

Battle of Brandywine Creek Reading Comprehension

Name _____

Washington's Plan

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania was the center of American government in 1777. On September 11, well into the Revolutionary War, George Washington got wind that the British were mounting an attack on Philadelphia in an attempt to occupy the Patriot capital. The loss of the city would have terrible consequences for the Patriot cause, so Washington began mobilizing his forces along Brandywine Creek to stop the British advance. He stationed troops along fords - shallow areas along the river that could be crossed by wading. Expecting a head-on attack from the British, he placed the bulk of his forces on the high ground of Chadds Ford. If he could force the fight to Chadds Ford, Washington thought, then his troops would have an advantage and could easily defeat the British. The coming battle would feature the highest number of soldiers in the entire war and would become the longest single-day battle as well.

Howe's Army Crushes Washington's

Washington assumed that British General Sir William Howe would plan a frontal assault; but instead, Howe sent General Wilhelm von Kynphausen and some of his troops to fight the Americans at Chadds Ford, but he also sent a portion of his army upstream of Brandywine Creek - to a ford that Washington had not guarded. This weak link allowed the British forces to easily cross the creek and surprise the Americans from the right side. Washington, not expecting the attack, sent a portion of his troops to the area, but it was too late. The right flank of the army crumbled under Howe's surprise attack, and the front fell to General von Kynphausen's army.

Philadelphia Falls; Congress Flees

Washington sent part of the army to guard from the back, allowing the other part to escape to the northeast. When night fell, the rest of the Continental Army retreated, led by Marquis de Lafayette, who was wounded in the battle. Patriot Generals Nathanael Greene and Casimir Pulaski held off Howe's column long enough to allow the retreat. The Continental Congress was forced to flee Lancaster, and then York, before the British arrived in Philadelphia a few days later, occupying it easily. The American army also moved its military supplies to Reading, Pennsylvania, ahead of the British arrival. The Battle of Brandywine Creek was a staggering defeat for the Continental Army. Washington's army plummeted in size from 15,000 to 6,000 after the battle.

1. Which of the following pairings of general with army is false?

- a. William Howe → British Army
- b. George Washington → Continental Army
- c. Marquis de Lafayette → French Army
- d. Wilhelm von Kynhausen → British Army

2. Which of the following best describes a ford?

- a. Too deep to swim in
- b. Low-level place for easy crossing
- c. High waves and wind
- d. Light rain on a riverbank

3. Which of the following best explains the American defeat at Brandywine Creek?

- a. The British preyed on an American vulnerability.
- b. The Americans were heavily outnumbered from the start.
- c. George Washington failed to give his troops clear instructions.
- d. The British overcame the Americans with sheer strength of numbers.

4. Which statement about the aftermath of Brandywine is true?

- a. The American army lost a key city and all of its troops.
- b. The American army lost a city, but retained its manpower.
- c. The American army successfully protected Philadelphia.
- d. The American army lost all its troops, but saved the city.

5. Which statement best explains why the Americans moved their Congress to York?

- a. To make political decisions from a higher vantage point
- b. To turn Philadelphia into a military storage city
- c. To prevent their government from falling to the British
- d. To strategize for a final attack against the British

6. Which of the following best describes Washington's decisions during the Battle of Brandywine Creek?

- a. Assertive, but cowardly
- b. Strategic, but short-sighted
- c. Strong-willed, but fearful
- d. Decisive, but reckless

7. Which event happened last?

- a. Washington's army shrinks in size to 6,000.
- b. Washington's army loses the fight at Chadds Ford.
- c. The British plan an attack on Philadelphia.
- d. Sir William Howe leads an attack on the army's right flank.

Answers:

1. C

2. B

3. A

4. B

5. C

6. B

7. A