for%20the,line%20to%20the%20occu,pled%20city.>
- <https://founders.archives.gov/?q=%20Dates-From%3A1777-10-29&s=1111311111&r=4>
- <https://www.nps.gov/vafo/learn/historyculture/valley-forge-history-and-significance.htm>
- <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-13-02-0355>
- <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-14-02-0525>
- <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-14-02-0469>
- https://books.google.com/books?id=EnauK2PI_9sC&q=the+first+large-scale%2C+state-sponsored+immunization+campaign+in+history#v=snippet&q=the%20first%20large-scale%2C%20state-sponsored%20immunization%20campaign%20in%20history&f=false
- <https://www.nps.gov/vafo/learn/historyculture/valley-forge-history-and-significance.htm>
- <https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/conway-cabal/>
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- <https://www.nps.gov/vafo/learn/historyculture/valleyforgewomen.htm>
- <https://oll.libertyfund.org/title/ford-the-writings-of-george-washington-vol-vii-1778-1779?html=true>

Images

Washington



Credit: National Art Gallery

Valley Forge



Credit: Wikipedia

Images

Soldiers



Credit: Canva Pro.

Horatio Gates



Credit: Wikipedia

Images

**Baron von
Steuben**



Credit: American Battlefield Trust

**Martha
Washington**



Credit: Wikipedia.

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