

Second Continental Congress Printable Reading Comprehension

Name \_\_\_\_\_

On May 10, 1775, the Continental Congress met for the second time in Philadelphia. Unlike the circumstances during which the first Congress was held, the American Revolution had begun and American soldiers, known as “minutemen” had been killed. The delegates to the Second Continental Congress chose John Hancock, a wealthy Massachusetts merchant and chief financial contributor to the Sons of Liberty, as president. While Georgia refused to send a delegate to the First Continental Congress, it eventually agreed to send one this time.

The Second Continental Congress made decisions like an actual government. It authorized the production of paper money and named Benjamin Franklin Postmaster General (in charge of the Post Office). Most importantly, it authorized the creation of the Continental Army and George Washington as Commander-in-Chief. It would become the legislative branch of the war effort that would sign treaties, make declarations, and appoint ambassadors. By 1777, the Continental Congress adopted the Articles of Confederation - a temporary (and inadequate) set of laws that would be replaced ten years later by the United States Constitution.

Some delegates of the Second Continental Congress still wished to avoid war, most notably John Dickinson from Pennsylvania. They sent a petition known as the Olive Branch Petition to Parliament to express their wish for peace and to appeal to the king to respect their rights. At the same time, the British had intercepted a letter from John Adams stating his belief that war was inevitable and that the United States should have already built up its military. Subsequently, the Olive Branch Petition was rejected by England, and King George hired 30,000 German troops to fight alongside the British in war against America.

On July 2, 1776, the Second Continental Congress approved the measure to declare independence from England. Two days later, the actual Declaration of Independence was approved.

**1. Which of the following is NOT true about the Second Continental Congress?**

- A. It had already met once before
- B. Delegates from all 13 colonies attended
- C. George Washington was chosen as President of the congress
- D. Some delegates still believed that peace with England was the best path

- 2. In which of the following ways was the Second Continental Congress different from the First Continental Congress? Select all that apply.**
- A. The Second Continental Congress was held in Philadelphia
  - B. Georgia sent delegates to the Second Continental Congress
  - C. The American Revolution was already underway at the Second Continental Congress
  - D. The Second Continental Congress made decisions like an actual government
- 3. Which was not a function of the Second Continental Congress?**
- A. Making treaties with other nations
  - B. Appointing ambassadors to nations
  - C. Authorizing the Continental Army
  - D. Adopting the United States Constitution in 1777
- 4. According to the passage, which two events happened simultaneously?**
- A. The interception of the John Adams letter and the hiring of 30,000 Hessian soldiers
  - B. The Olive Branch Petition and interception of the John Adams letter
  - C. The Olive Branch Petition and the hiring of 30,000 Hessian soldiers
  - D. The Continental Congress approved the measure to declare independence from England and the issuance of the Declaration of Independence
- 5. Which pair had contrasting thoughts on the best course of action?**
- A. George Washington and John Hancock
  - B. George Washington and John Adams
  - C. John Hancock and Benjamin Franklin
  - D. John Adams and John Dickinson
- 6. What happened last?**
- A. The Declaration of Independence was issued
  - B. The Second Continental Congress met
  - C. July 5, 1776
  - D. The Articles of Confederation was adopted

**7. Below is a definition for a word in this passage. What is the word?**

a formal written request, typically one signed by many people, appealing to authority with respect to a particular cause.

- A. petition
- B. treaty
- C. declaration
- D. delegate