

The National Guard

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In many ways, in the United States, governors are like the president of a state. They sign bills into law, appoint judges and serve as the head of the Executive Branch of government in their state; the same way the president is in charge of the Executive Branch of the U.S. government. One power governors and presidents share is particularly important: the ability to command troops. The president is in charge of the national Armed Forces. Governors are in charge of the National Guard.

What makes the National Guard different from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines? Although National Guard soldiers are just as well-trained as regular soldiers, they spend much less time in uniform. National Guard soldiers are ordinary men and women—bankers, grocers, teachers—who spend one weekend a month in training. Although they are usually not in uniform, the men and women of the National Guard are always ready to be called into action, responding to natural disasters, civil unrest and even war itself.

In some ways, the National Guard is older than the nation itself. The first organized militia was founded on December 13, 1636, in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, to secure the colony's borders against attack from the Pequot Indians. After the Revolutionary War ended, the new country did not want to have what is called a standing army—an army that exists all the time, in war and peace. Instead, they had loosely organized militias ready to be called into service when needed. This included the Whiskey Rebellion of 1791, when George Washington used state militias—not the regular army—to end a protest over taxation.

It took several laws to transform those state militias into the well-organized National Guard we have today. The 1903 Militia Act arranged for federal funding for state militias. The National Defense Act of 1916 explained how and why the National Guard could be called into action.

The most common usage of the National Guard is after a natural disaster, like a hurricane or earthquake. In 1927, the great Mississippi River Flood covered an area the size of New England with water. One thousand people were killed and more than 700,000 were forced out of their homes. Mississippi governor, John E. Martineau, called up the National Guard to help deal with the crisis. This marked the first time National Guard aircraft were used after a major natural disaster. Flying small planes, 60 National Guard pilots scoured the flooded area looking for survivors and distributing food, medicine and supplies.

Eighty years later, the National Guard's duties are largely the same. After Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, the National Guard was there. Soldiers and airmen from all 50 states were deployed to Louisiana to help people the same way they did after the Great Flood of 1927. Over 50,000 National Guardsmen were involved in the recovery efforts.

While those National Guardsmen were fighting the flood in Louisiana, other members of the National Guard were overseas involved in a different kind of battle. Even though they are not regular soldiers, the National Guard can be called up during times of war. National Guard units have served in every major American conflict, from the Civil War right up until today. During wartime, the Guard is no longer under a governor's control, but is instead commanded by the President.

Calling in the National Guard can be the most important decision a governor ever makes. Often it comes not after a natural disaster, but a man-made one, like a terrorist attack or a riot. Whenever unrest threatens an American city, the National Guard is available to restore order and protect the home front. They may only train for one weekend each month, but the men and women of the National Guard are soldiers all the same.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What makes the National Guard different from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines?

- A They can assist in times of war.
- B They can be called upon by the President of the United States.
- C They spend much less time in uniform.
- D They are prepared to help with natural disasters.

2. What does the author describe?

- A the history of the American Armed Forces
- B examples of when the National Guard has been used
- C the training National Guard soldiers receive
- D how the National Guard is organized during times of war

3. The men and women of the National Guard are well-trained. What evidence from the passage best supports this conclusion?

- A National Guardsmen can be sent overseas during times of war.
- B During wartime, the National Guard is under the President's command.
- C The National Defense Act describes when the National Guard can be called upon.
- D The National Guard is made up of ordinary men and women.

4. The National Guard has always played an important role in America. What evidence from the text best supports this conclusion?

- A The first organized militia was founded on December 13, 1636.
- B National Guard units have served in every major American conflict.
- C Calling in the National Guard is an important decision for a governor.
- D The great Mississippi River Flood was the first time National Guard aircrafts were used.

5. What is this passage mainly about?

- A the difference between the National Guard and the national Armed Forces
- B the history of the National Guard
- C the importance of the National Guard to America's safety and security
- D the duties of governors in their states

6. Read the following sentence: "Flying small planes, 60 National Guard pilots **scoured** the flooded area looking for survivors and distributing food, medicine, and supplies."

What does the word "**scoured**" most nearly mean?

- A searched
- B set on fire
- C left
- D cleaned

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

When the Revolutionary War ended, the country created loosely organized militias that could be called upon in times of need, _____ The Whiskey Rebellion of 1791.

- A above all
- B at last
- C consequently
- D such as

8. In the passage, the author states that the National Guard is often called upon after natural disasters. What evidence from the text supports this conclusion?

9. Read the following sentence from the passage: "They may only train for one weekend each month, but the men and women of the National Guard are soldiers all the same." Use evidence from the text to support this statement.

10. Explain how the history of the National Guard shows that the National Guard is an important part of America's government. Use information from the passage to support your answer.

Teacher Guide & Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 1120

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8. In the passage, the author states that the National Guard is often called upon after natural disasters. What evidence from the text supports this conclusion?

Suggested answer: The National Guard can be called into action during natural disasters. They were involved in finding survivors and distributing food, medicine, and supplies after the great Mississippi River Flood of 1927. After Hurricane Katrina, National Guardsmen from all 50 states were sent to Louisiana to help with the recovery efforts.

9. Read the following sentence from the passage: "They may only train for one weekend each month, but the men and women of the National Guard are soldiers all the same." Use evidence from the text to support this statement.

Suggested answer: Although they may only train for one weekend each month, the National Guard can be called upon to protect our country and restore order at a moment's notice. They are involved in recovery efforts during natural disasters, and can be sent overseas during times of war, just like regular soldiers. They also can help during terrorist attacks or riots. When a governor decides to send the National Guard into action, the Guardsmen have to be just as prepared as a member of the national Armed Forces.

10. Explain how the history of the National Guard shows that the National Guard is an important part of America's government. Use information from the passage to support your answer.

Suggested answer: Before the existence of the national Armed Forces, America had state militias similar to the National Guard. America did not want to have a standing army. Thus, state militias were used such as in the event to stop protests over taxation in 1791. In order to protect this structure, several laws were passed. In 1903 the Militia Act allowed for federal funding for state militias, and the National Defense Act of 1916 outlined how and why the National Guard could be called upon. This is important because having state militias has been an effective way to keep our country safe since the beginning of our country. By putting laws into place that created the well-organized National Guard, the government was acknowledging the value of these types of troops.