

LESSON 3 - A CLEVER GENERAL

A CLEVER GENERAL

[Point out Henry Knox and George Washington.]

Henry Knox was a clever man. *Another word for clever is smart.* Before the American Revolution began, he and his wife had owned a bookshop in the city of Boston, Massachusetts. *The American Revolution was when people fought to start a new government.* Henry Knox had loved the quiet, peaceful life of a bookseller, but all that was in the past now.



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Henry Knox, bookseller, had become Colonel [/kern*Əl/] Henry Knox of the American Continental Army. He worked directly with General George Washington, another clever man who commanded that army, and the two men had become great friends. *Colonel and General are titles given to leaders in the army. A colonel answers to a general because a general is in charge.*



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At the Continental camp just outside the city of Boston, Henry Knox had a puzzled look on his face. *Henry Knox was puzzled, or unsure, about how to solve a problem.* Looking at General Washington, he asked, "But, sir, how can we keep the larger British army from marching out from Boston and destroying our soldiers here? We don't even have enough bullets or gunpowder for all our soldiers. If the British only knew . . ."



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George Washington answered him. "Yes, Colonel, 'if they only knew.' But they do not know. The British think we have more men than we really have.



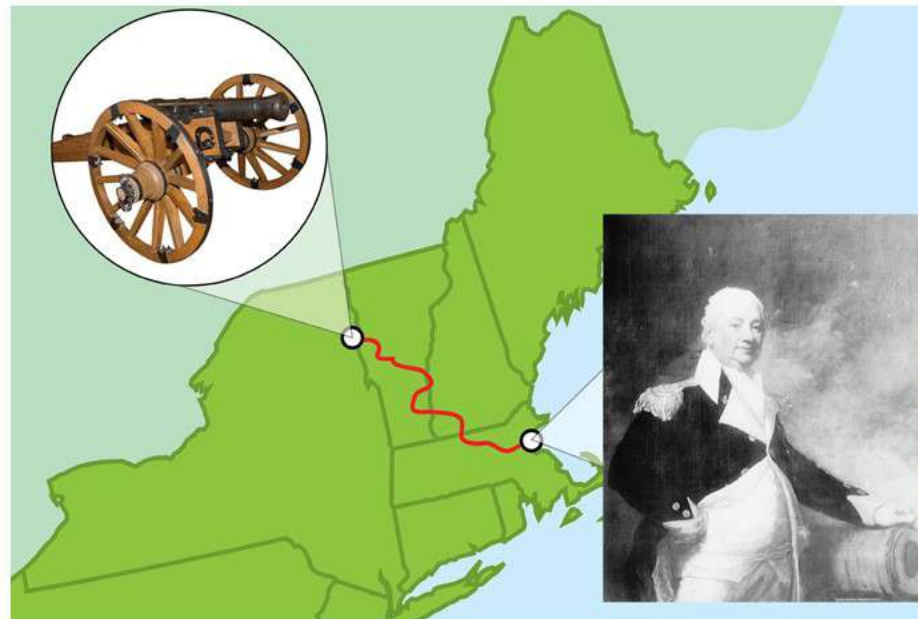
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“They do not know that many of those whom we do have lack anything to shoot at them with, as you mentioned. *Even though the Continental soldiers had guns, they didn't have any gunpowder or bullets left.* So we must make sure that they do not find out. Let them think we are stronger than we are, so that they will wish to stay comfortably in Boston through this long, cold winter, at least until we are ready for them. But in order for us to get ready, we need more gunpowder and bullets.”



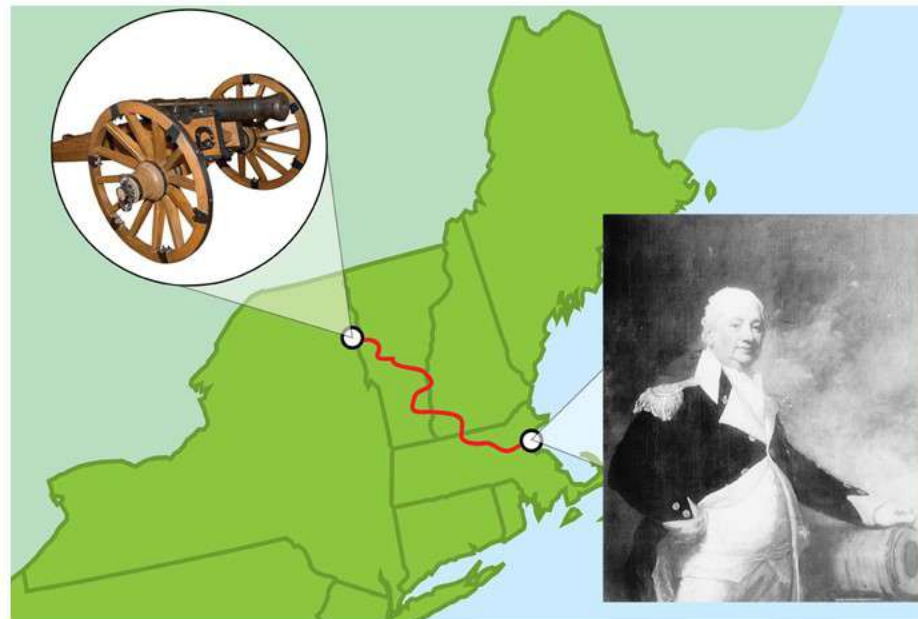
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Colonel Knox thought for a few moments and then smiled.
“General,” he asked, “would fifty cannons, and the cannonballs and gunpowder to use with them, help?”



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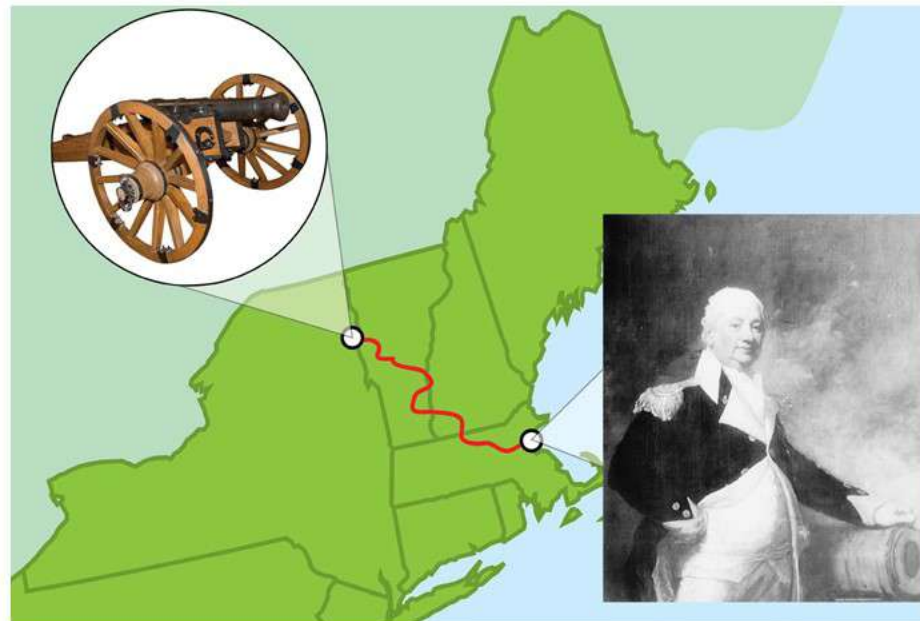
Washington looked startled *or surprised*. "Where could we get . . . ?" He stopped. A light of understanding shone in his eyes. "Fort Ticonderoga [/tie*kon*də*roegə/]" he exclaimed. *A fort is a protected building or small town set up by an army during a war.* "Brilliant, Colonel! Now that we have captured *or have taken control of* Fort Ticonderoga from the British, we have captured their cannons, too. You are to gather a team of carefully chosen men. In the morning, you will leave to bring those cannons here. Travel as quickly as you can! *So the Americans had captured one of the British forts, and now they were going to get their cannons, too! Was this a clever idea?*



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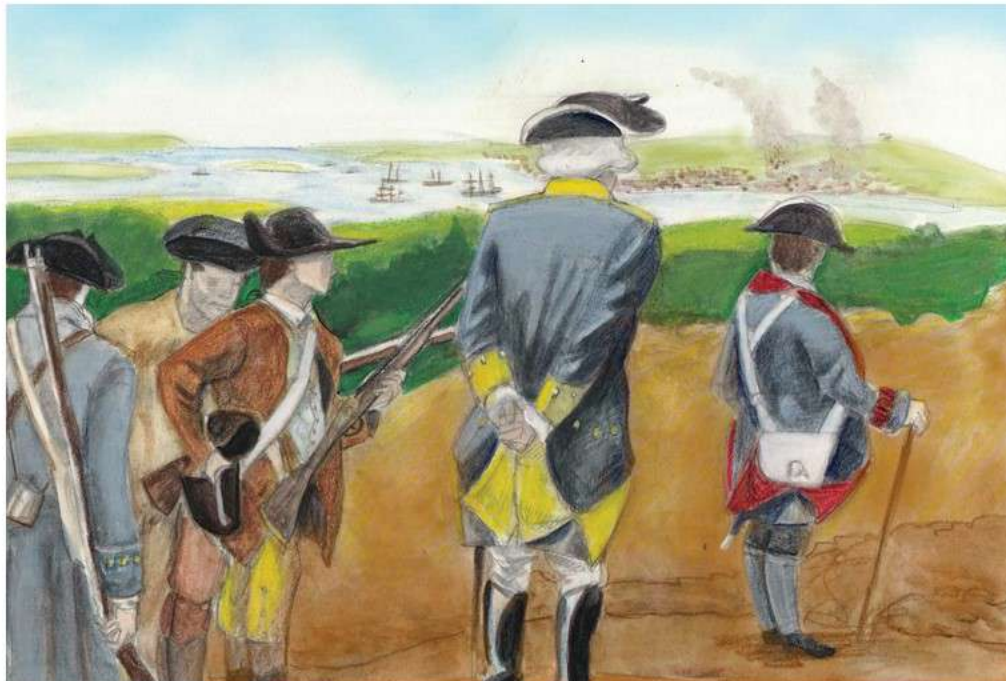
“Meanwhile, my job here will be to convince the British general, General Howe, that we are too strong for him to attack.”

Washington knew his small army could not win against General Howe's larger army, so he had to find a clever way to convince General Howe that Washington's army was much larger than it really was.



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"I will order our men to build high mounds *or huge piles* of dirt in front of our camp. General Howe will not be able to see past the dirt. Then I will march our men up and down at either end. He will not know we are moving the same men from place to place. Instead, he will think we have more soldiers than we really do. *[Point out the American Continental Army and the British ships in the picture. Explain what the British army could and could not see.]* By putting up the dirt mounds, we also will appear to be settling in for a long time.



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General Howe will think, 'Those colonial soldiers are expecting to keep us trapped here in Boston. They are certainly sure of themselves.' He may think that it would be better to leave Boston on board his ships rather than stay.



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If we can force the British to leave, we will be in charge of the harbor again. *A harbor is a protected body of water where ships can easily dock.* Then, unlike the British, we can bring in supplies from other American cities on the coast. *The ships can sail along the coast, which is where the land meets the ocean.* We will move the supplies to our armies all across the countryside, because our friends there will help us.” *The supplies would include anything the army might need, such as food, water, or guns.* Washington went over the idea in his mind. “It might work,” he said. “It must work!”

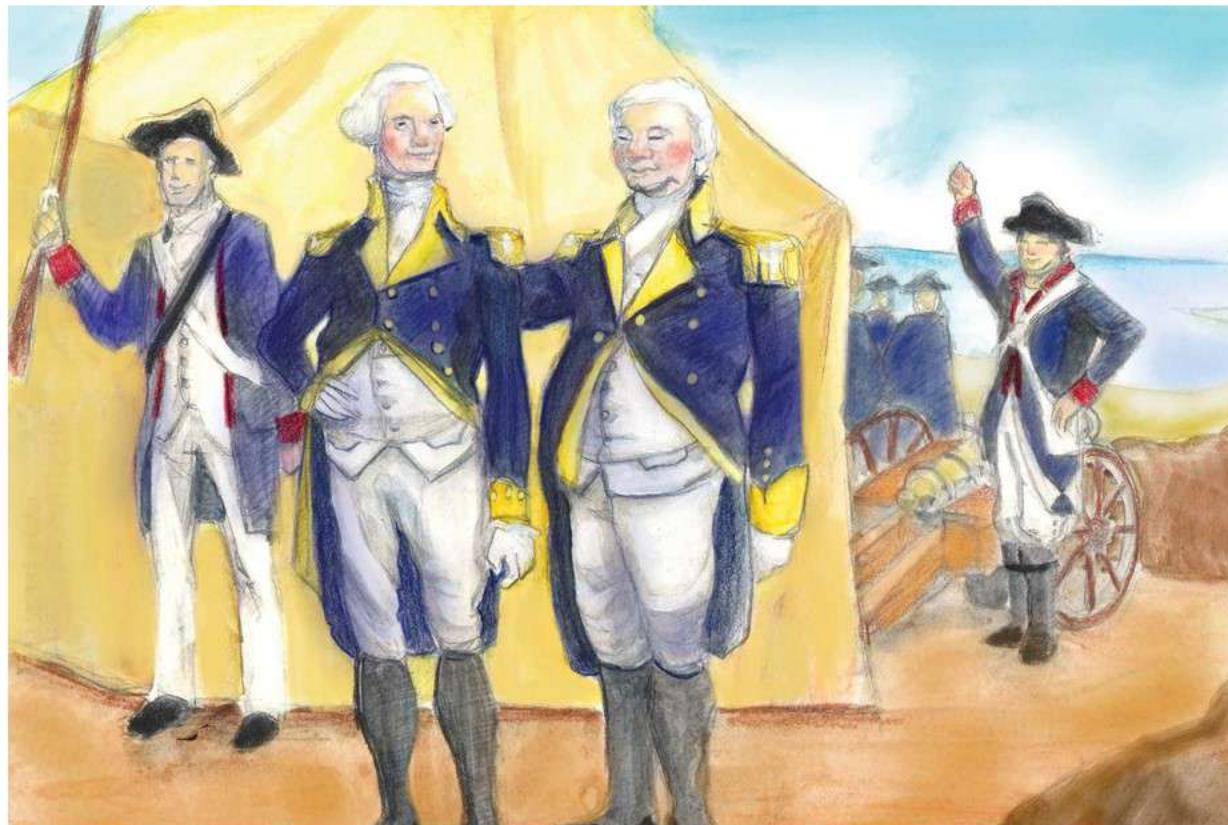


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It did work! Colonel Knox and his men marched off through the cold New England winter and returned in a little less than two months with cannons and supplies. *[Show the path from Boston to Fort Ticonderoga.]* They had loaded these things onto carts and used huge, heavy animals called oxen to pull the carts back to Washington's camp outside of Boston.

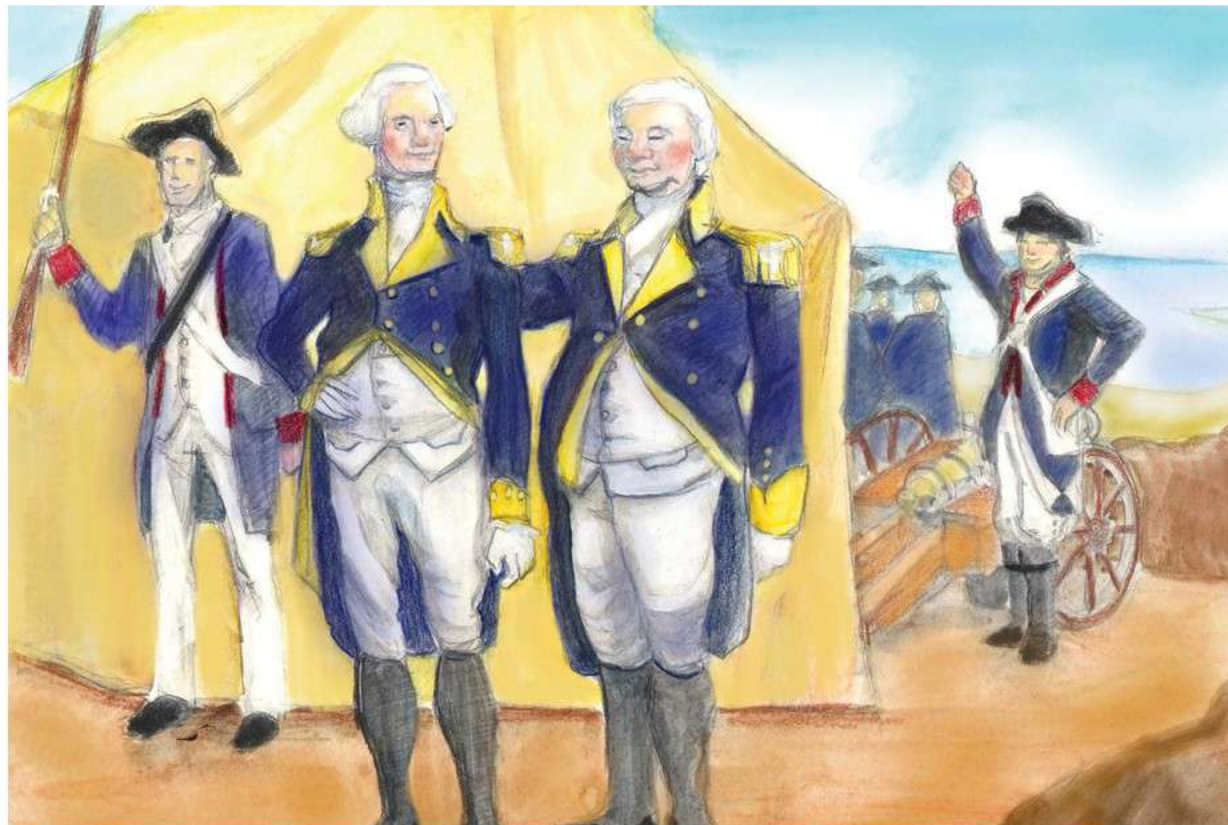
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When they arrived, the waiting American soldiers sent up a mighty cheer. Hearing the noise, Washington came out of his tent. Seeing Henry Knox riding his horse at the head of the line of men, oxen, and supplies, Washington stepped forward to greet him. *The word line means a group of people that are waiting to move forward.* "Welcome back, Colonel. I am glad to see you—and our cannons."



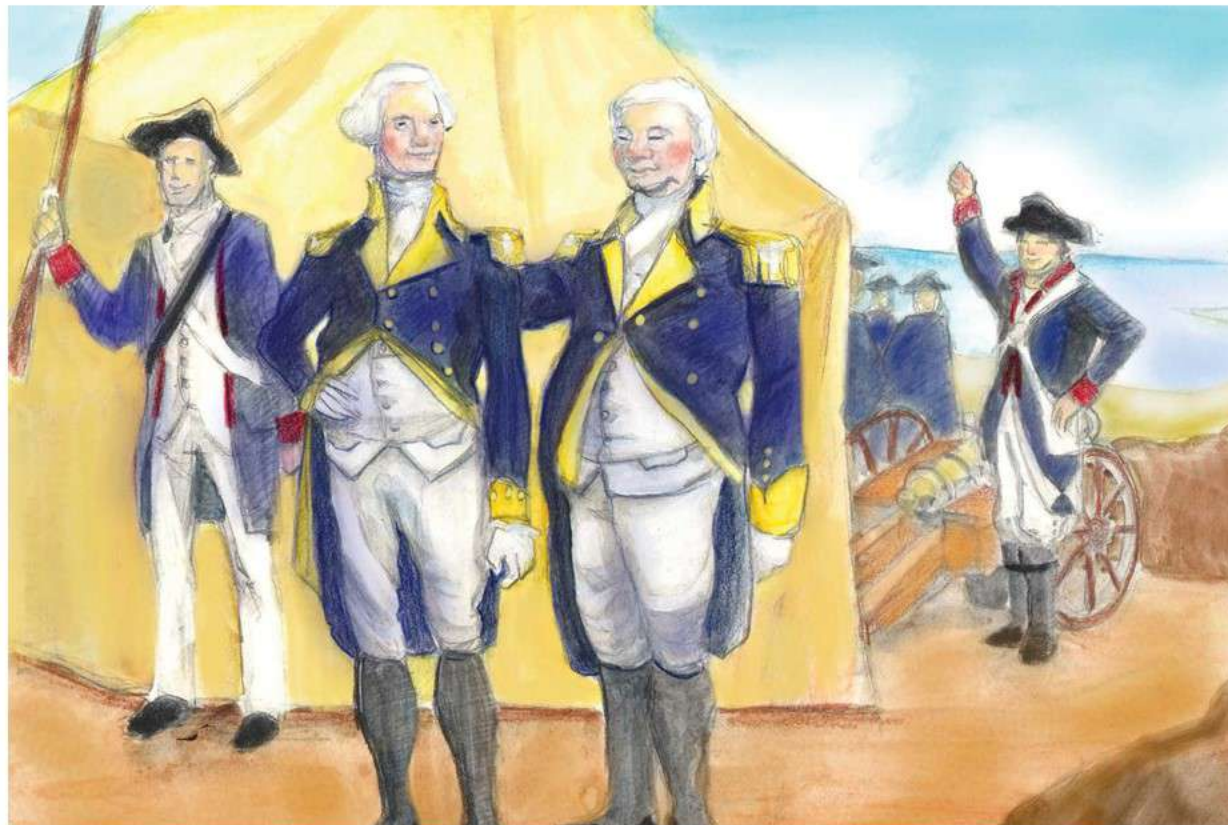
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Knox climbed down from his horse, turned, and saluted. "Thank you, sir. It is good to see you, too, and to know that I will not have to spend another night on the march. And I have additional good news; we have also brought enough gunpowder and bullets so that our soldiers here will finally have something to fire out of their gun barrels."



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Over in Boston, the British guards heard the shouts of joy, too, and ran to tell General Howe, "Something is going on, General, but we cannot see what it is because of the dirt mounds the colonists built."



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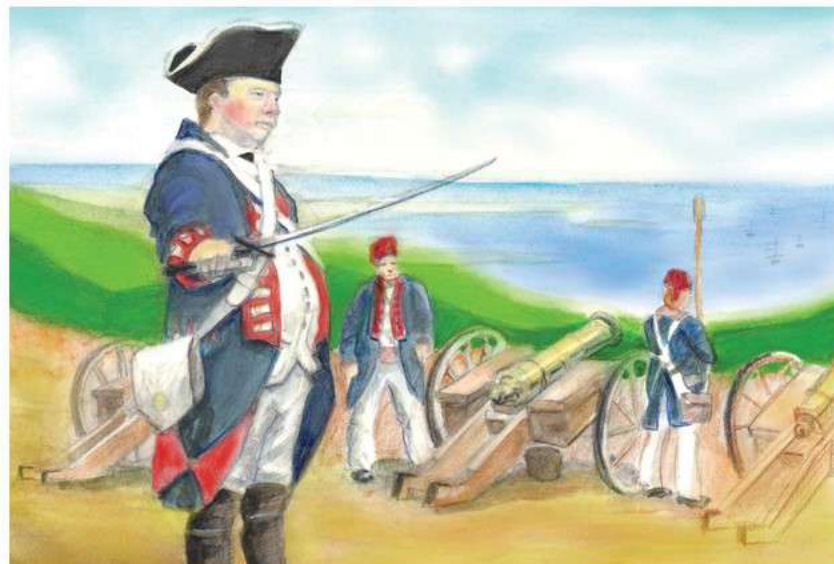
Do you think Washington's clever plan worked? Did he keep the British from attacking until the cannons arrived by making them think they had a lot of soldiers behind the dirt pile?

Later that same day, however, General Howe looked up to see fifty-nine cannons aimed his way from on top of the dirt mounds. "Now," he thought, "there is no way to safely attack Washington and his men." Of course, he did not know that he might have done that successfully anytime in the two months it had taken Henry Knox to bring the cannons. Soon afterward, the British left Boston. The plan of Washington and Knox had worked.



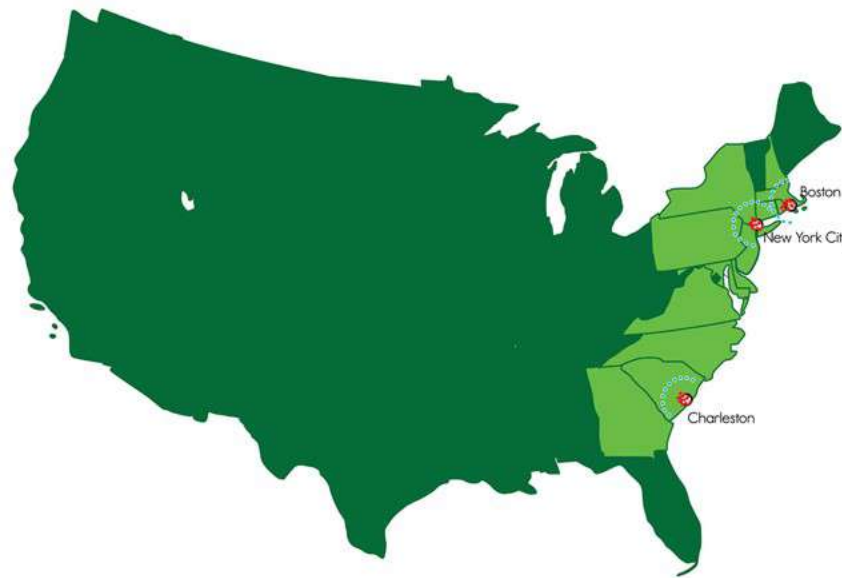
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Afterward, several things changed in important ways. First, the city of Boston was back in American hands. *Great Britain was no longer in charge of the city; Americans were.* This was great news for the people there, and it also made Americans throughout the thirteen colonies think, "If we are strong enough to force British soldiers out of Boston, maybe we can win our freedom after all." Though some American colonists remained loyal to Great Britain and chose to leave with General Howe, many Americans who had been afraid before came forward to help. They had begun to hope that they really could defeat the British.



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The second change was that George Washington had learned something important. "The British army almost always wins when they fight on an open battlefield. From now on, we will attack and then quickly move away to attack in another place; or we will trap them up on the coast, as we did in Boston. If we can keep them cooped up in coastal areas, *or areas next to the water, as shown on this map* they cannot come onto land to attack us. If they cannot attack us, they cannot beat us. If they cannot beat us, they will grow tired of this war and leave us in peace."



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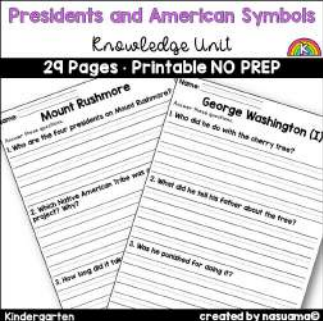
There was a third change, too. Washington called in Colonel Knox and told him, "Congratulations, Henry. I am making you a general. I am putting you in charge of all of our cannons, not just the ones you brought from Fort Ticonderoga." *Who has more authority, or power: a general or a colonel?*



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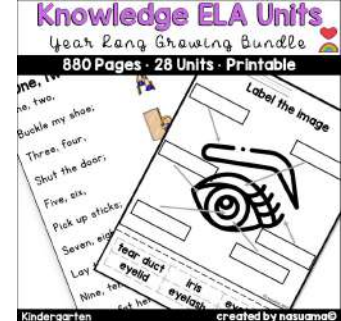
George Washington and Henry Knox, the wealthy farmer from Virginia and the bookseller from Boston, became lifelong friends. General Knox helped General Washington win the American Revolution. A few years later, when Washington became president, he asked Henry Knox to become America's first Secretary of War, a person who helps the president keep soldiers and sailors ready in case there should be another war. However, having fought one war already, the two friends worked together and made a wonderful peace instead.





PRESIDENTS AND AMERICAN SYMBOLS

BUNDLE



Name: _____

George Washington (II)

Answer the question.

What was the clever idea Colonel Knox and George Washington had?

DO YOU NEED EXTRA ACTIVITIES?

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