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The ideals of liberty and freedom helped attract key support and helped the colonists overcome difficult challenges.

Gaining Allies

How did America gain allies?

By late 1777, Benjamin Franklin had been in France for a year. He was trying to get the French to support the Americans' fight for independence. With his skill and charm, Franklin gained many friends for the United States. The French had secretly given the Americans money, but they had not entered the war.

The Continental Congress sent Jonathan Austin of Boston to France to deliver the news of the American victory at Saratoga. As soon as Austin arrived, Franklin asked if the British had taken Philadelphia. Austin answered, "Yes sir. . . . But sir, I have greater news than that. General Burgoyne and his whole army are prisoners of war!"

Franklin surely understood the importance of this news. The victory at Saratoga was a turning point in the American Revolution. France and other nations now realized that the Americans might actually win their war against Great Britain. France decided to help the Americans. In February 1778, France declared war on Britain and sent money, equipment, and troops to aid the American Patriots.

Like France, Spain also decided to help the Americans. Spain did not form an alliance with the United States, but it did declare war on Great Britain in 1779. Spanish forces fought the British in present-day Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. This fighting kept many British troops out of action against the Americans.

Winter at Valley Forge

In 1778 news traveled slowly across the Atlantic. People in the United States did not learn of the French-American alliance until the spring. Meanwhile, British general Howe and his forces spent the winter in comfort in Philadelphia. Washington set up camp at Valley Forge, about 20 miles (32 km) to the west. There, Washington and his troops suffered through a terrible winter. They lacked decent food, clothing, shelter, and medicine. Washington's greatest challenge at Valley Forge was keeping the Continental Army together.

Snowstorms and damaged roads slowed delivery of supplies. The Continental Army built huts and gathered supplies from the countryside. Several volunteers—including Washington's wife, Martha—made clothes for the troops and cared for the sick. Washington declared that no army had ever put up with "such uncommon hardships" with such spirit. "Naked and starving as they are," he wrote, "we cannot enough admire the incomparable patience and fidelity [faithfulness] of the soldiery."

Joseph Martin, a young soldier from Connecticut, spent the winter at Valley Forge. "We had hard duty to perform," he wrote years later, "and little or no strength to perform it with." Most of the men lacked blankets, shoes, and shirts. Martin made a pair of rough shoes for himself out of a scrap of cowhide, which hurt his feet.

"[T]he only alternative I had, was to endure this inconvenience or to go barefoot, as hundreds of my companions had to, till they might be tracked by their blood upon the rough frozen ground."

—Joseph Martin, in *A Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier*

Many soldiers became sick and died. Other men deserted (duh • ZERT • ed), or left without permission. Some officers quit. The Continental Army seemed to be falling apart.

Yet the Continental Army did survive the winter. Spring came, and conditions gradually improved. New soldiers joined the ranks. "The army grows stronger every day," one officer wrote. "There is a spirit of discipline among the troops that is better than numbers."

Then, in April 1778, Washington told his troops of France's help. Everyone's spirits rose at the thought. The Continental Army celebrated with a religious service and a parade.

Foreigners Help on the Battlefield

The Patriot cause had supporters around the world. A number of individuals from other nations gave their talents to the cause.

One leader at Valley Forge was Marquis de Lafayette (lah • fee • EHT) of France. He had come to the United States as a 19-year-old volunteer in June 1777. Lafayette was excited about the ideas expressed in the Declaration of Independence, and he wanted to join the battle for freedom. He believed that the American cause represented the future of humankind.

When he reached the United States, Lafayette offered his services to General Washington. He agreed to serve without pay and became a trusted aide to Washington.

Other Europeans volunteered to work for the Patriot cause. Two Polish men—Thaddeus Kościuszko (THAD • ee • uhs kawsh • CHUSH • KOH) and Casimir Pulaski (KAH • sih • meer poo • LAHS • kee)—supported American efforts. Kościuszko helped build important defenses for the Americans. Pulaski won promotion to the rank of general. He died in 1779, fighting for the Continental Army.

Friedrich von Steuben (FREE • drihk vahn STOO • buhn) also came to help Washington. Steuben had been an officer in the Prussian army. He helped to train the Patriot troops at Valley Forge and shape the ragged Continental Army into a more effective fighting force.

In 1778 Spaniard Juan de Miralles (mee • RAH • yays) arrived in Philadelphia. He had persuaded Spain, Cuba, and Mexico to send money to the United States. Miralles became friends with many Patriot leaders and loaned money to the cause.

Europeans who had recently moved to the United States also joined the Patriot cause. For example, almost two-thirds of the Pennsylvania regiments were foreign-born.

Even with the help of foreign nations and individuals, the Patriots faced a huge challenge. The Continental Army still needed large amounts of money to fight the war and defeat the British.

Describing How did Lafayette help the Patriot cause?

Thinking Like a HISTORIAN

Understanding Cause and Effect

Benjamin Franklin served as America's first ambassador to France. French nobles and thinkers greatly admired the American. Much like a singer or actor today, Franklin became a star in America and Europe. Fashionable women even wore a hairstyle meant to look like a fur cap Franklin wore. How might Franklin's popularity have helped the Patriot cause? For more about understanding cause and effect, review *Thinking Like a Historian*.

Life on the Home Front

What was life like on the home front during the American Revolution?

The hardships of the soldiers involved in fighting the war were considerable. However, the war changed the lives of all Americans, even those who stayed at home. For example, wives of soldiers had to take care of families by themselves. They had to run a farm or a business without a husband's help. Children had to make do without a father present.

Problems in the Economy

For the young United States, getting the money to pay for the war was a great challenge. The Continental Congress had no power to raise money through taxes. The Congress did get some money from the states and from foreign countries. Yet this amount fell far short of the need.

To meet this need, the Congress and the states simply printed hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of paper money. The paper money quickly lost its value. The amount of bills was greater than the supply of gold and silver backing them. This led to inflation (in • FLAY • shun), which means that it took more and more money to buy the same amount of goods. People began to have doubts about how much their paper bills were worth. Congress stopped printing paper money because no one would use it. This left the Americans with no way to finance their fight for independence.

New Ways of Thinking

The ideals of liberty and freedom inspired the American Revolution. These same ideals also caused some women to question their role in American society.

Abigail Adams was one example. She wrote to her husband, John Adams, a member of Congress:

"I can not say that I think you [are] very generous to the Ladies, for whilst you are proclaiming peace and good will to Men, Emancipating all Nations, you insist upon retaining an absolute power over Wives."

—from *Adams Family Papers*

Questioning Slavery

The revolutionary quest for freedom and liberty led some white Americans to question slavery. In 1778 Governor William Livingston of New Jersey asked his government to free all enslaved people. He said slavery was "utterly inconsistent with the principles of Christianity and humanity."

African Americans made similar arguments. In New Hampshire enslaved people asked the government for their freedom so "that the name of slave may not be heard in a land gloriously contending for the sweets of freedom."

As you have read, African Americans fought for the American cause and hoped the Revolution would help end slavery. The Pennsylvania legislature in 1780 adopted a plan to gradually free enslaved people—the first legislature in the world to take such action against slavery. Other northern states soon took similar measures. Still, the **issue** of slavery would remain unsettled for many years.

Treatment of Loyalists

Not all Americans supported the Patriot cause. During the war, thousands of Loyalists fought on the side of the British. Some Loyalists spied on the Patriots. Many Loyalists fled, packing their belongings and selling whatever they could. Some left hurriedly for other parts of the British Empire, including British-owned Florida.

Known Loyalists who remained in the United States faced difficult times. Their neighbors often shunned them. Some became victims of violence. Loyalists who actively helped the British faced arrest. In a few rare cases, Patriots executed Loyalists.

Describing How were Loyalists treated by the Patriots during the war?

LESSON 2 REVIEW

Review Vocabulary

1. Explain the significance of the following terms from this lesson.

a. desert b. inflation

LAFS.68.RH.2.4

Answer the Guiding Questions

2. **Identifying** Who were the key European allies of the Patriots?

SS.8.A.3.4

3. **Explaining** Explain some of the ways that the war affected women.

SS.8.A.3.6

4. **ARGUMENT** Take the perspective of a foreign soldier volunteering to serve in the United States in the fight against the British. Write a letter to family back home explaining why you have decided to risk your life in this cause.

SS.8.A.3.4, LAFS.68.WHST.2.4, LAFS.68.WHST.4.10