

### Question Sheet (with answers)

1. Consider the military strategies employed by the British during their involvement in the Revolution. Which one, in your view, is the most damaging to the British cause? Explain your answer?

Answers will vary. Many students might note that the British insisted on traditional fighting styles while the colonists fought as guerillas. In addition, the typical belief of the British was that war was “gentlemanly,” and therefore, officers were not to be targeted during battle. The colonists disagreed with that particular view.

2. The first handicap describes how the royal government and general had no firm purpose for waging the war and no logical aim. How might this flaw have caused the British to fail?

Most students will note that without some concrete “game plan” it would be difficult to focus British resources on a concentrated effort to defeat the American forces.

3. How did the British underestimate the “American resolve” to win the war?

First, the British believed that American resistance would crumble when thousands of British troops landed on US shores. Secondly, they also believed that the American military and political leadership was inexperienced and unable to fight a sustained war against an organized government and military force, such as Britain.

4. How did geography hinder the British war effort?

Distance made it difficult for the British to move men, supplies, news and orders. Sailing conditions from Britain to the colonies were difficult, and troops often arrived exhausted and ill. Communication and transportation systems were usually slow and ineffective. Other hindrances included supply shortages, the lack of roads which necessitated creating paths through the wilderness and harsh climate extremes in the Northeast.

5. What impact did the British impression of George Washington have on their war effort?

The British underestimated the ability, skills, talents, maturity and charisma of Washington. They probably considered him unfit for command and unable to lead.

6. In your view, how did the presence of Indians affect the war effort of the British and the colonists?

Answers vary. Some might say that the Indians had to weigh the “lesser of two evils” between the colonists and British when deciding which side to join, given that both groups had previously attempted to seize Indian lands. In the end, Indians fought on both

sides but were probably more prevalent on the British side. In the beginning, Indians helped the British navigate through wilderness, serving as their eyes and ears. British use of Indians sometimes backfired, however, as it did during the famous incident involving colonist Jenny McCrea who was scalped and killed by Indians. The colonists used this story to create propaganda against the British, encouraging men to join the militia in response to the atrocity.

7. What impact did a “long, prolonged conflict” have on the British in the Revolution?

The British economy was already struggling with huge debts because of the Seven Years’ War. To continue another long conflict would drive the British treasury into bankruptcy. In addition, as casualty counts increased, many in Britain found themselves less and less in favor of the war and more and more opposed to it.

8. Describe how the “hard peace” advocates undermined the British war effort.

Most people in Britain demanded a “hard peace” which would include harsh terms for the colonists as well as payments for war debts and reparations. Since the colonists saw this as a threat, they figured it was a “do or die” situation and fought harder for independence with little inclination towards negotiation.

9. In your view, could the British have overcome the obstacles listed in the “Factors” list and still won the war? Give an example how they might have done this. If you feel the obstacles were too complex to overcome, give a short explanation explaining your view.

Answers will vary. Some students may note that since the British were the great superpower of the period, they should have concentrated more effort towards subduing the colonists. Others may note that the British government could have adapted their policy to be more accepting of a soft peace. Still, others may note that the British could have equipped their army from Canada or from the West Indies and effectively defeated the colonists.

10. In your view, if the British had been less insistent on a “hard peace” from the colonists, do you think we would be part of the British Empire today? Explain your answer.

Answers will vary. Some students may note that if the British had been conciliatory toward the colonists, there would have been no reason for the colonists to break away, and the British Empire in North America would probably have been maintained. However, other students may note that because of the distance and the gradual development of a uniquely “American” identity (as opposed to a British identity) America would have eventually pushed for independence but on more congenial terms.