

SECTION  
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# Struggling Toward Saratoga

## MAIN IDEA

After a series of setbacks, American forces won at Saratoga and survived.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Determination, resilience, and unity have become part of the American character.

## Terms & Names

- Valley Forge
- Trenton
- Saratoga
- inflation
- profiteering

## One American's Story

After the colonists had declared independence, few people thought the rebellion would last. A divided colonial population of about two and a half million people faced a nation of 10 million that was backed by a worldwide empire.

Albigense Waldo worked as a surgeon at **Valley Forge** outside Philadelphia, which served as the site of the Continental Army's camp during the winter of 1777–1778. While British troops occupied Philadelphia and found quarters inside warm homes, the underclothed and underfed Patriots huddled in makeshift huts in the freezing, snow-covered Pennsylvania woods. Waldo, who wrote of his stay at Valley Forge, reported on what was a common sight at the camp.

### A PERSONAL VOICE ALBIGENSE WALDO

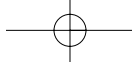
“Here comes a bowl of beef soup full of dead leaves and dirt. There comes a soldier. His bare feet are seen through his worn-out shoes—his legs nearly naked from the tattered remains of an only pair of stockings—his Breeches [trousers] are not sufficient to cover his nakedness—his Shirt hanging in Strings—his hair disheveled—his face meager.”

—quoted in *Valley Forge, the Making of an Army*

The ordeal at Valley Forge marked a low point for General Washington's troops, but even as it occurred, the Americans' hopes of winning began to improve.

**General Washington's troops march to Valley Forge.**





## The War Moves to the Middle States

The British had previously retreated from Boston in March 1776, moving the theater of war to the Middle states. As part of a grand plan to stop the rebellion by isolating New England, the British decided to seize New York City.

**DEFEAT IN NEW YORK** Two brothers, General William Howe and Admiral Richard Howe, joined forces on Staten Island and sailed into New York harbor in the summer of 1776 with the largest British expeditionary force ever assembled—32,000 soldiers, including thousands of German mercenaries, or soldiers who fight solely for money. The Americans called these troops Hessians, because many of them came from the German region of Hesse.

Washington rallied 23,000 men to New York's defense, but he was vastly outnumbered. Most of his troops were untrained recruits with poor equipment. The battle for New York ended in late August with an American retreat following heavy losses. Michael Graham, a Continental Army volunteer, described the chaotic withdrawal on August 27, 1776.

### A PERSONAL VOICE MICHAEL GRAHAM

**“It is impossible for me to describe the confusion and horror of the scene that ensued: the artillery flying . . . over the horses' backs, our men running in almost every direction, . . . [a]nd the enemy huzzahing when they took prisoners. . . . At the time, I could not account for how it was that our troops were so completely surrounded but have since understood there was another road across the ridge several miles above Flatbush that was left unoccupied by our troops. Here the British passed and got betwixt them and Brooklyn unobserved. This accounts for the disaster of that day.”**

—quoted in *The Revolution Remembered: Eyewitness Accounts of the War for Independence*

By late fall, the British had pushed Washington's army across the Delaware River into Pennsylvania. The vast majority of Washington's men had either deserted or had been killed or captured. Fewer than 8,000 men remained under Washington's command, and the terms of their enlistment were due to end on December 31. Washington desperately needed some kind of victory for his men to keep them from going home.

**THE BATTLE OF TRENTON** Washington resolved to risk everything on one bold stroke set for Christmas night, 1776. In the face of a fierce storm, he led 2,400 men in small rowboats across the ice-choked Delaware River.

By 8 o'clock the next morning, the men had marched nine miles through sleet and snow to the objective—**Trenton**, New Jersey, held by a garrison of Hessians. Lulled into confidence by the storm, most of the Hessians had drunk too much rum the night before and were still sleeping it off. In a surprise attack, the Americans killed 30 of the enemy and took 918 captives and six Hessian cannons.

The Americans were rallied by another astonishing victory eight days later against 1,200 British stationed at Princeton. Encouraged by these victories, Washington marched his army into winter camp near Morristown, in northern New Jersey. **A**

**THE FIGHT FOR PHILADELPHIA** As the muddy fields dried out in the spring of 1777, General Howe began his campaign to seize the American capital at Philadelphia. His troops sailed from New York to the head of Chesapeake Bay, and landed near the capital in late August. The Continental Congress fled the city while Washington's troops unsuccessfully tried to block the redcoats at nearby Brandywine Creek. The British captured Philadelphia, and the pleasure-loving General Howe settled in to enjoy the hospitality of the city's grateful Loyalists.

### MAIN IDEA

#### Analyzing Effects

**A** Why were the victories at Trenton and Princeton so important to the Continental Army?



**VICTORY AT SARATOGA** Meanwhile, one of Howe’s fellow British generals, General John “Gentleman Johnny” Burgoyne, convinced the London high command to allow him to pursue a complex scheme. Burgoyne’s plan was to lead an army down a route of lakes from Canada to Albany, where he would meet Howe’s troops as they arrived from New York City. According to Burgoyne’s plan, the two generals would then join forces to isolate New England from the rest of the colonies.

Burgoyne set out with 4,000 redcoats, 3,000 mercenaries, and 1,000 Mohawk under his command. His army had to haul 30 wagons containing 138 pieces of artillery along with extra personal items, such as fine clothes and champagne. South of Lake Champlain, swamps and gullies, as well as thick underbrush, bogged down Burgoyne’s army. Food supplies ran low.

The Continental Congress had appointed General Horatio Gates to command the Northern Department of the Continental Army. Gates, a popular commander, gathered militiamen and soldiers from all over New York and New England. Burgoyne lost several hundred men every time his forces clashed with the Americans, such as when Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys attacked Burgoyne at Bennington, in what is now Vermont. Even worse, Burgoyne didn’t realize that Howe was preoccupied with conquering and occupying Philadelphia and wasn’t coming to meet him.

Massed American troops finally surrounded Burgoyne at **Saratoga**, where he surrendered his battered army to General Gates on October 17, 1777. The surrender at Saratoga dramatically changed Britain’s war strategy. From that time on, the British generally kept their troops along the coast, close to the big guns and supply bases of the British fleet. **B**

**MAIN IDEA**

**Summarizing**

**B** What factors contributed to General Burgoyne’s defeat at Saratoga?

**Revolutionary War, 1775–1778**



→ American campaign  
→ British campaign  
★ American victory  
★ British victory

0 100 200 miles  
 0 100 200 kilometers

**GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER**

- 1. Location** From which city did General Burgoyne march his troops to Saratoga?
- 2. Place** What characteristics did many of the battle sites have in common? Why do you think this was so?

**Military Strengths and Weaknesses**

**UNITED STATES**

**Strengths**

- familiarity of home ground
- leadership of George Washington and other officers
- inspiring cause of the independence

**Weaknesses**

- most soldiers untrained and undisciplined
- shortage of food and ammunition
- inferior navy
- no central government to enforce wartime policies



**GREAT BRITAIN**

**Strengths**

- strong, well-trained army and navy
- strong central government with available funds
- support of colonial Loyalists and Native Americans

**Weaknesses**

- large distance separating Britain from battlefields
- troops unfamiliar with terrain
- weak military leaders
- sympathy of certain British politicians for the American cause







**A TURNING POINT** Still bitter from their defeat by the British in the French and Indian War, the French had secretly sent weapons to the Patriots since early 1776. The Saratoga victory bolstered French trust in the American army, and France now agreed to support the Revolution. The French recognized American independence and signed an alliance, or treaty of cooperation, with the Americans in February 1778. According to the terms, France agreed not to make peace with Britain unless Britain also recognized American independence. **C**

**WINTER AT VALLEY FORGE** It would take months for French aid to arrive. In the meantime, the British controlled New York and parts of New England. While British troops wintered comfortably in Philadelphia, Washington and his meager Continental Army struggled to stay alive amidst bitter cold and primitive conditions at winter camp in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Soldiers suffered from exposure and frostbite, and surgeons like Albigense Waldo worked constantly but often unsuccessfully to save arms and limbs from amputation. Washington's letters to the Congress and his friends were filled with reports of the suffering and endurance of his men.

#### MAIN IDEA

#### Summarizing

**C** What did France agree to do in its treaty of cooperation with the Americans?

### KEY PLAYER



**GEORGE WASHINGTON**  
1732–1799

During the Revolutionary War, Commander in Chief George Washington became a national hero. An imposing man, Washington stood six feet two inches tall. He was broad-shouldered, calm, and dignified, and he was an expert horseman. But it was Washington's character that won hearts and, ultimately, the war.

Washington roused dispirited men into a fighting force. At Princeton, he galloped on his white horse into the line of fire, shouting and encouraging his men. At Valley Forge, he bore the same cold and privation as every suffering soldier. Time and again, Washington's tactics saved his smaller, weaker force to fight another day. By the end of the war, the entire nation idolized General Washington, and adoring soldiers crowded near him just to touch his boots when he rode by.

### A PERSONAL VOICE GEORGE WASHINGTON

**“To see men without Clothes to cover their nakedness, without Blankets to lay on, without Shoes, by which their Marches might be traced by the blood of their feet, and almost as often without Provision . . . is a mark of patience and obedience which in my opinion can scarcely be paralleled.”**

—quoted in *Ordeal at Valley Forge*

Of the 10,000 soldiers who braved wind, snow, and hunger at Valley Forge that winter, more than 2,000 died. Yet those who survived remained at their posts.

## Colonial Life During the Revolution

The Revolutionary War touched the life of every American, not just the men on the battlefield.

**FINANCING THE WAR** When the Congress ran out of hard currency—silver and gold—it borrowed money by selling bonds to American investors and foreign governments, especially France. It also printed paper money called Continentals. As Congress printed more and more money, its value plunged, causing rising prices, or **inflation**.

The Congress also struggled to equip the beleaguered army. With few munitions factories and the British navy blockading the coast, the Americans had to smuggle arms from Europe. Some government officials engaged in **profiteering**, selling scarce goods for a profit. Corrupt merchants either hoarded goods or sold defective merchandise like spoiled meat, cheap shoes, and defective weapons. **D**

In 1781, the Congress appointed a rich Philadelphia merchant named Robert Morris as superintendent of finance. His associate was Haym Salomon, a Jewish political refugee from Poland. Morris and Salomon begged and borrowed on their personal credit to raise money to provide salaries for the Continental Army. They raised funds from many sources,

#### MAIN IDEA

#### Identifying Problems

**D** What economic problems did the Americans face in financing the war?



▲ Molly Pitcher was the heroine of the battle of Monmouth, New Jersey, in 1778.

including Philadelphia's Quakers and Jews. Due to the efforts of Morris and Salomon, on September 8, 1781, the troops were finally paid in specie, or gold coin.

**CIVILIANS AT WAR**

The demands of war also affected civilians. When men marched off to fight, many wives had to manage farms, shops, and businesses as well as households and families. Some women, such as Benjamin Franklin's daughter, Sarah Franklin Bache of Philadelphia, organized volunteers to mend clothing for the soldiers. Many women

made ammunition from their household silver. And hundreds of women followed their husbands to the battlefield, where they washed, mended, and cooked for the troops.

Some women risked their lives in combat. At Fort Mifflin, New York, Margaret Corbin replaced a gunner who was shot and then was shot herself. Mary Ludwig Hays McCauly took her husband's place at a cannon when he was wounded at the Battle of Monmouth. Known for carrying pitchers of water to the soldiers, McCauly won the nickname "Molly Pitcher." Afterward, General Washington made her a noncommissioned officer for her brave deeds. **E**

Thousands of African-American slaves escaped to freedom, some to the cities, where they passed as free people, others to the frontier, where they sometimes joined Native American tribes. About 5,000 African Americans served in the Continental Army, where their courage, loyalty, and talent impressed white Americans. Native Americans remained on the fringes of the Revolution. Some fought for the British but most remained apart from the conflict.

**MAIN IDEA**

**Summarizing**

**E** In what ways did women contribute to the Revolutionary War?



**ASSESSMENT**

**1. TERMS & NAMES** For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Valley Forge
  - Saratoga
  - inflation
  - profiteering
- Trenton

**MAIN IDEA**

**2. TAKING NOTES**

In a chart like the one below, list each early battle of the American Revolution, its outcome, and why it was important.

Battle	Outcome	Importance

**CRITICAL THINKING**

**3. HYPOTHESIZING**

Imagine that Burgoyne and the British had captured Saratoga in 1777. How might the course of the war have changed? **Think About:**

- the military strength of the British
- the fighting skills of the Americans
- French support of the colonists

**4. EVALUATING**

If you were a woman civilian during the beginning of the American Revolution, what problem caused by the war do you think would affect you the most? **Think About:**

- inflation and the scarcity of goods
- the separation of families
- the demands of the war effort