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Webisode 8

Washington Crossing Logistics

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Authored by Joseph "Joe" Refinski

With special thanks to the following sponsors for their generous support of this education project that enables teachers and the general public to learn more about the formative years of the American Revolution:

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EAGLEVISION PRODUCTIONS, INC. PRESENTS TEACHER'S GUIDES FOR TEN EDUCATIONAL WEBISODES

INTRODUCTION TO TEN EDUCATIONAL WEBISODES

Welcome to the formative years of the American Revolution 1775 – 1777. Based on the documentary ***Road to Liberty Through Their Eyes***, the producers have developed Ten (10) Educational Webisodes with a Teacher's Guide for teachers to use in their History and Social Studies lesson plans designed to be **rigorous, adaptable, and fun!** Each of the webisodes has its own specific activities tied to the theme of the five to eight-minute webisodes and cover a variety of topics, including how the American Revolution impacted the lives of Colonists, enslaved and free Blacks, and Indigenous Peoples.

CURRICULUM WRITER: JOSEPH "JOE" REFINSKI

Now retired, Joe served as a history teacher for 48 years. During his tenure, Joe won numerous teaching awards, recognitions and Fellowships, as well as several Teacher of the Year Awards, including the 2023 Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, and he was named the 2025 NJ Council for the Social Studies Lifetime Educator Award for contributions to the study of history, civics and professional development. Joe has participated in several Teaching American History Grants. He is a Case Method Instructor (Harvard Business School) and is listed in the *Who's Who In Education*.

WEBISODE TITLES

Webisode 1 – Integrated Continental Army

Webisode 2 – Fortifications + Addendum

Webisode 3 – Divided Country + Addendum

Webisode 4 – Militias vs Standing Army

Webisode 5 – Camp Followers

Webisode 6 – Impact of War

Webisode 7 – Spies and Informants

Webisode 8 – Washington Crossing Logistics + Addendum

Webisode 9 – Winter Encampment/Forage Wars

Webisode 10 – Living History/Reenactments + Addendum

EAGLEVISION PRODUCTIONS, INC. PRESENTS
WEBISODE 8 – WASHINGTON CROSSING LOGISTICS TEACHER’S GUIDE

NATIONAL HISTORY AND SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

Webisode 8 fulfills several National History Standards and Social Studies Themes including: NCSS Themes 3: People, Places, and Environments; 6: Power, Authority, and Governance; and 7: Production, Distribution, and Consumption; United States History Content Standards for Grades 5 -12 – Era 3 – Standard 2: The impact of the American Revolution on politics, economy, and society; and The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies Grades 6-8, 9-10, and 11-12.

WEBISODE 8 SUMMARY: WASHINGTON CROSSING LOGISTICS

Following the tragic defeat at Fort Mifflin and evacuation of Fort Mifflin, many officers and soldiers questioned Washington’s leadership. As he retreats across the Jerseys with his demoralized and disgruntled division, he loses over 2,500 soldiers because their enlistments have expired. Fortunately, British General William Howe ordered General Charles Cornwallis not to cross the Raritan River at New Brunswick, which gives Washington time to reorganize his depleted troops, collect all the boats on the Jersey side of the Delaware River, and cross over to Pennsylvania where he deploys his troops to guard the river crossings. Washington knew “the game was pretty near up” and put together a plan to attack the Hessian garrison in Trenton. To accomplish this, he needed more troops and sent letters to General Charles Lee requesting that he bring his division to the banks of the Delaware, but Lee chose not to obey because he wanted to replace Washington as Commander-in-Chief. Providence steps in when Lee is captured by the British and General John Sullivan arrives with Lee’s division, along with fresh Pennsylvania troops and troops from New York and several New Jersey militias, which enables Washington to put his plan into action for the Christmas night crossing and surprise attack on Trenton in the early hours of December 26th. Two of the crossings failed due to horrendous weather conditions and ice choking the river, but Washington’s troops managed to get across with 18 cannon and marched 9 miles in freezing weather to attack the Hessians and capture the garrison.

HOW TO USE EACH WEBISODE AND TEACHER’S GUIDE

Webisode 8 would be useful for middle school and high school students (K6-12) studying United States History, Military History, European History, and Colonial History. Teachers may want to use all or some of the webisodes in the series over several days of history and/or social study classes to introduce their students to a variety of topics experienced during the formative years of the American Revolution. Each webisode has an individual Teacher’s Guide that provides a lesson plan with suggested classroom activities and/or applicable homework assignments. Alternatively, teachers may choose an individual webisode from this series as an overview to highlight a particular topic that occurred in the Revolutionary era for one lesson plan as outlined in that webisode’s Teacher’s Guide.

LESSON PLAN FOR WEBISODE 8 – WASHINGTON CROSSING LOGISTICS

(Total Lesson Plan Times – combine Webisode with #1 + #2 = 58:06 or #1 + #3 = 58:06.)

(5 minutes) Screen Webisode Students are introduced to the topic by posing the following questions to the class and asking them to take notes that address these questions as they watch Webisode 8 – *Washington Crossing Logistics* **(Running Time: 6:06):**

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS TO COMPREHEND

- With the catastrophic fall of Fort Washington and Fort Mifflin, what was the mental and physical state of Washington's troops when British General Charles Cornwallis gave chase to "end the rebellion" as they retreated across the Jerseys in 1776?
- During the retreat across the Jerseys, over 2,500 soldiers whose enlistments had expired went home, leaving Washington with only 3,000 troops to fight the British. What happened that allowed him to escape the clutches of Cornwallis?
- When Washington and his depleted troops reached the Delaware, how did Washington put a barrier between his army and the oncoming British troops?
- Since late November 1776, Washington sent letters and messengers to his Second-in-Command, General Charles Lee, to leave North Castle, NY and bring his division to join him *post haste* on the banks of the Delaware. Why did Lee refuse to comply with Washington's many requests to join forces with him?
- What happened that enabled Washington to hold a Council of War on December 22nd and discuss the pros and cons of attacking the Hessian garrison in Trenton?

SUGGESTED STUDENT ACTIVITIES

1. (10 minutes) Discussion Following the screening of the webisode, a discussion is opened with the students. What did they learn from the webisode regarding the condition of the Patriot soldiers? Students should name some of the legitimate complaints the soldiers and some of the Generals had following the devastating defeats in New York and the retreat across the Jerseys. (Note: It should be pointed out, if the students haven't already, that some of Washington's officers and many of the soldiers questioned Washington's leadership abilities and military experience.) Students will be directed to use their Online Resource list and open up the link to Lee's Papers. On p.293, have students go around the room taking turns to read Colonel Joseph Reed's letter dated November 21, 1776 to General Charles Lee; then go to p.305 and read aloud Lee's reply, which Washington had opened and read by mistake. If they were Washington, how would the students react to reading Lee's reply to Reed? Washington knew he needed a victory to boost the flagging morale of his weary troops who were ready to go home at the end of the year when their enlistments expired, but what was he lacking that prevented him from planning a successful attack against the British and regain a foothold in New Jersey? (Note: Students should know the answer is "Reinforcements" from watching the webisode.)

2. a) (10 minutes) Washington Retreats Across the Jerseys Having established that the American Revolution had hit its lowest point during the Student Activity #1 discussion, students are asked to explain why British General, Charles Cornwallis, was unable to overtake and capture Washington and his army as they retreated across the Jerseys? What did Washington do to get his troops to safety and why was Cornwallis and his army unable to chase them down and capture them? Knowing that his troops are demoralized and ready to go home when their enlistments expire at the end of the year, the students discuss what Washington needed to accomplish in order to protect their independence? (Note: Washington needed reinforcements in order to mount an attack against the British before the end of the year.) The students are directed to use the Online Resources to open Washington's Letter to John Hancock, President of Congress, on December 16th warning him of the consequences if reinforcements don't arrive and take turns going around the room to read it aloud. Then they open the link to Washington's letter to his brother, John Augustine Washington, on December 18th and read it aloud as well. The question is "What happened between the time Washington thought 'the game was pretty near up' to calling a Council of War 4 days later on December 22nd to discuss his plan of attack on Trenton?"

b) (8 minutes) Council of War – To Attack or Not To Attack – December 22, 1776 The teacher interacts with the students in the role of General George Washington (see Addendum) and divides the class into three groups representing Washington's Generals and Officers invited to attend the Council of War. General George Washington welcomes them and presents his three-pronged plan of attack and explains why they must go on the offensive to give the troops a victory in order to boost morale before the end of the year, which will help recruit soldiers for the 3rd Establishment of the Continental Army in 1777. However, he warns his Generals that if they are unable to raise new recruits, the will to break away from the tyrannical British Crown and defend their country may end in failure.

c) (10 minutes) Decision-making Time General Washington asks the groups to use the Online Resource links to learn more about the situation they are in, discuss the pros and cons of the situation, and create a T-chart listing pros on one side and cons on the other. If your group has questions during this decision-making time, one of your members should stand up and get General Washington's attention by calling out, "Your Excellency" and posing their question. General Washington answers it, which all the groups can use in their own decision-making. With about 3 minutes left the students must decide if they want to attack or wait until Congress starts recruiting fresh troops for its 3rd Establishment Army in 1777. Once each group has reached a decision they should write a brief report that justifies their decision and select a group member to present their report to General Washington.

d) (5 minutes) Council of War Debrief General Washington calls the Council of War to order and asks a member of each group to stand up and report the decision of their group to either attack or not to attack and provide justification for their decision. General Washington closes the Council of War by thanking his Generals and Officers for their opinions and adds that he has decided we have no choice but to attack Trenton in the early hours of December 26th. The watchword for the night, "Victory or Death."

e) (4 minutes) Homework Assignment and Assessment For the students' homework assignment, they are asked to use the Online Resource list as well as their own research to find all of the letters Washington and Lee exchanged from November 19th to December 13th, 1776 that deal with Washington's request for Lee to bring his division to Pennsylvania and join him on the banks of the Delaware. As students read each letter, their task is to write a report on their findings beginning with an introductory paragraph stating what the students learned about Lee and Washington's perspectives of each other from their exchange of letters. Then create a list of Lee's letters with dates in chronological order and a sentence describing the excuse(s) in each of Lee's letters that he uses for not marching his division to join up with Washington's troops, and the dates of Washington's replies to Lee's letters with a sentence describing his tone and demeanor and what he says in response to Lee's excuses. To conclude the report, the students should address the question, "Why did Lee refuse to comply with Washington's many requests to join forces with him?" and cite Lee's letters to Colonel Reed and to General Horatio Gates that answers this question (See Online Resources). Students hand in their reports at the next class for the teacher's assessment.

3. (37 minutes) Collaborative Essay Following the screening and Student Activity #1 discussion, students are instructed that based on the webisode they will be working together to write a collaborative essay. The class is divided into three groups – one large (8-10 students) and two small (4-6 students) – and assigned to one of the groups as follows:

Group 1: General Washington and his Officers This is the large group and will focus their research on the following questions: What was General Washington experiencing as he retreated across the Jerseys? How did he put a barrier between his troops and General Cornwallis? What were his reasons for wanting to go on the offensive before the end of the year? Why did he need reinforcements and what was the problem he had trying to consolidate his troops with General Lee's division and other militias? Who did Washington write to when he felt the Revolution may fail? What happened that enabled Lee's division to join his forces? What was the outcome of the Council of War held on December 22, 1776 with his Generals? How did the freezing weather impact the crossing? Why did he make the crucial decision to march nine miles with eighteen cannon to Trenton rather than abort the mission? The group then writes two paragraphs to answer these questions, citing the documents used to find the answers to how Washington dealt with all of these issues.

Group 2: Washington's Network of Spies This small group will focus their research on John Honeyman, who posed as a "Tory" and went behind enemy lines to gather information on the Hessian Garrison in Trenton. He knew the commander, Colonel Rall, (also spelled Rahl) and told him that the remnants of Washington's army were in desperate straits, without food and supplies, just waiting to go home when their enlistments expired at the end of the year. Address: Was this correct information or misinformation? Honeyman made note of troop movements and where Hessian outposts and patrols were located. How did he get this information to Washington? (Note: Some historians think Honeyman was never a spy; others disagree and believe he was instrumental in providing

good intelligence to Washington.) For this collaborative essay, the group should consider Honeyman is a spy and research his story and the answers to these questions accordingly. Hercules Mulligan lived and worked as a tailor in NYC and served as one of Washington's trusted spies from 1776 to the end of the war. Through research discover if there is evidence that Mulligan gave Washington a report about General Howe setting up winter quarters in NYC. If so, what was in his report? If not, write a sentence about Mulligan and what made him a good spy. Once the group's research is complete, write two paragraphs that describe the roles these two spies played in helping Washington decide to put his attack plan into action and cite the documents you used to learn about them.

Group 3: The Enlisted Soldiers This small group will focus on the condition of the enlisted soldiers as they retreated across the Jerseys. Knowing over 2,800 hundred of their fellow soldiers had been captured and thrown into prison ships, were they confident that General Washington had the military experience to win the war? Did some New England regiments favor General Charles Lee, Washington's Second-in-Command, because he had served in the British army before becoming a Patriot? Was Congress supporting the army by providing funds to pay the soldiers, supplies like blankets, and rations to feed them? What condition were the soldiers in, mentally and physically, when they reached safety on the banks of the Delaware River in Pennsylvania in December? Why were they counting the days until the end of the year? Finally, by researching some soldiers' memoirs, what made them endure the nine-mile march to Trenton to attack the Hessian Garrison when their enlistments were expiring in six days? Cite the documents you researched and address these questions by writing two paragraphs about what the soldiers endured.

The groups are provided a handout that gives them the historical context for this collaborative essay (see Addendum) and directed to use the Online Resources and their own research skills with a focus on analysis and evidence gathering to discover how the events leading up to the surprise attack on Trenton impacted their group and summarize their findings into two paragraphs that will be part of the collaborative essay.

When the groups have written their paragraphs for the collaborative essay, students will then submit a digital copy to a common folder and the writings will be displayed for the students to make the final editing selections and order of information, as well as citations. Students will receive the final collaborative product to keep as a study guide for future reference. The teacher will use the essay as an assessment of the students' research and writing skills that they used to accomplish this collaborative essay exercise.

NATIONAL CURRICULUM STANDARDS LINKS

[National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: Introduction | Social Studies](#)

[United States History Content Standards | Public History Initiative](#)

[English Language Arts Standards | Common Core State Standards Initiative](#) Click on History/Social Studies for the drop down menu. Then click on the Grade levels.

ONLINE RESOURCES FOR *WASHINGTON CROSSING LOGISTICS*

[Trenton Historical Society, New Jersey](#) Detailed events leading up to the Crossing, March, and Battles of Trenton and Princeton.

[National Museum of the United States Army](#) describes the Washington Crossing Logistics.

[Battle of Trenton, 1776, Summary, Facts, Significance](#) Washington plans an attack on Trenton at a Council of War on December 22nd with some of his Generals and officers and provides them with troop details of the crossings on how the troops will be deployed.

[The Legacy of the Crossing | Pennsylvania Center for the Book](#) Describes his three-fold attack plan to attack Trenton with Brigadier General Ewing and Colonel Cadwalader.

[Christmas Night, 1776: How Did They Cross? - Journal of the American Revolution](#) Article by William M. Welsch looks at the specific tactical and logistical execution required to ferry horses, artillery, and men over ice-choked waters.

[George Washington's crossing of the Delaware River - Wikipedia](#) Outlines attack plan.

[Behind the Lines: The Durham Boat](#) Article by Michael W. Robbins (MHQ: 2015) focuses on the shallow-draft freight boats that made the December 25-26 river crossing possible.

[What Happened to the Troops That Were Supposed to Help Washington at Trenton? | Washington Crossing Historic Park](#)

[December 1776: Washington and the Continental Army in Crisis – Revolutionary War Journal](#)

[Trenton: "A glorious day for our country" | American Battlefield Trust](#) Excerpt from James Wilkinson's Memoirs who describes the Crossing he participated in.

[A Connecticut Soldier Under Washington: Elisha Bostwick's Memoirs of the First Years of the Revolution on JSTOR](#) p.102 Bostwick describes the March to Trenton and outcome of the battle, December 25/26, 1776.

[a young patriot in the american revolution : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#) pp. 80/81 Describes March to Trenton p.85 Describes Hessian prisoners.

[Battles of Trenton and Princeton | Facts, History, & Significance | Britannica](#) This website summarizes all the events that took place during the American Revolution.

[George Washington to Brigadier Generals James Ewing, Hugh Merc ...](#) Dated: December 14, 1776. Requests that no expense should be spared to send a trustworthy spy into NJ to report on British troop movements and whether they are building boats in Trenton.

[Hercules Mulligan - Wikipedia](#)

[John Honeyman - Wikipedia](#)

[The Strange Case of John Honeyman and Revolutionary War Espionage - CSI](#)

[In Defense of John Honeyman \(and George Washington\) — Central Intelligence Agency](#)

[Insights: General Charles Lee's Capture at Widow White's Tavern in Basking Ridge & Washington's Delaware Crossing Impact - Mr. Local History Project](#)

[December 1776: Washington and the Continental Army in Crisis – Revolutionary War Journal](#) Covers events including the capture of General Charles Lee.

[Major General Charles Lee to George Washington, 19 November 1776](#)

[The Lee papers .. : Lee, Charles, 1731-1782. \[from old catalog\] : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#) p.293 Col. Reed to Gen. Lee – November 21, 1776; p.305. Lee's reply to Reed – November 24, 1776 that Washington mistakenly opened and read.

[George Washington to Major General Charles Lee, 21 November 1776](#) Washington requests for the first time for Lee to move his troops to join him in the Jerseys.

[Major General Charles Lee to George Washington, 24 November 1776](#)

[George Washington to Major General Charles Lee, 27 November 1776](#)

[George Washington to Major General Charles Lee, 1 December 1776](#) Asks Lee to hasten his March or his arrival may be too late to answer any valuable purpose.

[George Washington to John Hancock, 2 December 1776](#) Informs him that Lee has just started moving his division across to New Jersey.

[George Washington to John Hancock, 8 December 1776](#) informs him that Lee and his troops have not joined him despite the letters he's sent requesting Lee hastens his march.

[Major General Charles Lee to George Washington, 8 December 1776](#) Stating he would remain in the rear of the British rather than join Washington.

[George Washington to Major General Charles Lee, 10 December 1776](#) Washington responds to Lee asking him to make haste and join him to protect Philadelphia.

[George Washington to John Hancock, 11 December 1776](#) Informs him of Lee's location.

[The Lee papers .. : Lee, Charles, 1731-1782. \[from old catalog\] : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#) p.348 Just before he was captured by the British Lee wrote this letter to Gen. Gates – December 13, 1776 which he uses to malign Washington.

[Major General John Sullivan to George Washington, 13 December ...](#) Informing Washington of the capture of General Charles Lee, stating he'll march Lee's troops to join him.

[George Washington to John Hancock, 16 December 1776](#) Once again expresses his frustration about militias not being reliable and requesting that Congress increase the number of Battalions and create a respectable army that's competent.

https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/ford-the-writings-of-george-washington-vol-v-1776-1777#lf1450-05_head_046 Letter from George Washington to his brother, John Augustine Washington, December 18, 1776 where he describes General Lee's capture and thinks "the game is pretty near up" because his army's enlistments expire at the end of the year.

[List of Continental Army units \(1777–1784\) - Wikipedia](#)

SUGGESTED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR *WASHINGTON CROSSING LOGISTICS*

McCullough, David **1776** (Simon & Schuster, Inc, 2005).

Fischer, David Hackett ***Washington's Crossing*** (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). Pulitzer Prize-winning study detailing the logistics of the crossing, local geography, weather conditions, and the tactical brilliance behind the operations.

Ketchum, Richard M. ***The Winter Soldiers: The Battles for Trenton and Princeton*** (New York: Owl Books, 1999). A readable account covering the logistics of the retreat across New Jersey and the desperate conditions the troops faced.

Maloy, Mark ***Victory or Death: The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*** (New York: Savas Beatie, 2018). A detailed military and logistical examination of the famous battles.

Kidder, William L. ***Ten Crucial Days: Washington's Vision for Victory*** (Westholme Publishing, 2008). Focuses heavily on the tactical, logistical, and troop movement realities in the Trenton and Princeton campaigns.

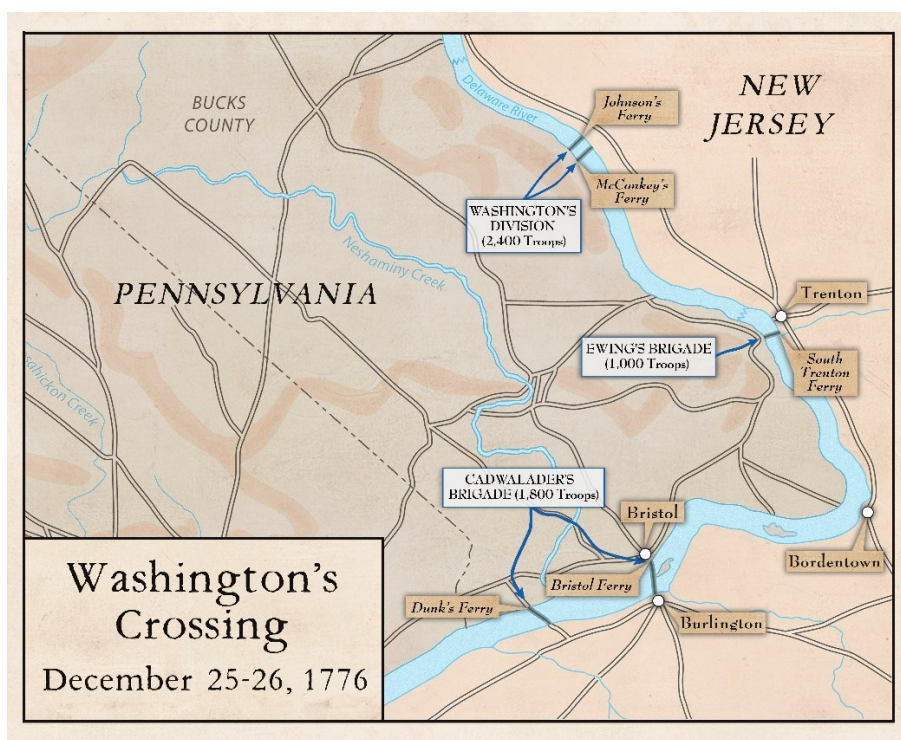
Preparation Sheet for the Teacher’s Role as General George Washington

On December 22, 1776, General George Washington held a Council of War at the William Keith House, his headquarters, in Upper Makefield Township, PA, to present his audacious plan of attack against the Hessian Garrison at Trenton to his newly arrived Generals and officers and asks them to decide if the attack is feasible or the risk is too great.

After convening the Council of War and welcoming the newly arrived Generals, Washington presents his Three-Pronged Plan of attack on the Hessian Garrison in Trenton.

Background Information for Presenting the Three-Pronged Plan of Attack

Washington's strategy relied on three separate columns crossing the Delaware River on Christmas night, 1776:



- The Blocking Force (Ewing): General James Ewing was tasked with leading about 1,000 troops across the Delaware River at the Trenton Ferry. Their job was to seize the bridge over Assunpink Creek to block the Hessians' southern retreat route.
- The Diversionary Attack (Cadwalader): Colonel John Cadwalader was to lead about 1,800 troops across at Dunk's Ferry (near Burlington). His mission was to engage British and Hessian forces to the south at Bordentown, preventing them from sending reinforcements to Trenton.

- The Main Assault (Washington): General Washington would lead roughly 2,400 men across at McConkey’s Ferry (9 miles north of Trenton). This force was to split into two groups—one assigned to General Nathanael Greene and the other to General John Sullivan—to launch a pre-dawn attack from the north and west of the town.

Washington continues his presentation by explaining to the Generals and Officers that he has received reports from two of his spies - one in Trenton and the other in New York City who provided him with intelligence that this is the only time when Washington’s army will outnumber the British because General Howe and most of his Generals have set up winter quarters in New York City, leaving a number of British Garrisons scattered throughout New Jersey for the purpose of supplying food, fodder, and livestock to the troops in New York City and New Jersey. He has met with his spy in Trenton who reported that the Hessians were exhausted after a week of patrols and skirmishes with NJ and PA militias and will have several manned outposts around Trenton but don’t plan to patrol further up the river.

Background Information for Presenting the Spy Reports

1. From "Tory" John Honeyman (Working in Trenton):

- Report: The Hessian troops at Trenton, commanded by Colonel Rall, (also spelled Rahl) are exhausted. They have been harassed by local NJ and PA militias for over a week, but Colonel Rall is overconfident that Washington will not attack because Honeyman assured him that the Patriot soldiers were demoralized by all the defeats and can’t wait to go home when their enlistments expire at the end of the year.
- Crucial Detail: Colonel Rall plans to only man outposts in and around Trenton on December 25th and 26th and will not patrol further up the river so his troops have a chance to celebrate Christmas.
- Risk: To get this information, I had to stage my spy’s “capture” and "escape" from my own camp. If he turns out to be a double agent, my whole army is lost.

2. From Hercules Mulligan (Tailor in British-occupied NYC):

- Report: The British command in New York believes the war is over. Many of the regular troops and Hessians are quartered in NJ at various garrisons (cantonments), while General William Howe has set up his winter headquarters in Manhattan.
- Crucial Detail: Mulligan overheard a British officer bragging that they plan to "clean up" the last of the rebels in Pennsylvania once the river “freezes solid in January."
- Risk: This means we have a tiny window to attack before a major British offensive in January to capture Philadelphia.

Possible Questions the Students may ask during their Decision Time

- *Can you trust your spies’ reports?* Answer: I cannot guarantee that one or both may be double agents, but I have to gamble on the intelligence they’ve given me.
- *Are you willing to risk our soldiers who are exhausted knowing that this battle could signal the end of the war and the independence movement?* Answer: Frankly, we have no choice but to go on the offensive now to prevent the British Army from crossing the frozen river in January and capturing Philadelphia and ending the war.
- *But why not wait for new enlistments, fresh troops, to arrive in January and defend Philadelphia if the Delaware freezes over?* Answer: Gentlemen, it’s now or never. Even if new recruits enlist in January, they are untrained and not ready to fight a battle against professional soldiers; whereas, our troops have trained for this.

Note: Be prepared to field other questions that the students may ask General Washington.

Student Activity 3 – Historical Context Handout

By late December 1776, the American Revolution was on the brink of failure. After losing New York, Washington's army was demoralized, freezing, low on food and supplies, and the soldiers’ enlistments would expire on December 31, 1776, leaving Washington without an army to command. Washington knew he needed a victory to boost morale and through information provided by his network of spies, developed an audacious plan of attack against Hessian troops in Trenton on Christmas night, but was unable to execute it until reinforcements arrived, which they did on December 20, 1776, that enabled Washington to put his plan into action before his army disbanded at the end of the year.

Homework Assignment - General Charles Lee’s Reasons for Disobeying Washington.

Through their research of contemporary letters General Charles Lee wrote, students should be able to list some of the reasons below in their responses. Key reasons for Lee choosing to ignore Washington’s letters include:

- Lee regarded Washington as a "certain great man" who was "inept," viewing his own military experience as superior to Washington's.
- Following the catastrophic fall of Fort Mifflin, Lee argued that the American cause was "unhinged," believing Washington’s mismanagement was responsible.
- Lee heavily criticized the retreat across the Jerseys and believed Washington was incompetent and ignored Washington’s requests to hasten his forces to join him.
- Lee saw the Revolution as failing and viewed Washington’s capacity to turn the tide as remote without the support of Lee’s division and chose not to join forces him.
- As Washington never ordered him to bring his division to join him in PA, Lee decided as Washington’s Second-in-Command that he could choose to ignore the requests.
- Lee wanted to attack the British lines from West Jersey and chalk up some victories to show Congress that he would make a better Commander-in-Chief in 1777.