

The Battle of Brandywine

The Philadelphia Campaign

Worksheet 1: You Are There! Constructing a Battlefield to Scale

Directions: Your map should cover an area of approximately 10 square miles. Use the symbols your teacher discussed to draw and/or label the following:

Landforms:

Brandywine Creek (east branch, west branch and the main stream)
Osborne's Hill
Wooded areas

Roads:

Great Valley Road
Baltimore Pike
Street Road
Brinton's Bridge Road
Dilworthtown Road
Birmingham Road

Fords and ferries:

Trimble's Ford
Jeffries's Ford
Buffington's Ford
Jones's Ford
Brinton's Ford
Chadd's Ford
Chad's Ferry
Pyle's Ford

Towns and buildings:

Chadds Ford
Dilworth
Sconnetown
Welch's Tavern
Kennett Meeting
Birmingham Friends Meeting House
Ring House (Washington's headquarters)
Gilpin House (Lafayette's headquarters)

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Worksheet 2a: You Are There! Phase I: The Stage is Set

Background: Convinced that the way to crush the Colonial revolt was to capture their Capitol of Philadelphia, General Howe sets out from New York by sea and lands his troops in Northern Maryland. He intends to march north and east across southern Pennsylvania and enter Philadelphia from the West. In response, General Washington sets up a line of defense along the Brandywine Creek in Chester County. He knew that Howe and his troops would have to cross the creek in order to march into Philadelphia. The creek has several fords (crossings).

After consulting with local farmers, Washington is convinced that the British will try to cross at Chad's Ford and concentrates the main body of his troops near that crossing. However, he also stations troops at the other fords along the creek except for Trimble's Ford (on the West branch of the Creek) and Jeffries' Ford (on the East branch of the Creek). The local farmers have convinced Washington that these two crossings would be almost impossible for a large army to reach because the roads to them were so poor.

Characters:

George Washington - Commander-in-Chief of the American Forces

General Knox – One of Washington's Generals

Colonial Sergeant – Clerk on Washington's staff

Major Jamison – One of Washington aides

Lt. Colonel Ross – PA militiaman in General Wayne's division.

Colonel Bland – Commander of a post of dragoons at Jones's Ford

Major Spear – Chester County militiaman.

Major John Eustace – A member of General Sullivan's staff.

Thomas Cheyney – A local squire who was a patriot.

Courier 1 – A soldier carrying messages from General Sullivan.

Courier 2 – A soldier carrying messages from Colonel Hazen camp.

Narrator

Worksheet 2b: You Are There! Phase I: The Stage is Set, con't.

Scene I - Benjamin Ring House – Washington's Headquarters near Chadd's Ford on the Brandywine Creek.

Narrator: It is 7 am on the morning of September 11, 1777. General Washington and General Knox know that Howe has crossed into Pennsylvania and a battle is imminent. They are sitting at a table discussing battle strategy.

General Knox: You know, George, General Sullivan still believes that Howe will attempt a flanking movement and strike from the North. Howe defeated us in New York using that strategy. Sullivan and several of the others think that he will try the same tactic again.

General Washington: I know. I know. It has caused me some concern as well. However, the information we have from the local farmers we spoke to has convinced me that such a tactic is highly unlikely. (*Washington points to a map on the table.*) Look at the road they would have to traverse. It would be difficult enough for foot soldiers. I cannot believe that Howe would risk his guns and field artillery on such a march.

General Knox: That is true. But these are seasoned British troops, and those mercenary Hessians as well. Many of them have fought for years on the continent against the French, often on far rougher terrain.

General Washington: I've thought of that, Henry. That's why I have troops guarding every ford from Buffington's in the North to Pyle's in the South. Look here. (*Washington goes to the map and places markers on it as he speaks.*) I have positioned Maxwell, Wayne and Greene here, near Chad's Ford. Armstrong is to the south at Pyle's Ford. Sullivan guards Brinton's Ford and the Delaware contingent is guarding Jones's Ford. Hazen's men are divided between Wistar's Ford and Buffington's Ford. Stephen and Stirling are here, to the rear in case the British do try a flanking movement. So you see, Henry, we are ready.

General Knox: What about Trimble's Ford?

General Washington: According to the local people, it would be almost impossible for the British to reach that ford. Besides, the Brandywine splits into two branches above Buffington's Ford. If the British were to cross at Trimble's, they would have to cross the east branch at Jeffries's Ford. I do not believe that Howe would risk two crossings.

(*A sergeant entering interrupts the generals.*)

Sergeant: General Washington, sir. (*He salutes.*)

Washington: What is it, Sergeant?

Sergeant: Sir, a young farmer has just arrived. He lives not far from Kennett Square. He reports seeing a large column marching North along the Great Valley Road.

Worksheet 2c: You Are There! Phase I: The Stage is Set, con't.

General Knox: What!?

General Washington: Have we heard anything from General Maxwell?

Sergeant: No, sir.

General Washington: Thank you, Sergeant. Please find Major Jamison and send him to me.

(A few minutes later, Major Jamison enters.)

Major Jamison: General Washington, sir! *(He salutes.)*

General Washington: At ease, Major. We have received a report that a column of British is marching north. The information came from one of the locals. However, I've heard nothing from Maxwell. I want you to reconnoiter the situation and report back to me.

Major Jamison: Very good, sir. I will leave immediately. *(Jamison salutes, turns, and leaves.)*

General Washington: Come, Henry. Let's get a breath of air. *(Washington and Knox exit.)*

Scene II – Back inside Washington's Headquarters. The time is 9:30 am. Washington and Knox are again seated at the table.

Narrator: *Washington anxiously awaits Major Jamison's report. Finally, about 9:30 am, a courier arrives.*

(Courier enters and salutes)

Courier 1: General Washington, Sir. General Sullivan sent this missive, sir. *(Hands Washington a letter.)*

General Washington: Thank you, Sergeant. *(Washington opens the paper and reads the contents.)*

General Knox: What does it say, George?

General Washington: It's Jamison's report. He saw no evidence of a Northern movement. He states: "I might depend there was no enemy there." *(He shows Knox the report.)*

General Knox: Are we to proceed as planned, then?

General Washington: Yes. Unless I receive more evidence of a Northern movement, we will concentrate on Chadd's Ford.

Narrator: *Washington and Knox continue their study of the original battle plan. Then, at 10:00 am, another courier arrives. The clerk/sergeant interrupts them again. He enters and salutes.*

Sergeant: General Washington, sir.

General Washington: Yes, Sergeant. What is it?

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Worksheet 2d: You Are There! Phase I: The Stage is Set, con't.

Sergeant: Another courier, sir. He's from Colonel Hazen's camp, sir.

General Washington: Send him in, Sergeant.

(Courier 2 enters and salutes)

General Washington: You have word from Colonel Hazen?

Courier 2: Yes, Sir. We saw a large column of British traveling north on the west side of the creek. It was too foggy to see clearly, sir, but Colonel Hazen believes it might be Howe's main body.

General Washington: Thank you, corporal.

General Knox: What are you going to do now, George?

General Washington: *(Looking at a map of the region.)* Hazen is positioned here at Wistar's Ford. They must have passed Jones' Ford as well. Send word to Colonel Bland to watch for them.

Narrator: *At noon, Washington received word from Bland that a large column of British were indeed moving North toward Trimble's Ford. The clerk/sergeant enters and hands Washington another missive.*

General Knox: More information, George?

General Washington: It's from Bland. He, too, saw an enemy column moving north on the Valley Road.

General Knox: Howe is moving north, then?

General Washington: Perhaps. It may be a feint to make us believe he is trying to flank us in hopes that we will reposition away from the main fords.

The clerk knocks and enters again.

General Washington: What is it, Sergeant?

Sergeant: A courier has just delivered this report from Lt. Colonel Ross, sir.

The sergeant hands the report to Washington who opens it and read it aloud to Knox.

General Washington: It is indeed from Ross. He sent a patrol to scout the area west of the creek. According to Ross,

"A large body of the enemy, from every account five thousand with sixteen or eighteen field pieces, marched along [the Great Valley] road just now. This road leads to Taylor's Ferry [Trimble' Ford] and Jeffery's [Jeffries's] Ferry on the Brandywine and to the Great Valley and the Sign of the Slip on the Lancaster Road to Philadelphia. There is also a road from Brandywine to Chester by Dilworth Town."

General Knox: That doesn't sound like a feint to me!

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Worksheet 2e: You Are There! Phase I: The Stage is Set, con't.

General Washington: Nor to me. We had best reexamine our plans. It sounds as if Howe has divided his army. This may be our opportunity to strike a damaging blow. If we can drive back their advance here at Chadd's Ford, they will not be able to join the flank coming in from the north. I shall send word to Maxwell to cross to the western side of the creek and engage the enemy there. *(He writes the order then gives it to the sergeant to send to General Maxwell.)* Sergeant, send this at once.

Sergeant: Yes, sir. *(He turns and leaves.)*

Washington and Knox begin to discuss plans to reposition the troops. At 1:00 pm the sergeant enters and hands Washington another message from General Sullivan.

General Washington: Sullivan has forwarded this report from Major Spear. *(He reads the report aloud.)*

Since I sent you the message by Major Morris I saw some of the militia who came in this morning from a tavern called Martins on the forks of the Brandywine. He came thence to Welches Tavern and heard nothing of the Enemy above the Fords of the Brandywine and is Confident that [they] are not in that Quarters. So that [then] Colonel Hazen's information must be wrong.

General Knox: All the other reports indicate the opposite. This is most perplexing.

General Washington: It certainly is. Still, Spear is a native of this area. If there were enemies about, he should know where to look. I need to speak to him directly. Sergeant!

(The Sergeant enters.)

Sergeant: Yes, sir?

General Washington: Send word to General Sullivan that I would like to see Major Spear immediately.

Sergeant: The major is here, sir. General Sullivan sent him to confirm his report.

General Washington: Very good. Send him in.

(Major Spear enters and salutes.)

General Washington: Major, I have received numerous reports that the British are moving north. Yet, your report says there is no such movement. What say you?

Major Spear: Sir, I know this area well. My home is not far from here. I rode out along the western edge of the stream. Other than a few patrols moving south, I saw no evidence of a large movement of British troops.

General Washington: Thank you, Major. You may go.

(Spear turns and leaves. Washington turns to Knox.)

Worksheet 2f: You Are There! Phase I: The Stage is Set, con't.

General Washington: It is as I first believed. Howe feinted a movement north, and has now turned his troops south to reinforce Knyphausen. We will follow our original plan. I will send word to Maxwell to return to the east side of the creek and defend that position. I am also going to reposition Stephen and Stirling to the rear of Greene and Sullivan. We will need them to reinforce the lines. (He sends messages out to the Generals.)

Narrator: A short time later, another messenger from Sullivan arrives.

Sergeant: General, Major Eustace is here. He is a member of General Sullivan's staff.

General Washington: Send him in, Sergeant.

(The sergeant leaves and Eustace enters and salutes.)

Major Eustace: General Washington, sir. I have come to report that the enemy has moved north. It appears the Howe is going to attack our flank. *(Both Washington and Knox laugh.)*

General Washington: Thank you, Major. You are dismissed.

(Eustace leaves. He is shaking his head in disbelief that Washington laughed at this report. The sergeant enters again. About a half hour later.)

General Washington: What now, Sergeant?

Sergeant: A local man named Thomas Cheyney is outside. He insists on speaking with you personally.

General Washington: Send him in.

(The sergeant leaves and Cheyney enters.)

Cheyney: General, while I was out riding, I saw the main force of the British army. They pursued me and I barely escaped. They have crossed the eastern branch of the Brandywine at Jeffries's Ford. They are moving south to attack!

General Washington: Really, Sir?

Cheyney: You don't believe me?

General Washington: Sir, I do not know you. How do I know you are not a spy in the employ of the British. Perhaps you have been sent to throw us off our guard?

Cheyney: *(Exasperated)* "If Anthony Wayne or Persie Frazer were here, they'd know whether I'm to be believed. My life for it. You're mistaken. By hell! It's so. Put me under guard till you can find out it's so! I would have you know that I have this day's work as much at heart as e'er a blood of you."

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Worksheet 2g: You Are There! Phase I: The Stage is Set, con't.

(The sergeant enters again. He hands Washington two more reports. Washington reads them and his expression becomes grim.)

General Knox: What is it, George?

General Washington: They're from Bland. *(He reads the first report aloud.)*

"I have discovered a party of the enemy on the heights, just on the right of the two Widow Davis's who live close together on the road called the Fork Road, about a half a mile right of the Meeting House."

It appears the British are indeed flanking us.

General Knox: What are you going to do now, George?

Worksheet 3: You Are There! Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

Directions:

At the end of the play, "The Stage is Set," General Knox asked Washington:

"What are you going to do now, George?"

Write a short essay predicting the steps Washington might take to counter the flanking action of the British. Be sure to consider the "current" positions of the troops. Then discuss whether or not Washington's counter moves will be successful and why.

Worksheet 4: You Are There! The Debriefing

Directions:

Now that you have discussed Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the Battle of Brandywine, answer the following questions:

1. Was there a clear-cut victor in the Battle of Brandywine? Explain your answer.

2. What effect did this battle have on the American troops?

3. A serious problem for the Americans was the lack of accurate information on British troop movements. Discuss the forms of communication that existed at the time of the battle and how this contributed to the confusion on the day of the battle.

4. Think about the types of communication available today. If the battle were being fought today, do you think the same confusion would have occurred? Why or why not?