

SECTION

3

The Revolutionary War Begins

BEFORE YOU READ

MAIN IDEA

While the colonies and the British began with different strengths and weaknesses, the Revolutionary War demonstrated Washington's great leadership.

READING FOCUS

1. What groups of people played a part in the Revolutionary War?
2. What major revolutionary battles took place in the North?
3. In what ways was the Battle of Saratoga a British setback?
4. How did Washington's leadership at Valley Forge influence the course of the Revolutionary War?

KEY TERMS AND PEOPLE

Redcoats
Battle of Saratoga
Valley Forge
inflation
Marquis de Lafayette

TAKING NOTES

As you read, take notes about the advantages the Americans had in the Revolutionary War. Record your notes in a graphic organizer like the one shown below.

American Advantages

Deborah Sampson, SOLDIER

THE INSIDE STORY

Who is that young soldier? Older soldiers in the Fourth Massachusetts Regiment felt protective toward Robert Shurtleff. The new recruit was strong, but he seemed very young to his fellow soldiers. Shurtleff was so young that he did not even have to shave! He also kept to himself, seldom joining in the teasing and rough talk that went on in camp. All the same, the young soldier proved to be brave in battle. In the fighting in New York, he was slightly wounded several times but never complained. He insisted on taking care of his wounds himself.

What the soldiers didn't realize about Robert Shurtleff was that "he" was actually a woman, Deborah Sampson. Dressed in men's breeches and shirt and with her hair cut short, the 21-year-old Sampson had joined the army posing as a man. Her disguise worked partly because she stood about 5 foot 7 inches, tall for a woman in the 1700s. She was also physically strong from doing farmwork as an indentured servant. As long as she looked and acted like a male soldier, it never occurred to anyone that Private Shurtleff was a woman. She guarded her secret until she came down with a fever. In the hospital, the truth was discovered. Sampson received an honorary discharge in October 1783, went home, and married a farmer, Benjamin Gannett. She later received a soldier's pension. 🏠



▲ Sampson, shown here in the only known portrait of her, disguised herself to become a soldier.

The People behind the American Revolution

After declaring independence, the colonies and the Congress next took steps toward forming a nation. The colonies adopted constitutions and established new state governments. But first, the American colonists had to win the Revolutionary War. Many people would play a role.

Continental and Redcoats When the war began, the British seemed to have an overwhelming military advantage. Britain was a world power with an army of well-trained soldiers, known as **Redcoats** for their red uniforms.

Compared with that, American prospects looked bad. Washington's Continental Army and state militias together had only about 19,000 soldiers. He had no navy except for some merchant ships armed with guns. Raising and keeping an army was a constant problem.

Finding and paying for supplies and military equipment was even harder. Congress was always short of money. The army depended heavily on captured British guns and ammunition. Soldiers and their commanders

constantly complained about shortages of food, clothes, and gunpowder.

On the other hand, the British army included many hired German soldiers. They had no loyalty to their cause, while colonists were fighting for their homes and liberty. Moreover, the Royal Navy had been allowed to decline after the French and Indian War. Many of its ships were old and in poor condition.

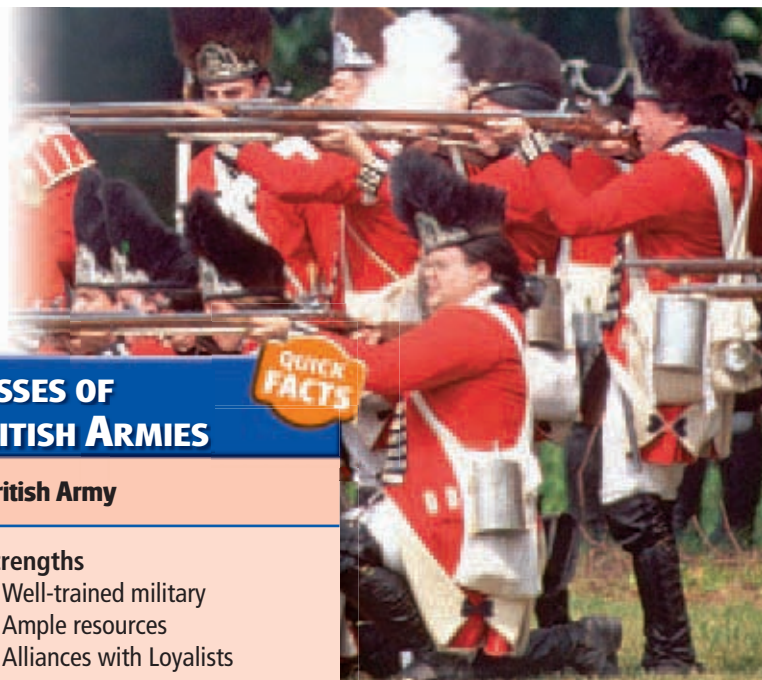
The role of women Even before independence was declared, American women had been active in boycotts and other protests. Once the fighting began, Patriot women found many other ways to take part.

A few, such as Deborah Sampson, disguised themselves as men to become soldiers in the Continental Army. Mary Hays was nicknamed Molly Pitcher for bringing water to the troops at the battle of Monmouth in New Jersey on a blistering hot day.

Women also served as couriers, scouts, and spies. Sybil Ludington, a 16-year-old girl, learned of a planned British attack on Danbury, Connecticut. On her horse Star, she made a 40-mile night ride to spread the alarm.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

prospects
expectations for the future



STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE CONTINENTAL AND BRITISH ARMIES

Continental Army

Strengths

- Strong military leadership
- Fighting on home territory
- Alliance with France

Weaknesses

- Small, untrained military
- Shortages of resources
- Weak central government

British Army

Strengths

- Well-trained military
- Ample resources
- Alliances with Loyalists

Weaknesses

- Fighting in unfamiliar territory
- Fighting far from home

QUICK FACTS

Many women participated in the revolution in less dramatic but still vital ways. Catherine Greene, the wife of General Nathanael Greene, turned their home into a hospital. Some women in Philadelphia raised money to supply the army with food and clothing.

Many women did what was considered “women’s work” such as laundry or nursing. At home, women knit wool stockings and made bandages for the troops. Some melted down their pewter pots and pitchers to make bullets. As in all wars, women kept their homes, farms, and shops running while the men were at war.

The role of African Americans African Americans, both free and enslaved, fought on both sides of the Revolutionary War. Before the war began, some British officials had tried to win over African Americans. Governor Dunmore of Virginia, for example, offered enslaved Africans their freedom if they joined the British army. As the war went on, many did. Some also enlisted in the Royal Navy. Northern Patriot militias also promised freedom in exchange for military service.

Black Americans fought at Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill. At first the Continental Army did not officially accept them. Soon, the need for soldiers overcame that prejudice. Volunteers were supposed to prove that they were freemen, but many recruiters did not ask.

New England regiments had the most African Americans because more free blacks lived there. Connecticut and Rhode Island had all-black regiments. James Middleton, the only black commissioned officer in the Continental Army, led a Massachusetts regiment.

African American soldiers generally received the same pay, clothing, and rations as whites. They served in both the army and the navy. Most African American soldiers, however, were given menial duties, kept at low ranks, and were not encouraged to re-enlist.

The role of Native Americans The Iroquois League had long been allies of the British. Now Britain expected their help. The Iroquois hoped that a British victory would slow American settlements on their lands.

But the French and Indian War had weakened the league. Only four of the Six Nations helped the British. Joseph Brant, a Mohawk leader, did become a British officer. He and his

FACES OF HISTORY

George WASHINGTON

1732–1799



Many years before he became the first president of the United States, George Washington earned a reputation

as an exceptional military leader. In 1752 he joined the Virginia militia and led troops in the French and Indian War. Years later, as an early supporter of American independence, Washington began to recruit and train a militia when tensions rose with the British.

Leading the Continental Army, Washington made some early tactical mistakes, such as allowing the British to occupy New York City. Nevertheless, his ability to inspire and manage his army helped the Americans achieve victory in the end.

Predict How do you think Washington’s military experience prepared him for the presidency?

sister Mary brought the Mohawks, Senecas, Onondagas, and Cayugas to help in campaigns in upstate New York. Oneidas and Tuscaroras, however, sided with the Americans.

On the frontiers, Loyalists and Native Americans sometimes fought together. In the mountains of Virginia and the Carolinas, the Cherokees attacked some settlements. Patriot militias fought back fiercely and tried to force the Cherokees to move west.

READING CHECK Summarizing What advantages did Britain have at the beginning of the war?

Revolutionary Battles in the North

The British reacted to the Declaration of Independence with a great show of military strength. Their losses and forced retreat from Boston in March 1776 had made them realize that they were engaged in a real war.

The British fight back After his unexpected defeat by Washington in Boston, General Howe returned to New York with a huge force. Howe was now the commander of British forces in America. More than 300 ships and approximately 30,000 British soldiers arrived in New York in August 1776. For the next few years, Revolutionary battles were centered in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

Before the campaign began, General Howe and his brother Admiral Richard Howe tried to make peace. They wrote to Washington and offered a pardon to the rebels if they would give in and promise loyalty. Washington refused.

Howe's forces soon defeated the Americans and captured Long Island, taking many Americans prisoner. But Howe did not follow up on the victory. Washington took advantage of a heavy fog to take his remaining men across the river to Manhattan Island. As fall went on, the British moved steadily northward on the island as Washington's men retreated to the rocky heights at the northern end.

In the Battle of Harlem Heights, American forces won a few small encounters that helped their morale. Then Howe's army forced them to retreat across New Jersey. There they crossed the Delaware River into Pennsylvania.

In traditional European warfare, armies did not fight in the winter. Howe's men settled down in winter quarters at various towns in New Jersey, including Trenton and Princeton. The Hessians, the German mercenaries, were guarding Trenton, on the Delaware River.

But Washington did not follow European fighting methods. Instead, on Christmas night of 1776, he and his men crossed the icy Delaware River to Trenton. After celebrating Christmas, the Hessians were asleep. The Americans took them by surprise, occupied the town, and captured weapons and ammunition. Moving on, Washington then drove the British out of Princeton. In January 1777 the Continental Army went into winter quarters.

Campaigns in New York When fighting began again in the spring of 1777, Britain's plan was to cut New England off from the rest of the colonies. To do this, troops commanded by General John Burgoyne planned to meet General Howe's troops at Albany. But Howe changed his plans and decided to attack Philadelphia first. The city was the American capital, so Howe hoped its capture would hurt Patriot morale. He also hoped its sizeable Loyalist population would help him.

Howe took an army of 15,000 by sea from New York to Chesapeake Bay. In September he met Washington and his army of 11,000 in southeastern Pennsylvania. The British won the Battle of Brandywine Creek, but the Americans escaped without serious casualties.

From there Howe easily captured Philadelphia, where he and his troops settled comfortably for the winter. The Continental Congress fled the city. Washington and his exhausted troops settled into quarters at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, for the winter of 1777–1778.

READING CHECK

Making Inferences Why did Howe return to New York with so many ships and troops?

A British Setback at Saratoga

In the meantime, General Burgoyne was conducting a campaign in upstate New York. His strategy was to lead part of his force down the Hudson River valley to Albany. The rest would travel up the Saint Lawrence River into Lake Ontario and take the Mohawk valley. Burgoyne expected to meet Howe's army at Albany.

Things went well for the British at first. Burgoyne's army easily recaptured Fort Ticonderoga on July 5, 1777, a serious loss for the Americans. In response, Congress sent a new general, Horatio Gates, to lead the Continental Army in New York.

The other British force, however, met strong local resistance along the Mohawk River. When they attacked Fort Stanwix in early August, a band of Patriot farmers and their Oneida allies rallied to help the fort's defenders. But they were ambushed by British troops and their Iroquois allies in one of the bloodiest battles of the war. Then an American force led by Benedict Arnold arrived to hold the fort.

Burgoyne was now very short of supplies. Because of Howe's delays, no reinforcements arrived from the south. In early October, with only 5,000 men left, Burgoyne found himself at Saratoga, New York, surrounded by an American force of 17,000 under General Gates. He twice tried to break through Continental lines to reach Albany but could not. On October 17, 1777, Burgoyne surrendered to Gates.

The **Battle of Saratoga** is considered the turning point of the Revolutionary War. News of the American victory encouraged the colonists and surprised the British and Europeans. Most importantly, the victory at Saratoga convinced France to support the American cause.

READING CHECK

Summarizing How did General Gates achieve victory at Saratoga?

THE IMPACT TODAY

Culture

At Saratoga National Historic Park in New York, people can visit the Saratoga battlefield. The Saratoga Monument stands in the nearby village of Victory.

BATTLES OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, 1775–1778



GEOGRAPHY SKILLS

INTERPRETING MAPS

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Interactive Map

Keyword: SD7 CH4

- 1. Location** How does the the pattern of battles and troop movements reflect Britain's war strategy?
- 2. Movement** Why was the Battle of Saratoga a turning point?
See **Skills Handbook**, p. H19

Washington's Leadership at Valley Forge

For Washington and his tired army, the winter of 1777–1778 at **Valley Forge** was a low point of the Revolution. The winter weather was bitterly cold, and some 12,000 men were housed in makeshift huts and tents. Food was scarce. Washington's soldiers shivered in worn, ragged uniforms. Many of the men became ill, and hundreds died.

The winter at Valley Forge was a tough test of Washington's leadership, but he met the challenge. His firm character and common sense helped hold his troops together. In spite of many defeats, Washington always managed to keep a national army in the field. This was in part because his men greatly admired him.

Washington enforced discipline strictly. At the same time, he was always insisting that the Congress treat the army better.

Money problems Paying for the war was an ongoing problem. Congress did not have the power to make people pay taxes. Most currencies were based on supplies of "hard money"—gold and silver—which was scarce. Congress and the states printed paper money with little to back it up. As a result, paper money became almost worthless, and prices soared. This situation is known as **inflation**.

Because Continental money was worth very little, some farmers and merchants instead chose to trade with the British, who had gold and silver coin. This caused problems. For example, the food shortages at Valley Forge



Winter at Valley Forge

George Washington (right), saw that his troops remained ready for battle, despite the harsh winter at Valley Forge. In this painting, he watches as his troops perform a series of drilling exercises. Even more important, Washington was able to inspire his men with his leadership.

occurred partly because some Philadelphia merchants would not sell their goods to the Continental Army.

Encouraging words Earlier in 1776 Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* had inspired many American colonists to support a declaration of independence from Great Britain. After the retreat across New Jersey

in 1776, Paine wrote another series of papers called *The American Crisis*. To rally his troops at Valley Forge, Washington read Thomas Paine's ringing words aloud:

HISTORY'S VOICES

“The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman.”

—Thomas Paine, *The American Crisis*
(December 19, 1776)

Help arrives from Europe The American struggle for liberty found support in Europe. Several European officers joined the American cause. One was Baron Friedrich von Steuben of the Prussian army. In the cold, snowy winter at Valley Forge, he drilled Washington's troops. By spring, Washington's men were a well-trained fighting force.

Washington also acquired an invaluable aide, a 20-year-old French noble, the **Marquis de Lafayette**. Lafayette was like a son to Washington. In the next section you will learn how Lafayette's help became crucial in the outcome of the Revolutionary War.

READING CHECK

Summarizing How did the winter at Valley Forge affect the army?

SECTION 3 ASSESSMENT

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Online Quiz

Keyword: SD7 HP4

Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People

- a. Describe** What kind of work did Patriot women undertake in the Revolution?

b. Summarize What was the role of African Americans in the Revolution?

c. Evaluate How did the fact that Americans were fighting for independence affect their fighting capability?
- a. Describe** What was Burgoyne's strategy for cutting New England off from the other colonies?

b. Make Generalizations In general, what was the year 1776 like for the Continental Army?
- a. Identify** What roles did William Howe, John Burgoyne, and Horatio Gates play in the **Battle of Saratoga**?

b. Analyze What factors contributed to the British defeat at Saratoga?

c. Predict How do you think the victory at Saratoga will affect the course of the war?
- a. Identify** What factors made the winter at Valley Forge so difficult for the Americans?

b. Draw Conclusions What impact did Washington's character have on events at Valley Forge?

Critical Thinking

- Summarizing** Copy the chart below, fill it with details from the section, and then analyze the role of women, African Americans, and Native Americans in the Revolutionary War.

African Americans	Women	Native Americans

FOCUS ON WRITING

- Descriptive** As either a British soldier at Saratoga or an American soldier at Valley Forge, write a letter home describing one day on the battlefield to your family. Use details from the section in your description.



American Literature

THOMAS PAINE (1737–1809)

About the Reading During the Revolutionary War Thomas Paine wrote a series of articles called *The American Crisis*. The following is from an article written on September 12, 1777, shortly after the Battle of Brandywine Creek.

AS YOU READ Consider how the various modes of public communication during wartime have the ability to influence public support.

Excerpt from

The American Crisis

by Thomas Paine

Gentlemen of the city and country, it is in your power, by a spirited improvement of the present circumstance, to turn it to a real advantage. Howe is now weaker than before, and every shot will contribute to reduce him. You are more immediately interested than any other part of the continent: your all is at stake; it is not so with the general cause; you are devoted by the enemy to plunder and destruction: it is the encouragement which Howe, the chief of plunderers, has promised his army . . .

Our army must undoubtedly feel fatigue, and want a reinforcement of rest though not of valor. Our own interest and happiness call upon us to give them every support in our power, and make the burden of the day, on which the safety of this city depends, as light as possible. Remember, gentlemen, that we have forces both to the northward and southward of Philadelphia, and if the enemy be but stopped till those can arrive, this city will be saved, and the enemy finally routed. You have too much at stake to hesitate. You have been invaded, have likewise driven off the invaders. Now our time and turn is come, and perhaps the finishing stroke is reserved for us. When we look back on the dangers we have been saved from, and reflect on the success we have been blessed with, it would be sinful either to be idle or to despair.



General Howe planned to stamp out both the Continental Army and the Revolution at the Battle of Brandywine Creek.

I close this paper with a short address to General Howe. You, sir, are only lingering out the period that shall bring with it your defeat. You have yet scarce began the war, and the further you enter, the faster will your troubles thicken. What you now enjoy is only a respite from ruin; an invitation to destruction; something that will lead on to our deliverance at your expense. We know the cause which we are engaged in, and though a passionate fondness may make us grieve at every injury which threatens it, yet, when the moment of concern is over, the determination to duty returns. We are not moved by the gloomy smile of a worthless king, but by the ardent glow of generous patriotism.

Skills Focus

READING LIKE A HISTORIAN

- 1. Identifying the Main Idea** Who was Paine's audience? What were his purposes in writing?
- 2. Literature as Historical Evidence** What does Paine claim motivates the British army? How might you assess the validity of these claims?

See **Skills Handbook**, pp. H5, H32