



Caesar Rodney Printable Reading Comprehension

Grade Level: 5 | Word Count: 440 | Lexile 1020

Early Life

Caesar Rodney was born on October 7, 1728, in Kent County, Delaware. He grew up on a family farm after his father passed away when Caesar was young. Although he had little formal education, Rodney learned through reading and working hard. He became interested in public service and politics early in his life.

Career and Role in Politics

Rodney began his career as a sheriff and later held several important government positions, such as judge and member of the Delaware Assembly. He was known for his strong sense of duty and leadership. During the years leading up to the American Revolution, Rodney became a supporter of independence from Britain. He attended the First and Second Continental Congress meetings, where leaders from the colonies discussed how to respond to British rule.

The Ride to Independence

On the night of July 1, 1776, Caesar Rodney received an urgent message while in Delaware. The Delaware delegation at the Continental Congress was deadlocked on the vote for independence—one member supported it, and the other opposed. Rodney, who had been home due to illness, knew his vote would decide the issue. Despite suffering from cancer and asthma, he mounted his horse and rode more than 70 miles through pounding rain, strong winds, and muddy roads. The journey lasted almost overnight and included dangerous conditions, including lightning storms. Rodney arrived in Philadelphia on July 2, just in time to cast his vote for independence. His decision broke the tie and ensured that Delaware supported the Declaration of Independence, making his ride one of the most dramatic and important acts in America's fight for freedom.

Later Years and Legacy

Rodney continued serving his state during the war, even while suffering from poor health due to cancer and asthma. He became president (governor) of Delaware from 1778 to 1781, working to support the Continental Army. Caesar Rodney died on June 26, 1784. Today, he is remembered as a patriot who risked everything for freedom, and his famous ride is celebrated as a symbol of courage and determination.

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1. Which statement **BEST explains why Caesar Rodney's ride was so important?**

- A. It helped deliver supplies to the Continental Army.
- B. It broke a tie that allowed Delaware to support independence.
- C. It inspired the creation of the Continental Congress.
- D. It convinced Britain to end the war immediately.

2. What can you infer about Caesar Rodney's character from his actions on July 1–2, 1776?

- A. He valued personal health over duty.
- B. He was willing to risk everything for his country.
- C. He disliked working with others in politics.
- D. He avoided dangerous situations whenever possible.

3. Which sentence **BEST states the main idea of the passage?**

- A. Caesar Rodney faced health struggles throughout his life.
- B. Caesar Rodney made a historic ride that helped secure America's independence.
- C. Delaware was the last colony to agree to independence.
- D. Caesar Rodney served as president of Delaware after the Revolution.

4. How did Rodney's early life prepare him for leadership?

- A. He attended the best schools in the colonies.
- B. He gained experience as a soldier during the French and Indian War.
- C. He developed responsibility through work and self-education.
- D. He studied law in Europe.

5. Which detail from the text **BEST supports the idea that Rodney showed determination despite obstacles?**

- A. He grew up on a family farm after his father died.
- B. He served as governor of Delaware from 1778 to 1781.
- C. He rode through storms and illness to cast his vote for independence.
- D. He attended the First and Second Continental Congress meetings.

6. Compare Rodney's role during the American Revolution to his role later in life. What is one similarity and one difference?

- A. Similarity: He worked to support independence.
Difference: He later became president of Delaware during the war.
- B. Similarity: He focused only on his health.
Difference: He refused to hold public office after 1776.
- C. Similarity: He stayed away from political decisions.
Difference: He later fought in battles as a soldier.
- D. Similarity: He relied on others to make important choices.
Difference: He avoided public office after the Revolution.

7. Why is Caesar Rodney remembered as a patriot today?

- A. He wrote the Declaration of Independence.
- B. He risked his health and safety to ensure a vote for independence.
- C. He created the Continental Army.
- D. He helped Britain and the colonies reach peace.

Answer Key

1. **B** – It broke a tie that allowed Delaware to support independence.
2. **B** – He was willing to risk everything for his country.
3. **B** – Caesar Rodney made a historic ride that helped secure America's independence.
4. **C** – He developed responsibility through work and self-education.
5. **C** – He rode through storms and illness to cast his vote for independence.
6. **A** – Similarity: He worked to support independence. Difference: He later became president of Delaware during the war.
7. **B** – He risked his health and safety to ensure a vote for independence.