

Washington's March to Valley Forge
Valley Forge Historical Society



Teaching Guide

SEGMENT 2, WEBISODE 2

Please note: Each segment in this Webisode has its own Teaching Guide



Segment Overview



Let's Discuss

After unsuccessfully engaging the British in a battle to prevent the capture of Philadelphia, Washington led his twelve thousand Continental soldiers into winter quarters at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Although no military engagements were fought at Valley Forge, during the winter of 1777-78, the patriot soldiers waged an epic battle against deprivation, disease, and discouragement. Washington's ill-fed, ill-equipped army, exhausted from long marches, worked in six-inch-deep snow to build log huts and defenses. Undernourished, inadequately clothed, and living in crowded, damp quarters, the men fell sick, with disease killing as many as 2,000. Although Washington petitioned Congress for relief, the fledgling treasury was unable to provide it. Nevertheless, Washington, assisted by Prussian General von Steuben, created an effective, well-trained fighting force. By spring, the army had been transformed in its crucible of suffering. Buoyed by new supplies and troops and the French guarantee of military aid, the Continental army emerged strong, well-disciplined, and confident.

Teacher Directions

1. Students, in small teams, discuss the following questions.
 - What events and conditions might have discouraged the soldiers at Valley Forge?
 - What kind of picture does Dr. Waldo paint of the conditions at Valley Forge? What additional burdens might a doctor face in these conditions?
 - Why did the men lack provisions?
 - What happened at Valley Forge in spite of—or perhaps because of—the hardships endured?
2. Make sure students understand the following points in discussing the questions.

Even though Washington had tried to prevent it, the British captured America's capital city, Philadelphia. Britain's army, the most powerful in the world, was well-fed, well-clothed, and well-armed. The Continental army, on the other hand, had to build its own winter quarters in mid-December when the men were already weak from hunger and long marches. Because shoes and clothing wore out on long marches and were not replaced, many soldiers went barefoot and lacked blankets or overcoats. Even though Washington repeatedly asked Congress for food and supplies, the army's supply system was chaotic. The ordinary citizen did not know how or did

Let's Discuss, Cont.



not worry about how to get food to the soldiers. Dr. Waldo describes the cold, misery, lack of food, harsh weather, and sickness the men experienced. As a doctor, he would treat the many men who became ill from these conditions, and he no doubt lacked sufficient medical supplies or assistance. By the end of this traumatic winter, however, the men emerged a strong, well-trained, well-disciplined fighting force. While the men had probably bonded together in their suffering, they had also worked hard learning military drills.

Teacher Directions

Activity One

1. Distribute the Student Sheet: *Suffering and Soldiering at Valley Forge*.
2. Students examine the photos of the reconstructed log huts built by the men and General Washington's winter quarters at Valley Forge. While Washington did spend some time in tents at Valley Forge, he later moved into this large stone house.
 - Did Washington really share his men's hardships?
 - Should the commander-in-chief of the army be as physically uncomfortable as his men?
 - What benefits and drawbacks might such a situation present?
3. Point out to students that while Washington's quarters were undoubtedly far more comfortable than those of his men, he did make repeated requests to Congress and to other officials for provisions for the soldiers. Also, he did not seclude himself in the house, but moved about frequently among his men.

Activity Two

1. Distribute the Student Sheet: *The March to Valley Forge*.
2. Working with teammates, students view the painting and discuss the following questions. (Note to the Teacher: Alternative lesson suggestions include reproducing the painting and/or discussion questions as a transparency, and facilitating whole-class discussion rather than initial small group discussion.) After small-group discussions, students from each group share their responses with the class.
 - How would you describe the condition of the men?
 - What physical hardships did they face?
 - Describe the mood of the men as depicted in the painting. Describe the mood of General Washington.
 - When was this painting created? What message or impression do you think the artist wanted to convey to the viewer?
 - What questions does this painting raise in your mind? Where could you find answers to them?

- The artist, W.B.T. Trego, received a harmful dose of medicine as a small child that left him partially crippled in his hands and feet, and in constant pain. How might his life experiences have affected his perspective of the soldiers' experiences?

This painting, "The March to Valley Forge" by W.B.T. Trego, shows General Washington and some of his 12,000 men traveling to their winter quarters at Valley Forge. Painted in 1883, "The March to Valley Forge" is one of the most reproduced historical paintings in books and films about American history. After enduring this long march, the hungry, ragged, and exhausted men slept in tents until they could build their own log huts for shelter.

Activity Three

1. Distribute the Student Sheets: *Washington's Plea for Help*.
2. Explain that this is a condensed version of a slightly longer letter that General Washington sent to the Governor of New York, George Clinton, during the winter at Valley Forge.
3. Students read the text of the Student Sheet and working with teammates, answer the questions.

To Governor George Clinton

Head Quarters, Valley Forge, February 16, 1778

Dear Sir:

It is with great reluctance, I trouble you on a subject, which does not fall within your province; but it is a subject that occasions me more distress, than I have felt, since the commencement of the war; and which loudly demands the most zealous exertions of every person of weight and authority, who is interested in the success of our affairs. I mean the present dreadful situation of the army for want of provisions, and the miserable prospects before us, with respect to futurity. It is more alarming than you will probably conceive, for, to form a just idea, it were necessary to be on the spot. For some days past, there has been little less, than a famine in camp. A part of the army has been a week, without any kind of flesh, and the rest for three or four days. Naked and starving as they are, we cannot enough admire the incomparable patience and fidelity of the soldiery, that they have not been ere this excited by their sufferings, to a general mutiny or dispersion. Strong symptoms, however, [of] discontent have appeared in particular instances; and nothing but the most active efforts every where can long avert so shocking a catastrophe.

Our present sufferings are not all. There is no foundation laid for any adequate relief hereafter...

...I am calling upon all those, whose stations and influence enable them to contribute their aid upon so important an occasion... tho' you may not

History Sleuth, Cont.

be able to contribute materially to our relief, you can perhaps do something towards it; and any assistance, however trifling in itself, will be of great moment at so critical a juncture, ... if you can devise any means to procure a quantity of cattle, or other kind of flesh, for the use of this army, to be at camp in the course of a month, you will render a most essential service to the common cause. I have the honor etc.

Vocabulary

province — responsibilities, duties

commencement — beginning

zealous exertions — strong, diligent efforts

provisions — supplies of food

flesh — meat

fidelity — loyalty, faithfulness

ere — so far, before

dispersion — desertion, leaving

avert — prevent

stations — jobs, status

trifling — small

devise — come up with

procure — to get

render — to cause, to give

- List three things the author of the letter said that you think are important.
- Why was this letter written?
- What quote sums up the purpose of Washington's letter?
- List three things the letter tells you about the condition of the Continental soldiers at Valley Forge.

Teacher Directions

1. Students, in small teams, discuss the following questions.

- Why do you think the men did not run away (desert) from Valley Forge?
- Do you think the soldiers felt supported by the general population of the colonies? By Congress? Why or why not?
- If you were writing a letter home to your family from Valley Forge, what might you have said?



What do you
Think?



Moving Toward
Freedom



Connections

Teacher Directions

1. Distribute the Student Sheet: *Diversity at Valley Forge: Peter Francisco, the One-Man Army*.
2. Students read the Student Sheet and discuss it with teammates.

Teacher Directions

Use the following activities with your students.

Art — Students research the life and work of acclaimed artist W.B.T. Trego, whose painting “The March to Valley Forge” is one of the most famous depictions in American history. Trego, who was partially handicapped in his hands and feet from an overdose of medicine as a young child, painted by holding a brush in both hands.

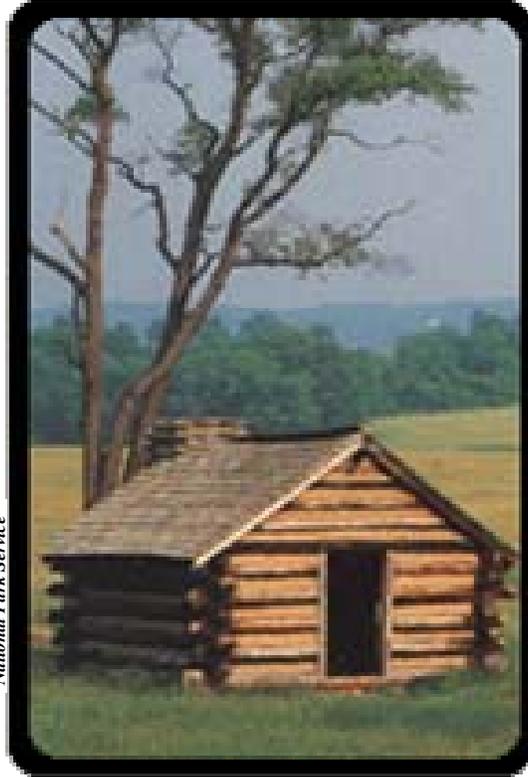
Science — Students research eighteenth century medicine. How were battlefield injuries treated? Why did physicians practice bloodletting?

Art/Media Center — Many of Washington’s soldiers lacked clothing and shoes because these items had been worn out from repeated wear and long marches. Students research the process of eighteenth century clothmaking and dying. Students recreate at least some of the steps involved (weaving, dying, hand sewing) in making clothes during this era.

Language Arts — Students read the following works of historical fiction set during the Revolutionary War: *My Brother Sam is Dead* by Christopher Collier and James Lincoln Collier; *Johnny Tremain* by Esther Forbes; *The Winter of Red Snow: The Revolutionary War Diary of Abigail Jane Stewart* (Dear America series) by Kristiana Gregory; or *The Journal of William Thomas Emerson: A Revolutionary War Patriot* (My Name Is America series) by Barry Denenberg.

Geography — Students examine a map to locate Valley Forge and Philadelphia, the new nation’s capital, to trace the movement of British and American troops during the fall and winter of 1777-78. Trace the British landing at Head of Elk, Maryland, and their march to capture Philadelphia. Washington marched from Newport, Delaware, and tried unsuccessfully to block Howe at the Brandywine Creek, and then marched to winter quarters at Valley Forge.

Suffering and Soldiering at Valley Forge



National Park Service

Log hut at Valley Forge



National Park Service

George Washington's headquarters at Valley Forge

The March to Valley Forge



Valley Forge Historical Society

This painting shows General Washington and some of his 12,000 men traveling to their winter quarters at Valley Forge. Painted in 1883, "The March to Valley Forge" is one of the most reproduced historical paintings in books and films about American history. After enduring this long march, the hungry, ragged, and exhausted men would sleep in tents until they could build their own log huts for shelter.

Washington's Plea for Help

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Diversity at Valley Forge: Peter Francisco, the One-Man Army



The Continental soldiers who shivered and drilled during the miserable winter at Valley Forge came from all classes and backgrounds; some were immigrants, others were native-born; some were wealthy, others were poor. They were young and old, slave and free, and from different religions. Let's meet one of these interesting men, Peter Francisco, the Portuguese orphan whom Washington called "a one-man Army."

Sailors found five-year-old Peter Francisco wandering on a dock in Virginia in 1765. The boy had probably been abandoned by sailors who had kidnapped him from his native Portuguese Azores to sell as an indentured servant. He spoke no English, wore a dirty, worn suit, and slept in a shack on the dock. The dock workers fed him scraps from their own small supplies. But a kindhearted judge—an uncle of Patrick Henry, the famous Patriot orator—took the boy in, fed him, and taught him the trade of blacksmithing.

Judge Winston must have fed young Peter well—he grew to be a giant of a man for those days, more than six feet tall and weighing over 250 pounds. He accompanied the judge to Second Virginia Convention, where the fourteen-year-old heard Patrick Henry deliver a passionate speech: "I know not what course others may take but as for me, give me liberty or give me death." That speech set Peter on fire! He wanted to enlist immediately, but the judge persuaded him to wait a year.

At age sixteen, Francisco enlisted and began a military career full of bravery, excitement, and danger. He suffered through the miserable winter at Valley Forge, where he was hospitalized for two months. He was wounded not once, but six times during the war. Even when his enlistment was up, he signed on to fight again. He survived many narrow escapes, and earned a reputation as the strongest man in America. Many stories of his Paul Bunyan-

like feats exist: that he once broke up a tavern fight by lifting the two brawlers into the air and banging them together until they stopped fighting; that he lifted a thousand-pound cannon to his shoulder and carried it off the field so that it wouldn't be captured by the enemy; and that he once speared a British cavalryman with his bayonet, lifted him from his horse, climbed onto the horse himself, escaped through enemy lines, and presented the horse to his exhausted commanding officer, thus saving his life. After one battle, General Washington ordered a special six-foot broadsword specially made for Francisco. While on a scouting mission, nine British soldiers surrounded him in a tavern to arrest him. When one soldier bent over to take Francisco's prized silver shoe buckles, the giant seized the soldier's sword, banged him on the head, and managed to overpower the remaining stunned soldiers. Even though he was wounded, Peter knocked a soldier from his saddle, took his horse, and escaped. No wonder people call him the most famous private soldier of the war!

While recovering from one wound, he became friends with the young French general, the Marquis de Lafayette. They remained friends the rest of their lives. Francisco saw the British General Cornwallis surrender at Yorktown, and then with the same determination he had demonstrated during the war, pursued what he had lacked in his youth: an education. He went to school, where his giant form dwarfed the children beside him, and in three years, he learned to read the classics. He eventually married, became a wealthy and well-respected member of Virginia society. When he died at age seventy-one, the Virginia House of Delegates adjourned and honored him with a public funeral. About Francisco, General George Washington is reputed to have said: "Without him we would have lost two crucial battles, perhaps the War, and with it our freedom. He was truly a One-Man Army."