

Why did men like  
joseph plumb martin  
join the army



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Men like Joseph Plumb Martin joined the army mainly because of strong sense of patriotism and intense feeling of hatred against the English. At the same time, it was also seen as a glamorized occupation where food, clothing and salary were an attraction for the young people who wanted to move away from farming and general conditions of poverty. Most of the recruits were young and army provided them with an opportunity to escape home and experience adventure of fighting against their enemy. But unfortunately, the reality was far from the rosy picture as envisaged by the new recruits. The common soldiers were faced with huge hardships where food had become scarce and proper clothing a distant dream. The long drawn battle of American army had severely affected the welfare of the soldiers. The new recruits were just sent to the front to fight with enemies without training. They were also not only deprived of adequate food and shelter during tough weather conditions but were also not paid their wages on time. Martin asserts that 'I well know, for I have fought by their side' (183). The delivery of supplies for food and other goods used to become difficult due to weather conditions which resulted in starvation and death. Most of the recruits went to fight without training because they felt that it was their moral duty to fight for their country. Hence, need for training was not important for the common soldier. The young recruits later became accustomed to the grim conditions of the war but were unable to do anything except accept the situation. The strong patriotism and need to prove that they can defeat the enemy army was a major factor that motivated them to endure hardship including starvation and freezing weather conditions.

Indeed, most of the soldiers endured hardships because they wanted to

defeat foreigners and drive them away from their land. They therefore,  
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preferred to fight to death rather than desert the army. Major purpose of Martin writing his biographical account of his life in army was to present the true picture of American soldiers who had fought against the enemies. Through the book he wanted the public to acknowledge their contribution to the freedom movement who had survived the adversities of war and ensure their welfare in post war era. The veterans had suffered hugely for the cause of the nation and its people. Most importantly, Martin believed that the interests of the common soldiers were widely overlooked for the officers because of racial and class differences. Most of the common soldiers had come from the under-privileged segment of society or the youth who were unaware of the hardships of the war. Martin therefore wanted the veterans of the war to live in dignity and at the same time, the surviving relatives of dead soldiers to be compensated for their contribution to the war. Hence, pensions of the veteran had become just one of the many things like land etc that Martin believed that soldiers had earned as their right. (525) Reference Martin, Joseph Plumb. *Memoir of a Revolutionary Soldier: The Narratives of Joseph Plumb Martin*. NY: Dover Publications, 2006.