The Trenton Surprise

Read how Washington led a risky attack against trained troops.

5.C.4.4.B "Describe the Continental Army's victory at Trenton, exemplified by Washington's military leadership against professional British and Hessian troops."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two choices Washington made, circle who defended Trenton, and draw a box around a sentence that tells why the victory mattered.

A Winter Victory

1. In late 1776, the Continental Army was in trouble. It had lost battles and retreated across New Jersey. Many soldiers were tired, and some planned to leave when their enlistments ended. Across the Delaware River, Hessian soldiers hired by Britain guarded Trenton, New Jersey. Hessians were trained professionals. Washington needed a victory against Britain's forces to give his army new hope.

2. On the night of December 25, Washington led his soldiers across the icy Delaware River. Freezing rain and snow slowed the boats, and the crossing took longer than planned. Still, Washington kept the attack moving. He led his troops toward Trenton and split them into two groups to enter the town by different roads. The Hessian troops did not expect an attack that morning.

3. On December 26, the Continental Army surprised the Hessians at Trenton. After a short fight, the Hessian force surrendered. The Americans captured many soldiers and supplies. British professional troops were not the defenders at Trenton, but the Hessians were fighting for Britain. Washington's bold plan showed that his army could beat trained troops and gave Americans new hope.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Washington's choice to cross the Delaware at night help his army at Trenton?

2. What made Washington's crossing difficult, and what did he do despite the delay?

3. How did Washington plan for his soldiers to enter Trenton?

4. Why did defeating the Hessians give the Continental Army hope?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence letter to a friend who thinks the Continental Army cannot beat Britain's professional troops. Describe Washington's choices, identify who fought at Trenton, and explain why the victory mattered.

ANSWER KEY

The Trenton Surprise

GRADE 5 · 5.C.4.4.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two choices Washington made, circle who defended Trenton, and draw a box around a sentence that tells why the victory mattered. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Washington's choice to cross the Delaware at night help his army at Trenton?	**The night crossing helped his army reach Trenton before the Hessians expected an attack.**
2	What made Washington's crossing difficult, and what did he do despite the delay?	**Freezing rain and snow slowed the boats, but Washington kept the attack moving.**
3	How did Washington plan for his soldiers to enter Trenton?	**He split his soldiers into two groups that entered by different roads.**
4	Why did defeating the Hessians give the Continental Army hope?	**The victory showed that Washington's army could beat trained troops fighting for Britain.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

You think our army cannot beat Britain's trained forces. On a freezing night, Washington led us across the Delaware, then split us into two groups to enter Trenton by different roads. We surprised the Hessians, trained soldiers hired by Britain, and they surrendered. This victory showed that Washington's leadership could help our army beat professional troops and gave us hope.

Accept descriptions that connect Washington's decisions to the surprise attack and the victory. Students should identify the defenders at Trenton as Hessians fighting for Britain, not British troops.