

Battle of Yorktown - Lexile 800

Name _____

By 1780, the Revolutionary War was happening in both the North and South, and the French were fully helping the Americans fight the British. One big goal was to take back New York City, which the British had captured. At first, George Washington wanted to attack the British in New York City, but French General Comte de Rochambeau suggested a different plan. He thought it would be better to attack the British farther south, in Chesapeake Bay. This way, the French navy could help surround the British army led by General Charles Cornwallis, who was in Yorktown, Virginia.

French and American soldiers, including 5,500 new French troops, secretly met near New York City. The British thought they were planning to attack New York City, so they didn't send help to Cornwallis in Virginia. In September 1781, the French and American forces began marching south, and they kept their destination a secret. They marched over 200 miles in about two weeks. By the end of September, they had trapped Cornwallis in Yorktown, and French naval forces had surrounded him from the sea. The British couldn't get any help.

On October 6, Washington's troops started digging a long trench to bring heavy guns closer to the British defenses. For the next few days, French and American cannons fired at the British day and night. The British soldiers began to give up, and by October 12, the French had destroyed British ships in the harbor. On October 14, American and French forces took two key British forts, with Alexander Hamilton leading the Americans.

Cornwallis tried to escape by crossing the York River, but bad weather ruined his plan. On October 17, he had no choice but to surrender. The next day, the official surrender took place, and the Americans captured more than 7,000 British soldiers. This victory at Yorktown nearly ended the Revolutionary War.

1. Why did George Washington keep the final destination of the army a secret from even the soldiers during the march to Yorktown?

- A) To prevent the soldiers from worrying about the difficult journey
- B) To confuse the British and keep them from knowing where the attack would occur
- C) To keep the soldiers from getting distracted by the idea of the final destination
- D) To protect the French allies and their secret plans

2. What impact did the surprise meeting of the French and American forces near New York City have on British planning?

- A) It allowed the British to prepare reinforcements for the south
- B) It tricked the British into thinking the Americans were planning to attack New York City, preventing aid from reaching Cornwallis
- C) It made the British think they had a chance to capture New York City before the Americans moved south
- D) It convinced the British to surrender early because they felt they were surrounded

3. What strategic advantage did the French naval forces provide during the siege of Yorktown?

- A) They helped transport American troops secretly into Yorktown
- B) They trapped Cornwallis' army from the sea, preventing any escape or reinforcements
- C) They helped destroy British supplies before the battle even started
- D) They distracted the British by attacking other cities

4. How did the British drummers playing "The World Turn'd Upside Down" during Cornwallis' surrender reflect the British defeat?

- A) It symbolized how the British forces were no longer fighting, and the war was over
- B) It showed how the British were celebrating their victory over the Americans
- C) It represented the chaos and confusion the British felt after their defeat
- D) It marked the beginning of a new era in Britain's military history

5. Why do you think Cornwallis' plan to escape across the York River failed despite his efforts?

- A) His soldiers were too tired to execute the plan properly
- B) The bad weather destroyed his transport boats and delayed the escape
- C) The French forces had already blocked the river and trapped his fleet
- D) Cornwallis didn't have enough soldiers to carry out the escape plan

Answers

1. B
2. B
3. B
4. C
5. B

Answers:

- 1.) D
- 2.) D
- 3.) C
- 4.) B
- 5.) B