

## George Washington Crossing the Delaware

What thoughts might have raced through this great man's head?  
Those secret thoughts that he would never share.  
Yet, these thoughts would help him pass the trying hours,  
That Christmas day, when Washington crossed the Delaware.

On this cold bitter blustery Christmas night,  
With sleet stinging his eyes and pelting his face,  
Perhaps thoughts of Mr. Vernon would enter his mind,  
All those comforts of home and a warm fireplace.

A huge slab of ice slammed angrily against the boat,  
Reminding him of his critical and difficult chore.  
A maze of menacing ice chunks surrounded the boat.  
There seemed to be no possible route to the shore.

Was this daring attack that was so carefully planned  
To be doomed to failure by nature's cruel wrath?  
But with Glover's skilled marble heads manning the oars,  
He relaxed reassured that they would find a path.

For had they not snatched from certain defeat,  
His army, transporting them out of harms way.  
From the banks of Brooklyn to Manhattan shore,  
So his soldiers could live to fight another day.

He thought, as they passed boats with horses and cannons,  
That's the works of Henry Knox, reliable and bold,  
He must weight 260 if he weighs a pound.  
But his is worth far more than his weight in gold.

Learning military expertise from his books,  
And upon Dorchester Heights he placed each gun  
He brought from Ticonderoga through snow, mud, sleet and rain,  
And the British fleet in Boston Harbor had to run.

Did he smile when he thought of young Nathaniel Green?  
How lucky he was to have him on his general staff.  
Like Knox, his military knowledge came mostly from books  
But his talent stood out like a gem among the riff raff.

Untried in combat, a Quaker, and he walked with a limp.  
A most improbable choice for a promotion, you'll agree.  
Marched as a private in Rhode Island company drills,  
Then became our youngest general at age thirty three.

Benedict Arnold, Knox, and Green, his three best generals,

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With two of these lacking a military pedigree.  
Perhaps, fidelity and integrity transcend experience,  
As he thought of supercilious perfidious Charles Lee.

A chuckle may have escaped from Washington's lips,  
As he envisioned his vain second in command in his night ware.  
Marched off as a prisoner by the British twelve days ago.  
So far from his troops, they were unscathed, causing no despair.

A painful thorn had thus been removed from Washington's side.  
He could focus on the enemy, without not within.  
He reviewed the plans he made for the upcoming battle at Trenton.  
All hope for America was on this fight they had to win!

He knew most of his men's enlistments were up at December's end  
And were going to go back home, and not enlist again.  
Long Island, Brooklyn, White Plains, Fort Washington,  
Defeats and retreats, causing lost faith in the cause to Washington's chagrin.

So when he crossed the Delaware to defend inn Pennsylvania,  
He took all the boats he could find across the river with him.  
Causing just a small delay, if the enemy wanted to cross,  
They really were for a daring attack though success seemed rather dim.

He sent John Honeyman, his secret spy, to the British camp,  
Posing as a Tory butcher agreeing to furnish them meat.  
But learning the layout of the camp and "capture" by rebels,  
His report to Washington helped him plan a British defeat.

For days he sent patrols across the river to harass.  
Shooting at British scouts making them fear to stray far from the base.  
At two p.m., they started their march, in rain, snow and sleet.  
At the crossing, the storm had gotten worse, will they stop in disgrace?

But they started crossing although it seemed painstakingly slow,  
When suddenly Washington's thoughts were interrupted by "Land Ho".  
Finally across, but Washington knew, they were three hours behind.  
The cover of darkness would be lost to help surprise his foe.

But the indecision he showed in earlier defeat was gone,  
As he firmly but calmly formed men into two divisions.  
General Sullivan would take one group down the river road.  
Washington would go with Green on the inland route making rapid decisions.

Guns too wet to fire? "Use your bayonet," he shouted to Sullivan.  
He seemed everywhere, "For God's sake, keep up with your officers," he implored.

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Knox needed little advise, firing cannons down King and Queen Streets.  
The rebels attacked, Colonel Rull was killed, a loss the Hessians couldn't afford.

In Washington's plan, two thousand men were to cross south of Trenton  
To take a bridge and stop reinforcement of any British Troops.  
Nine hundred more were to cross at Trenton to stop the Hessian escape.  
Both turned back due to the ice, exposing Washington to British swoops.

Despite the difficulty getting there and the time it took to plan,  
The battle was over quickly- forty-five minutes or less.  
Twenty-one Hessians killed, ninety wounded, nine hundred prisoners,  
Five hundred escaped over the bridge that was now defenseless.

A resounding victory, more than Washington could have hoped,  
Not one American killed, although two stopping to rest froze in their sleep.  
Only four Americans wounded, including Lieutenant James Monroe,  
Though this helped him years later make a huge political leap.

Propelled by this victory, Washington won again at Princeton,  
Two victories in ten days! The Patriots rejoiced, raising spirits in the men,  
And a most important consequence of these happy events,  
With Paine's immortal words and Washington's persuasions, many signed up again!

There we greater battles to be fought, more soldiers in the fray,  
More times of great honor, more times of tears and prayer-  
But none will be more important igniting the fires of freedom  
As that cold Christmas day when George Washington crossed the Delaware.

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