

Continental Congress - Lexile 800

Name _____

The Second Continental Congress Meets

On May 10, 1775, the Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia. This was after the American Revolution had already started, and some American soldiers, called "minutemen," had been killed. The Congress chose John Hancock, a rich merchant from Massachusetts, to be the president. Georgia, which had not sent anyone to the first meeting, agreed to send a delegate this time.

Making Important Decisions

The Second Continental Congress acted like a government. They decided to print paper money and made Benjamin Franklin the Postmaster General, in charge of the mail. Most importantly, they created the Continental Army and chose George Washington to lead it as Commander-in-Chief. The Congress would also sign treaties, make important decisions, and choose ambassadors. In 1777, they created the Articles of Confederation, which were laws to guide the country until they were replaced by the U.S. Constitution ten years later.

Trying to Avoid War

Some people in the Congress still wanted peace, like John Dickinson from Pennsylvania. They sent a letter called the Olive Branch Petition to the British King, asking for peace and asking him to respect their rights. But at the same time, the British had found a letter from John Adams where he said that war seemed unavoidable and that the U.S. needed to be ready. King George didn't listen to the petition and hired 30,000 German soldiers to fight against the Americans.

Declaring Independence

On July 2, 1776, the Continental Congress voted to declare independence from England. Two days later, they officially approved the Declaration of Independence.

1. Why did the Second Continental Congress choose George Washington to lead the Continental Army?

- A) He was the richest person in America
- B) He had experience as a military leader
- C) He was the most famous person in the colonies
- D) He was from the most important colony, Virginia

2. Why was the Olive Branch Petition sent to the British King?

- A) To ask for help in the war
- B) To peacefully ask for respect of American rights
- C) To declare independence from England
- D) To end the war and make peace with Germany

3. What does it suggest about the Continental Congress that they created an army but also sent a petition for peace?

- A) They were unsure if they wanted to fight
- B) They believed war was the only way to win freedom
- C) They wanted to avoid fighting but were preparing just in case
- D) They were not ready for independence

4. Why do you think Georgia decided to send a delegate to the Second Continental Congress even though they didn't attend the first one?

- A) They didn't want to be left out of the decision-making
- B) They were forced by Britain to participate
- C) They had already decided to fight for independence
- D) They wanted to support the British

5. Why do you think the Continental Congress adopted the Articles of Confederation even though they knew they were temporary?

- A) They wanted to make sure they had some laws to guide them while they figured out better ones
- B) They were unsure if they were ready for a Constitution
- C) They thought the Articles were perfect and didn't need to change
- D) They didn't care about creating a strong government at that point

Answers

1. B
2. B
3. C
4. A
5. A

Answers:

- 1.) D
- 2.) D
- 3.) C
- 4.) B
- 5.) B