

George Washington Letter to Robert Dinwiddie, March 10, 1757

Guiding Question

- What challenges did Washington and other colonists who fought in the French and Indian War face?

Objectives

- ☑ I can analyze Washington's letter to show how unequal treatment of colonial troops during the French and Indian War influenced his ideas about justice and leadership.
- ☑ I can explain how Washington's letter reveals tensions between British officers and colonial militia during the French and Indian War.
- ☑ I can identify examples in the letter that show Washington's frustration with unequal treatment and lack of recognition.

Scaffolding note: Vocabulary defined in Notes column.

Background Information

By spring of 1757, the Virginia militia regiment that George Washington served in had been at war for three straight years. Despite this period of extended service and courage like at the Battle of Monongahela, the regiment was treated as inferiors compared to the British professional army. Among other things, none of the officers in the militia were offered commissions to become officers in the British professional army, which had higher status and pay. Washington wrote a letter to Virginia Lieutenant Governor Robert Dinwiddie in which he asked for his support in petitioning for greater respect and recognition for his regiment.

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Source: <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-04-02-0062>

Text	Notes/Summary
The Virginia Regiment was the first in arms of any Troops upon the Continent, in the present War. That—The three Years which they have Served has been one continued Scene of Action. That—whilst other Troops have an agreeable recess in Winter Quarters , the Nature of the Service in which we are engaged, and the smallness of Our Numbers so unequal to the Task, keep us constantly in Motion—That nevertheless, all these Services have hitherto been performed with great Spirit and cheerfulness...	agreeable recess: a time to rest from fighting Winter Quarters: non-professional forces like militias would usually disband during the winter during the time when fighting would not occur hitherto: up until now
We can't conceive , that being Americans should deprive us of the benefits of British Subjects; nor lessen our claim to preferment : and we are very certain, that no Body of regular Troops ever before Served 3 Bloody Campaigns without attracting Royal Notice.	conceive: imagine deprive: deny preferment: consideration for promotion or recognition
Recounting these Services is highly disagreeable to us—as it is repugnant to the Modesty becoming the Brave , but we are compelled thereto by the little Notice taken of Us —It being the General Opinion, that our Services are slighted, or have not been properly represented to His Majesty: otherwise the best of Kings would have graciously taken Notice of Us in turn, while there are now Six Battalions raised in America, and not an Officer of the Virginia Regiment Provided for .	repugnant to the Modesty becoming the Brave: distasteful to those who are courageous and humble little Notice taken of Us: lack of recognition for their contributions Provided for: commissioned as an official officer in the British army

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. What examples did Washington give in his letter of the Virginia Regiment not being given the recognition he thought they deserved?
2. Justice is defined as: “Upholding what is right and fair. Respecting the rights and dignity of all.” How did this letter demonstrate Washington supporting the civic virtue of justice?
3. How might the British treatment of Washington and his regiment during the French and Indian War affect his leadership style in which he rewarded talent and virtue over aristocratic birth?

