

**American History Document Based Question**  
**The Revolutionary War**  
**Cassie Hill, Haines City High School**  
**8<sup>th</sup> Grade or Higher**

**Directions:**

- Answer the corresponding questions following each document.
- After answering the questions for documents 1-3, please then respond to the essay prompt using the information obtained from the following documents.
- The essay will be graded based on your ability to integrate and utilize relevant information from the documents provided to create a well organized essay.

**Essay Prompt: Describe the feelings of people in America about the possibility of having a war with England?**

**Document #1: Letter from Abigail Adams to husband John Adams.**

On June 17, 1775, The Battle of Bunker Hill took place. Although the British took the position, they suffered large casualties. The Americans lost 400 of 1,500 men, and held fast against greater numbers of professional soldiers, reiterating the Americans resolve to fight. This letter is written by Abigail to her husband John regarding the battle and the loss of a friend.

“Dearest Friend,

The day, perhaps the decisive day, is come, on which the fate of America depends. My bursting heart must find vent at my pen. I have just heard that our dear friend, Dr. Warren, is no more, but fell gloriously fighting for his country; saying, Better to die honorably in the field, than ignominiously hand upon the gallows. Great is our loss. He has distinguished himself in every engagement, by his courage and fortitude, by animating the soldiers and leading them on by his own example. A particular account of these dreadful, but I hope glorious days, will be transmitted you, no doubt, in the exactest manner.

“The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; but the God of Israel is He that giveth strength and power unto his people. Trust in him at all times, ye people, pour out your hearts before him; God is a refuge for us.” Charlestown is laid in ashes. The battle began upon our intrenchments upon Bunker’s Hill, Saturday morning about three o’clock, and has not ceased yet, and it is now three o’clock Sabbath afternoon.

It is expected they will come out over the Neck tonight, and a dreadful battle must ensue. Almighty God, cover the heads of our countrymen, and be a shield to our dear friends! How many have fallen, we know not. The constant roar of the cannon is so distressing that we cannot eat, drink or sleep. May we be supported and sustained in the dreadful conflict. I shall tarry here till it is thought unsafe by my friends, and then I have secured myself a retreat at your brother’s, who has kindly offered me part of his house. I cannot compose myself to write any further at present. I will add more as I hear further.

Tuesday afternoon”...I ardently pray that you may be supported through the arduous task you have before you. I wish I could contradict the report of the Dr’s death; but it is a lamentable truth, and tears of the multitude pay tribute to his memory, those favorite lines of Collin continually sound in my ears: “How sleep the brave” etc. ....The spirits of the people are very good; the loss of Charlestown affects them no more than a drop in the bucket.

I am, most sincerely, yours,  
Portia”

After reading this letter, answer the following questions.

1. How does she feel about what the conflict has done to her friends and surroundings?
2. How does she feel about the death of Dr. Warren?
3. Does she support the decision to go to war?

## **Document #2: Stockbridge Indian speech**

This speech was given to the Massachusetts congress by a member of the Stockbridge tribe in Western Massachusetts in 1775.

“Brothers! You remember, when you first came over the great waters, I was great and you were little-very small. I then took you in for a friend, and kept you under my arms, so that no one might injure you. Since that time we have ever been true friends; there has never been any quarrel between us. But now our conditions are changed. You are become great and tall. You reach to the clouds. You are seen all around the world. I am become small-very little. I am not so high as your knee. Now you take care of me; and I look to you for protection. Brothers! I am sorry to hear of this great quarrel between you and old England. It appears that blood must soon be shed to end this quarrel. We never till this day understood the foundation of this quarrel between you and the country you came from. Brothers! Whenever I see your blood running, you will soon find me about to revenge my brothers’ blood. Although I am low and very small, I will grip hold of your enemy’s heel, that he cannot run so fast, and so light, as if he had nothing at his heels. Brothers! You know I am not so wise as you are; therefore I ask your advice in what I am now going to say. I have been thinking, before you come to action, to take a run to the westward and feel the mind of my Indian brethren, the Six Nations, and know how they stand-whether they are on your side or for your enemies. If I find they are against you, I will try to turn their minds. I think they will listen to me, for they have always looked this way for advice, concerning all important news that comes from the rising sun. If they hearken to me, you will not be afraid of any danger from behind you. However their minds are affected, you shall soon know by me. I think I can do you more service in this way than by marching off immediately to Boston and staying there. It may be a great while before blood runs. Now, as I said, you are wiser than I; I leave this for your consideration, whether I come down immediately or wait till I hear some blood is spilled. Brothers! I would not have you think by this that we are falling back from our engagements. We are ready to do anything for your relief, and should be guided by your counsel. Brothers! One thing I ask you, if you send for me to fight; that you will let me fight in my own way. I am not used to fight English fashion; therefore you must not expect I can train like your men. Only point out to me where your enemies keep, and that is all I shall want to know.”

Please answer the following:

4. What will this Native American say he will ask the Six Nations to do for the Americans?
5. What does it mean when he say, “...if they hearken to me, you will not be afraid of any danger from behind you.”
6. Is this person for going to war with England?
7. How does he feel about the Americans telling the Native Americans how to fight with them against the British?

### Document #3:

George Washington was a military hero in the French and Indian War with an excellent reputation. He was a steadfast patriot to the cause. No other candidates were nominated or considered for the position and he was selected by a unanimous vote to be Commander of the Continental Army. The following excerpt is a letter he wrote to his wife, Martha, telling her of his new command.

“Philadelphia, June 18, 1775

My Dearest,

I am now set down to write to you on a subject which fills me with inexpressible concern, and this concern is greatly aggravated and increased, when I reflect upon the uneasiness I know it will give you. It has been determined in Congress, that the whole army raised for the defense of the American cause shall be put under my care, and that it is necessary for me to proceed immediately to Boston to take upon me the command of it. You may believe me, my dear patsy, when I assure you, in the most solemn manner that, so far from seeking this appointment, I have used every endeavor in my power to avoid it, not only from my unwillingness to part with you and the family, but from a consciousness of its being a trust too great for my capacity, and that I should enjoy more real happiness in one month with you at home, than I have the most distant prospect of finding abroad, if my stay were to be seven times seven years. But as it has been a kind of destiny, that has thrown me upon this service, I shall hope that my undertaking it is designed to answer some good purpose. You might, and I suppose did perceive, from the tenor of my letters, that I was apprehensive I could not avoid this appointment, as I did not intimate when I should return. That was the case. It was utterly out of my power to refuse this appointment, without exposing my character to such censures, as would have reflected dishonor upon myself, and given pain to my friends. This, I am sure, could not, and ought not, to be pleasing to you and must have lessened me considerably in my own esteem. I shall rely, therefore, confidently on that providence, which has heretofore preserved and been bountiful to me, not doubting but that I shall return safe to you in the fall. I shall feel no pain from the toil or the danger of the campaign; my unhappiness will flow from the uneasiness I know you will feel from being left alone. I therefore beg, that you will summon your whole fortitude, and pass your time as agreeably as possible. Nothing will give me so much sincere satisfaction as to hear this, and to hear it from your own pen. My earnest and ardent desire is, that you would pursue any plan that is most likely to produce content, and a tolerable degree of tranquility; as it must add greatly to my uneasy feelings to hear, that you are dissatisfied or complaining at what I really could not avoid.....I....got Colonel Pendleton to draft a will for me, by the directions I gave him, which I will now enclose. The provision made for you in case of my death will, I hope, be agreeable. ....remember me to your friends .....

8. Describe what Washington means when he says, “...I have used every endeavor in my power to avoid it.”
9. What is he saying to his wife when he writes, “But it has been a kind of destiny, that has thrown me upon this service, I shall hope that my undertaking it is designed to answer some good purpose.”?
10. What other words and/or phrases does Washington use to show that he felt that he did not have a choice about accepting the appointment as commander of the Continental Army?

**Essay Prompt: Describe the feelings of people in America about the possibility of having a war with England?**

As you prepare and write your essay you should remember to:

- Include an introduction paragraph or thesis statement.
- Use information from the documents as supporting details and examples to enforce your ideas.