

The British Mistake - Opinion Proof Chart

Read the newspaper story, *British Army Defeated! General Braddock Killed!* As you **actively read**, answer whether you “Agree” or “Disagree” with the given “Opinion” based on evidence within the story. Then list the details of this evidence in the chart below. As you discover the evidence, highlight the evidence in the story.

Opinion	Agree or Disagree	Proof (Page # and give Details of Evidence)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ It took over a year for the British to bring enough forces to face the French in the Ohio Valley. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The British commander, General Braddock, had a high opinion of the American militia. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ General Braddock and the British Army, one of the greatest militaries at the time, were unprepared for the journey and terrain ahead of them. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The British underestimated the force of the French and their Indian allies. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The British style of fighting was all wrong for the terrain and enemy that they faced in the America’s. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Colonel George Washington did not know how to fight the Indians any better than Braddock. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The strong British Army never feared their Indian attackers 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Many Native tribes will join forces with the French because they feel it will be best for their overall prosperity and survival. 		

BRITISH ARMY DEFEATED! GENERAL BRADDOCK KILLED!

July 14, 1755, Camp near Great Meadows

A shattered and demoralized British army is now breaking camp and continuing its retreat after a crushing defeat at the hands of the French and their Indian allies near Fort Duquesne just five days ago. Our brave General Edward Braddock, who was mortally wounded in the battle, died last night. We buried him this morning and Colonel Washington, who served as an aide to the general, read passages from scripture over his remains. Then, our wagons rolled over his grave to obscure the location in fear that the Indians would exhume and desecrate the corpse.



The Wounding of Braddock

Painting by Robert Griffing; Paramount Press, Inc.

General Braddock arrived in America in February and immediately set about organizing an expedition to seize the French outpost known as Fort Duquesne, located at the Forks of the Ohio. Numerous difficulties, including a lack of supplies and transports, plagued the commander from the beginning. Dr. Benjamin Franklin, long associated with the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, arrived to assist the general in obtaining wagons. At that time, he warned the general to be careful of Indian ambushes. The overly confident Braddock replied, "The savages may indeed be a formidable enemy to your raw American militia, but upon the King's regular and disciplined troops, Sir, it is impossible they should make any impression."

It was not until the beginning of June that the army departed from the staging area at Fort Cumberland, located along Wills Creek in Maryland. General Braddock's 2,200-man army included the 44th and 48th Regiments of Foot, as well as provincial forces from Virginia, Maryland and North Carolina.

The advance against Fort Duquesne was tedious and slow due to the rugged mountain terrain and dense foliage. One British officer recalled, "The horses grew every day fainter, and many died, and the men would not have been able to have undergone the constant and necessary fatigue, by remaining so many hours under arms; and by the great extent of the baggage the line was extremely weakened." As a consequence, General Braddock resolved to split his command and push forward with a "flying column" of nearly 1,400 men.

On July 9, the expedition reached the Monongahela River, only a scant ten miles from our objective, Fort Duquesne. All of the officers and men were extremely apprehensive at this point since an army crossing a body of water is particularly vulnerable to attack. The river was wide and shallow, allowing the men to easily wade across to the opposite bank. In order to avoid a stretch of difficult and dangerous terrain, the general determined to ford the river again. For the second

time, tension built as the army made its way across the stream. Surprisingly, no French or their resourceful Indian allies came out to oppose the march. After crossing this second ford, the entire army appeared greatly relieved. As one soldier put it, "There never was an army in the world in more spirits." One officer toasted the successful crossing with milk punch.

Once the column had re-formed, General Braddock directed the vanguard, under the command of Col. Thomas Gage, to proceed down the trail toward the French stronghold. In their euphoria, the British failed to secure a hill that extended along their right flank. This would prove to be a costly mistake.

After moving forward less than a mile, Colonel Gage's advance party ran headlong into a force of French soldiers and their Indian allies. It is said that their numbers did not exceed 900. The French commander quickly signaled his native warriors to disperse along either side of the trail. At that moment, the front rank of Gage's column unleashed a deadly volley, instantly killing the enemy captain. The Indians, however, no longer needed the direction of their inspirational leader as they darted from tree to tree along the flanks of the British column. They quickly took up position along the hill and began to pour a deadly fire into Colonel Gage's right flank. The French regulars and militia held the front, while other warriors stealthily moved along the left side of the redcoat column.

British military orders dictate that the soldiers discharge their muskets either in volleys or by platoon firing, without aiming at specific targets. The Indians, on the other hand, use their firearms for hunting purposes and are all good marksmen. Within a few minutes, most of Colonel Gage's soldiers were dead or wounded. Fearing complete encirclement, the colonel ordered a retreat.

Back with the main column, General Braddock heard the first rattle of musketry and rushed forward with the main column to reinforce the vanguard. The remnants of Gage's retreating men collided with the reinforcements rushing forward, creating confusion in the ranks. Perhaps as a result of prior direction, the Indians especially targeted the mounted British officers, shooting them down. This added to the panic, since disciplined British troops are reluctant to act without orders from their officers. As a result, the redcoats huddled together in the open road, firing wildly into the woods at an enemy they could not see. One soldier recalled, "We was drawn up in large bodies together, a ready mark. They [the Indians] need not have taken sight at us for they always had a large mark [to shoot at]." In some cases, the frightened troops massed in the roadway fired at their own men.

Riding forward, General Braddock tried in vain to restore order, cursing and lashing out at the panic-stricken soldiers with the flat side of his sword. Colonel Washington rode forward and pleaded with Braddock to allow him to scatter 300 men throughout the trees and fight Indian fashion. The general lifted his saber and angrily replied, "I've a mind to run you through the body. We'll sup today in Fort Duquesne or else in hell!"

After three hours of fighting, the redcoats began to run low on ammunition. Many of them had expended their full complement of 24 cartridges and had never seen an enemy. First in small bunches, and then en masse, the British threw down their weapons and fled the battlefield. General Braddock fought on, frantically trying to rally his men until a musket ball penetrated his side and lodged in a lung. The general tumbled from the saddle and was carried off the field in a litter made from his own sash. A group of officers loaded the commander into a cart as the remnants of his army, seized with horrors, fled in wild confusion. The war cries of the Indians intensified the state of fear and panic among the retreating troops. As one British officer recently told this reporter, "The yell of the Indians is fresh on my ear, and the

terrific sound will haunt me until the hour of my dissolution. I cannot describe the horrors of that scene.”

The shattered command re-crossed the river and fled in terror until reaching Col. Thomas Dunbar’s supply camp near the Great Meadows. Throughout the retreat, General Braddock suffered greatly from his wound. He could not believe what had happened to his once proud army. Just before he died he was heard to mutter, “Who would have thought it.”

With the British defeated, it is clear that the entire frontier will now be open to attack from roving bands of Indians who are allied with the French. It is also quite likely that other tribes will now join the French in order to obtain useful trade goods and protect their homeland. Hopefully, the provincial governments of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia will be able to raise enough troops to defend the backcountry settlers who are now at the mercy of the enemy.

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