

Read the article "George Washington's Legacy" before answering Numbers 1 through 8.

GEORGE WASHINGTON'S LEGACY

BY GEORGE ROCHE

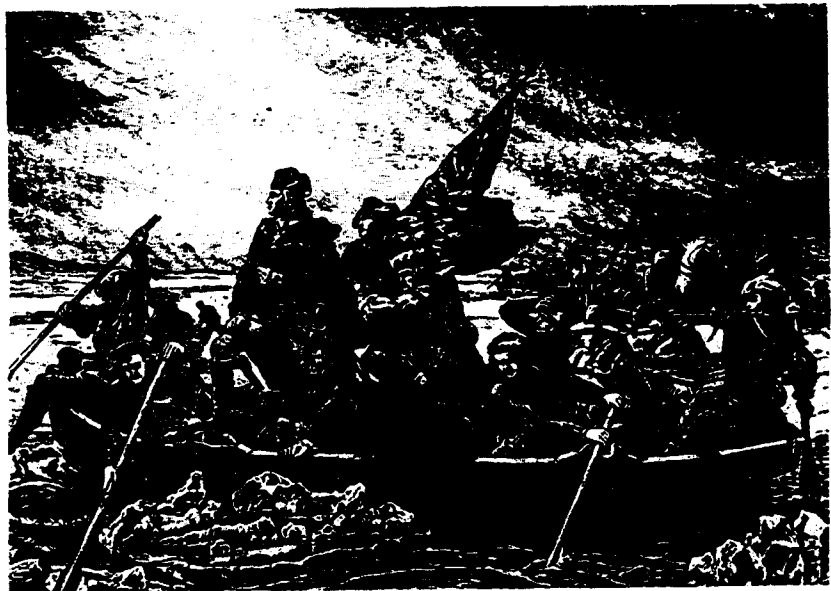
In 1775, after the first shots between the Redcoats and the Minutemen were fired at Lexington and Concord, the Second Continental Congress unanimously elected Washington as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army even though he was not a general. He was just a simple country farmer who happened to have some limited military experience. He did not enjoy a reputation as a powerful politician or great orator. At 43, he seemingly was far too young for such an awesome responsibility, but he was the type of man who never quit, no matter how difficult the odds. If the American cause had to rest on the shoulders of one man, the delegates knew unquestionably that the man had to be Washington.

He was facing a hopeless cause. The Continental Army had no trained soldiers, money, ammunition, weapons, or supplies. Yet, it was about to take on the greatest army in the world. Great Britain was a superpower. Washington, however, found ingenious ways to make America's great liabilities into assets. As a commander, he was bold,

decisive, and strategically brilliant. Moreover, he inspired his men by setting a personal example of bravery on the battlefield and endurance in camp. He lived in the same conditions as his men and suffered the same cold, hunger, and pain. Arguably, the Continental Army would have deserted en masse at Valley Forge if it had not been for Washington.

The War for Independence essentially was won in 1781 after Washington pulled off a stunning surprise attack at Yorktown, but his army couldn't be disbanded until a treaty was signed. His men were furious, since they couldn't return to plant crops and care for their families. Worse yet, most of them hadn't been paid for two years.

As late as March 1783, they were still marooned in a dirty, crowded camp in Newburgh, N.Y. Congress continued to turn a deaf ear to Washington's pleas that the men be paid or discharged. It wasn't just the enlisted men who were grumbling about this shameful ill-treatment. Scores of officers were circulating anonymous pamphlets calling for mutiny. The rag-tag



army had won the war, but now stood to lose the peace. There was a possibility that the American experiment would be over before it really had begun, and the nation would be plunged into bloody civil war. Then, Washington performed one last desperate act. He showed up unexpectedly at a secret meeting that was designed to launch the mutiny. He asked if he could speak and reluctantly was given the floor. Washington called for his officers to be patient just a little while longer. He reminded them that the army could not be a law unto itself and pointed out that they had fought together to institute democracy, not a new kind of tyranny. He concluded by saying, "I have a letter here from a Congressman that will prove the good faith of our government." He drew the parchment from his pocket and unfolded it. The light in the tavern was too dim for him to make the words, though. With a trembling hand, Washington fumbled for his glasses, which he hated and never had worn in public before. In a deeply mortified tone, he apologized, "Gentlemen, you will permit me to put on my spectacles, for I have not only grown gray, but almost blind in the service of my country." He started to read the letter, but his voice, as well as his composure, deserted him. He stalked out of the room without uttering another word. The officers were all hardened soldiers who had witnessed terrible sights without flinching. Yet, seeing their beloved commander reduced to such a state, they began to weep openly. They immediately pledged to follow orders and quell all attempts at mutiny. Once again, Washington had saved the new nation from destruction.

FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY

This single incident speaks volumes about the nation's greatest hero. George Washington went on to become the first president of the U.S. in 1789. In fact, the drafters of the Constitution had him

specifically in mind when they created the office. Washington risked everything and gave up his private life once more to lead the struggling new nation, which was bankrupt, disorganized, and weak. He said that being the first president was like "entering upon an unexplored field, enveloped on every side with clouds and darkness." He even confessed to a friend that he felt like a condemned man being sent to the gallows, but duty could not be denied. Above all, Washington keenly was aware that forming "a new government requires infinite care," and that his actions as president would establish important precedents. In a letter written near the end of the Revolutionary War, he acknowledged that "we have a national character to establish" and added that it should rest "on permanent principles." The two principles he named were justice and gratitude. His dedication to these principles would be tested severely during his eight years as America's first chief executive. He turned out to be arguably the most successful president in American history. The following is a brief list of accomplishments:

- He enforced the separation of powers and used the presidential veto to protect the Constitution.
- He straightened out the nation's finances, calling for full repayment of the Revolutionary War debt, frugal spending, a balanced budget, and low taxes.
- He advocated a simple code of legal justice that the common man could understand and undertook the task of educating thousands of citizens about the Constitution, which was the new law of the land.
- He sought equal treatment for Indians on a par with whites in the courts, and in his will, he freed the slaves he had inherited from his family.

- He defended religion and morality as what he called the "twin pillars" of a free society. His diaries and letters are filled with references to his strong personal faith. He also defended religious freedom and tolerance for such traditionally persecuted groups as the Baptists, Roman Catholics, Quakers, and Jews.
- He was a peacemaker. When two rival political parties formed, he made sure that he had representatives of both in his Cabinet. Avoiding bitter factionalism was one of his strongest concerns. He constantly wrote letters to quarreling politicians in which he recited the virtues of trust, patience, and forgiveness.
- He was a war hero who hated war and harbored no romantic illusions about soldiering. Therefore, he established a foreign policy based on strict neutrality and, despite considerable pressures, kept his administration free from "entangling alliances" with other nations.

Washington's refusal to accept a third term was an extraordinary historical event.

That a ruler voluntarily would hand over the reins of government to another was almost unthinkable; it rarely had happened in human history. By giving his awesome political power back to the people who had entrusted it to him, he gained something far greater than the power any king ever possessed: He became the father not just of a country, but of the greatest experiment in freedom the world has ever known.

Washington bitterly regretted the fact that he had no children of his own. Yet, since he was the "father of our country," we all rightly are his heirs. He has been called the "indispensable man." Without him, the U.S. might not have won its independence. Without him, the republic might not have survived. Without him, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights might not have been written.

He showed us the tremendous power of one individual. He created not only a model for the chief executive, but a model for every citizen. George Washington was the living embodiment of what it means to be an American.

Answer Numbers 1 through 8. Base your answers on the article "George Washington's Legacy."

1 What is the main idea of this article?

- A. George Washington was the most effective president in history.
- B. Without George Washington, the United States might not even exist.
- C. George Washington has been the subject of many tall tales and legends.
- D. The Revolutionary War victory was largely due to George Washington.

2 If this article needed a new title, which would be BEST?

- F. "The Birth of a Nation"
- G. "A Simple Country Farmer"
- H. "A Model for Every Citizen"
- I. "The War for Independence"

DO NOT write on this paper

3 Read this sentence from the article.

He has been called the "indispensable man."

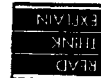
What does the word *indispensable* indicate about George Washington?

- A. He was perfect.
- B. He was necessary.
- C. He was intelligent.
- D. He was independent.

4 Which sentence from the article BEST supports the idea that Washington felt obligated to serve as president?

- F. "He turned out to be arguably the most successful president in American history."
- G. "In fact, the drafters of the Constitution had him in mind when they created the office."
- H. "He even confessed to a friend that he felt like a condemned man being sent to the gallows, but duty could not be denied."
- I. "Washington risked everything and gave up his private life once more to lead the struggling new nation, which was bankrupt, disorganized, and weak."

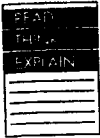
5 How did Washington convince his men not to mutiny? Support your answer with details and examples from the article.



6 Which of Washington's actions BEST illustrates his support of a true democracy?

- A. He wrote letters to quarreling politicians.
- B. He worked for Indians to have legal rights.
- C. He called for frugal spending and low taxes.
- D. He refused to accept a third presidential term.

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How did Washington serve as an inspiration for the soldiers in the Continental Army? Use details and examples from the article to support your response.

8 What conclusion can be drawn from George Washington's presidential experience?

- A. He was unhappy and anxious to leave office.
- B. He believed passionately in the democratic ideal.
- C. He felt that rival political parties were necessary.
- D. He enjoyed the opportunity to shape the new nation.

