

# WASHINGTON'S CROSSING

Washington Crossing Historic Park is the site where General George Washington famously crossed the Delaware River in a surprise attack on the British. It was Christmas night, 1776 when his Continental Army crossed the freezing Delaware River by boat, marched into Trenton, New Jersey, and defeated the British and Hessian troops that were stationed there.

This victory was an important turning point in the American Revolutionary War. The settlers of the thirteen colonies had been fighting a losing battle since the war started in 1775. They were fighting against the Kingdom of Great Britain, who believed they had the right to *impose* taxes on these new colonies. This surprise attack by General Washington led to further victories at the Battles of Trenton and the Battle of Princeton—these two *campaigns* are known as the “ten crucial days” that allowed Washington’s army to survive what was thought to be certain defeat. This victory was particularly incredible due to the fact that it took place in the dead of winter. Washington’s army rowed through a snowstorm, where the river conditions were icy and rough.



Washington Crossing the Delaware (1851) oil-on-canvas Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze

## Vocabulary

*Impose*: to force, to set as a rule to be obeyed

*Campaign*: actions and activities carried out for a specific purpose; (in this context) a military operation or battle

Answer the questions below on a separate piece of paper.

Washington took a great risk crossing a dangerous river in freezing conditions. Can you think of a time when you took a risk? Write about your experience in a paragraph or two.

Look at the painting by Leutze. What is wrong with the painting? Discuss.

Answer: The flag is incorrect—that version of the American flag was not created until more than a year after Washington crossed the Delaware. The painting also shows daylight, which is incorrect as the crossing took place in the dead of night.