

## **Second Continental Congress**

King George III refused to consider the concerns mentioned by colonial leaders in the Declaration and Resolves, and in May of 1775, delegates from 12 of the 13 colonies met again in Philadelphia for what became known as the Second Continental Congress. What did the delegates discuss there?

Although far from unified, the delegates had several pressing issues to deal with. Some called for war with Britain, while others insisted that peace should still be sought. Once again, compromise would be needed. While they did not vote to openly rebel against the Crown, the representatives expressed their growing dissatisfaction with George III and Parliament.

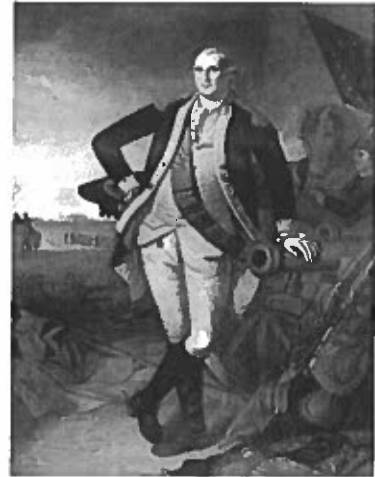
The delegates decided to request that each of the 13 colonies draft a new state constitution, and the large militia besieging Boston was declared the Continental Army. Since the “soldiers” were all New Englanders, many argued that someone from New England should be named commander.

John Hancock felt he should be given command since he was one of the wealthiest and most respected men from the area, but John Adams saw the importance of naming a non-Yankee General. He was determined to name a stout, engaging militia leader from Virginia to be the commander.

First, Adams’ candidate was 43. He wasn’t too old to function, but not too young to command respect. He had been a leading figure in the colonial resistance for several years and had substantial military experience during the French and Indian War. In fact, he had more military experience than any other American.

Finally, he was Virginian. His selection would show that the struggle wasn’t merely a Boston or New England matter, but something all of the colonies supported. Upon being nominated, the Virginian left the room so the others could discuss openly. After the debate, George Washington was unanimously voted the leader of the Continental Army.

In July, Congress sent the Olive Branch Petition to George III as a final attempt to avoid conflict. It blamed Parliament for the war and asked George III to call off the fighting for peace talks. John Adams was disgusted by the document but signed it anyway.



*George Washington*

George III refused the petition and sent the Royal Navy to blockade the colonies. He also authorized Parliament to hire 18,000 German Hessians from Europe. These professional soldiers for hire, known as mercenaries, had a particularly ruthless reputation, and the king believed the Hessians would “bring the colonists to their knees.” When word of the king’s agreement with several German princes reached the colonies, many argued that the act was solid proof that George III was an enemy of American liberty.

As General Washington began to put his staff together in preparation to depart for Boston, news of a major battle and British atrocities in and around the city began to trickle in. Benjamin Franklin, who had left Britain to take a seat in Continental Congress, wrote one of his companions back in London:

*Mr. Strahan: You are a Member of Parliament and one of that majority which has doomed my country to destruction. You have begun to burn our towns and murder our people. Look upon your hands! They are stained with the blood of your relations! You and I were long friends. You are now my enemy and I am Yours, B Franklin.*

**Multiple Choice:** *Select the choice that completes the statement or answers the question.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_ When did the Second Continental Congress first convene?
  - a. May 1774
  - b. July 1774
  - c. May 1775
  - d. July 1776
  
2. \_\_\_\_\_ The Second Continental Congress requested that each of the 13 colonies do what?
  - a. Declare independence from Britain.
  - b. Draft a new state constitution.
  - c. Send a list of grievances to King George III.
  - d. Send delegates to the British Parliament.
  
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Who insisted that George Washington be placed in command of the American army?
  - a. Patrick Henry
  - b. George Washington
  - c. Charles Lee
  - d. John Adams
  
4. \_\_\_\_\_ What colony was George Washington from?
  - a. New York
  - b. New Jersey
  - c. Virginia
  - d. Georgia
  
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Soldiers for hire are known as
  - a. Draftees
  - b. Conscripts
  - c. Mercenaries
  - d. Continentals

**TRUE/FALSE:** *Indicate whether the statement is true or false. If the statement is false, write the correct word or phrase in the space provided to make the statement true.*

6. \_\_\_\_\_ All of the 13 colonies met in Philadelphia for the opening of the Second Continental Congress. \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. \_\_\_\_\_ The large militia besieging Boston was declared the Continental Army.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
8. \_\_\_\_\_ John Hancock had more military experience than any other American.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
9. \_\_\_\_\_ In July, Congress sent the Olive Branch Petition to George III.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
10. \_\_\_\_\_ John Adams was pleased with the petition to King George III.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Guided Reading:** *Fill in the blanks below to create complete sentences.*

1. King George III refused to consider the concerns colonial leaders had mentioned in the \_\_\_\_\_.
  
2. Delegates of the Second Continental Congress had several \_\_\_\_\_ issues to deal with.
  
3. Delegates openly expressed their growing \_\_\_\_\_ with George III and Parliament.
  
4. Many felt someone from \_\_\_\_\_ should be named commander of the Continental Army.
  
5. \_\_\_\_\_ felt he should be given command of colonial forces since he was one of the wealthiest and most respected men in New England.
  
6. George Washington was unanimously voted the leader of the \_\_\_\_\_.
  
7. The \_\_\_\_\_ was a final attempt by Congress to avoid war with Great Britain.
  
8. George III refused the Olive Branch Petition and sent the Royal Navy to \_\_\_\_\_ the colonies.
  
9. King George III authorized Parliament to hire 18,000 \_\_\_\_\_ to fight in North America.
  
10. Many colonists argued that the hiring of German mercenaries was solid proof that George III was an enemy of \_\_\_\_\_.

**Vocabulary Check:** *Select the option that best identifies the use of the underlined word.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_ “Although far from unified, the delegates had several pressing issues to deal with.”  
In the previous sentence, the word pressing implies
  - a. Adapted or designed for actual use; useful.
  - b. Lesser, as in size, extent, or importance.
  - c. Not having much political strength, governing power, or authority.
  - d. Urgent; demanding immediate attention.
  
2. \_\_\_\_\_ In the third paragraph, the word draft means
  - a. To draw up in written form; compose.
  - b. A current of air moving in an upward or downward direction.
  - c. To take or select by draft, especially for military service.
  - d. To transfer or give away, as by gift or sale.
  
3. \_\_\_\_\_ “Upon being nominated, the Virginian left the room so the others could discuss openly.” In the previous sentence, the word nominated means
  - a. To be removed from a position or office.
  - b. To delegate to a lesser position.
  - c. To propose someone for appointment or election to an office.
  - d. To register as an entry in a race.
  
4. \_\_\_\_\_ In the eighth paragraph, the word blockade seems to mean
  - a. The isolating, closing off, or surrounding of a port, harbor, or city, by hostile ships to prevent entrance or exit.
  - b. To draw a plan on in order to indicate placement of scenery, stage property, etc.
  - c. To relieve or rid of outside forces.
  - d. To furnish or endow with a gift or the like, especially by formal act.
  
5. \_\_\_\_\_ “These professional soldiers for hire, known as mercenaries, had a particularly ruthless reputation...” In the previous passage, the word ruthless implies
  - a. Without pity or compassion; cruel; merciless.
  - b. Refusing consent, as to a proposal.
  - c. Acting in opposition; opposing, especially mutually.
  - d. Favorably disposed; inclined to approve, help, or support.

**Student Response:** *Please respond to the questions raised below. A thorough response should be a paragraph of at least three to five complete sentences.*

6. Summarize John Adams’ reasoning for nominating George Washington to be the commander of the Continental Army? Do you believe his reasons were sound? Why or why not.