

Timothy Normandin
Colonial America, The American Revolution, and Early Republic
Frank A. DeSorbo, Ph.D.

LESSON PLAN FROM FOUR-WEEK UNIT

Knee Deep in the Big Muddy: Washington Constructs Fort Necessity

Time Needed
One 90-minute class

Materials

Map of the Cowdrey Conservation Land
Pine Point guide sheet—needed for recording student observations
Tree identification guide sheet

Introduction

Bell Ringer Question: Is necessity really the mother of invention?

Ask students to respond to this cliché. Then have them relate what they already know about Washington's preparation and training for command, and the utter failure of Fort Necessity (You are on day 3 of a 5-day unit.) Certainly Washington for great need to get his fort constructed, yet Fort Necessity was hardly *inventive*.

Objectives

Students will list and describe three similarities between the location where Washington had Fort Necessity constructed and Pine Point in the Cowdrey conservation land

Students will evaluate Washington's motives for construction Fort Necessity in such an untenable place

Instruction

Gathered around the Old Tote Road bridge students will review the main considerations Washington had to contend with in the aftermath of the battle with Jumonville's forces. Possible answers such as time, insufficient military intelligence regarding French troop strength, and the colonists lack of experience and training

Then on the ten-minute walk to Pine Point have students use their tree identification handout to find examples of the white oak trees that Washington's men selected because the logs were easy to split.

Once at Pine Point students survey the area looking for similarities to Fort Necessity. Students should notice, for example, that Pine Point is a low-level grassy area adjacent to a stream. Also, Pine Point is surrounded on three sides by a heavily wooded area with trees close enough to provide the enemy cover when firing a musket. The teacher can go over one or two of these for guided practice, then let the students work independently on their observations.

Back at the Old Tote Road bridge (comfortable area) students participate in a "round table" discussion of Washington's motives.

Closure

Ask the students what they would have done differently—turned tail and run for example—had they been in Washington's position. Have them answer this question in their journal for discussion the next day.