

Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

Winter at Valley Forge

Winter at Valley Forge During the 1700s and 1800s, major fighting during wars generally ceased for the winters and armies took up winter encampments. As winter descended upon Pennsylvania in 1777, General George Washington chose Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, some eighteen miles west of Philadelphia as site of the winter encampment of the Continental Army. The area was far enough away from the British in Philadelphia to discourage surprise attacks and its location between high hills and the Schuylkill River made it easily defensible.

The Continental Army, however, was in bad shape. Of the 12,000 soldiers, many lacked the supplies or clothing to survive the winter and many others were starving at this point. At Valley Forge, defense lines were built along with over 1,000 huts to provide some relief from the brutal elements. Moisture from rain and melting snow made it impossible for many soldiers to stay dry and allowed for the spread of disease. The only reliable food that the soldiers received was a mixture of flour and water known as "firecake." Occasionally, soldiers received meat and bread. Furthermore, many soldiers had inadequate supplies of clothing and were forced to endure the winter in tatters and without blankets. Many lacked shoes. Wounded soldiers often died from exposure to the elements. Unsanitary and crowded conditions led to the proliferation of diseases and sicknesses such as typhoid and pneumonia. Over 2,000 people died from such sicknesses.

On February 23, 1778, former German General Baron von Steuben arrived at Valley Forge to train the Patriots how to march in formation, fire guns quickly, use bayonets and become soldiers. Though von Steuben spoke little English, he developed a training manual in French that would be translated on the grounds into English. Unlike many American generals, von Steuben worked directly with the soldiers, endearing him to the thousands suffering at Valley Forge. Von Steuben's presence did much to improve the morale of the army during the bitter winter and also helped them develop into a more tactical, effective military machine, capable of fighting the British.

On June 19, 1778, the Continental Army left Valley Forge in pursuit of the British who were moving north to New York.

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Battle of Yorktown

Battle of Yorktown

After fighting against Washington's Continental Army in the north, the British turned to the south, looking for support from loyalists in southern colonies, and easy victories as a result. They also hoped to divide the American colonies.

This did not go as planned for the British. They found fewer loyalists than expected, and they fought many costly battles against patriots in the south. The southern campaign seemed a lost cause, and British Lieutenant General Cornwallis retreated to Yorktown on the coast of Virginia. The Continental Army, led by Marquis de Lafayette, followed in close pursuit.

General Washington and French commander Comte de Rochambeau marched their combined troops south from New York towards Yorktown. They arrived at Yorktown in late September. Comte de Grasse, a French naval commander, sailed his warships north from the West Indies, blocking the port and cutting off Cornwallis' escape.

Together, Washington, Rochambeau, Lafayette, and Grasse surrounded Cornwallis on land and sea. After suffering more than two weeks of American attack, Lieutenant General Cornwallis asked to surrender. The official surrender ceremony took place on October 19, 1781.

The Battle of Yorktown was the last major battle of the American Revolutionary war. Two years later, the Treaty of Paris was signed, officially ending the war.

By: Carole Marsh - Gallopade

1. Why did the British focus their fighting in the southern colonies?

2. Why did Lieutenant General Cornwallis retreat to Yorktown?

3. How did Yorktown's location cause problems for Cornwallis?

4. Explain the significance of the French military in the outcome of the Battle of Yorktown.

Treaty of Paris 1783



1. Use the map to describe the land each country received as part of the terms of the Treaty of Paris:
 - a. United States - _____
 - b. Britain - _____
 - c. Spain - _____
 - d. France - _____

2. What geographic feature separates the U.S. and Spanish land?

3. What geographic features separate the U.S. and British lands?

4. How is this map similar and different to a map of the United States today?

