

Soldier's Letter

5th Grade Historical Fiction

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My dear Mother,

It is a very hard time we are having here at Valley Forge. We have little food. I am so glad you made me take the blanket when I left. It was a lot of trouble carrying it with me. But every day I use it. I sit huddled under it in the very cold snow and ice. I have two friends that I shared it with. I cut it into three pieces. Each of us has one part. They thank you, too.

When we first came here, George Washington told us it would be hard. But I had not idea it would be so very difficult. There are not many people around to help us. We went to a farm yesterday to beg for food. But the farmer shouted at us to leave. He said he hoped we would just go home and stop this fighting. He does not understand that we are fighting for his freedom, too.

Every day I pray that we will win the war. But every day I get discouraged. My friends and I try to stay hopeful. And George Washington comes to talk with us one by one every day. He says to stay hopeful.

He brought a new man to help us. It is a man from another country. He is from Germany. He does not speak English well. A few people who know German tell him what we are saying. And they translate his words for us. His name is Von Steuben. They say he is an expert at fighting a war.

George Washington says that we will do better if we learn from Von Steuben. The German is very clever. He shows us how to fight better. I never knew about this. I thought you just ran across the battlefield. But he says we must have a plan for each fight. I think George Washington has found us the help we need to win the war.

I will write to you again next week. We do not have much paper, so I have to stop my letter now. I hope the family is well. I hope I see you soon.

Your Son, Tom

Identify and infer stated and implied character traits – Historical Fiction

Questions developed by Center for Urban Education for use by Chicago Public Schools 2008-2009.

Choose the best answer for each question

1. What is a trait that the soldier says Von Steuben has?

- a. German
- b. smart
- c. angry
- d. cooperative

2. What is a trait that you infer the soldier thinks George Washington has?

- a. leadership
- b. cowardice
- c. generous
- d. nervous

3. What trait do you infer the farmer had?

- a. caring
- b. selfish
- c. proud
- d. hungry

4. What trait do you think the soldier's mother has?

- a. caring
- b. friendly
- c. angry
- d. mean

5. *Write your own answer to this question. What trait do you think the soldier shows?*

Why do you think so?

TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students' Skills: Exercise Thinking

These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student's achievement should not be made based on their responses. They are intended to exercise skills. Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

Answers: *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

Item	1	2	3	4
Answer	b	a	b	a

Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.
Sharing, generous, responsible—based on the soldier's actions