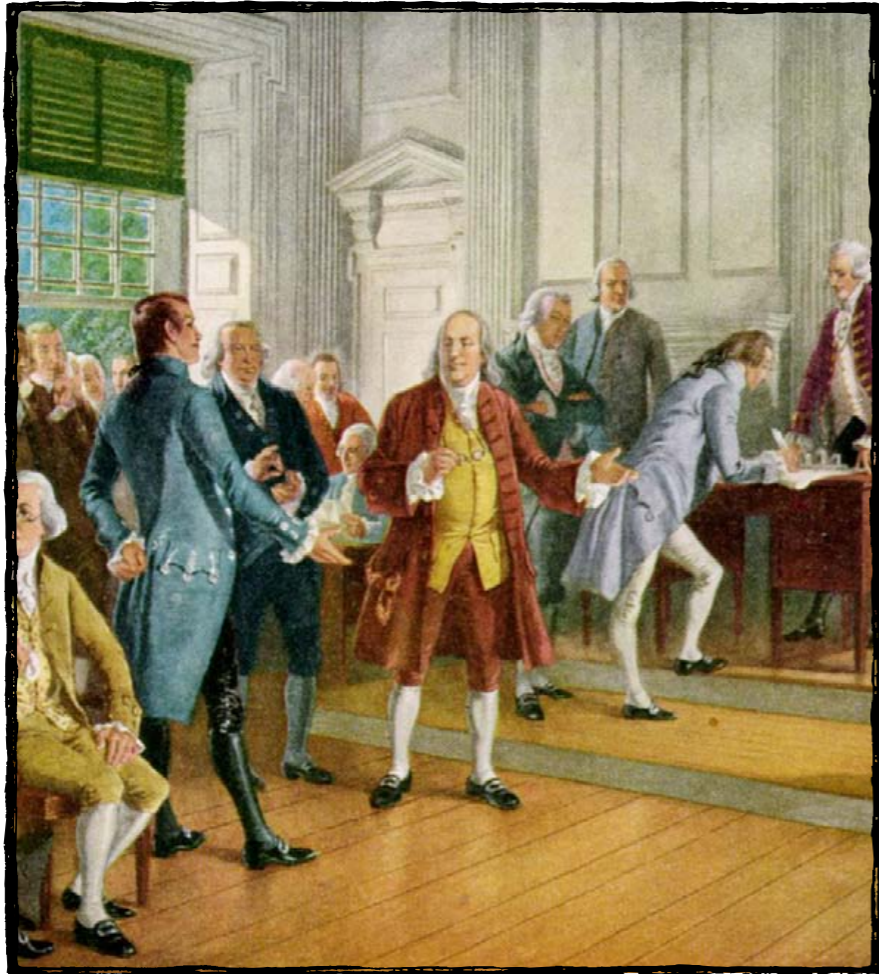


Battling for Independence

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Word Count: 1,676



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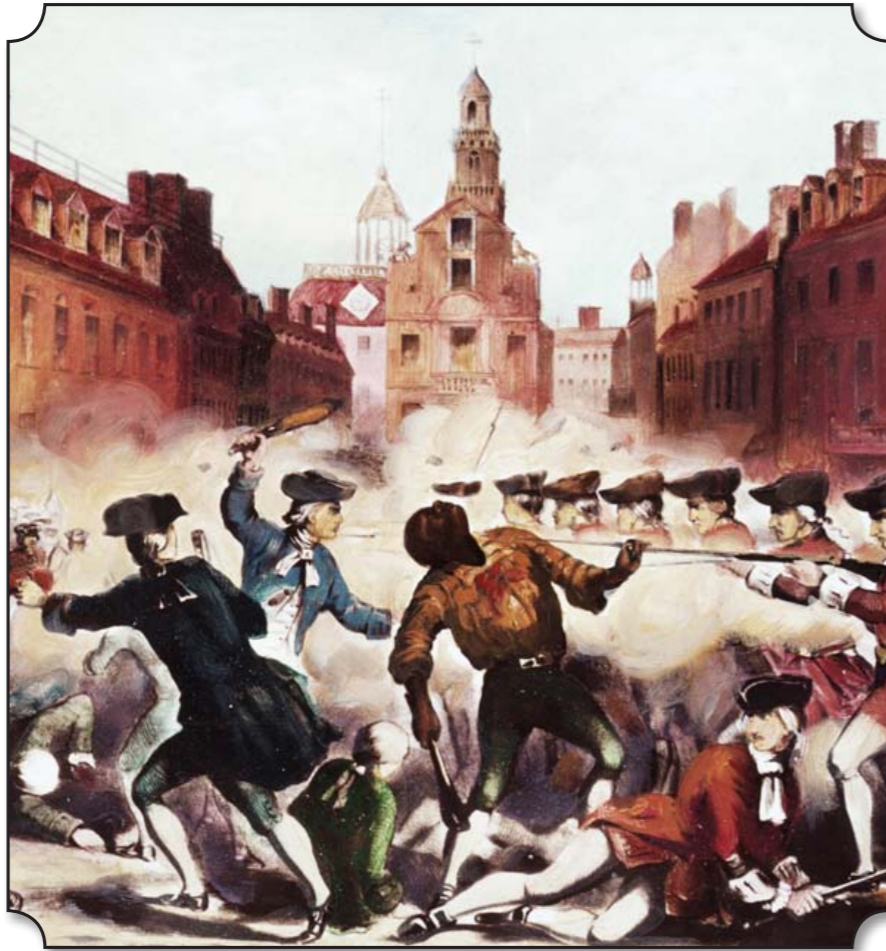
Battling for Independence



Part Two of The American Revolution
Written by Terry Miller Shannon

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Part Two of The American Revolution

Battling for Independence at Level Y tells about the major battles of the Revolutionary War. Read *Seeds of Revolution* at Level X to find out what events lead to the war. Then read *Building a Nation* at Level Z to find out what happens after the war is over.

Battling for Independence
Level Y Leveled Book
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Correlation

LEVEL Y

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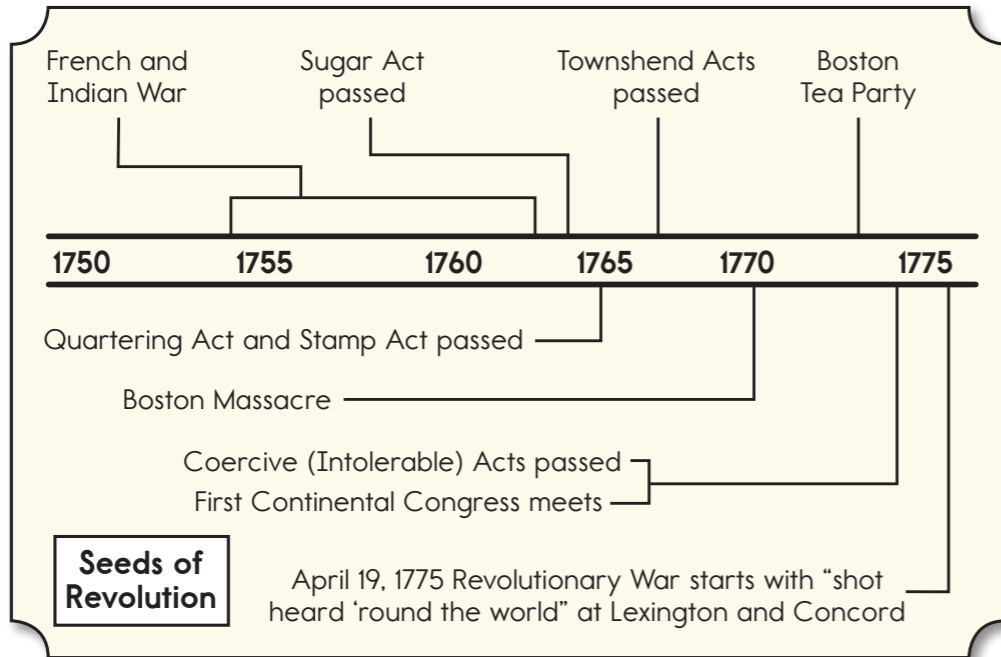


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Introduction

America was not always a country. Over 200 years ago, it was a collection of thirteen colonies ruled by Great Britain. Britain began taxing the **colonists** and enforcing unpopular new laws. The colonists objected, saying they wanted “no taxation without **representation**” in British Parliament.

Over time, the disagreements between the two groups only increased bad feelings and violence. Britain’s King George III tried to gain control over the colonists, but failed. A series of events led to a confrontation on April 19, 1775, between British soldiers and colonists at the towns of Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts. Shots were exchanged on the village green in Lexington—no one knows which side fired first. That first shot became known as “the shot heard ‘round the world,” signaling the beginning of war between Britain and its thirteen colonies.



The Battle of Concord



Give Me Liberty!

When King George refused to repeal the taxes, it became obvious that the colonies would have to fight for their independence. After the First Continental Congress, Patrick Henry returned to Virginia and made a speech in which he cried, "Give me liberty or give me death!" During the war, "Liberty or Death!" was a Patriot battle cry.

The Second Continental Congress

On May 10, 1775, the Second Continental Congress met at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The **delegates** unanimously chose George Washington, one of the delegates from Virginia and a former officer in the British army, to command the colony's troops. The Congress voted to call the troops the Continental Army, and declared it would be made up of volunteer soldiers from each of the thirteen colonies.

Thinking Critically

WHAT does a unanimous vote reveal about the delegates' perception of George Washington?

IN YOUR MIND, how might a unanimous vote benefit the delegates?

Washington's job as commander of the Continental Army wasn't going to be easy. Washington had a ragtag group of farmers, carpenters, and blacksmiths with few weapons and little or no training. These soldiers would be fighting against powerful Britain, with its well-trained and well-supplied army and navy. He expected to fail, telling Patrick Henry, "From the day I enter upon the command of the American armies, I date my fall, and the ruin

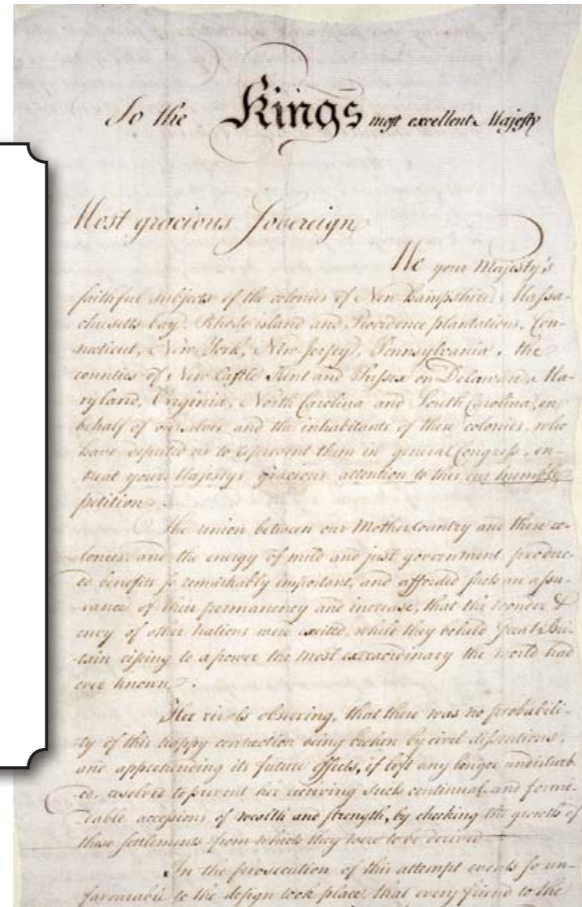


George Washington accepts the surrender of troops in Trenton, New Jersey, 1776.

of my reputation." Although he thought his reputation would be ruined, Washington believed so strongly in the cause of American **independence**, he took the challenge as its commander and insisted that he not be paid for his services.

The Olive Branch Petition

The petition that the Second Continental Congress sent to King George III was called The *Olive Branch Petition*. An olive branch is a symbolic offering of peace.



Not every colonist wanted to be independent from Britain. So while George Washington headed to Concord and Lexington near Boston to lead his new troops, the Continental Congress continued to try to make **amends** with Britain's Parliament. The delegates sent a **petition** to King George III asking him again to grant the colonists rights and to proclaim the colonists as loyal English subjects. King George refused to even read the petition, and declared that the colonists "had proceeded to open and avowed rebellion."

The Patriots Take Ticonderoga

On the same day the Second Continental Congress met, the Colonist soldiers scored a victory over the British at Fort Ticonderoga. A rough, tough farmer named Ethan Allen and his backwoods friends had formed a group called the Green



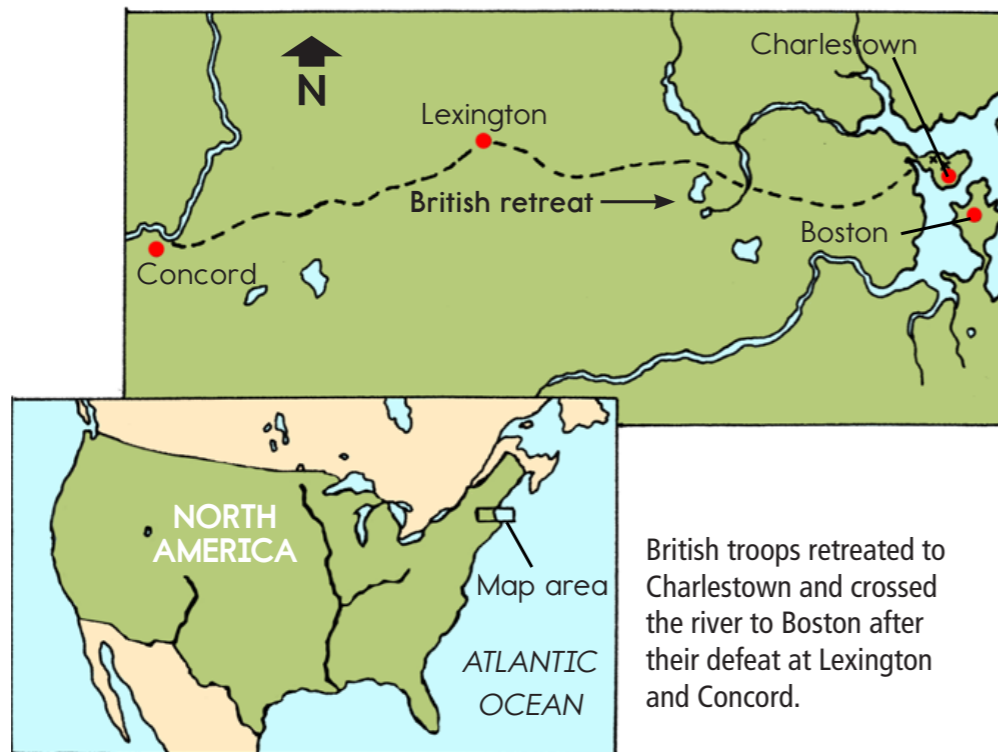
Ethan Allen at Fort Ticonderoga

Mountain Boys. The Congress asked the Green Mountain Boys to capture the British fort on Lake Champlain in New York. Another soldier named Benedict Arnold also was ordered to attack Fort Ticonderoga. Both Arnold and Allen wanted to be the leader of the attack, so they argued all the way to Ticonderoga, but they managed to conquer the fort together on May 10, 1775.

The victory gave the Patriots a **morale** boost. It also served as an announcement that war had indeed begun. Colonists were now forced to take sides either as **Loyalists**, those who wanted to remain part of Britain, or as **Patriots**, those who wanted independence from Britain.

Bunker Hill (and Breed's Hill)

After the Battle of Lexington, in which “the shot heard ‘round the world” started the first battle of the American Revolution, the British soldiers, led by Major John Pitcairn, had retreated to Boston. The colonist soldiers camped outside Boston, gathering forces. Around 16,000 Patriot troops eventually surrounded Boston, cutting off supplies to the British. With Patriot troops surrounding Boston, British General Thomas Gage worried enemy troops might **fortify** the hills across the Charles River from Boston—Bunker Hill and Breed's Hill in Charlestown.

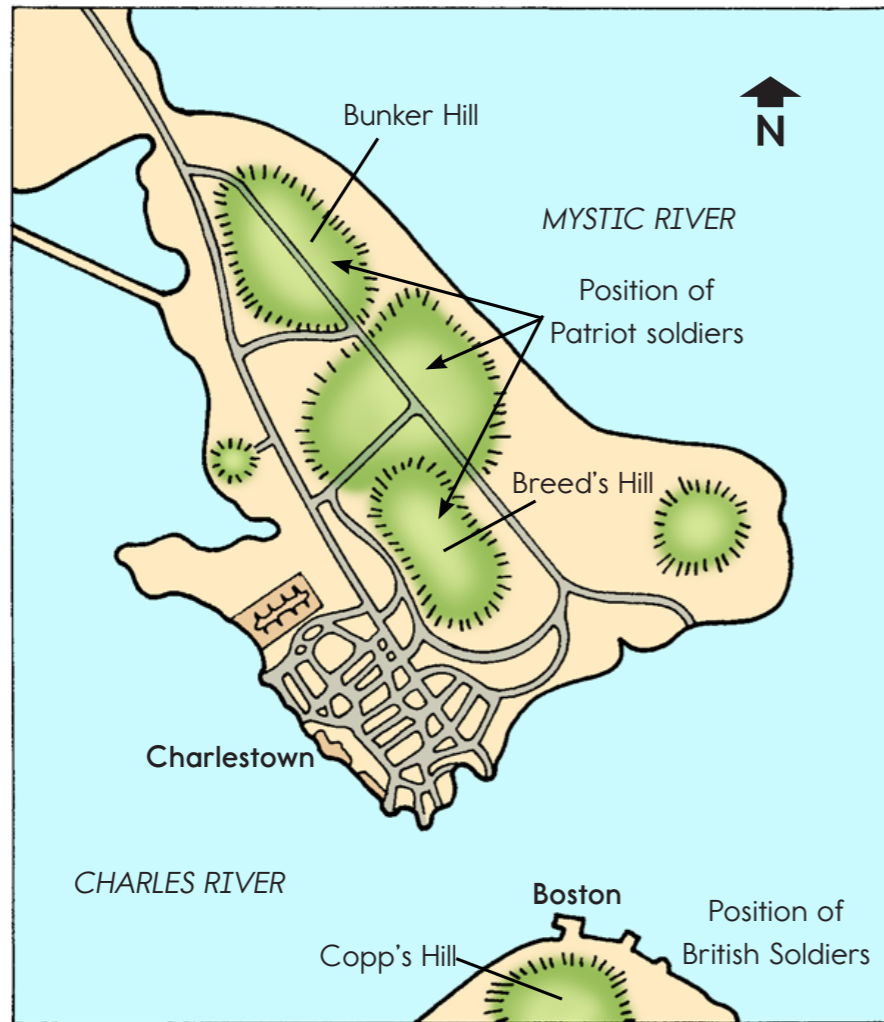


On the night of June 16, 1775, Patriot soldiers dug trenches into Breed's Hill, working all night. By morning, soldiers and trenches covered the hill. The British soldiers moved by ship across the Charles River with cannons blasting. The minutemen were at a disadvantage: they weren't trained well and were fighting Britain's professional soldiers. The Patriots also had very little **gunpowder**. In order to conserve their ammunition, Patriot officers told their soldiers to make every shot count by waiting until the British were very close before firing: “Wait until you see the whites of their eyes.”

As the British soldiers rushed the hill, the Americans held their fire until the last safe moment—the strategy worked and many British soldiers died. More British troops landed and attacked, with the Americans continuing to wait and then shoot. Finally, after the Americans ran out of gunpowder and had to retreat, the British captured Breed's Hill and Bunker Hill.



The type of muskets (rifles) used during the Revolutionary War. Gunpowder was stored inside a powder horn.



The British won control of the two hills at the cost of many British lives. More than 1,000 British soldiers were wounded or killed, while the Patriots lost 441 men. The Patriots gained a big boost in morale even though they lost a battle because they could fight and win a war against professional soldiers. Although most of the action was seen on Breed's Hill, the battle has come to be known as "The Battle of Bunker Hill."

General George Washington's troops held the British captive in Boston for nearly a year. He also sent forces to invade Canada to prevent the British from landing there and sending forces south into New York. The Patriots captured Montreal but failed in their attack on Quebec.

During the winter, Patriots used cannons they captured from the British to attack British soldiers in Boston. On March 17, 1776, the British soldiers and thousands of colonists loyal to Britain left

Thinking Critically

HOW would seeing the Patriots using British cannons cause the British troops to react?

IN YOUR MIND, how could their reaction have been an advantage or disadvantage for the Patriots?

Boston, leaving Washington's troops to march triumphantly into the city.





Declaring Independence

Patriot Thomas Paine wrote a pamphlet, *Common Sense*, in which he declared independence to be the only correct choice for the colonists. His booklet sold 150,000 copies in a few months and swayed many Loyalist colonists to the side of independence.

In June 1776, the Continental Congress selected a committee to write a statement about the colonists' right to be **self-governing**. Thomas Jefferson was chosen as the actual writer. The Continental Congress approved the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. Once passed by each of the thirteen colonies, the Declaration of Independence created the United States of America.

“Put your John Hancock right here.”

Have you ever heard the above saying? It means, “Please sign this.” It dates back to 1776 when John Hancock boldly signed the Declaration of Independence. His large signature encouraged the other 53 signers to sign. If Britain had won, all the signers could have been hanged as traitors.

Battling for Freedom

There were dark days ahead for the Patriots, as they lost battle after battle. A month after the Declaration of Independence was signed, the British, under General William Howe, shipped 30,000 soldiers into New York Harbor. The outnumbered Patriots lost the Battle of Long Island and retreated south across New Jersey to Philadelphia. The British occupied New York City, and won a battle in which Patriots surrendered Fort Washington.

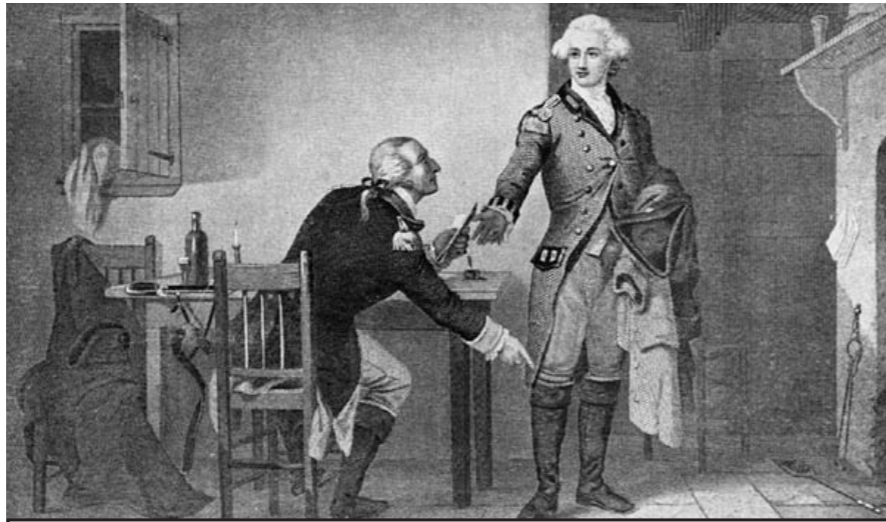


A statue honors Nathan Hale's sacrifice.

A Spy's End

Nathan Hale, a 21-year-old teacher, volunteered to spy on British troops in New York City. Hale was caught and hanged. His last words were: “I regret that I have but one life to give for my country.”

In October 1776, Patriot Benedict Arnold's gunboats were defeated at Lake Champlain in Canada. However, the Patriots fought so fiercely that the British were concerned. Conquering the **rebels** might not be as easy as they'd thought. On December 24, 1776, George Washington and his men ferried across the Delaware River to Trenton, New Jersey. The Patriots won a battle there in less than an hour! A few days later, Washington defeated the British at Princeton, New Jersey. These victories **rejuvenated** the Patriots' morale.



Benedict Arnold's Plot

Benedict Arnold was a brave general, but he felt Congress and the Continental Army had mistreated him. In 1779, Washington put Arnold in charge of a fort on the lower Hudson River called West Point. Arnold planned to sell the fort to the British. When his plan was revealed, he became a traitor and joined the British army.

Britain **retaliated** in June 1777, by moving a large army led by General John Burgoyne south from Canada. Burgoyne planned to conquer the Hudson River area, cutting off New England and New York from the other colonies. On the way, Burgoyne recaptured Fort Ticonderoga. However, Patriot soldiers stopped Burgoyne's **momentum** at the Battle of Saratoga in October, with Burgoyne surrendering around 6,000 men.



The Battle of Saratoga was a turning point in the war because it proved to France and other European countries that the Patriots might win the war. France joined the fight against its long-standing enemy Great Britain by sending supplies to the Continental Army. Soon after, Spain would declare war on Britain.

Supplies grew scarcer for the Continental Army. Soldiers often lacked food, clothing, and shelter. The Continental Congress needed **allies** such as France to help supply the troops. George Washington's troops suffered through a cold and hungry winter at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, before supplies reached them.

In June 1778, after that horrible winter, Washington attacked the British army, now under the command of General Henry Clinton, at the Battle of Monmouth. Neither side won the fight, which was the last major battle in the northern colonies.



A depiction of the legend of Molly Pitcher, a woman who took her husband's place after he died in battle.

Southern Battles

British forces captured Savannah, Georgia, in December 1778. Then they attacked and captured Charleston, South Carolina, in May 1780. They won yet again at Camden, South Carolina, in August 1780. Many colonists in the southern colonies were Loyalists. Although Britain was winning the South, the Patriots would not give up.



It's a Grand Old Flag

Congress decided on a flag for the new republic on June 14, 1777. It was to have thirteen stars on a blue field and thirteen red and white stripes. Many people believe Philadelphia seamstress Elizabeth "Betsy" Ross sewed the first national flag. However, no real evidence supports this story.



The tide of the war started to turn in favor of the Patriots in October when they won a battle at King's Mountain, South Carolina, in a speedy sixty-five minutes. They again won battles at Camden and Cowpens. Next, they forced British General Charles Cornwallis north into Virginia. Cornwallis had aided the British victory at Long Island and had taken command of British troops in the south. The Patriots' alliance with the French began to pay off. French soldiers helped hold the British back and fought alongside colonists as part of the troops Washington led into Virginia.



Cornwallis surrenders to Washington at Yorktown.

The most important battle of the war was about to begin. French ships drove off the British ships sent to rescue Cornwallis at Yorktown, on the coast of Virginia. The French fleet also brought extra soldiers to help the fight on land. The French and Patriot troops moved into Yorktown, surrounding the British army. The British fought for three weeks before surrendering on October 19, 1781. The Revolutionary War was over.

The Patriots had won their war and were now independent from Britain. Now a group

Thinking Critically

WHAT do you consider to be the greatest challenge faced by people of any new nation?

IN YOUR MIND, why might one challenge be greater than others?

of colonies that was used to being supported by another country had to come together and build a brand new nation.

Major Players in the Revolutionary War

George Washington:

Commander of the Continental Army; later became the country's first president



George Washington

Thomas Gage: Commander of British troops in the colonies; army was trapped in Boston after battles at Lexington and Concord

John Burgoyne: British commander of the northern army; captured Fort Ticonderoga but was defeated at Saratoga

King George III: Twenty-two years old when he became Great Britain's king; was determined to keep the colonies at all costs



King George III

Thomas Jefferson: Wrote the Declaration of Independence

Thomas Paine: Wrote a booklet called *Common Sense*, which inspired many colonists to choose independence

William Howe: Commander of the British army in North America, 1775–1778

Henry Clinton: Replaced Howe as British commander in 1778

Charles Cornwallis: British general under Henry Clinton; was in charge of the South; surrendered at Yorktown on October 19, 1781



Charles Cornwallis

Marquis de Lafayette: A young Frenchman who served as a commander under Washington; instrumental in attaining the French military assistance that helped win the war



Glossary

allies	people or groups that join together for a common cause (p. 17)
amends	acts that are intended to improve a bad situation (p. 7)
colonists	those from one country who settle in a new place controlled by that country (p. 4)
delegates	people sent to act for a group or another person (p. 5)
fortify	to make stronger or more resistant to attack (p. 9)
gunpowder	an explosive substance used in guns and cannons (p. 10)
independence	free from the control, influence, support or help of others (p. 6)
Loyalists	colonists who did not want independence from Great Britain (p. 8)
momentum	strength or force that keeps something moving or growing (p. 16)
morale	the mental well-being of an individual or a group (p. 8)
Patriots	colonists who wanted independence from Great Britain (p. 8)
petition	a formal request, usually made in writing (p. 7)
rebels	people who fight against the government (p. 15)
representation	having a voice, often in government (p. 4)
retaliated	responded to an act (p. 16)
self-governing	having the right to create and enforce laws without outside interference (p. 13)

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