

Battles in New York Reading Comprehension

After the British Pyrrhic (costly) victory at Bunker Hill in 1775, British General William Howe decided a lethal blow needed to be delivered to the Patriot cause. Howe proposed to launch an attack on New York City using tens of thousands of troops. He began mobilizing the massive fleet in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Meanwhile, American Commander in Chief George Washington had ordered General Charles Lee to prepare for the defense of the city. That June, Howe and 9,000 troops set sail for New York. Howe's army was to be met in the city by additional regiments of German and British troops. Reinforcements from Halifax led by Howe's brother would follow them.

Howe's initial fleet arrived in New York Harbor and began landing troops on Staten Island. On August 27, 1776, British forces engaged the Americans at the Battle of Brooklyn Heights (also called the Battle of Long Island). Howe's army successfully outflanked Washington's, eventually causing the Patriots, after some resistance, to withdraw to Manhattan under the cover of darkness, thereby avoiding a potentially costly siege at the hands of the British.

After failed peace negotiations, the British Army next struck at Lower Manhattan, where 12,000 British troops quickly overtook the city. Most of the Continental Army had retreated to defensible positions at Harlem Heights and then to White Plains, well north of the city, but some soldiers remained at Fort Washington in Manhattan. Howe's army chased Washington and the Continental Army into positions north of White Plains before returning to Manhattan. In Manhattan, Howe set his sights on Fort Washington, the last Patriot stronghold in Manhattan. In the furious, three-pronged attack, British forces easily took the fort, capturing nearly 3,000 American prisoners and at least 34 cannons in the process. Most of the prisoners were taken to squalid British prison ships where all but 800 or so died of disease or starvation. General Washington, now at Fort Lee, directly across the Hudson River from Fort Washington, witnessed the events that happened.

Following the fall of Fort Washington, British forces ferried up the Hudson River in barges toward Fort Lee. Washington ordered the evacuation of the fort's 2,000 soldiers across the Hackensack River at New Bridge Landing. Washington would lead his army clear across the Delaware River into Pennsylvania. Following the events in and around New York City, the outlook was bleak for the Continental Army. Morale in the army was extremely low, enlistments were ending, and desertions were commonplace. Even General Washington admitted his army's chances of success were slim. Meanwhile, General Howe ordered his army into their winter quarters that December and established several outposts from New York City south to New Brunswick, New Jersey.

1.) Where was Howe's massive fleet mobilized for the attack on New York?

- a.) Boston
- b.) Canada
- c.) New York
- d.) New Jersey

2.) Which of the following would NOT participate in Howe's attack on New York?

- a.) German soldiers
- b.) Soldiers led by Howe's brother
- c.) British soldiers
- d.) General Charles Lee

3.) What happened at the Battle of Brooklyn Heights?

- a.) The Americans withdrew.
- b.) The British withdrew.
- c.) George Washington was captured.
- d.) A costly siege

4.) Why were Patriot forces at Harlem Heights?

- a.) It was a position they thought they could defend.
- b.) Washington's headquarters were located there.
- c.) They were hiding from the British.
- d.) They were about to surrender.

5.) Which of the following was NOT true about Fort Washington?

- a.) It was the last Patriot stronghold in Manhattan.
- b.) It was attacked by General Howe and British soldiers.
- c.) It had been completely evacuated by George Washington.
- d.) British forces easily took the fort.

6.) What does the adjective "squalid" mean as written in the following sentence:

Most of the prisoners were taken to **squalid** British prison ships where all but 800 or so died of disease or starvation.

- a.) Dangerous
- b.) Crowded
- c.) Unsanitary
- d.) Honored

7.) How did George Washington likely feel watching the events at Fort Washington?

- a.) Proud
- b.) Honored
- c.) Desperate
- d.) Dizzy

8.) Why did George Washington evacuate Fort Lee?

- a.) Because the British would likely attack it.
- b.) There were no more supplies inside.
- c.) He needed to try to rescue the prisoners.
- d.) They had just defeated the British at Fort Washington.

9.) Where would Washington's army eventually end up?

- a.) New York
- b.) New Jersey
- c.) Fort Lee
- d.) Pennsylvania

10.) Which of the following best expresses the effects of the Battles in New York?

- a.) The Patriots were in a good position.
- b.) The outlook was very bleak for the success of the Patriots.
- c.) Morale within the army increased.
- d.) The size of the army grew.