A Last Appeal

Read how Congress sought peace while fighting continued.

8.C.1.4.B "Explain the purpose and outcome of the Olive Branch Petition as the colonists' final attempt to avoid war by affirming loyalty yet seeking the king's intervention."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline words that show loyalty to the king and circle what Congress asked him to do. Write 1 beside the reason Congress sent the petition and 2 beside the result of the king's response.

The Olive Branch Petition

(1) Gunfire had already erupted at Lexington and Concord in April 1775. By summer, colonial forces and British troops were fighting near Boston, yet many colonial leaders still hoped to repair their relationship with Britain. The Second Continental Congress faced a hard choice: prepare to defend the colonies or try another appeal to the king. It did both. In July 1775, Congress sent King George III the Olive Branch Petition, named for a traditional symbol of peace. The document was Congress's final major attempt to avoid a wider war with Britain.

(2) The petition did not declare independence. Instead, its writers described the colonists as loyal subjects who wanted their ties with Britain preserved. They blamed the crisis largely on policies made by Parliament and British officials, not on the king himself. Congress asked George III to step in and help settle the conflict, including finding a way to address colonial complaints. Its message carried two ideas at once: the colonists respected the king, but they believed the current policies threatened their rights. They hoped his intervention would restore peace.

(3) The appeal failed. George III refused to consider the petition and did not act as the mediator Congress had hoped for. In August 1775, he issued a proclamation declaring the colonies in rebellion. His response left Congress without the royal intervention it had requested, while fighting continued. The petition shows why loyalty and resistance could appear together in 1775: Congress could oppose British policies and still ask the king to help. When that request went unanswered, a peaceful settlement through the king became less likely, although independence was not declared until 1776.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did Congress send the petition even though fighting had already begun?

2. How did the petition pair loyalty to the king with a request for change?

3. Why did Congress appeal to the king instead of declaring independence in the petition?

4. How did the king's response affect the petition's goal of avoiding a wider war?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are a royal adviser in 1775 offering the king an alternative to his actual response. Write four sentences: explain the petition's loyal purpose and request, propose a different response, and predict how it might have affected the chance of peace without claiming peace was certain.

ANSWER KEY

A Last Appeal

GRADE 8 · 8.C.1.4.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline words that show loyalty to the king and circle what Congress asked him to do. Write 1 beside the reason Congress sent the petition and 2 beside the result of the king's response. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did Congress send the petition even though fighting had already begun?	**Congress still hoped the king could help repair relations with Britain and prevent a wider war.**
2	How did the petition pair loyalty to the king with a request for change?	**It called the colonists loyal subjects who wanted to preserve their ties with Britain, while asking the king to help settle the conflict and address their complaints.**
3	Why did Congress appeal to the king instead of declaring independence in the petition?	**Congress still hoped to preserve its relationship with Britain and believed the king might intervene to restore peace.**
4	How did the king's response affect the petition's goal of avoiding a wider war?	**George III refused to consider the petition and declared the colonies in rebellion. Without his intervention, a peaceful settlement through the king became less likely.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The colonists sent this petition because they still hoped to avoid a wider war while remaining loyal to you. They ask you to step in and help settle their complaints about British policies. Instead of refusing to consider the petition, you could meet with colonial representatives and hear their concerns. Such a meeting might make a peaceful settlement more likely, though it could not guarantee an end to the fighting.

Accept responses that accurately connect the petition's loyal appeal to its request for the king's intervention and explain that his refusal made peace through him less likely. For the open task, accept plausible alternatives that do not present peace as certain.