Words That Strengthened

How one essay helped people face a difficult winter

5.C.4.4.E "Explain the significance of Thomas Paine's The Crisis in bolstering patriot morale among the public and the military."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two hardships Americans faced, then circle one way Paine's essay encouraged the public and one way it encouraged soldiers.

A Message in a Hard Winter

1. In December 1776, the American fight for independence looked shaky. British forces had pushed George Washington's army out of New York and across New Jersey. Many soldiers were cold, tired, and nearing the end of their enlistments. Some people wondered if the colonies could win. Writer Thomas Paine answered that fear with the first essay in *The American Crisis*, often called *The Crisis*.

2. Paine wrote, "These are the times that try men's souls." He did not pretend the struggle was easy. Instead, he said that staying loyal through hard times made the cause more valuable. His plain language helped ordinary readers understand his message: freedom was worth the effort. Printers shared the essay, so people away from the battlefield could find reasons to keep supporting independence.

3. Soldiers also heard Paine's words. Washington had the first essay read aloud to his troops before their victory at Trenton in December 1776. The essay urged them not to give up when victory seemed far away. Paine's writing could not feed or warm an army, but it gave both soldiers and the public a reason to believe their hard work still mattered.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Paine use the hard times Americans faced to make his message encouraging?

2. How could the essay help people who were not on the battlefield?

3. Why might hearing the essay have mattered to Washington's tired soldiers before Trenton?

4. Paine's essay could not feed or warm the army. Why was it still important to both soldiers and the public?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are a neighbor who has heard Paine's essay in December 1776. Write a three-sentence note to a soldier's family explaining how it could give hope to both people at home and troops, using one fact from the passage but no quotation.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 5 · 5.C.4.4.E

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two hardships Americans faced, then circle one way Paine's essay encouraged the public and one way it encouraged soldiers. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Paine use the hard times Americans faced to make his message encouraging?	**He admitted the struggle was hard but said staying loyal through it made the cause more valuable.**
2	How could the essay help people who were not on the battlefield?	**Printers shared it with ordinary readers, giving them a reason to keep supporting independence.**
3	Why might hearing the essay have mattered to Washington's tired soldiers before Trenton?	**It urged them not to give up, even when victory seemed far away.**
4	Paine's essay could not feed or warm the army. Why was it still important to both soldiers and the public?	**It helped both groups believe their efforts for independence still mattered.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Dear neighbors, Paine admits these are hard days, but he shows why staying with the cause matters. His words, read aloud to Washington's tired soldiers, may help them face another fight. We at home can keep supporting independence instead of giving up.

Accept responses that explain how Paine's message strengthened both public and military morale, even if students use different wording. The note should have three sentences, include a passage fact, and avoid quoting it.