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# Valley Forge: Would You Have Quit?

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**Overview:** In the winter of 1777 and 1778, George Washington commanded several thousand patriot soldiers who spent the winter at Valley Forge, 18 miles outside of Philadelphia. It was not an easy time. This Mini-Q asks the question: If you had been a soldier in Washington's army, would you have quit?

## The Documents:

- Document A: The Numbers: Deaths and Illness (chart)
- Document B: Washington at Valley Forge (engraving)
- Document C: Diary of Dr. Albigence Waldo
- Document D: The Sunshine Soldier: Thomas Paine

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A Mini Document Based Question (Mini-Q)

## Hook Exercise: Valley Forge

### The Historical Setting

Place: Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

Date: Mid-January, 1778

**The Situation:** Your name is Levi Zendt. Most folks call you "Uncle Levi." You are a prosperous, third generation Pennsylvania Dutch farmer with foodstuffs to sell. In September, the British army under William Howe occupied nearby Philadelphia and set up comfortable quarters for the winter. Last month, the American Continental Army under George Washington made its rough winter camp at Valley Forge, just a few miles west of your farm. You have recently become a Quaker and hate war, but business is business.

Last week you sent your nephews to both camps to get prices offered by the two armies. Your nephews returned with this price list.

<i>Prices Offered Uncle Levi (Friday last)</i>		
	<i>By the Army at Valley Forge</i>	<i>By the British in Philadelphia</i>
<i>Butter (one pound)</i>	<i>3 shillings plus</i>	<i>7 shillings</i>
<i>Potatoes (one bushel)</i>	<i>10 shillings</i>	<i>16 shillings</i>
<i>Veal (one pound)</i>	<i>1 shilling</i>	<i>4 shillings</i>

**Directions:** Answer the following questions from the point of view of Levi Zendt.  
Be prepared to share your thinking with the class.

1. To which army are you going to sell your foodstuffs and why?
2. If most of your neighbors do as you do, what impact will it have on the American army at Valley Forge?

## Valley Forge: Would You Have Quit?

The first two years of the American Revolution had not gone well for the **Continental Army**. Since the summer of 1775 when he had taken command, George Washington and his troops had withdrawn from Boston and retreated from New York City. Most recently, in October 1777, he had been unable to stop the British when General Howe marched his army into the national capital of Philadelphia. True, there had been a victory at Trenton and a success at Princeton, but on the whole Washington's army had seen hard times.

Not surprisingly, Washington was having trouble keeping his soldiers in the army. Some of his men had signed on for one or two years. However, the most frequent time of enlistment was nine months. Nine-month men were going home and not returning. Others simply **deserted**.

To make matters worse, Washington's own position was uncertain. Some members of Congress did not trust him. To them, the general from Virginia seemed to be leading a grand retreat.

Like much of America, Philadelphia was divided over the war. Some Philadelphians even welcomed the British. A few young women developed "**scarlet fever**," a fascination with British soldiers and their bright red coats. Washington's own Chief of Engineers wrote that, "There is a hundred times more enthusiasm for this revolution ... in Paris than there is in all the United States together."

With Howe's army of 18,000 comfortably **quartered** in Philadelphia, Washington decided

to build a winter camp at **Valley Forge** about 18 miles northwest of Philadelphia.

It was not big enough to be called a village, with only a few fieldstone houses and a mill for forging iron. The **Quaker** farms in the area offered the promise of food for his men, and the camp would be close enough to Philadelphia to keep an eye on the British.

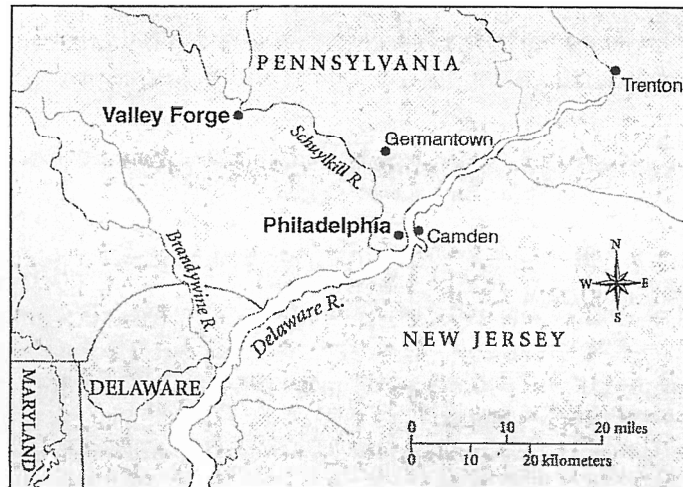
It was the week before Christmas, 1777. The first job of the men was to build log "huts." Each hut was 16' by 14' with a door at one end, a stick and clay fireplace at the other, and no windows. Each hut slept twelve men. There were no beds, just straw on the mud floor. Cold

was one problem; smoke was another. The huts would be home for the next six months.

Some of the conditions experienced by the soldiers at Valley Forge are revealed in the four documents that follow. Today we know that most of the army

survived the winter. We also know that on April 13, 1778, word reached camp that the French would join the Americans in the war. It was a huge turning point. But what we know today was not known in late January, 1778. Victory seemed a long way off; in fact for many, it seemed unlikely.

Now it is time to look into your own heart of hearts. Your 9-month enlistment is up on March 1st, just one month away. General Washington is desperate to keep his army intact. You miss your family and are concerned about your aging mother. Examine the documents that follow and answer the question: *Had you been a soldier at Valley Forge, would you have quit?*



## Background Essay Questions

1. In December of what year did Washington and his troops arrive in Valley Forge?
2. How many miles is Valley Forge from Philadelphia?
3. Define or explain each of these terms:

Continental Army

desert

“scarlet fever”

quartered

Valley Forge

Quaker

4. What is the main idea of the quotation by Washington’s Chief of Engineers?
5. Did word of France’s decision to join the Americans in the war come before your March 1 decision point?

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### Timeline

**1773** – Boston Tea Party

**1773** – 310 streetlights installed in Boston

**1776** – Declaration of Independence

**1777** – Washington’s army arrives at Valley Forge.

**1783** – Treaty of Paris ends Revolutionary War.

**1784** – 13-year-old boy makes first balloon ride in America

**1786** – America’s first golf club in South Carolina

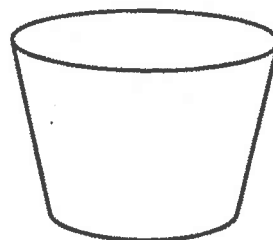
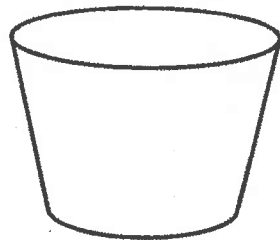
**1787** – Writing of the Constitution

## Understanding the Question and Pre-Bucketing

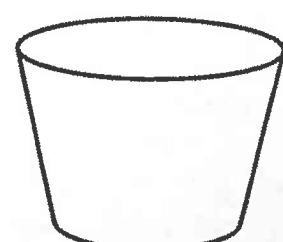
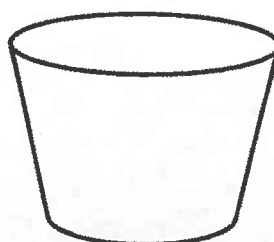
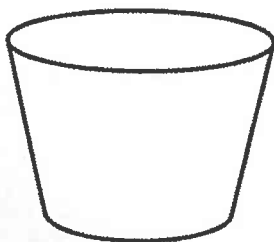
1. What is the analytical question asked by this Mini-Q?
2. What words in the question, if any, need to be defined?
3. Rewrite the question in your own words.

### Pre-Bucketing

**Directions:** Using clues from the Mini-Q question think of logical analytical categories and label the buckets. We suggest a two-step bucketing strategy.



THEN



## Document A

Source: Varied sources including Noel F. Busch, *Winter Quarters*, Liveright, New York, 1974; and researchers at the William Clements Library of the University of Michigan.

<b>Estimates of Illness and Deaths at Valley Forge</b> (December 1777 – February 1778)	
<b>Total Soldiers at Valley Forge (estimates)</b>	
December 1777	12,000
February 1778	8,000
<b>Illness Estimates During Encampment*</b>	
December 23, 1777	2,898
February 1, 1778	3,989
<b>Death Estimates Due to Illness During Encampment</b>	
December–June	1,800 to 2,500
*Reported sick or unable to report for duty	

## Document Analysis

1. Is this document a primary or a secondary source? Explain your thinking.
2. On February 1, 1778, how many soldiers at Valley Forge were sick? What % was this?
3. What was the low estimate of the number of American soldiers who died at Valley Forge?
4. How could this document be used to argue for quitting?
5. How could this document be used to argue against quitting?

## Document B

**Source:** Engraving of a painting by William Henry Powell, *Committee of Congress at Valley Forge*, National Archives, 1866.

**Note:** William Henry Powell lived from 1823 to 1879.



George Washington presenting Congressional Committee to soldiers at Valley Forge. The committee of five Congressmen stayed several weeks and was helpful in getting more food and clothing to the soldiers.

### Document Analysis

1. In what year was this engraving done?
2. Who are the men at the left? The men at the right? The man in the middle?
3. What do you suppose the man in the middle was saying?
4. How could this document be used to argue for quitting?
5. How could this document be used to argue for staying?

## Document C

Source: Diary of Dr. Albigence Waldo, a Connecticut surgeon, 1777.

Note: Dr. Waldo suffered during his winter at Valley Forge but stayed loyal to the Continental Army as he helped other surgeons care for sick soldiers.

December 14, 1777

*The Army which has been surprisingly healthy hitherto, now begins to grow sickly from the continued fatigues they have suffered this Campaign. Yet they still show a spirit of Alacrity [cheerful willingness] and 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 – smoak'd out my senses – the Devil's in't – I can't Endure it – Why are we sent here to starve and Freeze.... There comes a Soldier, his bare feet are seen thro' his worn out Shoes, his legs nearly naked from the tatter'd remains of an only pair of stockings....*

December 21, 1777

*"Heartily wish myself at home, my Skin and eyes are almost spoil'd with continual smoke. A general cry thro' the Camp this Evening among the Soldiers, "No Meat! No Meat!" – the Distant vales Echo'd back the melancholy sound – "No Meat! No Meat!"*

### Document Analysis

1. Do you believe this document is an accurate picture of camp life at Valley Forge? Why?
2. What hardship described by Waldo most gets your attention?
3. Make one inference about the quality of ventilation in the soldiers' huts.
4. How could this document be used to argue for quitting?
5. Is there any way this document could be used to argue against quitting?



**Document D**

**Source:** Thomas Paine, *The American Crisis*, December 23, 1776.

**Note:** General Washington had essays from *The American Crisis* read aloud to his soldiers at Valley Forge. Paine, known by some as the author of the Revolution, took no payment for this historic publication.

“THESE are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives every thing its value.... Britain, with an army to enforce her tyranny, has declared that she has a right (not only to TAX) but ‘to BIND us in ALL CASES WHATSOEVER,’ and if being bound in that manner, is not slavery, then is there not such a thing as slavery upon earth.”

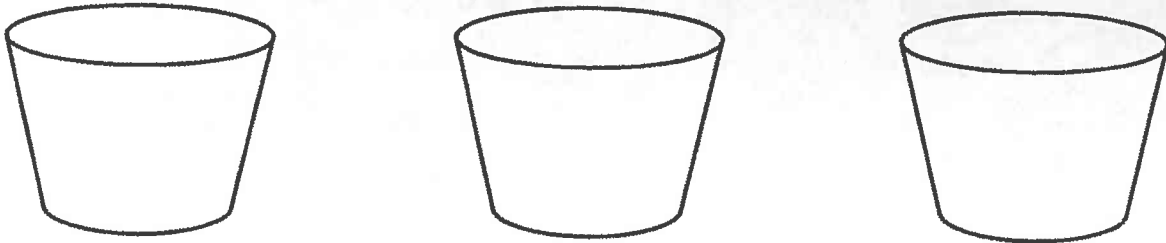
**Document Analysis**

1. When was this document written and who was the author?
2. What is meant by the line, “These are the times that try men’s souls”?
3. Who are “The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot”?
4. What is “tyranny” and what does Paine compare it to?
5. What does Paine mean when he writes, “What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly”?
6. What is the main idea of this document?
7. Are the words of Thomas Paine enough to keep you at Valley Forge?

## Bucketing – Getting Ready to Write

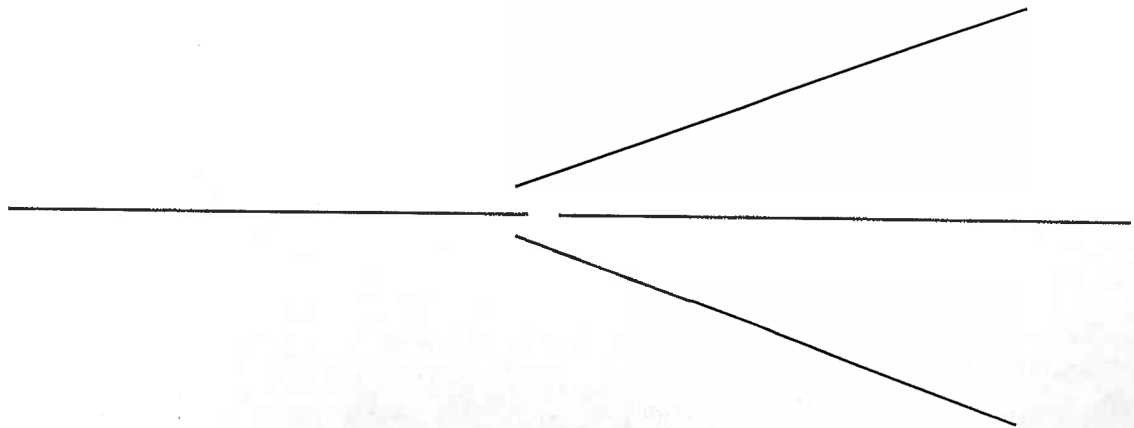
### Bucketing

Look over all the documents and organize them into your final buckets. Write final bucket labels under each bucket and place the letters of the documents in the buckets where they belong. It is OK to put a document in more than one bucket.



### Thesis Development and Roadmap

On the chickenfoot below, write your thesis and your roadmap. Your thesis is always an opinion and answers the Mini-Q question. The roadmap is created from your bucket labels and lists the topic areas you will examine in order to prove your thesis.



# From Thesis to Essay Writing

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## Mini-Q Essay Outline Guide

**Working Title**

### **Paragraph #1**

Grabber

Background

Stating the question with key terms defined

Thesis and roadmap

### **Paragraph #2**

Baby Thesis for bucket one

Evidence: supporting detail from documents with document citation

Argument: connecting evidence to the thesis

### **Paragraph #3**

Baby Thesis for bucket two

Evidence

Argument

### **Paragraph #4**

Baby Thesis for bucket three

Evidence

Argument

### **Paragraph #5**

Conclusion: Restatement of main idea along with possible insight or wrinkle

**Mini-Q Sample Essay: Non-Proficient**  
**Valley Forge: Would You Have Quit?**

It is the middle of the Civil War. In 1777 and 1778 George Washington is living with his army in Valley Forge. The British are close in Pennsylvania but I am not going to quit.

First, the dead men need me to take care of them. They can't do it themselves. Not even George Washington can and he's the General.

Another reason I am staying is because of the Committee. They are listening to the men and have seen our torn clothes (Doc A).

A third reason I am not quitting is because of Thomas Paine. He is a great man and I am proud to be one of his summer soldiers (Doc D).

I know why some men are going home. We have smoky huts and no meat (Doc C). Still, we all should fight if we are able to. As Paine said, we must free the slaves!

**Mini-Q Sample Essay: Basic Proficiency**  
**Valley Forge: Would You Have Quit?**

Nobody said it would be easy! It is the middle of the Revolutionary War. In 1777 and 1778 George Washington and his army are spending the winter at a place called Valley Forge. It is in Pennsylvania, very close to Philadelphia where the British army is staying. Conditions are pretty bad. The question is will I quit. The answer is no because the army needs me, Congress is trying hard, and I want freedom.

First, the army needs me. On February 1st one-half of Washington's men were too sick to even stand up and report for duty. About 1800 to 2500 are dead or are going to die from disease (Doc A). My friends need me to fight for them. I can't quit now.

Another reason I am staying is because of the Committee of Congress. There are about five men from the government who are here to help (Doc B). I like that. They are listening to the men and have seen our torn clothes. It makes me want to help them back.

A third reason I am not quitting is because of the great words written by Thomas Paine who said don't be a summer soldier (Doc D). That means when things are tough don't quit. Fight in the summer and the winter, when times are good and when things are bad. He said that freedom costs a big price but it's worth it. I agree. I'm staying.

I know why some men are going home. We have smoky huts and not enough meat (Doc C). Still, we all should fight if we are able to. As Paine said, "What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly" (Doc D).