



The Revolutionary War

Focus

Americans declared their independence of Britain on July 4, 1776. Yet words alone did not make the United States a free country. Americans had to fight for their freedom and independence. They had to make war against the army and navy of Britain, one of the most powerful countries in the world. The Revolutionary War, or War for Independence, was a long, hard war. In the end, Americans won.

In this chapter you will learn how American people defeated the British and won independence for themselves and for us.

Reading for a Purpose

Look for these important words:

Key Words

- Second Continental Congress
- Patriots
- Loyalists
- declaration
- Continental Army
- earthworks

- Battle of Bunker Hill
- independence
- Olive Branch Petition
- mercenaries
- Declaration of Independence
- Independence Day

People

- Thomas Paine
- Thomas Jefferson

Places

- Mount Vernon

Look for answers to these questions:

1. How did the colonists prepare to fight the British?
2. Why did most Americans want to avoid war with Britain?
3. Why did Americans finally declare independence from Britain?

1. ON THE ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE

After the battles of Lexington and Concord, the Continental Congress met again in Philadelphia. This was the **Second Continental Congress**. Some of the wisest men in America attended. From Massachusetts came Sam Adams, John Adams, and John Hancock. From Pennsylvania came Benjamin Franklin, and from Virginia, Patrick Henry and George Washington.

These men were called **Patriots**. Patriots believed that the American colonists were right to stand up for their liberties. About one-third of the American colonists were Patriots. About one-third of the colonists sided with Britain. They were called **Loyalists**, or Tories. Another third of the colonists did not choose either side.

Few members of the Second Continental Congress wanted a complete break with Britain. In a **declaration**, or statement, the Second Continental

Congress said, "We fight not for glory or for conquest." Colonists had started fighting, they said, because they felt they had no choice.

Even though it hoped for peace, the Continental Congress created an army and navy to fight the British. It appointed George Washington to be commander in chief of the new **Continental Army**. John Adams had suggested Washington for the job. Washington's skill, great talents, and excellent character would command the respect of all Americans, Adams said. He proved to be right.

Washington would rather have returned to his Virginia plantation, **Mount Vernon**. Instead, he accepted the position of commander in chief. He felt it was his duty to do so. He wrote Martha Washington, his wife, that he hoped his going would "answer some good purpose."

Battle of Bunker Hill

After the battles at Lexington and Concord, the angry citizens of Massachusetts started to build **earthworks**, or walls of dirt and stone, near Boston. Earthworks would protect Patriot soldiers if there were another battle. The Patriots had taken over control of the countryside. A British soldier was not safe if he tried to leave Boston. The British troops were hemmed in, able to enter and leave Boston only by sea.

The Patriots began to build new earthworks on a small hill near Charlestown on June 16, 1775. At this, the British commander decided the time had come for action. He called out his troops. On June 17, lines of Redcoats started marching up the hill to the roll of drums. Behind the earthworks the Patriots waited, muskets ready. "Don't fire until you see the

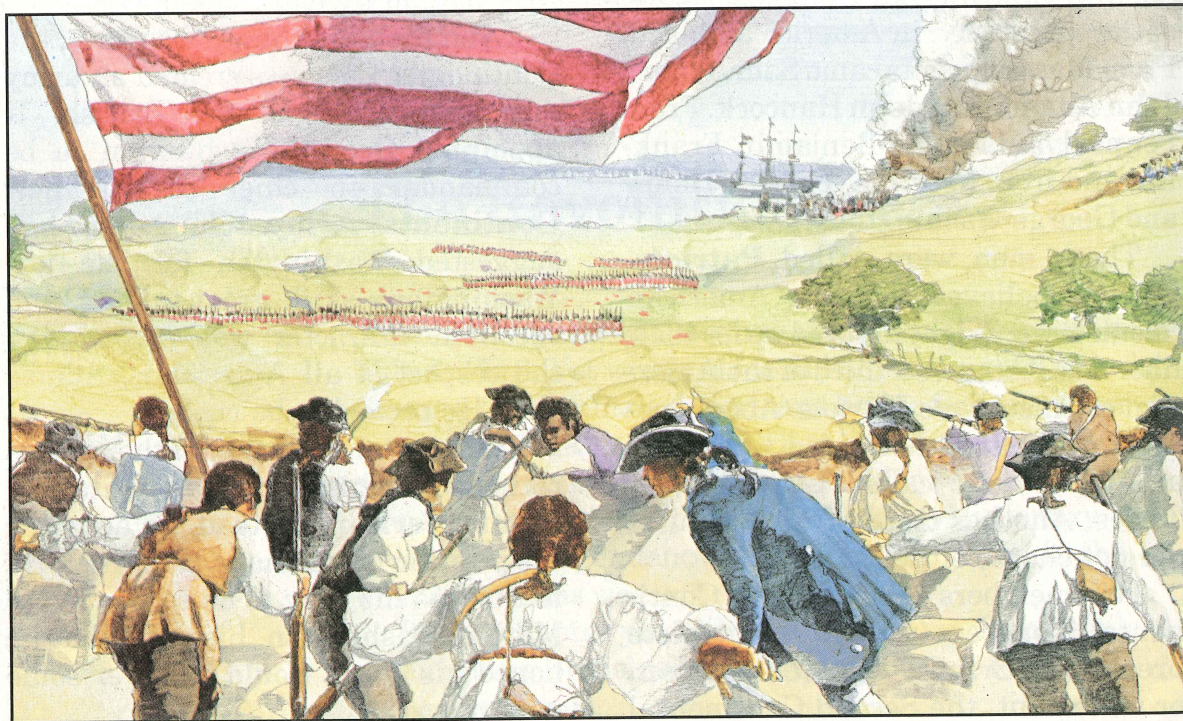
whites of their eyes," they were told. When the British drew close to the earthworks, the Patriots let loose a deadly hail of shot.

The British were forced back several times. Finally, the Patriots ran out of ammunition and retreated. The British took the hill, but at great cost. On that day about half of the British army were killed or wounded. The Patriot losses were much fewer. The Americans were proud of how well they had done. They felt the victory was really theirs. From this battle, the **Battle of Bunker Hill**, the British learned that it would be no easy job fighting the Americans.

Hopes for Peace

Most Americans still did not want war. They considered themselves loyal

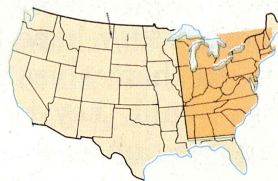
At the Battle of Bunker Hill, Patriot soldiers prepare to defend themselves against lines of British Redcoats.





THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR, 1775-1783

- Settled area of thirteen original states
- British
- American victory
- British victory





In his right hand King George III holds the scepter, symbol of his right to rule.

subjects of the king of England. Each evening George Washington drank a toast to King George.

In 1775 few Americans could imagine **independence**, or complete freedom, from Britain. The colonies were British in their language, their laws, and their customs. Many people had relatives in Britain. Most colonial trade was with Britain or with British colonies in the West Indies. American trading ships had been under the protection of the British navy wherever they sailed. The British navy was the most powerful in the world.

If the colonies did fight a war against Britain, how could they hope to win? If the colonies cut themselves off from the king, how would they be ruled? They could not imagine a government without a king.

In July 1775, the Continental Congress made another effort to achieve

peace with Britain. It sent a petition to the king of England. In the petition Congress begged the king to stop the war, repeal the Intolerable Acts, and bring back peace. This petition was called the **Olive Branch Petition**. The olive branch is a symbol of peace.

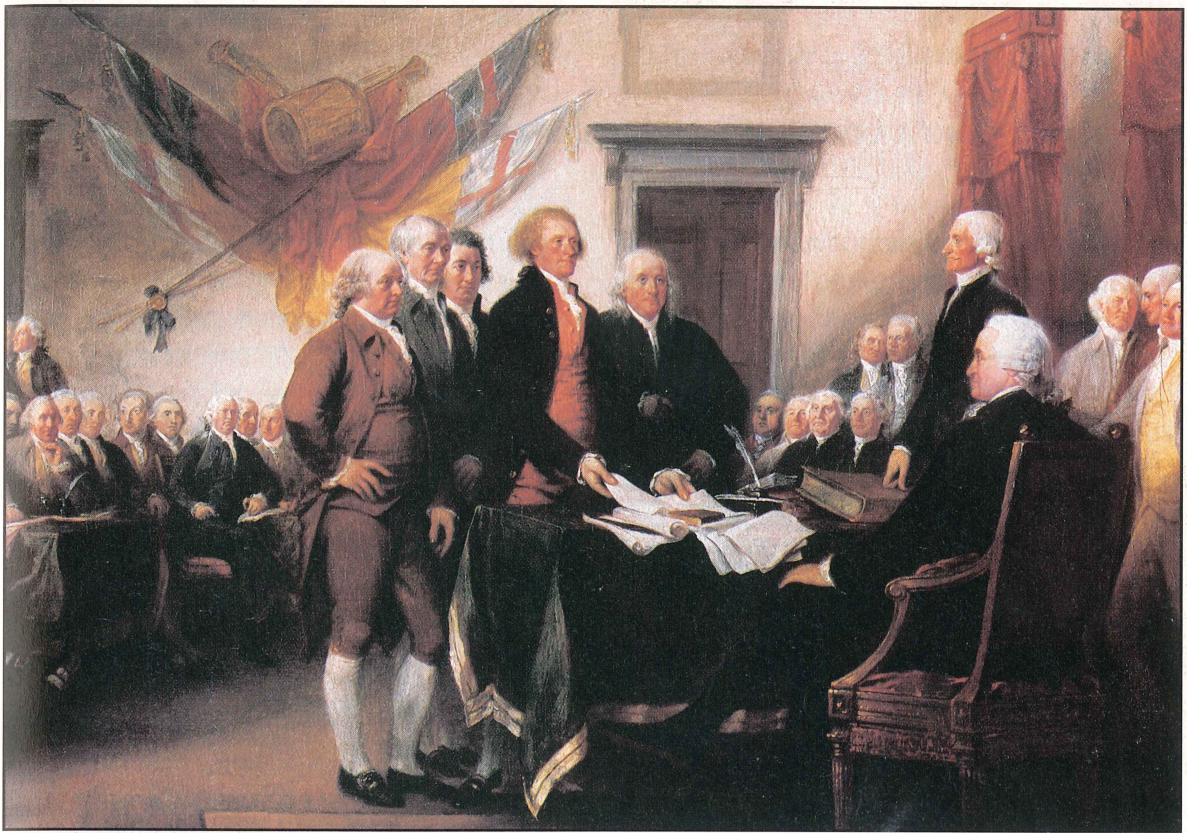
Independence Declared

In August 1775, King George answered the Olive Branch Petition in a speech to Parliament. A rebellion existed in the colonies, he said. Everything would be done to crush the rebellion and "bring the traitors to justice." The British navy and army would be enlarged. To help fight the rebels, the king said, Britain would use German **mercenaries**, or hired soldiers.

By the time the king's harsh words reached the colonies in 1776, Americans had begun to think more about independence. The most important reason for this change was a pamphlet called *Common Sense*. **Thomas Paine**, its author, said, "A government of our own is our natural right." Paine even attacked the king. He called him the "Royal Brute of Great Britain." America would be better off independent, Paine said.

Paine's arguments paved the way for the final break from Britain. Many colonists began to urge independence. That was the only way, they said, to ensure liberty. "By every post [mail] and every day, independence rolls in on us like a torrent," John Adams wrote from the Congress.

In June of 1776, the Congress asked a committee to write a declaration of independence. **Thomas Jefferson**, a Virginia planter and scholar, was a



Thomas Jefferson presents the Declaration of Independence. On his left is Benjamin Franklin. On his far right is John Adams.

member of this committee. Using a goose quill pen, Jefferson wrote every evening for 17 days. The committee suggested some changes. At last the document was ready.

On July 4, 1776, the members of the Continental Congress voted for the **Declaration of Independence**. Writing to his wife, Abigail, John Adams said that **Independence Day** should be remembered with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and fireworks "from this time forward forever more."

The Declaration of Independence announced to the world why the American colonies had to cut their ties with Britain. Now the colonies were the United States of America. After

the declaration was read out loud in Philadelphia, the Liberty Bell rang out.

Yet saying the 13 colonies were the United States of America did not make it so. The United States had to prove their strength and push the British troops off their soil.

Reading Check

1. Why did the Second Continental Congress appoint George Washington commander in chief?
2. Why could few Americans imagine independence in 1775?
3. What was the main idea of *Common Sense*?
4. Who was the main writer of the Declaration of Independence?

Reading for a Purpose

Look for these important words:

People

- Marquis de Lafayette
- Friedrich von Steuben

Places

- Trenton
- Saratoga
- Valley Forge

Look for answers to these questions:

1. What difficulties did the Continental Army face?
2. How was George Washington able to hold an army together?
3. How did women help in the Revolutionary War?
4. How did Europeans help the Patriots?

2. AMERICANS FIGHT FOR LIBERTY

In the summer of 1775, George Washington arrived in Massachusetts to take command of the 15,000 soldiers gathered there. Washington's problems were great and would remain so throughout the war.

Washington's major problem was feeding and supplying the Continental Army. Most soldiers in the war never did have uniforms. They fought in the clothes they had. Thousands marched and fought without shoes. Thousands never had blankets or tents. The historian Samuel Eliot Morison has written:

Altogether, the private soldier of the War of Independence was so badly fed, clothed, and cared for...that one is surprised and grateful that any continued to fight.

Another problem Washington faced was the lack of discipline. The soldiers knew little of drills or marching in lines. The men who came to fight were not

used to taking orders. They were independent people—backwoodsmen, fishermen, farmers, and craftsmen. Washington's job was to turn these soldiers into a well-trained army able to take on the British forces.

Another problem was keeping men in the army. Washington's army at times had more than 15,000 men. At other times it shrank to as few as 2,000. Most men served in the army less than a year. Many would go home when it was time to plant or harvest crops. Others joined the army only when the fighting was nearby. They were like the farmer Reuben Stebbins. He had paid little attention to the war until he heard the sounds of a battle near his farm in New York state. Then he saddled his horse and rode off to fight the British. "We'll see who's going to own this farm," he shouted.

Washington was able to hold his army together only because people respected him so much. Soldiers were

These ragged Continental soldiers proudly march forward in this painting by Howard Pyle. In the front line is the drummer, one of the most important persons in the army. Drum beats directed soldiers to advance, to retreat, or to halt.



willing to follow Washington when they were hungry, cold, or even barefoot. Washington's simple presence brought respect, as a boy soldier later remembered.

Israel Trask, at the age of 10, was a cook and messenger boy in Washington's army. He was with the army in Massachusetts when a group of soldiers from Virginia arrived. The Virginia soldiers wore white, fringed shirts that came to their knees.

The New Englanders, who dressed differently, began to make fun of the Virginians. At first the Virginians were patient and took the teasing, but then they scooped up the snow at their feet and started throwing snowballs. Soon the snowball fight turned into a free-for-all with 1,000 soldiers kicking, biting, and hitting each other.

Young Israel watched. Then, Israel Trask remembered, George Washing-

ton appeared. "With the spring of a deer, he leaped from his saddle, threw the reins of his bridle into the hands of his servant, and rushed into the thickest of the fight."

Washington was a strong man, 6 feet 3 inches (190.5 cm) tall. With an iron grip he "seized two tall, brawny, athletic, savage-looking riflemen by the throat, keeping them at arm's length, alternately shaking and talking to them." As soon as the other soldiers saw the general, they ran away as fast as they could. Only Washington and the two soldiers in his grip remained on the field.

Women in the Revolution

The story of the War of Independence may seem to be the story of men. Men made the important battle decisions. Men did most of the fighting. Men

did most of the dying. Yet women were as important in winning the war. When the men went off to fight, the women took over the businesses, shops, and farms.

Many women formed groups to raise money for the war. Others worked hard to sew shirts and knit socks for the soldiers.

Women were spies and messengers. Some, left alone in their homes, resisted the British either by wit or by guns. When women at Groton, Connecticut, heard that the British were approaching, they dressed in men's clothes. Armed with pitchforks, sling shots, and guns, they successfully turned back the Redcoats.

Lead for bullets was in short supply during the war. Because lead was an important part of pewter, women gave up their pewter pots and plates, their

pewter spoons and forks. Many family treasures were melted down for bullets.

Hundreds of women shared the uncomfortable army life. These women, often with children, followed their husbands. In army camps they cooked food and washed clothes. Some, like Martha Washington, nursed the sick and wounded. On the battlefield women brought water and sometimes loaded cannons. A few dressed and fought as men.

The British knew how important the women were. One officer wrote that even if the British destroyed all the men in America, "we should have enough to do to conquer the women."

Victory at Trenton

By the fall of 1776, Washington and his ragged army moved south from



Molly Pitcher grabs a rammer to load cannon even though an officer tries to order her off the field. "Molly Pitcher" was the nickname of Mary Ludwig Hayes. She earned the nickname by bringing water to troops suffering through a long, hot battle at Monmouth, New Jersey.



This famous painting shows George Washington crossing the icy Delaware River on Christmas Day before the attack on Trenton.

Massachusetts. They went first to New York and then to New Jersey. The British had defeated the army several times and were chasing what remained of it. The Americans were in despair.

Then came new hope. On Christmas Day, 1776, Washington and his army of 2,400 men crossed the Delaware River in boats. By night in freezing weather, the shivering soldiers silently marched toward Trenton, New Jersey. There the German mercenaries were celebrating Christmas.

At daybreak the Americans made a surprise attack. Over 900 Germans surrendered. Only four Americans were wounded. Two others froze to death. The Continental Army found many weapons and supplies at Trenton. Patriots everywhere were overjoyed at the news. Perhaps there was hope after all!

Help from Europe

The year 1777 brought help to the Patriots. From Europe came men eager to fight for the idea of liberty. The most important of these was the **Marquis de Lafayette** (mahr•KEE duh lah•fee•ET), then only 20 years old. A rich Frenchman, he hired French soldiers to come with him to America. Washington liked the young Lafayette and immediately gave him important duties.

Another who came was Johann de Kalb, a German-born professional soldier. From Poland came Casimir Pulaski (KAZ•ih•mih• puh•LAS•kee) and Thaddeus Kosciuszko (THAD•ee•uhs kahs•ih•UHS•koh). Later Kosciuszko returned to Poland to lead a revolution for Polish liberty.

The best news of October 1777 was an American victory at **Saratoga**, New



It is a snowy, cold day at Valley Forge in 1777 as George Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette observe the hungry and weary troops.

York. There the Americans soundly defeated a large British army. This victory brought America an ally—France.

Benjamin Franklin had gone to France to try to win help for the Americans. At news of the American victory at Saratoga, the French decided to help the struggling nation. In this way the French hoped to get back at Britain, their old enemy.

Later in 1777, Washington's army faced another hard winter. After losing Philadelphia to the British, Washington established his winter camp at **Valley Forge**, about 20 miles (32 km) away. While the British were warm and comfortable in Philadelphia, the Americans were hungry, cold, and sick at Valley Forge. Things looked bad indeed for the Continental Army.

In these hard times a German soldier showed up to help. **Friedrich von Steuben** (FREE-drihk vahn STYOO-buhn) took on the job of organizing and drilling the army so that it could move quickly on command. He taught the soldiers how to use bayonets. Bayonets were standard equipment for European soldiers but were unknown in America. By spring the troops were marching smartly.

Reading Check

1. What problems did George Washington face as commander in chief?
2. How did women contribute to the Revolution?
3. Name at least three Europeans who helped the Patriots.
4. Why did France decide to help the American Patriots?

Reading for a Purpose

Look for these important words:

Key Words

- treaty

People

- Nathanael Greene
- John Paul Jones
- George Rogers Clark
- Francis Marion
- Charles Cornwallis

Places

- Yorktown

Look for answers to these questions:

1. What leaders helped win the war? What did each accomplish?
2. What happened at the Battle of Yorktown?
3. Why was the United States able to defeat Britain?

3. THE PUSH TO VICTORY

Starting in 1778, most of the fighting shifted to the South, particularly South Carolina. The Americans suffered some terrible defeats, but under the leadership of General **Nathanael** (nuh·THAN·yuhl) **Greene**, they began to hold their own. Victories at Kings Mountain, Cowpens, and Guilford Courthouse gave new heart to the Southern forces.

The British were able to take many important cities in America. But they could not win the war, for no one city was the heart of America. America's heart was in the farms and villages of its 13 states. As the British tried to stamp out the fire of independence in one place, they found that it only sprang up in another place. "We fight, get beat, rise, and fight again," Nathanael Greene wrote.

During the war Americans were cheered by news of many brave people. **John Paul Jones**, a navy commander,

battled British ships in their own waters. In one famous battle the British demanded his surrender. He replied, "I have not yet begun to fight."

In the Ohio River valley, **George Rogers Clark** helped safeguard the frontier by attacking the British and their Indian allies. Clark became known as the "Washington of the West."

From bases in the swamps of South Carolina, **Francis Marion** led daring raids against the British. They called Marion the "Swamp Fox" because they could never catch him and his men.

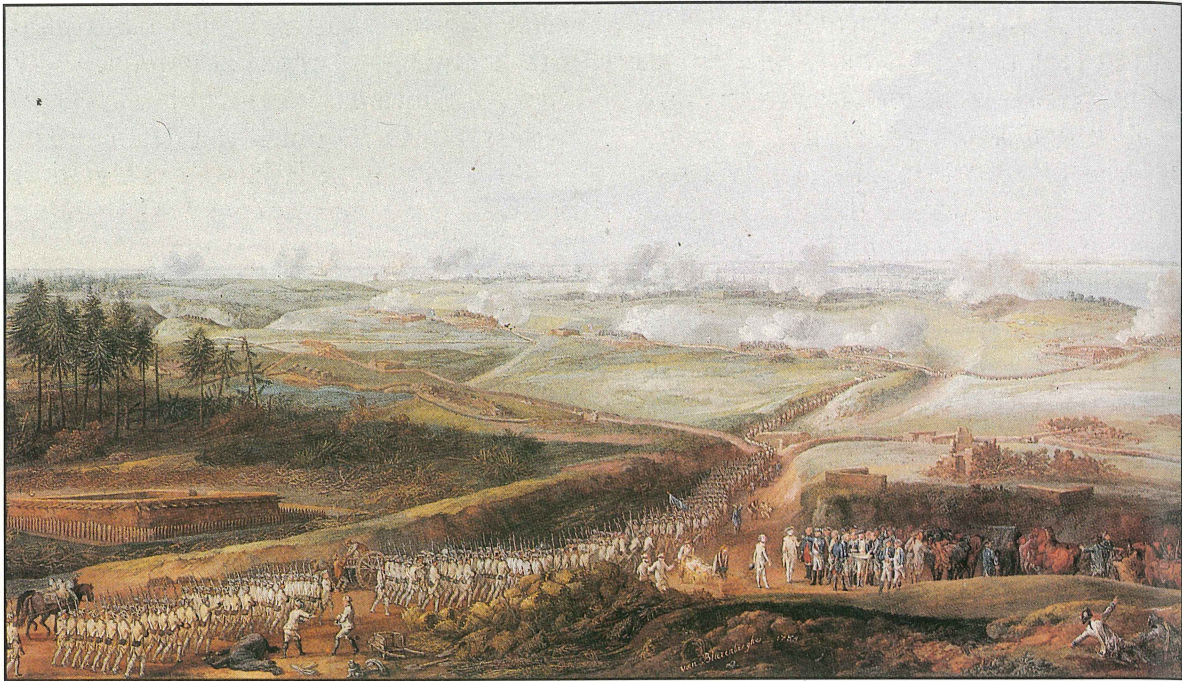
Thousands of blacks, both slave and free, fought on both sides of the Revolution. The British offered freedom and land in Canada to slaves who would join the Loyalists. The blacks who fought for the Patriots did so with courage and skill. Black soldiers from Rhode Island were "the best under arms," a French officer wrote.



In the Revolution's most famous naval battle, John Paul Jones's ship *Bonhomme Richard*, left, fought all night against the British *Serapis*.

Francis Marion and his followers cross the Pee Dee River in the swamps of South Carolina. The British never could catch him.





French troops march toward the battle line in the siege of Yorktown, 1781. In the distance is Yorktown itself. Behind earthworks, French and American gunners fire their cannons into the British positions.

Victory at Yorktown

In October 1781, the last major battle of the war was fought at **Yorktown**, Virginia. Yorktown was a small town on Chesapeake Bay, not far from Williamsburg. The British general **Charles Cornwallis** had set up headquarters at Yorktown because it was easy for British ships to bring supplies.

The French and Americans made a plan to defeat Cornwallis. First, the French troops in Rhode Island marched south to join Washington's army. Along the way, Americans turned out to stare at the trim and colorful uniforms of the French. The French soldiers looked so fancy compared to the poorly clothed Continental soldiers. Everywhere the French went they carried war chests full of silver and gold coins. With the coins they could buy all the supplies and food they needed.

The French army joined George Washington's army near New York City. Together, the two armies continued marching toward Virginia. Meanwhile, the French navy gained control of Chesapeake Bay, as planned. Hearing the news, Washington whooped with joy and swung his hat in the air. Now, even the British navy could not help Cornwallis, trapped at Yorktown.

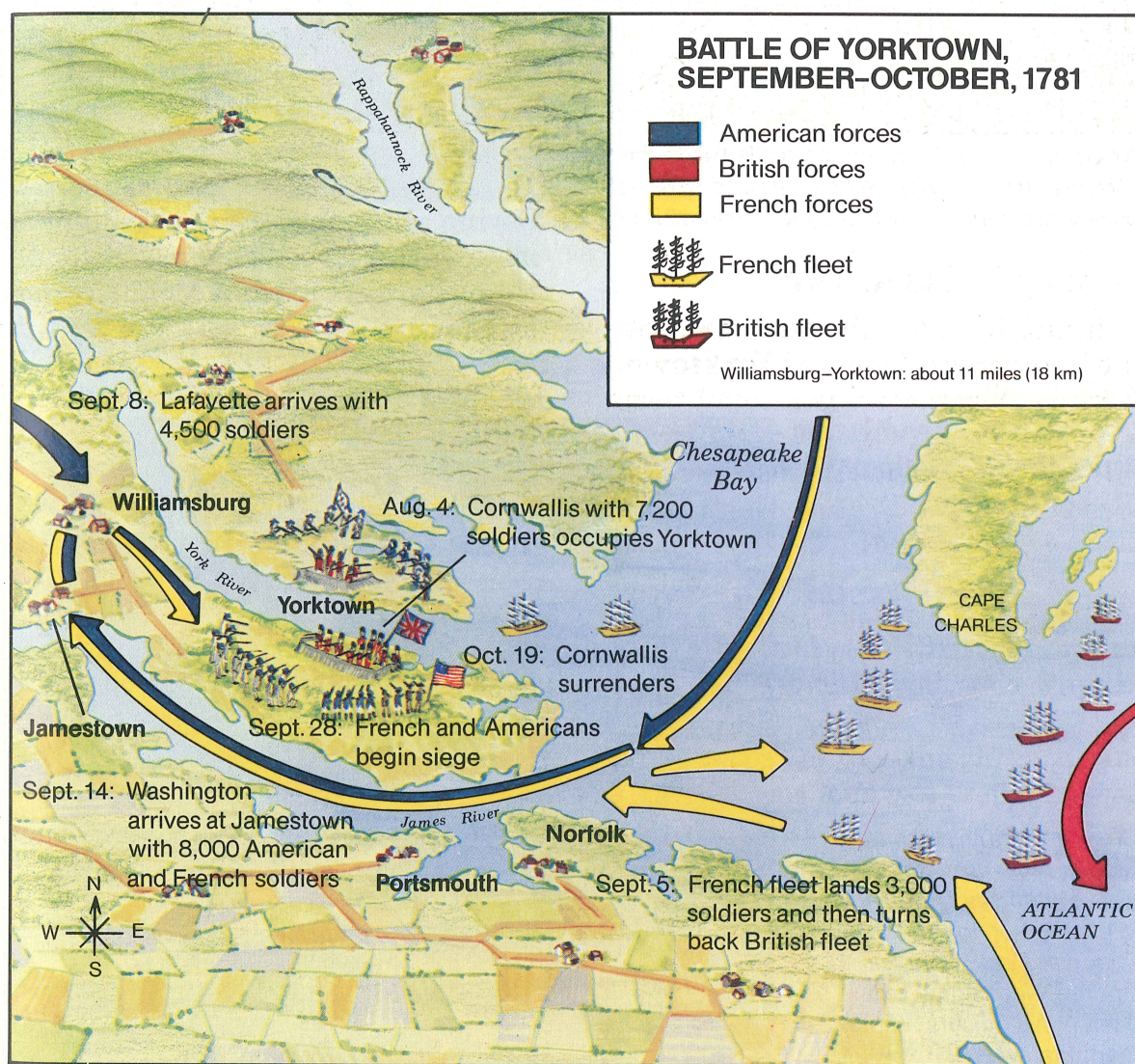
The French and American armies began to surround and bombard the British at Yorktown. To do this, they started on September 28 to dig trenches, or large ditches. The trenches protected the soldiers from most bullets and cannonballs. For two weeks they dug trenches closer and closer to the British. Day and night the two sides fired cannonballs at each other. At night the cannonballs looked like shooting stars.

During the battle Sarah Osborn was taking food to her husband and others in the trenches. Each day she brought beef, bread, and a gallon pot of coffee. On one of her trips she met George Washington. "Are you not afraid of the cannonballs?" he asked. "No," she said. "It would not do for the men to starve as well as fight."

Cornwallis, knowing he could not win, decided to surrender. A drummer boy in a red coat appeared on top of a British earthwork. He beat his drums

until French and American gunners saw him. One by one they stopped their fire. A British officer then appeared with a white flag, a sign of surrender.

Two days later British and German soldiers marched out of Yorktown to lay down their arms in a field. Their bands played sad music. One of the songs was named "The World Turned Upside Down." Americans were joyful. When news of the victory reached Philadelphia, the Liberty Bell rang out loud and clear.



The War Is Over

The Battle of Yorktown was the last major battle of the war. Yet a peace treaty, or formal agreement, did not become final until 1783. By that time George Washington and his officers had made their headquarters in New York City.

In early December 1783, George Washington and his officers met at the Fraunces (FRAWN-sehs) Tavern for a farewell dinner. Famous for its food, the tavern was in a fine, old New York mansion. Samuel Fraunces, the owner, was a black man from the West Indies. Before the war, his tavern had been a favorite meeting place for the Sons of Liberty.

Near the end of the dinner, Washington stood up. "With a heart full of love and gratitude, I now take my leave of you," he said to the men before him.

One by one, each man at the dinner came up to say good-bye to the com-

mander in chief. Tears streaming down his cheeks, Washington hugged each one. "Such a scene of sorrow and weeping I have never before seen," wrote one of the officers. They were sad because they thought they would never again see George Washington. He was the man who had led them through the long and bloody war. He was the man who had led his country to glory and independence.

After saying his farewells, Washington started home to Mount Vernon. On the way he stopped in Annapolis, Maryland, where the Continental Congress was meeting. He told the Congress that, with peace, his work was done. "I retire from the great theater of action," Washington said. He was leaving public life forever, he thought. Saying his good-byes, Washington mounted his favorite horse, Nelson. By riding hard, he reached Mount Vernon on Christmas Eve.



Great as their joy was in victory, American officers were sad to say good-bye to each other. In Fraunces Tavern in New York City, George Washington bids each of his officers a final, tearful farewell.

Chicago Historical Society, Washington's Farewell to His Officers at Fraunces Tavern by Alonzo Chapel, X 36.



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After eight years as general, George Washington could at last return to Mount Vernon. This picture of his home was painted about 1792.

Why the Americans Won

The Americans had beaten the powerful British army. How was this possible? All during the war the British army had problems. First of all, it was far from Britain and had to depend on supplies delivered by ship. The army could not set up and hold bases far from the sea. Generals of the British army often did not work together.

On the other hand, the Americans were fighting on their own soil. If they lost the war, many Patriots knew they would be hanged for treason. Americans were also fighting for liberty, an idea dear to their hearts. For these reasons they fought harder, and they would not give up. The Americans also had important help, particularly from the French. Finally, the Americans won

because they had fine leaders. Soldiers respected these leaders and followed them even when times were hard. The finest of these leaders was George Washington.

Reading Check

1. Why could the British capture important cities but not win the war?
2. What plan did the French and Americans follow to trap Cornwallis at Yorktown?
3. When was a peace treaty finally signed between Britain and the United States?
4. What problems did the British face during the war? What advantages did the Americans have?



Chicago Historical Society, Washington's Farewell to His Officers at Fraunces Tavern by Alonzo Chappel, X 36.

CHAPTER 11 REVIEW

USING WORDS

Explain the meaning of the words below. Then use each word in a complete sentence.

1. **declaration**
2. **independence**
3. **Patriots**
4. **mercenaries**
5. **treaty**

REVIEWING FACTS

1. Why did Patriots consider the Battle of Bunker Hill to be a victory?
2. How did the Second Continental Congress try to get peace with Britain?
3. What personal strengths did George Washington have?
4. How did Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* influence the Revolution?
5. What did the Declaration of Independence announce to the world?
6. Why was Washington's victory at Trenton important?
7. Why was the Battle of Saratoga a turning point in the war?
8. Name at least four Patriot military leaders in addition to George Washington. Why is each famous?
9. How was French help important at the Battle of Yorktown?
10. Put these events in order: Battle of Yorktown, Declaration of Independence, Battle of Bunker Hill, *Common Sense*, Battle of Saratoga.

THINKING CRITICALLY

1. You may know the saying "The pen is mightier than the sword." This means that words can be more powerful than weapons. Do you think the saying is true? Explain your answer by using examples.
2. George Washington faced many problems as leader of the army. Yet he led the army to victory. What other leaders can you think of? What qualities should a good leader have?
3. You have read about the Battle of Yorktown from the point of view of the Americans. Imagine what a British account of the battle might say. How might it be different from the American view?
4. Most leaders of the Revolution were well off. They were people of education and property. Why do you think they risked everything they had for the Revolution?

○ PRACTICING SKILLS

Reading a Document Use pages 270–272 to answer these questions about the Declaration of Independence.

1. What methods of persuasion did Thomas Jefferson use in writing the Declaration of Independence?
2. What are the four main parts of the Declaration of Independence?
3. According to Jefferson, what three rights are a natural part of all people?
4. What did the Declaration of Independence achieve?



UNIT 5 REVIEW

WORDS TO REMEMBER

Number your paper from 1 to 10. Complete the sentences below with the words or names in the list. Write the correct answers on your paper.

allies

boycott

independence

Loyalists

monopoly

Patriots

repeal

revolution

treaty

tyranny

In 1763 the British and Americans won a war against the French and their Indian (1). When the British passed the Stamp Act in 1765, Americans accused them of (2). Americans asked the British to (3) the Stamp Act. To make their feelings clear, Americans started a (4) of British goods. When Britain gave a (5) to the East India Company to import tea, angry Americans threw tea into Boston harbor. In July 1776, the Continental Congress voted to declare (6). People who supported the fight against Britain were called (7). People who supported the British were called (8). The efforts of American Patriots to overthrow British rule was a (9). In 1783 a peace (10) recognized American independence.

FOCUS ON MAIN IDEAS

1. How did the French and Indian War lead to the Stamp Act?
2. What events led to disagreements between Britain and the 13 colonies?
3. What rights did the colonists consider important?
4. What caused the British and American colonists to start shooting at each other?
5. What was the Olive Branch Petition? What was the king's response?
6. What was the purpose of the Declaration of Independence?
7. Why is the Liberty Bell a symbol of American freedom and independence?
8. How was each of these battles important?
 - a. Lexington and Concord
 - b. Bunker Hill
 - c. Trenton
 - d. Saratoga
 - e. Yorktown
9. Why did the Americans win the war?
10. How did each of these people contribute to the American Revolution?
 - a. Sam Adams
 - b. John Adams
 - c. Paul Revere
 - d. Thomas Paine
 - e. Thomas Jefferson
 - f. George Washington
 - g. Marquis de Lafayette
 - h. Patrick Henry
 - i. Friedrich von Steuben
 - j. Nathanael Greene
 - k. Crispus Attucks
 - l. George Rogers Clark
 - m. John Paul Jones
 - n. Francis Marion