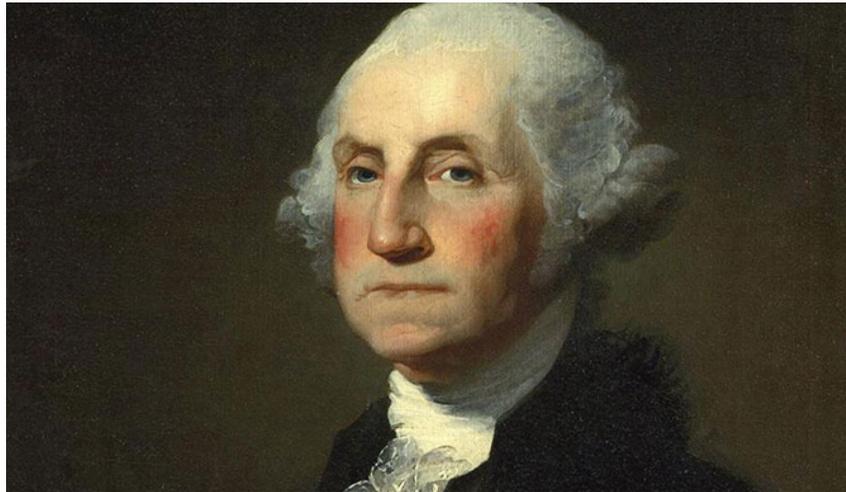


George Washington, Victories in War and Peace

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Description

George Washington is often called the father of his nation because he was the first president of the United States. However, Washington's leadership qualities were best displayed during his command of the Continental Army during the American Revolution. This story is produced by NBC Learn in partnership with Pearson.

Keywords

George Washington, Founding Fathers, American Revolution, Washington Crossing, Delaware River, Pennsylvania, Reenactment, Reenactor, Virginia, French and Indian War, Second Continental Congress, Declaration of Independence, British, British Army, New York City, New York, Trenton, New Jersey, Hessians, Battle of Trenton, Continental Army, Independence, Constitution, President, Commander in Chief, Presidency, "Father of the Nation"

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CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE

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Transcript

George Washington, Victories in War and Peace

SHIBA RUSSELL, reporting:

Every year on December 25th, Christmas Day, hundreds gather in Washington Crossing, Pennsylvania to witness a reenactment of one of the most famous events in American history-- George Washington's crossing of the Delaware River.

FEMALE RE-ENACTOR: It helps to give you a greater appreciation for the history, and a greater understanding for what they went through to forge our nation

RUSSELL: George Washington was born in Virginia and grew up with dreams of becoming an officer in the British army. At 22 years old, he served as a commander during the French and Indian War, but his experiences left him disillusioned with the British military. When the American Revolution broke out in 1775, the delegates of the Second Continental Congress elected Washington to lead the American forces. The year 1776 would prove to be one of the toughest for America's cause, despite the Second Continental Congress' Declaration of Independence on July 4th. To reinforce the seriousness of the cause, Washington told his men, "The fate of unborn millions will now depend, under God, on the courage and conduct of this army." Vastly outmanned and outmaneuvered, Washington's army suffered crushing losses early in the war.

The British gained control of New York City, forcing Washington and his remaining troops to retreat through New Jersey. With his competency as a leader in question, and his troops in a state of near mutiny, General Washington knew he had to continue to retreat to preserve the army. He was desperate for an opportunity to make a stand that would keep both his army and the dream of American independence alive.

MALE RE-ENACTOR #1: What's the word sir?

MALE RE-ENACTOR #2: Victory or death?

RUSSELL: After escaping to Pennsylvania, and with his army nearly depleted, Washington hatched an idea of a surprise attack across the Delaware River to the nearby town of Trenton, New Jersey. There, Hessian soldiers, or mercenary troops fighting for the British, held a garrison.

On Christmas night, 1776, Washington and his army began to cross. As the weather took a serious turn for the worse, it took all night to row the 2,400 troops, 18 cannons, and several horses across. Once on the other side, they still had a nine mile march to Trenton. Along the way, the snow was tinted red from the bloody feet of the soldiers with no shoes, and two men died from exposure.

By midmorning, the Americans were in place around Trenton, and Washington gave the order to attack. The Hessians were completely taken by surprise and were soundly defeated, with a couple dozen Hessian casualties and nearly 900 of their soldiers captured. During the battle, not a single American soldier was killed.

The Battle of Trenton was a turning point for the Continental Army. It gave hope to Congress and the fighting men that the Americans could win their fight for independence, and it gave an undying confidence in Washington.

Through seven more years of war, the Continental Army persevered to win the American Revolution. George Washington became a symbol of leadership to the new nation, and was later elected to lead the Constitutional Convention that produced the U.S. Constitution. In 1789, he was unanimously elected the first President of the United States of America.

It is because of his decisive leadership through war and peace that George Washington is still remembered as the father of the nation.