

The Hessians - Lexile 800

Name _____

Hessians in the Revolutionary War

During the Revolutionary War, the British hired about 30,000 German soldiers called Hessians. The name "Hessian" came from two places in Germany, Hesse-Cassel and Hesse-Hanau, where many of these soldiers came from.

Germany in 1776

Back in 1776, Germany wasn't a country like it is today. It was made up of many small states, each ruled by a prince. The soldiers in these states were often forced to join the army at a young age. Sometimes, the prince would rent out his soldiers to other countries who needed help. The soldiers didn't get a choice in the matter. The prince would get paid for the soldiers' service. Although the soldiers were paid, some people compare their situation to slavery.

How the Hessians Were Seen

The Hessians had a tough reputation during the Revolutionary War. They were feared by American soldiers because they were skilled fighters. However, some Hessian soldiers, in their diaries, said they were shocked by how badly the British treated civilians and prisoners. The British soldiers didn't always trust the Hessians and treated them poorly.

The Battle of Trenton

The Hessians are most remembered in America for their defeat by George Washington and his soldiers on December 26, 1776. On Christmas night, Washington and his troops crossed the icy Delaware River and marched nine miles to Trenton. They surprised the Hessians, who were sleeping, in an ambush. Many of Washington's soldiers didn't even have shoes, and their bloody footprints could be seen along the way. Washington captured about 1,000 Hessians and marched them through the streets of Trenton to boost the morale of his soldiers. Some captured soldiers were sent to work on farms in America, while others were sent to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where they were treated kindly. Many Hessians who stayed in America decided to live there instead of returning to Germany. Out of the 30,000 Hessians who fought in the war, around 3,000 to 5,000 stayed in the United States.

1. Why were Hessian soldiers hired by the British during the Revolutionary War?

- A) They volunteered to fight for the British
- B) The British needed extra soldiers to fight the American colonists
- C) They were forced to join the British army by their government
- D) The Hessians were the best-trained soldiers in the world

2. How were Hessian soldiers treated by the British military, according to the text?

- A) They were treated with great respect and admiration
- B) They were given better food and supplies than British soldiers
- C) They were feared and mistrusted by British soldiers, and treated poorly
- D) They were treated the same as British soldiers and given equal duties

3. What was the significance of the Battle of Trenton in the Revolutionary War?

- A) It was the first battle where George Washington was defeated
- B) It marked the first time the Continental Army fought the British
- C) George Washington's surprise victory raised the morale of the American troops
- D) The Hessians completely defeated the Continental Army

4. Why did some Hessian soldiers choose to stay in the United States after the war?

- A) They were forced to stay by the American government
- B) They were treated better than they would have been in Germany
- C) They were promised a large sum of money by the Continental Army
- D) They wanted to fight for the American side in the war

5. What happened to the captured Hessian soldiers after the Battle of Trenton?

- A) They were immediately sent back to Germany
- B) They were treated poorly and put in prison camps
- C) They were paraded through the streets to raise American morale and then sent to work on farms
- D) They joined the Continental Army to fight against the British

Answers

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