

SSUSH4: ANALYZE THE IDEOLOGICAL, MILITARY, SOCIAL, AND DIPLOMATIC ASPECTS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION



ELEMENT C: Analyze George Washington as a military leader, including but not limited to the influence of Baron von Steuben, the Marquis de Lafayette, and the significance of Valley Forge in the creation of a professional military.

George Washington as a Military leader



- ❑ George Washington was appointed by the Continental Congress to be the Commander in Chief of the Continental Army in June 1775.
 - Washington had developed an excellent military reputation in the French and Indian War when he led British and Virginian forces out of the ambush that killed the British commander William Braddock.
 - After his appointment, Washington reorganized the Continental Army, secured additional equipment and supplies, and started a training program to turn inexperienced recruits into a professional military.
 - As a field general, Washington was not the most skilled commander. Despite losing many battles, Washington's strong personality and reputation garnered him the support and respect of American soldiers.



The Revolutionary Army

- ❑ The Revolutionary Armies were composed of two distinct groups – the state militias and the Continental Army.
 1. Militias were organized by each state and community and generally provided their own weapons and uniforms.
 - Enlistments were short term and training was poor among the militia groups that Washington had to manage as a supplement to the also struggling Continental Army.
 - The militia groups were notoriously unreliable in battle. Washington once remarked that militia units, “...come in you cannot tell how, go, you cannot tell when; and act, you cannot tell where; consume your provisions, exhaust your stores, and leave you at last in a critical moment.”
 - It was for these reasons that Washington had urged the Congress to provide for the creation of a standing army – the Continental Army.
 2. In the newly created Continental Army, enlistments were from one to three years.
 - Pay was meager. Rations were short and the army often had to scavenge to find supplies of food, fuel, and fodder.
 - Disease, brought on by close confinement combined with poor diet and sanitation, was sometimes a bigger danger than the British Army.
 - The most common camp killers were influenza, typhus, typhoid, and dysentery.
 - The new Continental Army, faced with these challenges, limited their deadly effects through the work of dedicated surgeons, capable nurses, a smallpox inoculation program, and camp sanitation regulations.



Washington's Leadership at Valley Forge

- ❑ Washington's skill at maintaining his force under trying conditions is best shown during the winter months of 1777-1778 when the American Army was encamped for the season at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.



- In the Campaign of 1777, the British had tried to combine their Canadian forces with their forces in the American colonies.
 - If successful, this plan would have split the American colonies north and south along the Hudson River.
 - The British failed to accomplish their goal when they were defeated in central New York at Saratoga.
- A third British force attacked and successfully captured Philadelphia in September 1777.
 - Washington attempted to re-capture Philadelphia but failed.
- With winter approaching, Washington withdrew the Continental Army into a winter encampment.
 - The winter weather was harsh and the soldiers lacked adequate supplies.
 - The army remained intact during the trying circumstances thanks to George Washington's strong leadership.
 - The critical success of the winter at Valley Forge proved to be the further development of the army.
- European soldiers such as the Prussian Baron von Steuben and the Marquis de Lafayette of France arrived at Valley Forge to assist Washington in making the winter months in camp productive by training the soldiers to be more effective when fighting resumed the following spring.

Leadership under Baron Freidrich Wilhelm Augustus von Steuben



- ❑ Baron Friedrich Wilhelm Augustus von Steuben had been recommended to Benjamin Franklin by the French Minister of War as someone who would be helpful in developing the American army.
 - Once in America, Steuben was especially instrumental in teaching close-order drill critical for the maneuver and fire tactics of eighteenth century warfare.
 - He created a military drill manual that was written in French. George Washington's close aide, Alexander Hamilton, translated the manual into English.
- ❑ Valley Forge essentially became a boot camp to develop the American soldiers into more knowledgeable and trained fighters.



Leadership under The Marquis de Lafayette



- ❑ The Marquis de Lafayette also assisted in the professionalization and training of American forces during the winter at Valley Forge.
 - He was a well-connected Frenchman who believed deeply in the American cause and volunteered to serve with Washington and helped to secure French resources.
 - Lafayette worked closely with George Washington and was very successful and brave during many battles of the American Revolution, including Brandywine Creek and Yorktown.
- ❑ The French aristocrat was a critical link between the American military and the French alliance.



LAFAYETTE WOUNDED AT THE BATTLE OF BRANDYWINE.

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Washington's Successes as Military Leader



- ❑ George Washington was a successful military commander because he recognized his force's limitations in training and supplies.
 - He forged a path to success based on the resources he had available and utilized the assistance of others supportive of the American cause.
 - The winter at Valley Forge could have easily dissolved the American force as enlistments were coming to an end and desertion was also a great possibility for many soldiers given the trying conditions and limited success the Continental Army had experienced.
 - Washington's great leadership ability is evident in not only convincing soldiers to remain in the military, but to use the winter productively through training and assistance from the Baron von Steuben and the Marquis de Lafayette.