

George Washington's Diary Account of Jumonville Glen, May 28, 1754

Guiding Question

- How did ambition shape George Washington's decision-making in the leadup to Jumonville Glen?

Objectives

- ☒ I can summarize the events at Jumonville Glen and identify Washington's reasoning for attacking the French party.
- ☒ I can evaluate whether Washington's decision demonstrated prudence based on the information he had.
- ☒ I can explain how ambition influenced Washington's choices and what consequences followed.

Scaffolding note: Vocabulary defined in text.

Background Information

In the 1750s, tensions between Great Britain and France were rising as both moved to assert their ambitions in colonizing North America. France began constructing forts to protect trade routes in the upper Ohio River Valley. Virginia Lieutenant Governor Robert Dinwiddie sent George Washington with a message to demand the forts be removed. Following a French refusal, Dinwiddie sent Washington and a force of men to the frontier to protect British interests. Washington discovered a group of French soldiers advancing on his position when he reached modern day Pennsylvania. He decided to attack out of fear that the French soldiers posed a threat, even though no hostilities had broken out yet between France and England. This event became known as the Battle of Jumonville Glen and was the first skirmish of the French and Indian War.

George Washington's Diary, May 28, 1754

Source: <https://founders.archives.gov/?q=%20Author%3A%22Washington%2C%20George%22&s=1111311111&r=64#:~:text=About,-eight%20at%20Night>

Text	Notes/Summary
About eight in the evening I received an express from the Half King [a Native American ally of the British], who informed me, that, as he was coming to join us, he had seen along the road, the tracks of two men, which he had followed, till he was brought thereby to a low obscure [hidden] place that he was of opinion the whole party of the French was hidden there.	
That very moment I sent out forty men and ordered my ammunition to be put in a place of safety, fearing it to be a stratagem [strategy] of the French to attack our camp; I left a guard to defend it, and with the rest of my men, set out in a heavy rain, and in a night as dark as pitch, along a path scarce broad enough for one man; we were sometimes fifteen or twenty minutes out of the path before we could come to it again, and we would often strike against each other in the darkness;	
All night along we continued our route, and on the 28 [28th of May] about sunrise we arrived at the Indian camp, where after having held a council with the Half King, we concluded to attack them together...	
We killed Mr. de Jumonville, the Commander of that party, as also nine others; we wounded one and made twenty-one prisoners.	

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. In your own words, summarize the events of the skirmish at Jumonville Glen.
2. Prudence is a civic virtue defined as: “Practical wisdom that applies reason and other virtues to discern the right courses of action in specific situations.” Do you believe Washington acted prudently based upon the information he had? Why or why not?
3. What consequences do you think came about as a result of Washington’s decision?

