

## **The Times that Try Men's Souls**

It is 1778. You are a British intelligence officer who reports directly to King George III. Over the last two years he has been told by his generals many times that the American rebel fighters will surrender “soon” – yet they fight on. You have managed to obtain secret documents from the rebels. You intercepted an order from General Washington and two diaries – one from a soldier and one from a doctor. You are to analyze these documents and prepare a report for the King explaining the condition of the rebel soldiers and on the likelihood that they are near surrender.

**Essential Question: What was life like for patriot soldiers during the first two years of the war?**

### **Document 1**

#### ***General Orders of George Washington***

Head Quarters, New York, August 3rd 1776.  
Parole Uxbridge. Countersign Virginia

The Troops may have an opportunity of attending public worship, as well as take some rest after the great fatigue they have gone through; General Washington is sorry to be informed that the foolish, and wicked practice, of profane cursing and swearing (a Vice heretofore little known in an American Army) is growing into fashion; he hopes the officers will, by example, as well as influence, endeavor to check it, and that both they, and the men will reflect, that we can have little hopes of the blessing of Heaven on our Arms, if we insult it by our impiety, and folly; added to this, it is a vice so mean and low, without any temptation, that every man of sense, and character, detests and despises it.

**1. What does Washington say about the condition of his soldiers?**

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**2. What does he want them to change?**

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## Document 2

### On Whippings (Keeping Order in the Ranks)

#### *The 1777 Continental Army Diary of Sergeant John Smith, First Rhode Island Regiment*

Septemr. the 2d -- Seven Searjts. 5 Corporals & one Privat was tried by a General Court Martial for Behaving Disorderly -- the Corporals & Privats was reprimanded & dismisd but one Henery Forsigtte was tried & sentenced to receive 100 lashes & sent on board one of the ships to serve during the war -- John fly for disserting was tried & sentenced to receive 100 lashes on his naked back.

Septemr. 4th -- James Gduggen was tried by a Genll. Court Martial for attempting to fire his gun at a party of men as they was coming in from work thinking their was one who had threatned to kill his wife was their -- he was sentenced to sit on the gallows half an hour & to be whipt 50 lashes on his naked back at the gallows

Saturday the 13th -- three men belonging to Col. Greens Regiment. was whipt for being absent on muster day & Frances Baptist for staying out of quarters all night received 30 stripes lashes [the] other[s] 25 each & William Telley was tied to a tree naked & to stand ten minits.

[October 2] -- in the morning Sunday we arose by day llight & march'd 6 or 7 miles & halted & ate what we had to eat & while we halted here Col. Angel had three of his men punished for [offense omitted] -- each whipt 100 lashes.

**3. How common does whipping soldiers seem to be? Explain.**

**4. Why do you think they would whip their own soldiers?**

### **Document 3:**

#### **On Marching and Camping - The Daily Grind**

##### ***The 1777 Continental Army Diary of Sergeant John Smith, First Rhode Island Regiment***

[October 8] -- we turnd out early & eat some food & marchd 6 or 7 miles & halted to incamp -- we unloaded our waggons & began to camp when a message came to General Varnum which causd a stop to be put to our encamping untill further orders -- we march'd from Plumsted to this town which is New Britian or night town this day -- we halted till almost night then we marchd 7 or 8 miles back to our old ground and lodged this night in the same ground again.

[October 11] -- we halted at Mount Holley & drew fategue rum -- this town is 7 miles from burlington -- then we march'd through Mores town 9 miles farther -- then we march'd to Hatten feild & called up the people & made fires & rested a while for we were very much fategued with marching -- then we marchd again for the Red Bank -- we march'd 6 miles & made another halt & drew half gill of rum per man -- then marched into the fort about 4 miles farther & pitched our tents & lodged quiet this night -- their has bin a continuel fire of cannon all day between the enemy & our Galleys [ships] in the river.

**5. After marching so many miles on October 8 where did the army end up camping?**

**6. How many miles did they march on October 11<sup>th</sup>?**

## Document 4

### Surviving the Winter at Valley Forge

#### *The 1777 Continental Army Diary of Sergeant John Smith, First Rhode Island Regiment*

the 19<sup>th</sup> -- in the morning we marchd to our winter quarters [at Valley Forge] -- we marchd all day without food having nothing to Eat -- we went into the woods & slept in huts as usual.

the 21<sup>st</sup> Sunday -- we had warm pleasant weather & nothing to eat but a little flour made with coarse Indian meal & a little flour mixd with it -- at night the fortune of war [i.e., foraging] put into our hands a poor sheep which we roasted & boild which gave the company a good supper which we ate & turnd in

27<sup>th</sup> -- Clowday weather -- in the night it began to snow very fast & continued snowing untill day -- this was the Second Snow we had this winter -- we heard that Genll. Gates was in possession of New york & had took 700 prisoners

31<sup>st</sup> -- Clear & Cold -- we lay last night in huts without any roofs & on the frost & snow -- we suffered much with cold this night

#### **7. How would you describe life in the camp at Valley Forge?**

**Document 5**

**A Long Day**

*Valley Forge, 1777-1778. Diary of Surgeon Albigenice Waldo*

December 10. - Lay still.

**8. This is the surgeon's only entry for the day. What do you think was happening to lead to him writing this?**

After answering the question above highlight the box below and change the text color to black to read his entry for the next day.

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## Document 6:

### Despair

#### *Valley Forge, 1777-1778. Diary of Surgeon Albigen Wald*

December 14 - Prisoners & deserters are continually coming in. The army which has been surprisingly healthy so far, now begins to grow sickly from the continued fatigues they have suffered this campaign. Yet they still show a spirit of contentment not to be expected from so young troops. I am sick, discontented, and out of humour. Poor food, hard lodging, Cold weather, fatigue, nasty cloaths, nasty cookery, vomit half my time, the Devil's in it. I can't endure it. Why are we sent here to starve and freeze?

There comes a soldier, his bare feet are seen through his worn out shoes, his legs nearly naked from the tattered remains of an only pair of stockings, his breeches not sufficient to cover his nakedness, his shirt hanging in strings, his hair dishevelled, his face meagre; his whole appearance pictures a person forsaken & discouraged. He comes, and cries "I am sick, my feet lame, my legs are sore, my body covered with this tormenting itch. My cloaths are worn out, My former activity is exhausted by fatigue, hunger & cold, I feel fast I shall soon be no more! and all the reward I shall get will be? 'Poor Will is dead.'"

People who live at home in Luxury and Ease, quietly possessing their habitations, enjoying their wives & families in peace, have but a very faint Idea of the unpleasing sensations, and continual anxiety the man endures who is in a camp. These same people are willing we should suffer everything for their benefit & advantage, and yet are the first to condemn us for not doing more!!

#### **9. Describe the surgeon's life at Valley Forge.**

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#### **10. How does the surgeon feel about the people he and the soldiers are fighting for?**

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## **Document 7:**

### **To be a Prisoner of the British**

*Valley Forge, 1777-1778. Diary of Surgeon Albigen Waldo*

Describes condition of those kept as Prisoners by the British

Dec. 20, Our brethren who are unfortunately prisoners in Philadelphia meet with the most savage and inhumane treatments that Barbarians are capable of inflicting. Our enemies do not knock them in the head or burn them with torches to death, or flee them alive, or gradually dismember them till they die, which is customary among savages & barbarians. No, they are worse by far. They suffer them to starve, to linger out their lives in extreem hunger. One of these poor unhappy men, drove to the last extreem by the rage of hunger, eat his own fingers up to the first joint from the hand, before he died. Others eat the clay, the lime, the stones of the prison walls. Several who died in the yard had pieces of bark, wood, clay & stones in their mouths, which the ravings of hunger had caused them to take in for food in the last agonies of life ! " These are thy mercies, O Britain !"

#### **11. What was life like for rebel soldiers imprisoned by the British?**

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## **Closing**

Write a field report to King George giving your opinion on the state of the rebel army. Describe their overall condition and tell him if you think they are likely to surrender as he has been told. Make sure your report is detailed. As a military officer reporting to the king you are expected to provide information that is well supported with evidence and is presented in a clear and complete manner.