

#4 NS

Annalise Gretchen
2nd Place

Robert Morris was born in 1734 and raised in Liverpool England. His father was Robert Morris Sr. and his mother Elizabeth Murphet. There are no records of the two ever being married, and it would seem that Elizabeth left her child in the hands of her mother, while the child's father sailed off to the colonies where he became a successful merchant. Robert Morris stayed 13 years with his grandmother and at the age of 14 he crossed the sea to join his father in Maryland. Once there, he was sent off to be schooled in Philadelphia. But upon the unexpected death of Robert Morris Sr. in 1750, Morris joined his father's business partner, Charles Willing, under whom he became an apprentice of the trade. Morris caught on fast, putting his previous school experiences to good use and became very skilled with finances. He became good friends with Charles Willing's son, Thomas, and when the time came, they took over the business together calling it Willing, Morris, & Co. They imported goods from other countries and sold them to the colonists, also partaking in the slave trade from time to time, and soon their firm became one of the most successful in the colonies; both men became very wealthy.

In 1769 he married Mary White, the daughter of a successful lawyer, and became a father of seven children. They lived in Morris's beautiful estate called *The Hills*, in Pennsylvania, and attended St. Peters Church.

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As the American Revolution drew near, Morris, being a merchant, felt the burdens of the British rule as they tried to tax the goods he was selling. He protested against the Stamp Act along with fellow merchants. He was looked up to as someone with much experience and many came seeking his advice and opinions on the Acts being passed. In 1775 he was elected to the Pennsylvania state Assembly, the same that Benjamin Franklin served in.

Morris became part of many different Committees which helped and supported the Continental Army, and he helped with the founding of the Continental Navy. Morris's growing reputation (and his friendship with George Washington) helped him become a Pennsylvania delegate in the Second Continental Congress. When Independence was first proposed, Morris was not comfortable with the idea and, along with two other Pennsylvania delegates, voted against it. But soon Morris changed his mind and being able to convince one of his fellow delegates to change his thoughts as well, they voted Pennsylvania to be in favor of Independence. When the time came, Morris signed the Declaration Of Independence himself. He said; "I am not one of those politicians that run testy when my own plans are not adopted. I think it is the duty of a good citizen to follow when he cannot lead."

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As the war went on, Morris became a very important figure.

Congress assigned him to be Superintendent of Finance and he used his experience as a merchant and a financier to help the colonial army, doing as much as he could to help the soldiers stay armed and fed. He sought support from the states and foreign allies, and through the war he kept his merchant business going using the money from that, and his own credit, to help fund the war.

Even after the war Morris kept his business running, although he remained active in the political world as well. He once again joined Congress in the workings and signing of the Constitution in 1787, and the articles of confederation, becoming one of only two men to sign all three of the nation's most important documents.

George Washington tried appointing him as Secretary of the Treasury but Morris declined the offer. He suggested Alexander Hamilton take the position instead.

Morris was never able to recover the wealth he'd had before the war. He invested his money into real estate, but was unable to secure buyers for the land. Morris eventually went into debt and was thrown into a debtors prison, where he remained 3 years. After leaving the Prison he went on to live modestly with his wife on the outskirts of Philadelphia and he died in 1806.

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Although he may not be as well known as some of the signers of the Declaration Of Independence, He certainly played an important part; if it weren't for his help and contributions it is said the states may not have survived through the many hardships of war.

Part 2

Dear Mrs. Morris,

I was grieved when I heard of your husbands passing and I offer you my deepest sympathies.

I was one of those fortunate men who was able to experience the graciousness of Mr. Morris during the pains and afflictions of war. Many times we were in need of food or supplies, and our needs were quickly met through his efforts. It shows true nobility in character when one, who's own hands gained him such status and wealth, can see and understand the want of others, and use the same hands to help them.

Now I say on behalf of myself and many others soldiers, we are ever grateful.

Sincerely, George I. Joseph

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