Congress Takes Charge

Four decisions that shaped the Revolutionary War

8.C.1.4.A "Describe how the congress successfully formed the Continental Army, directed military strategy, established a national currency, and negotiated a foreign alliance with France."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB As you read, underline four actions Congress took to support the war. Number them 1 through 4 in this order: army, strategy, currency, and alliance.

Decisions for a New Nation

1. When fighting broke out near Boston in 1775, the colonies had separate militias, but no shared army. The Second Continental Congress voted to create the Continental Army on June 14 and chose George Washington as its commander the next day. Congress took responsibility for raising and supplying the force, even though it could not order colonies to send men. Washington now had a single command for troops from different colonies. Creating an army turned local resistance into a coordinated war effort, but keeping that army in the field required more decisions.

2. Congress did more than choose a general. It directed strategy by approving an invasion of British-held Canada in 1775, hoping to weaken British power and win support there. That campaign failed, showing that congressional plans did not always succeed on the battlefield. To pay soldiers and buy supplies, Congress also issued paper money called Continental dollars beginning in 1775. The bills were intended for use across the states, giving the new government a common currency. Congress printed more bills than it could support, however, and their value fell sharply during the war.

3. Congress also sought help overseas. After the American victory at Saratoga in 1777, France became more willing to join the fight against Britain. American representatives, including Benjamin Franklin, negotiated with French officials, and Congress approved treaties with France in 1778. The Treaty of Alliance promised military cooperation; another treaty opened trade between the two nations. French money, weapons, troops, and warships strengthened the American war effort. Congress could make these choices for all the states, connecting an army, military plans, money, and foreign support into one national effort.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Congress form a shared army, and how did that change the colonies' war effort?

2. Describe one way Congress directed military strategy. What was the result of that decision?

3. How did Congress establish a common currency, and what problem did that currency face?

4. How did Congress secure an alliance with France, and how did France help the war effort?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence news report dated 1778 for readers in one of the states. Choose two different actions by Congress from the passage, explain how each supported the war effort, and show how the two actions worked together.

ANSWER KEY

Congress Takes Charge

GRADE 8 · 8.C.1.4.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

As you read, underline four actions Congress took to support the war. Number them 1 through 4 in this order: army, strategy, currency, and alliance. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Congress form a shared army, and how did that change the colonies' war effort?	**Congress created the Continental Army and chose George Washington to command it. Troops from different colonies could then fight under one command.**
2	Describe one way Congress directed military strategy. What was the result of that decision?	**Congress approved an invasion of British-held Canada in 1775, hoping to weaken Britain and win support there. The campaign failed.**
3	How did Congress establish a common currency, and what problem did that currency face?	**Congress issued paper Continental dollars for use across the states. The bills lost value as Congress printed more than it could support.**
4	How did Congress secure an alliance with France, and how did France help the war effort?	**American representatives negotiated with France, and Congress approved the 1778 Treaty of Alliance. France provided money, weapons, troops, and warships.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In 1778, Congress is holding together an army led by George Washington, bringing soldiers from several states under one command. It has also issued Continental dollars to help pay troops and buy supplies, though the bills have lost value. Funding a shared army helps the states fight as one force instead of relying only on separate militias.

Accept any two distinct congressional actions if the report accurately explains each one's role and connects them. The report should contain exactly three sentences and make sense as a report written in 1778.