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The Patriots' and their allies' cleverness and commitment led to final victory in the Revolutionary War.

Victory at Yorktown

What events occurred in the victory at Yorktown?

While the British were carrying out their southern campaign, key events were taking place in the North. In July 1780, French warships appeared off Newport, Rhode Island. The ships carried French aid: thousands of soldiers commanded by Comte de Rochambeau (row • sham • BOH).

Eventually, Rochambeau joined up with General Washington, who was camped north of New York City. There the two leaders waited for the arrival of a second fleet of French ships. If and when the second French fleet arrived, Washington planned to attack the British army base in New York, which was under the command of General Clinton.

As it turned out, the second French fleet never did arrive in the North. Washington and Rochambeau would never launch the attack on Clinton. Instead, both the ships and the troops would find a better opportunity to strike at the British. That opportunity would come farther south—at Yorktown, Virginia.

Washington Leaves for Virginia

As he waited outside New York, Washington had followed reports of fighting in the South. In 1781 he sent Lafayette and Anthony Wayne to Virginia to stop Cornwallis. The results were positive. Lafayette had Cornwallis pinned down on a peninsula, a piece of land surrounded by water on three sides. The place was called Yorktown.

Washington also got important news about the French fleet he was waiting for: The ships were heading toward Chesapeake Bay instead of New York. They were going to join in the fight to defeat Cornwallis. With this news, Washington quickly changed his plans. He and Rochambeau would advance on the British at Yorktown rather than at New York.

Washington kept his new **strategy**, or plan of action, secret. He wanted Clinton to think the Patriots still planned to attack at New York. This, he hoped, would keep Clinton from sending aid to Cornwallis.

Washington and Rochambeau then rushed south with their armies. Secrecy was strict. Most soldiers did not know where they were going. One wrote, "We do not know the object of our march, and are in perfect ignorance whether we are going against New York, or . . . Virginia."

The French and American troops marched 200 miles (322 km) in 15 days. General Clinton did not learn they were gone until it was too late. There was nothing he could do to stop the three forces—Lafayette's troops, Washington's and Rochambeau's army, and the French fleet—from meeting at Yorktown.

A Trap at Yorktown

Washington's plan worked perfectly. By the end of September, 14,000 American and French troops stood against Cornwallis's 8,000 British and Hessian troops at Yorktown. Meanwhile, the French fleet kept guard at Chesapeake Bay. British ships could not get in to help Cornwallis escape by sea. General Clinton and the rest of the British army sat helplessly in New York. They were unable to help Cornwallis. The British were trapped. American and French forces began a **siege** (SEEJ)—they blocked off the British supply and escape routes. In this way, they hoped to force the British to surrender.

Victory Over Cornwallis

The siege began to take effect. The British ran low of supplies and many soldiers were wounded or sick. On October 14, Washington's aide, Alexander Hamilton, led an attack that captured key British defenses. Cornwallis could see that the situation was hopeless. On October 19, he surrendered his troops. The Patriots had won the Battle of Yorktown. They took nearly 8,000 British prisoners and captured more than 200 guns.

At the surrender ceremony, the British marched between rows of French and American troops. A French band played "Yankee Doodle." This was a song the British had used earlier in the war to taunt the Americans. As the war went on though, the song was claimed by the Patriots. They even added more verses to the song that made fun of the British and praised the Continental Army.

Explaining Why did Washington advance on Yorktown?

Thinking like a **HISTORIAN**

Predicting Consequences

Throughout the Revolutionary War, Washington succeeded in holding his army together, despite many difficulties. One of these difficulties was political meddling. The Continental Congress often interfered with his military operations. During the gloomy winter at Valley Forge,

some members of Congress and army officers plotted to replace Washington as commander in chief. How might Washington's removal or resignation have affected the war? For more about predicting consequences, review *Thinking Like a Historian*.

Independence Achieved

What helped the Patriots win independence?

The Patriot victory at Yorktown was a terrible blow to the British and their war effort. Still, the fighting went on after Cornwallis surrendered. The British still held Savannah, Charles Town, and New York. There would be a few more clashes on land and sea. However, the defeat at Yorktown convinced the British that the war was too costly to **pursue**, or proceed with.

The Americans and British sent delegates to Paris to work out a treaty. Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and John Jay represented the United States. The American Congress **ratified** (RAT • ih • fyd), or approved, the first draft of the treaty in April 1783. The final Treaty of Paris was signed on September 3, 1783. By that time Britain had also made peace with France and Spain.

Under the Treaty of Paris, Great Britain recognized the United States as an independent nation. The British also promised to withdraw all their troops from American territory. They gave Americans fishing rights to the waters off the coast of nearby Canada.

In turn, the United States promised that Americans would pay to British merchants what they owed. The treaty also stated that the Congress would advise the new states to return property taken from Loyalists.

A Conspiracy Against Congress

Many months passed between the end of fighting in the Revolutionary War and the signing of the peace treaty. During that time, Washington was unwilling to dissolve the army. Instead, he camped his idle troops in Newburgh, New York.

Many of these soldiers believed they were owed pay from the Congress. When this pay did not come, the soldiers grew angry. Some officers sent a letter around in March 1783. If their demands were not met, the letter said, the army should use force against the Congress.

Washington realized that this threat of revolt was dangerous. The new nation could be destroyed. In a dramatic speech, he asked the angry soldiers to be patient. Then Washington urged the Congress to meet their just demands. The Congress agreed. Washington's leadership ended the threat to the new nation.

Washington Returns Home

In late November 1783, the war truly ended. The last British troops left New York City. Washington could at last give up his command. The soldiers could return to their homes and their lives.

On December 4, Washington said farewell to his troops. Three weeks later he formally resigned, or gave up his position, at a meeting of the Congress. Washington said, "Having now finished the work assigned me, I retire . . . and take my leave of all the employments of public life."

Washington returned home to Mount Vernon, Virginia. There he planned to remain and live quietly with his family.

Why the Americans Won

How did the Americans defeat powerful Great Britain? Remember, the Americans had several advantages in the war. First, they fought on their own land. The British had to move troops and supplies across an ocean. It was harder for them to get reinforcement, as the siege of Yorktown showed. When their ships were blocked, the British troops had no support.

Also, the Americans knew the land. They knew where to lay an **ambush** (AM • bush), or surprise attack. They were expert at wilderness fighting. The British, in contrast, had much difficulty controlling the American countryside once they occupied the cities. The Battle of Kings Mountain, which you read about in Lesson 3, illustrates this point. The rural people did not like being told what to do. They also had wilderness fighting skills that could defeat their new enemies.

Help from other countries contributed to the American victory. The success at Yorktown would not have been possible without French soldiers and ships. The Spanish gave aid when they attacked the British. Individuals, such as Lafayette and Steuben, came to America to provide vital services to the Patriot cause.

Perhaps most important, the American Revolution was a people's movement. Its outcome depended not on any one battle or event but on the determination and spirit of all Patriots. As Washington remarked about the patriotic crowds, "Here is an army they [the British] will never conquer."

In 1776 the American colonists began a revolution. In the Declaration of Independence they outlined the principles of freedom and the rights they felt all peoples and nations should have. These ideas inspired people in other parts of the world. For example, French rebels in 1789 fought a revolution in defense of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity." The French upheld these principles: "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights."

In 1791 there was revolution in the French colony of Saint Domingue. Inspired by the ideals of the American and French revolutions, enslaved Africans took up arms. They were led by a formerly enslaved man named Toussaint L'Ouverture (too • SAN-loo • vehr • TOOR) and soon shook off French rule. In 1804 Saint Domingue—present-day Haiti—became the second nation in the Americas to achieve independence from colonial rule. "We have asserted our rights," declared the revolutionaries. "We swear never to yield them to any power on earth."

Explaining Why did Washington take action to end the Newburgh Conspiracy?

LESSON 4 REVIEW

Review Vocabulary

1. Define each of the following terms and use it in a sentence.

a. siege b. ratify c. ambush

LAFS.68.RH.2.4

Answer the Guiding Questions

2. **Sequencing** Describe Washington's actions leading up to and during the Patriot victory at Yorktown.

SS.8.A.3.3, SS.8.G.3.6, LAFS.68.RH.2.5

3. **Listing** What elements were key to the Patriots' victory in the war?

SS.8.G.3.4

4. **NARRATIVE** Write a news article detailing the importance of Washington's strategy leading to the British Hessian surrender.

SS.8.G.1.7, LAFS.68.WHST.2.4, LAFS.68.WHST.4.10