MR. NUSSBAUM
LEARNING + FUN

Battle of Princeton Reading Comprehension
Name_____

Cornwallis Midjudges Washington

The Battle of Princeton was not a conflict that the British or Patriots were expecting to fight, but it ended with a decisive victory for the Continental Army. In late 1776, British General Charles Cornwallis was sent to Trenton, New Jersey, with the task of defeating Washington. He arrived on January 2, 1777, prepared to corner the general. Cornwallis thought Washington would try to escape, and sent troops to guard along the Delaware River, since that was the route Washington had taken into New Jersey. However, Washington had a different escape route in mind.

The Engagement Begins

Washington left all of the army's campfires burning, muffled sounds made by the army wagons' wheels, and led his troops around the side of the British camp, allowing them to escape undetected. While heading north, Washington noticed a group of British men around William Clarke's farm. He sent a group of his men, led by Hugh Mercer, to look into it. A small portion of the British rear guard, heavily outnumbered by the Continental forces, began firing on Mercer and his soldiers, using bayonets to keep them back. Washington then sent another group into battle, but they succumbed to the British bayonets. Finally, Washington led his men into battle himself.

Driving the British from New Jersey

Washington's counterattack finally broke the line of British soldiers, while projectiles and ammunition fired by Joseph Moulder forced the British back in the direction of the farmhouse. This, combined with smaller fights near Frog Hollow and the College of New Jersey - today, Princeton University - caused the British to retreat. The Battle of Princeton was an important victory for Washington and his forces; as a result of the fight, the British commanders ended up leaving much of the New Jersey to Washington and the Continental Army. Washington employed an unexpected strategy and smart execution to avoid a direct confrontation with Cornwallis, put a dent in British forces, and come out with a second consecutive victory in New Jersey.
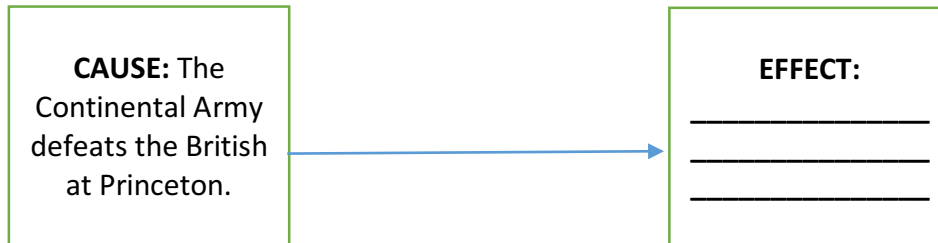
1. **Which statement is false?**
   a. Cornwallis wanted to defeat Washington in New Jersey.
   b. The Battle of Princeton was fought only at Clarke's farm.
   c. Washington's troops fought the British rear guard rather than Cornwallis at Trenton.
   d. Washington escaped Trenton in a manner different than Cornwallis had planned.

2. **Infer why Washington left the campfires burning when his army left Trenton**.
    a. He wanted Cornwallis to think his army was still there.
    b. He wanted to set the area on fire.
    c. He wanted to keep the heat in the area for anyone else around.
    d. He wanted to scare Cornwallis with the light and heat.

3. **Which of the following was not a factor in Washington's success at Princeton?**
    a. Washington's strategy to avoid confronting Cornwallis.
    b. Moulder's projectiles and ammunition.
    c. Hugh Mercer's decisive defeat of the rear guard.
    d. Washington's self-led counterattack.

4. **Fill in the blank in the following diagram.**

CAUSE: The Continental Army defeats the British at Princeton.	→	EFFECT: _____ _____ _____

    a. The British refuse to give up New Jersey and continue to fight.
    b. The British leave most of New Jersey to the Americans.
    c. George Washington is demoted to a lower position.
    d. Hugh Mercer becomes commander of the Continental forces.

5. **Which event happened first?**
    a. Washington leads his troops into battle.
    b. Mercer investigates the troops at Clarke's farmhouse.
    c. Cornwallis arrives in Trenton.
    d. The British rear guard retreats.

6. **Which statement about Cornwallis is supported by the passage?**
    a. He killed Washington at Princeton.
    b. He was tricked by Washington's plan.
    c. He fought in the battle at Frog Hollow.
    d. He was hiding out in Clarke's farmhouse.

7. **Which of the following is not a quality shown by Washington during the battle at Princeton?**
    a. Great Leader
    b. Great Strategist
    c. Determination
    d. Ignorance

Answers:

1. B
2. A
3. C
4. B
5. C
6. B
7. D