

The Revolutionary War

A Presentation Based on the
Georgia Standards of Excellence
(GSE) Objectives for High School
History Students

GSE Objective SSUSH4 :
Analyze the ideological, military,
social, and diplomatic aspects of the
American Revolution.

Part One: The War Begins

Lexington and Concord

April 19, 1775

- First battles of the Revolutionary War
- British troops marched from Boston to Concord to seize weapons and arrest John Hancock and Samuel Adams.
- Paul Revere had arranged to signal the route of the British once they were under way.
- At Lexington, the “minutemen” were ready. Both sides opened fire, and the Americans were forced to withdraw, but they slowed the British advance.
- When the British reached Concord, Patriots were waiting for them in force. The weapons depot was saved, and the British were forced to retreat, harassed by militiamen along the way.

[Shot Heard Round the World – Brief Video](#)

The British are Coming?

- Paul Revere probably never warned that “The British are Coming!” because the colonists considered themselves British.
- Revere also did not warn that “The Redcoats are Coming!” because the term redcoats was not in use at that time.
- Most likely, Revere warned that “soldiers” or “regulars” were on their way.

GSE Objective SSUSH4a :

Investigate the **intellectual sources**,
organization, and **argument** of the
Declaration of Independence including the
role of Thomas Jefferson and the
Committee of Five.

Continental Congress

- During the revolution, the Continental Congress was the body of delegates who spoke and acted for the people of the colonies that later became the United States.
- The First Continental Congress met in 1774, and the Second Continental Congress met from 1775–1781.
- An important decision Congress made in 1775 was the **appointment of George Washington as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army.**

The Committee of Five

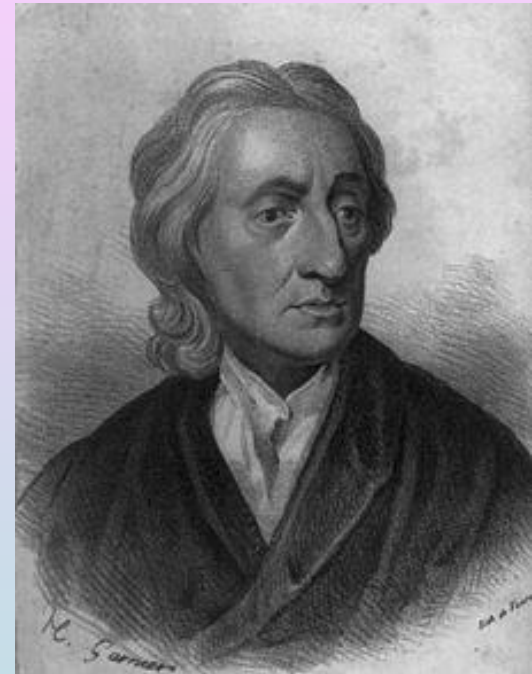
- In 1776, the Continental Congress appointed a Committee of Five to draft what became the Declaration of Independence.
- The five members were John **Adams**, Benjamin **Franklin**, Thomas **Jefferson**, Robert **Livingston**, and Roger **Sherman**.
- The committee chose Thomas Jefferson to write the first draft.

Declaration of Independence

- The document's ideas can be traced to several philosophies:

1. John Locke:

- believed people were born with certain natural rights (life, liberty and property)
- that the people and the government have a “contract”
- people had the right to overthrow a government if it did not uphold its end of the contract



Declaration of Independence

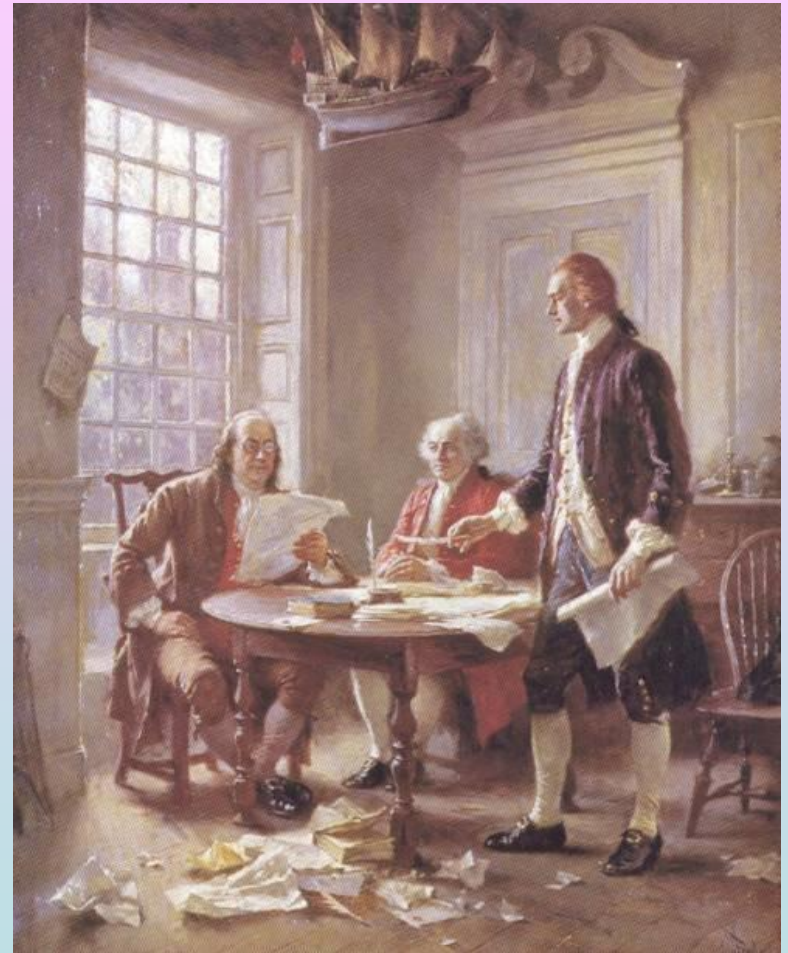


2. Baron de Montesquieu

- French philosopher
- Wrote of three types of political power (executive, legislative, and judicial)
- Separation of power and checks and balances
- Montesquieu's ideas would later influence the Constitution of the United States.

Declaration of Independence

- Jefferson professed that, he borrowed the ideas of Locke and Montesquieu.
- In fact, when later asked, Jefferson said the Declaration was “pure Locke.”
- The document was edited by Franklin and Adams several times prior to its presentation to the Congress .



Benjamin Franklin and John Adams editing Thomas Jefferson's original writing of the Declaration of Independence

Declaration of Independence

- Made up of 5 parts:
 - The Preamble explains the purpose of the document
 - Declaration of Natural Rights is taken almost directly from Locke (Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness)
 - List of Grievances details the colonists' complaints against Britain
 - Resolution of Independence declares that the colonies are free from Britain
 - Signers declared that they, as representatives of the colonies approved the document

Video:

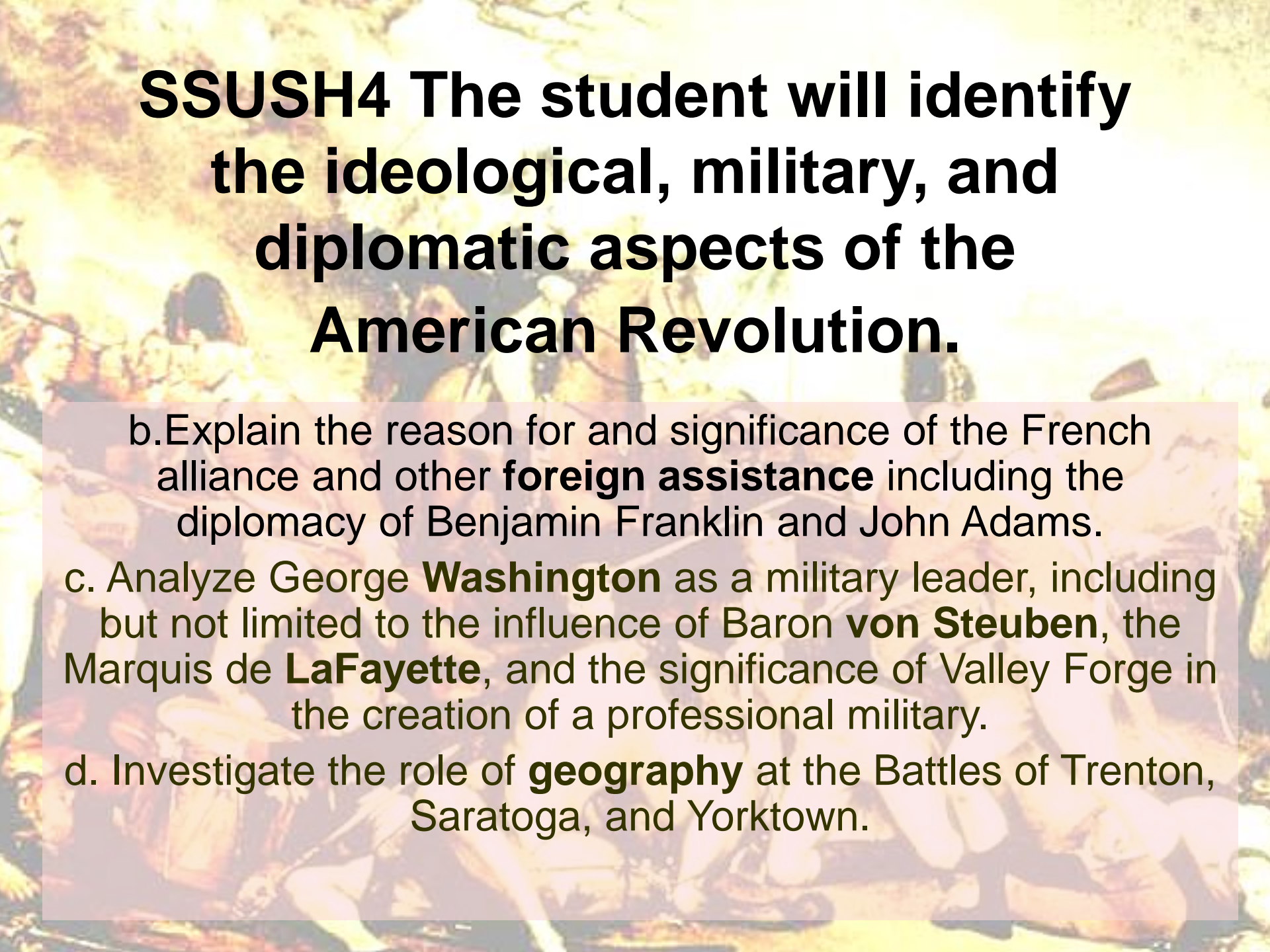
**Writing the Declaration of
Independence**

Declaration of Independence

- The signing of the Declaration of Independence signaled the colonists' dedication to fighting and winning their independence from Britain.



**Part Two:
The War's Course
and Outcomes**



SSUSH4 The student will identify the ideological, military, and diplomatic aspects of the American Revolution.

- b. Explain the reason for and significance of the French alliance and other **foreign assistance** including the diplomacy of Benjamin Franklin and John Adams.
- c. Analyze George **Washington** as a military leader, including but not limited to the influence of Baron **von Steuben**, the Marquis de **LaFayette**, and the significance of Valley Forge in the creation of a professional military.
- d. Investigate the role of **geography** at the Battles of Trenton, Saratoga, and Yorktown.

France's Role in the War

- The French, old enemies of Britain, began to secretly send supplies to the Americans.
- Benjamin Franklin and John Adams were sent to France to persuade the French to enter the war.
- The Americans wanted France to send troops as well, but the French government was not yet convinced Americans had a realistic chance of victory.

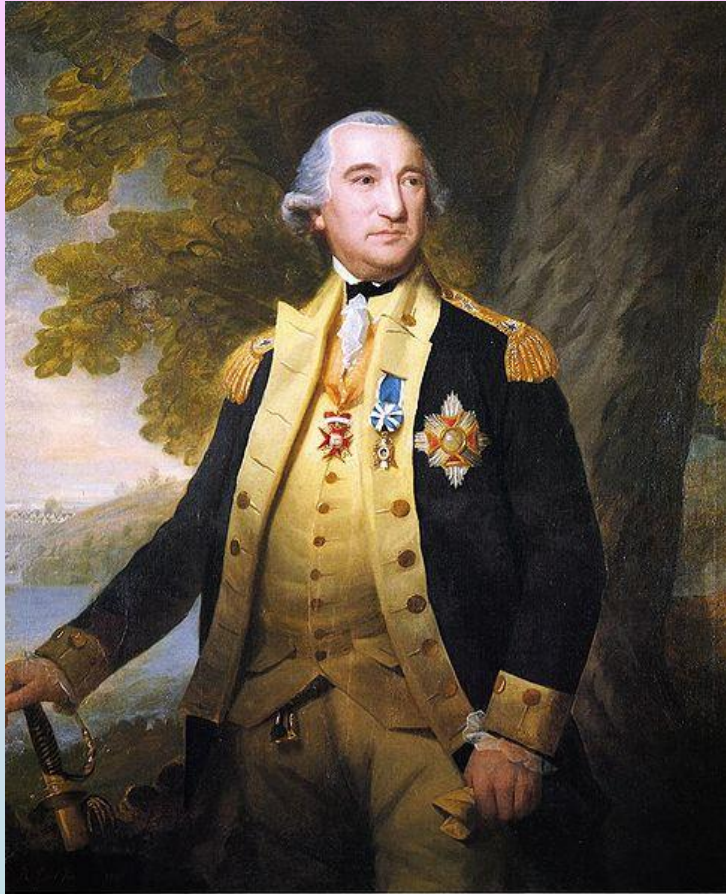


European Leaders Aid Patriots

A large number of European military leaders and soldiers aided the Patriot cause. Here are a few notable examples:

- **Marquis de Lafayette** (France) was a field commander in many notable battles including the decisive Yorktown siege. Lafayette also helped convince France to send more aid to the Americans.
- **Baron von Steuben** (Germany) is known for training American troops and instituting a greater degree of discipline in the ranks
- **Casimir Pulaski** (Poland) once saved George Washington's life; Pulaski was killed at the Battle of Savannah

Steuben and Lafayette



Baron von Steuben



The Marquis de Lafayette

George Washington

- In 1775, George Washington had been appointed the general and commander in chief of the colonial army, known as the Continental Army, by the Second Continental Congress.
- The Continental Army was formed mostly out of loosely trained local militias which surrounded Boston. It was inexperienced, poorly equipped, and poorly trained.



Washington as a Leader

- Washington recognized the limitations his forces faced against the British Army and Navy.
- He managed engagements between the Continental Army and the British in such a way as to preserve his forces, prolong the war, and wear down the enemy's will to fight.
- However, there were three battles in particular-Trenton, Saratoga, and Yorktown-where Washington won decisive victories and each is considered a turning point in the Revolutionary War.

Battle of Trenton: Crossing the Delaware

- Most armies of the era did not fight during winter due to poor weather conditions and scarcity of food.
- On **December 25th 1776**, Washington, needing a victory to convince his soldiers to re-enlist, surprisingly moved his army across the Delaware River into Trenton, NJ and captured over 900 British & Hessian troops and supplies.

[New York Campaign – Brief Video](#)

What might have happened if Washington's attack had failed?



Diplomatic Victories

- In France, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin successfully negotiated the Franco-American Treaty in 1778.
- John Adams travelled to Holland and convinced the Dutch to advance the colonies a substantial loan.
- After the war, Franklin and Adams helped negotiate the peace treaty (Treaty of Paris, 1783).

Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, 1777-1778

- **After the British captured Philadelphia in September 1777, Washington moved his troops into winter quarters at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.**
- **Poorly equipped and supplied, the cold, food shortages & disease, killed nearly 2,500 men.**

How would you describe the conditions for the average soldier in the Continental Army? Under these conditions, would you re-enlist?



Valley Forge, PA

- **The Marquis de Lafayette and Baron von Steuben joined Washington at Valley Forge and helped train the army.**
- **Through training and discipline, these three leaders helped keep the remaining troops together.**

"The unfortunate soldiers were in want of everything; they had neither coats nor hats, nor shirts, nor shoes. Their feet and their legs froze until they were black, and it was often necessary to amputate them."

--Marquis de Lafayette, 1778



SSUSH4e. Examine the roles of women, American Indians, and enslaved and free Blacks in supporting the war effort.

Women in the Revolution

- Many women were left to tend family farms while husbands went off to fight.
- Other women, such as the legendary Molly Pitcher, aided the soldiers by bringing them food, water and supplies and acting as nurses.
- A small number of women actually took up arms against the British.
- Even George Washington's wife Martha spent a great deal of time travelling to the General's headquarters and spent months at a time with him during winter.

Blacks in the Revolution

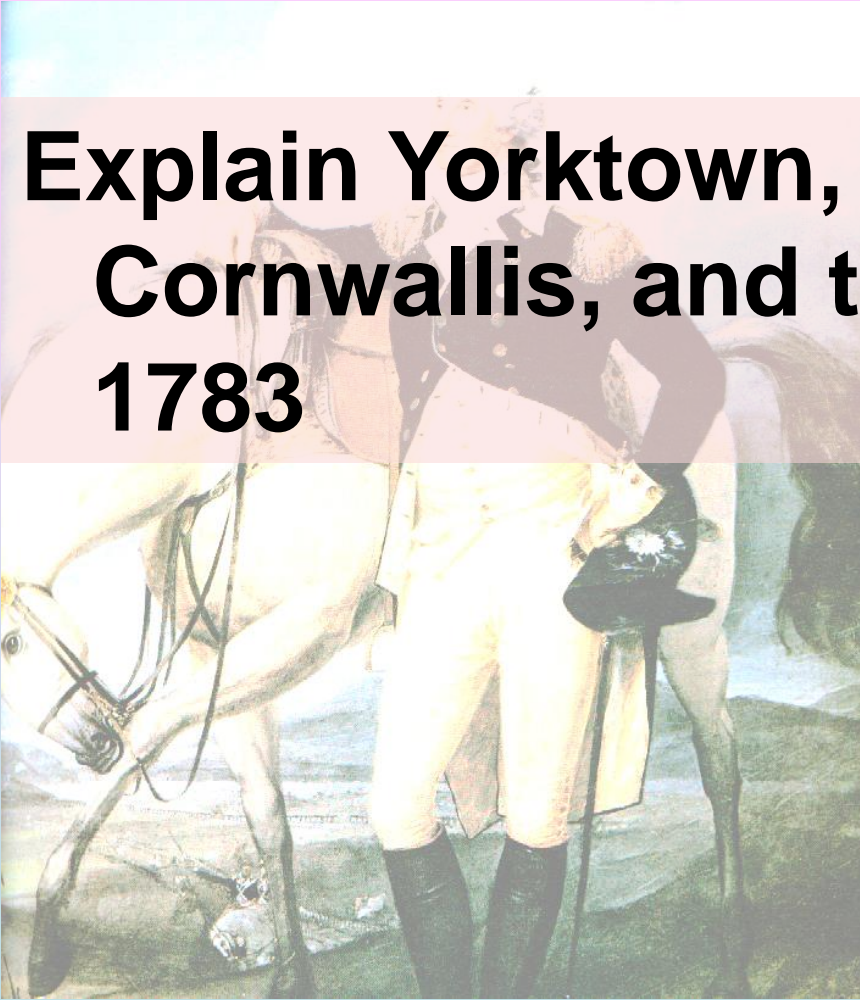
- Many American slave owners freed their slaves in exchange for fighting in the war.
- Although the British freed thousands of slaves, they also seized and shipped thousands of other slaves to Caribbean plantations.
- Washington allowed slaves to fight in the Continental Army, and about 5,000 fought either in the army or with state militias.

American Indians in the Revolution

- All around the colonies, American Indians joined forces with the British in hopes of driving the colonists out of North America.
- In Pennsylvania, the Iroquois helped British soldiers kill hundreds of militia men, but they were later defeated in western New York.
- In the South, the Cherokee along with various other tribes attacked colonial settlers, but they were later defeated, and many of their towns were burned to the ground.

The Wars' End

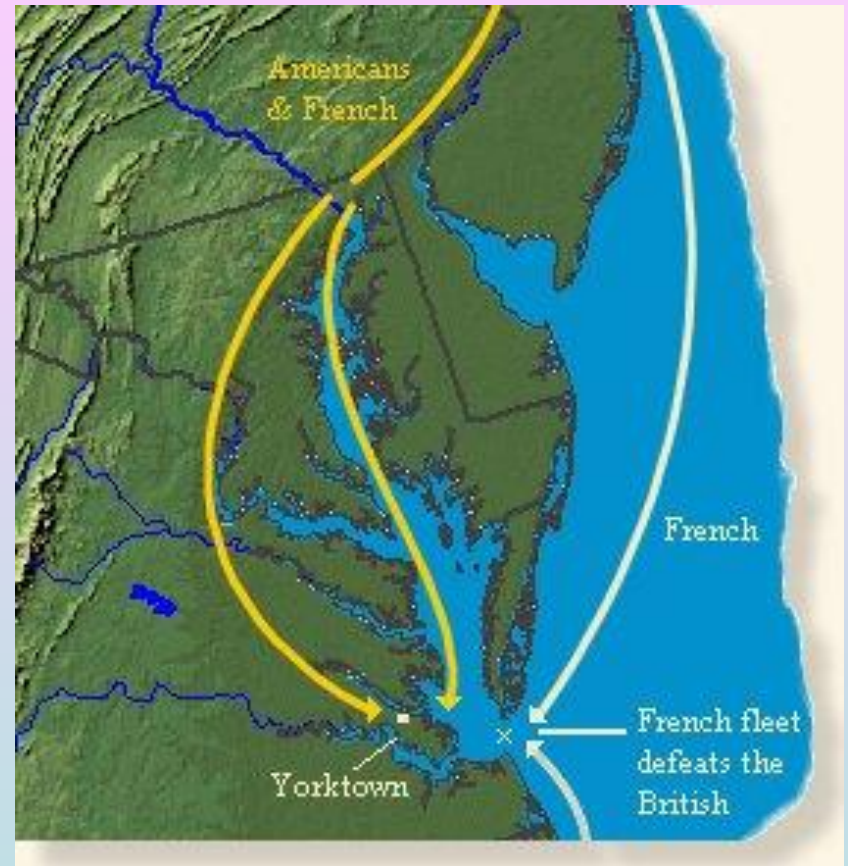
Explain Yorktown, the role of Lord Cornwallis, and the Treaty of Paris, 1783



Yorktown, Virginia

- In April 1781, British forces led by General Cornwallis invaded Virginia.
- Cornwallis moved his troops to Yorktown in order to gain supplies and keep a line of communication open by sea.

Though moving his army to Yorktown to get easily supplied by the British navy seemed like a good decision, why might moving your army onto a peninsula be a bad idea?



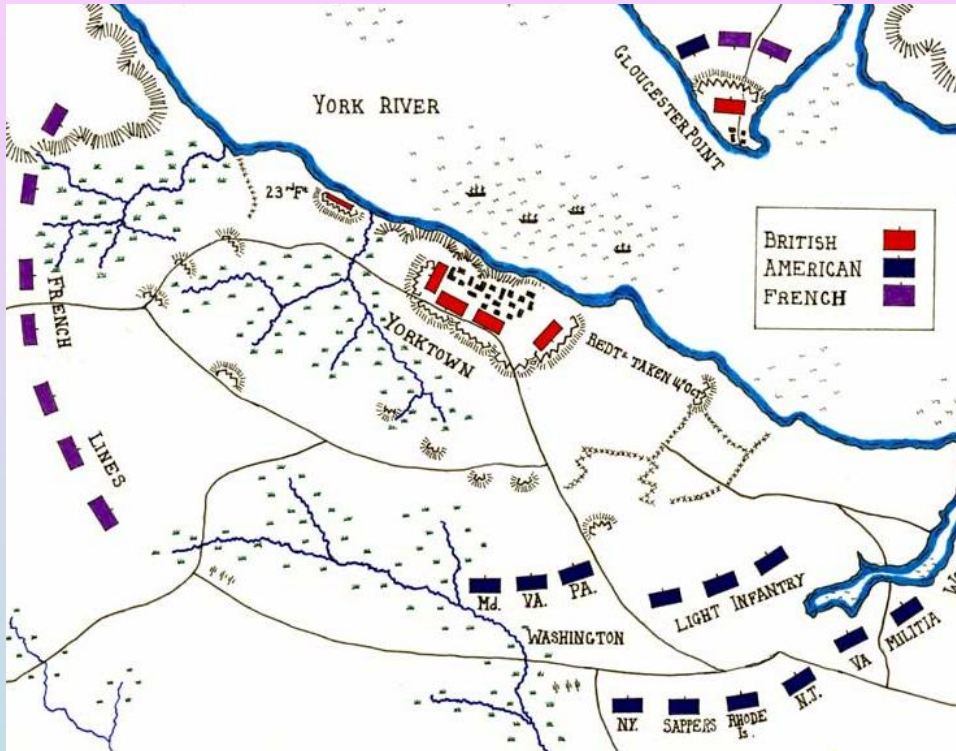
Yorktown, Virginia

- Washington took the opportunity to march from New York to Yorktown, Virginia with a combined American and French army.
- The French navy sailed up from the Caribbean to block supplies from reaching Cornwallis' army and to cut off his ability to escape by sea.



Cornwallis's Surrender

What role did the French play in defeating the British?



- In September 1781, American and French forces surrounded Yorktown and attacked Cornwallis' army.
- After a **siege** of almost 3 weeks, including constant bombardment, the 8,000-man British army surrendered.
- The surrender at Yorktown signaled the end of the war for the British.

[The Siege of Yorktown – Brief Video](#)

The Treaty of Paris, 1783



This Treaty ended the war and provided that:

1. Britain recognized the United States as a new, sovereign nation.
2. The United States' western border be set at the Mississippi River.
3. Spain regained Florida.
4. France received several colonies in Africa and the Caribbean.

The End