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The American Revolution, 1775–1783

The Seven Years' War was fought from 1756 to 1763. During this war, Britain captured French and Spanish colonial possessions around the world, mainly because of its superior naval strength. Chief among these possessions were Canada and Florida in North America and India in Asia.

England's prime minister during these years, William Pitt, planned the naval strategies that made it possible for England to win half the world by the war's end. The prime ministers after Pitt, however, allowed the Royal Navy to decline somewhat in the years after the war. On the other hand, France began to rebuild its navy immediately.

PRELUDE TO REVOLUTION

While England and France were busy fighting each other in the Seven Years' War, the American colonies grew and prospered. When the war was over, British officials looked to the colonies as a way to raise money to help pay off the debts built up during the long war. They felt the colonies had benefited unfairly. They believed that, unlike Englishmen at home, the colonists had not borne their share of the taxes and restrictions. England thus passed the Revenue Act and began enforcing taxes on sugar imports to the colonies in 1763. Then, by the Stamp Act of 1765 and other similar acts, it tried to reassert Parliament's power in the colonies. The colonists thought all this was unfair and soon became upset over the way Britain was treating them.

In 1767 Parliament passed the Townshend Act, which taxed paper, lead, and tea. All over the colonies people protested. Anti-British feelings were especially strong in Boston. There, on the evening of 5 March 1770, an angry crowd of protesters led by an African American named Crispus Attucks gathered and began to taunt British soldiers. One thing quickly escalated to another, and in a scuffle that followed, the soldiers shot and killed Attucks and several other people—considered the first casualties of the American Revolution. The incident was

played up in the press and soon became known as the "Boston Massacre." It made many colonists want to seek revenge.

Three years later, irate Bostonians disguised as warlike Indians boarded a merchant ship and dumped some British tea into the harbor rather than pay taxes due on it. Parliament soon responded to this "Boston Tea Party" with the Coercive Acts, which closed the port of Boston, abolished the right of the people of Massachusetts to select their own council, and restricted other civil liberties.

These were the events that led to the American Revolution, which began at Lexington and Concord in April 1775. "The die is cast," wrote King George III. "The colonies must either triumph or submit." There was no longer the possibility of a peaceful settlement.

PROBLEMS FOR BRITISH SEA POWER

The Royal Navy, in 1775 the mightiest in the world, soon found out that it would not be easy to fight the Americans. For one thing, the British had been getting much of their shipbuilding materials, such as tar, pitch, turpentine, and timber for masts and hulls, from the colonies. Now, of course, the colonies would not supply these materials to England. The British also soon found that many officers in the British Army and Navy believed the Americans were English citizens and refused to fight against them.

Another force that had earlier been on England's side was now turned against it: the *privateers*, the armed American merchant ships that had helped the British win the French and Indian War. Now these *privateersmen*, with the blessing of the Continental Congress, set out to capture British ships and goods.

The 1,800-mile-long American coast presented a big problem for the British. How could they defend their merchant ships from privateers in English waters, patrol the American coastline to keep ships from supplying the colonies with arms and other goods, and at the same

time supply British land troops with the weapons and other things they needed?

THE BIRTH OF THE AMERICAN NAVY

In July 1775 the Continental Congress petitioned King George III to restore liberty to the colonies in a final attempt to avoid war with England. Despite the difficulties facing the British, the king refused to accept the petition, and the colonists knew that they must prepare for war.

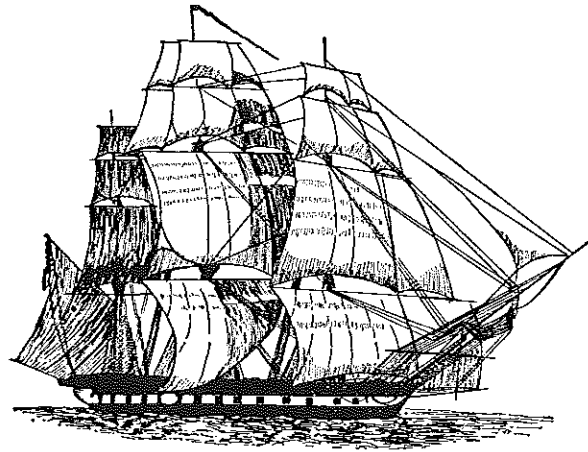
George Washington, who had been a British colonial officer in the French and Indian War, had taken command of the Continental Army surrounding Boston on 3 July 1775. Washington knew he could not wage war without a navy. "Whatever efforts are made by land armies, the navy must have the casting vote in the present conflict," he said.

Just the month before Washington had taken command, a group of Maine backwoodsmen under Jeremiah O'Brien won the first real sea fight of the Revolution. The Patriots captured a small British merchant sloop, and then they used her to capture the British armed cutter *Margaretta* and all of the supplies the ship was taking to British troops in New England.

This action was similar to most of the naval warfare done by the colonies throughout the war. Every colony except New Hampshire commissioned ships, and Virginia and South Carolina had fairly large squadrons. Nearly all of these ships were small. They operated all along the Atlantic seaboard, in river mouths, bays, and coves. They carried on coastal commerce and attacked British supply boats and parties whenever the opportunities and odds were favorable. But most important, they kept open the coastal lines of communication on which so much of the life in the colonies depended.

Partly because of this "coastal cavalry" force, the Continental Congress was reluctant to establish a navy. Many representatives thought that no warships built and manned by colonists would be able to stand up to the powerful ships of the Royal Navy. Still, the colonies needed supplies to wage war, and capturing them from British ships was a good way to get them. When Congress learned that two unescorted transport ships loaded with supplies for the British army in Quebec had sailed from England, it decided that the time had come to launch the Continental Navy.

On 13 October 1775 the Continental Congress took the step that the U.S. Navy regards as its official birth. It approved a plan for buying, fitting out, and arming two vessels, the *Andrew Doria* and the *Cabot*, to intercept the British supply ships. Two larger ships, the *Alfred* and the *Columbus*, soon were added. These ships were not only to attack British transports but also to protect and defend the colonies.



Sketch of a U.S. frigate of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The Continental Congress quickly enlarged its Navy even more. New men-of-war were built, and merchant vessels were converted into fighting ships. Privateers also helped. They captured some 2,200 British vessels by war's end. After the war, many privateer captains became famous in the U.S. Navy.

George Washington himself commissioned seven ships to capture some of the supplies that were streaming in to the British troops in Boston. In November 1775 his "navy" took muskets, shot, and a huge mortar, which Washington's poorly armed forces needed desperately, from the British ships.

On 10 November 1775 the Continental Congress established a Marine Corps of two battalions. These men helped man the new Navy. The Marine Corps still celebrates this date as its birthday.

In the early days of the Revolution, men were eager to serve in the Continental Navy. As the war continued, however, recruiting them became more difficult, due to a combination of stricter discipline, low pay, and the rewards that could be obtained by privateering. Sometimes the Continental authorities even resorted to the practice of impressment to crew the ships; men were forced to serve by taking them on board against their will. Finding men to serve in the Continental Navy was a problem throughout the war, and ships were often unable to go to sea because they lacked crews.

FIRST NAVAL OPERATIONS

The first Continental naval squadron was composed of six small schooners, brigs, and sloops donated by several states and assembled at Philadelphia. They were placed under the command of Esek Hopkins, a Rhode Islander. On 22 December 1775 the first American naval flag was raised on one of them, the *Alfred*, by the senior lieutenant

in the Continental Navy, John Paul Jones. More would be heard of him later.

In February 1776 Congress directed Hopkins to take his squadron to the Virginia Capes to neutralize any loyalist craft he might find there. But in keeping with his independent New England spirit, once at sea, Hopkins decided to go after bigger game. He sailed straight for New Providence (later Nassau) in the Bahamas, where he was able to overcome two British forts and take more than eighty artillery pieces, powder, and naval stores.

On their way home, the squadron captured several British ships loaded with more British arms, which they took to Washington's troops as well. The expedition was not without casualties, however. Just after midnight on 5 April, the squadron happened upon the twenty-gun British corvette *Glasgow* off New England. After damaging many of the squadron's ships, the *Glasgow* escaped, even though she was outnumbered six to one.

This incident showed in many ways what kind of navy the Continental Congress had gathered. For the most part, the squadron captains were privateersmen who could not cooperate with each other, teach their men gunnery, or maintain squadron discipline. One of the captains, Tom Hazard of the sloop *Providence*, was dismissed for cowardice, and his ship was given to Lieutenant Jones.

A few weeks later, when Hopkins took the squadron south to Providence, Rhode Island, troubles began to multiply. Several of the ships began to break down, an epidemic of smallpox sent a hundred men ashore, and General Washington wanted another hundred men he had loaned to the squadron returned. There was no

money to pay those who were left. It was nearly impossible to recruit men for such duty, when the crews of the coastal privateersmen got better shares of the prizes they captured plus quick payoffs for their efforts.

Thus, the Nassau expedition turned out to be the last time American ships would put to sea as a squadron during the war. Later, various officers who had been in the squadron set out by themselves in their ships and took on many British ships in hard-fought individual actions.

One such officer was Lieutenant John Paul Jones. With his sloop the *Providence*, in a single month, August 1776, he captured sixteen enemy vessels and destroyed many others. Later, as captain of the makeshift frigate *Alfred*, Jones cruised off the New England coast and raided enemy shipping and fishing in that area. One of the ships he captured carried British winter uniforms, and soon 10,000 American soldiers were wearing them. John Paul Jones would become legendary among early American naval leaders.

THE BATTLE OF LAKE CHAMPLAIN

In the fall of 1775, the American Patriots under General Benedict Arnold attacked Quebec in Canada, but they could not capture the city. The Americans stayed and bombarded the city through the winter. In the spring, when the ice melted on the St. Lawrence River, British reinforcements arrived by ship, forcing the Patriots to retreat toward the colonies. The British, under Generals Sir Guy Carleton and John Burgoyne, pursued them.

When Arnold and his men reached Lake Champlain in June 1776, he assembled a ragtag flotilla of sixteen craft. In response the British constructed their own naval force, and by October, they were ready to proceed against the Americans.

Strength was not on Arnold's side, but he outfoxed the British. At Valcour Island on 11 October he hid his flotilla until the enemy fleet sailed past before a strong north wind. Then the American force attacked from upwind, forcing the British to turn and attack against the wind. Over the next two days the Americans inflicted much damage on the superior British fleet, though they lost most of their ships in the process. Afterward the Americans ran their few surviving craft ashore and burned them, then escaped into the woods. By this time winter was approaching, and Carleton had to return to winter quarters in Canada.

This action could not be considered a "victory" in the usual sense because Arnold lost all his ships. However, the Patriots were able to stop the southerly British advance and thus gain time to regroup and train their forces until the following spring.

Meanwhile, the Second Continental Congress had signed the Declaration of Independence on 4 July 1776,



Action on the gunnery deck of an American frigate during the Revolutionary War.

making the colonists' rebellion a revolution. The Patriots were more determined than ever to be free from British rule.

WASHINGTON SAVES THE CAPITAL

While General Arnold was fighting the British on Lake Champlain, farther east things were not going well. The British general Sir William Howe held the city of Boston. The Americans placed cannon on Dorchester Heights overlooking the city in March 1776, but the colonial militia did not have enough gunpowder to engage Howe's troops and enter the city. Also, the Continental naval forces there were not large enough to stop the British from evacuating by sea. Thus Howe's troops and 1,000 loyalists escaped in ships to Halifax, Nova Scotia, to await reinforcements.

After the reinforcements arrived, General Howe sailed south from Nova Scotia with the main British army to join British generals Sir Henry Clinton and Charles Cornwallis at New York on 5 July, the day after the Declaration of Independence was signed. Five hundred British ships anchored off Staten Island. The Americans did not have a single warship, and the few small craft they had could not keep the enemy out of New York. Altogether, the British landed more than 30,000 well-equipped and well-trained troops. Washington's opposing troops numbered only about 20,000, and many of them were untrained militiamen.

By late fall, General Howe's superior forces had driven the Patriots from Long Island and then from White Plains, New York. General Washington's army fled again and again before the advancing British. By December 1776 the American forces were reduced to only about 2,000 men because of casualties and desertion, and also because most of those whose enlistments had run out went home to take care of their families for the winter.

Washington and his remaining troops were cold, hungry, and tired. They badly needed a victory to regain the momentum and sustain the revolution. As his men crossed the Delaware River to escape the enemy yet again in late December, Washington devised a bold plan. He ordered his men to take all boats from the New Jersey side of the river to the Pennsylvania side. Then, on Christmas night, in a raging sleet storm, the nearly frozen American soldiers quietly rowed through the ice floes on the river back to the New Jersey shore. Their surprise attack on the enemy troops (Hessian soldiers who were German mercenaries) at Trenton was a huge success. One week later, Washington surprised the British again, this time at Princeton, and his men won another complete victory.

The British then returned to New York for the winter, while Washington and his troops wintered in Morristown, New Jersey. They had saved the colonial capital at

Philadelphia from the enemy, but more important, the tide was turning. The Patriots would be ready to fight again with the coming of spring.

THE CRUCIAL YEAR: 1777

British forces poured across the Atlantic into America during the winter, spring, and early summer of 1777. The British prepared to use the same three-pronged plan of attack that had failed the year before because of the delays caused by the naval operations on Lake Champlain. General Burgoyne would move south from Montreal with 8,000 men to the Hudson Valley. An army of pro-British Tories and the Indians would advance eastward from Lake Ontario. The main army, commanded by Howe, would march north from New York City. The three forces were to meet in Albany, New York, after destroying all Patriot forces in their paths, thus splitting the colonies in half.

Burgoyne moved south and recaptured Fort Ticonderoga in early July, but in late August Patriot militia beat the Tories and Indians near Fort Stanwix. The plan probably still would have worked if Howe had proceeded according to plan. But he decided to take Philadelphia en route to meeting Burgoyne at Albany.

On 25 August 1777 Howe landed 15,000 men on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay about 50 miles south of Philadelphia. Howe's use of water transport had kept Washington guessing about his intentions for two months. When he finally received word that Howe's armada of 260 ships had entered the Chesapeake, Washington quickly moved most of his army south of Philadelphia to Brandywine Creek. But the Americans were no match for the superior British forces, and after a two-day battle on 10 and 11 September, the British marched in triumph into Philadelphia as the Continental Congress fled. Howe then quartered his army comfortably in Philadelphia for the winter, while Washington's men faced terrible cold and hunger at Valley Forge, northwest of the city. However, as events were to turn out, although Howe had taken Philadelphia, by not following the British plan he contributed to the eventual defeat of the British in the colonies.

THE TURNING POINT: THE BATTLE OF SARATOGA

Burgoyne was now by himself in northern New York, and he was in trouble. His supply line was stretched through the wilderness, and his men were running short of food. Through the summer of 1777 militiamen from New York and New England constantly harassed his troops.

Almost in desperation, on 19 September Burgoyne marched his men European-style through an open field

to try to break through the American lines near Saratoga, New York. They made easy targets for American sharpshooters, who were firing from behind trees. When the British retreated, the Americans followed, only to be driven back by British bayonets. The two forces took turns advancing and retreating. On 7 October Burgoyne led his trapped Redcoats in a final attempt to break through American lines. Once more, Daniel Morgan's riflemen mowed them down. The British retreated when General Benedict Arnold led a charge. Burgoyne had lost 1,200 men and was surrounded by a total of 15,000 American militiamen and regulars under Major General Horatio Gates. Burgoyne finally surrendered on 17 October 1777.

Saratoga marked the turning point of the war in two ways. First, after Burgoyne's defeat, the British government was less willing to carry on the war. Lord North, England's prime minister, offered to repeal the British tax laws that had caused the war if the Patriots would stop fighting and remain under British rule. But by now the leaders of the Revolution were dedicated to winning freedom for a new nation.

Even more important, the American victory at Saratoga now brought the French into the war on the American side. A few months after declaring independence, the Continental Congress had sent Benjamin Franklin to France. He tried to convince the French that joining the American cause was the best way for them to take world leadership away from England. After Saratoga, the French finally decided that the Americans had a chance of winning the war, and they signed a treaty of friendship with the former colonies on 6 February 1778. In June France declared war on England and began actively helping the Patriots win their freedom. A year later Spain joined the war as France's ally, followed by the Netherlands in 1780.

The naval battle on Lake Champlain had set the stage for Saratoga. Saratoga helped bring France and, later, Spain and the Netherlands into the war on the American side. These allies made American victory and independence possible.

THE WAR AT SEA

American naval efforts in American waters during the war were mostly just a nuisance to Britain. By 1780 only a few of the forty converted merchantmen and thirteen frigates built for the Continental Navy remained in American hands. Though these vessels captured many British ships, they did not affect the outcome of the war. The small naval forces of the coastal states were also largely ineffective, as British ships were able to sail freely up and down the coast throughout most of the war.

American privateers were the biggest problem for the British in the offshore waters of the Atlantic. They

hurt British trade in the West Indies, delayed troop transports bringing reinforcements, and captured arms and supplies that the colonial forces badly needed. However, privateering also took away men, ships, and weapons that the Continental Navy could have used. Despite the problems they caused, the privateers did not greatly harm the British war effort. Washington had been right when he said that naval power would decide the outcome of the war, but in the end, it was French, not American, naval power that made the difference.

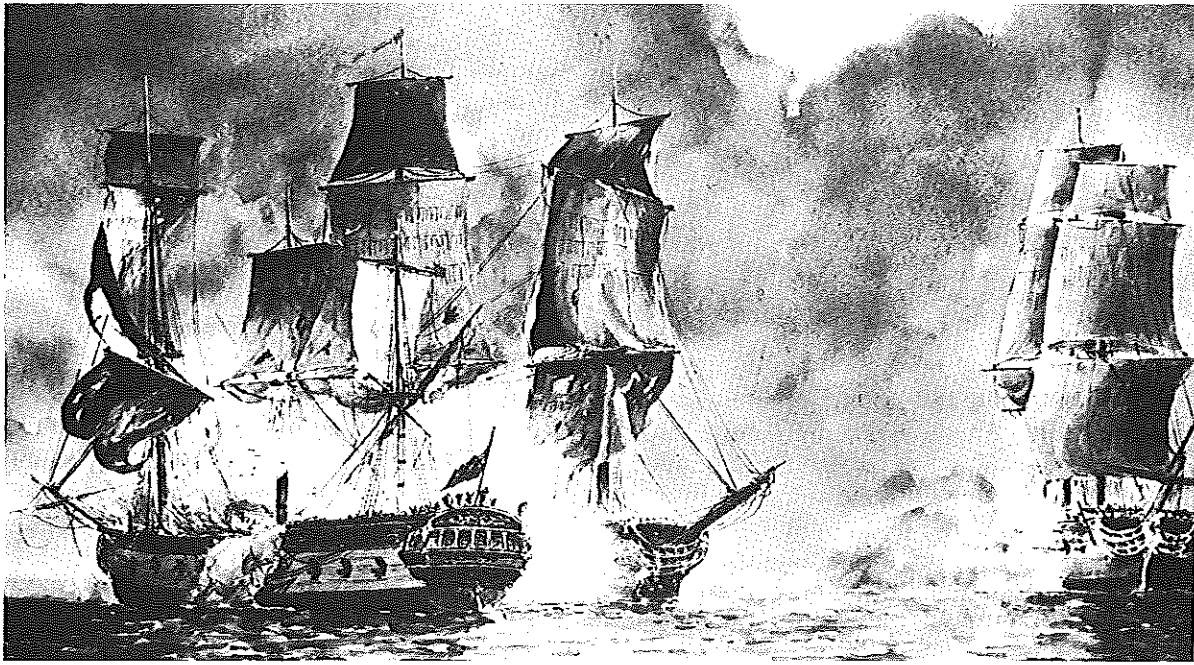
The American naval record in more distant waters, however, was impressive. The tiny Continental Navy and several American naval heroes won glory overseas during the war. The most famous of them was John Paul Jones, who took the war to European waters with inspiring results.

Jones received command of the new eighteen-gun *Ranger* in June 1777 and sailed to France. In the spring of 1778 Jones took the *Ranger* around Britain and Ireland, where he captured HMS *Drake* and several merchant ships.

One year later, Jones was given command of an old forty-two-gun converted French merchantman, which he renamed the *Bonhomme Richard* in honor of Benjamin Franklin, who had written *Poor Richard's Almanac*. In August 1779 Jones sailed in command of a small squadron that included the American frigate *Alliance*, which



John Paul Jones was one of the first naval heroes of the new American Republic. As the inscription on his tomb under the Naval Academy chapel reads, "He gave to our Navy its earliest traditions of heroism and victory."



The *Bonhomme Richard*, commanded by Captain John Paul Jones, engages HMS *Serapis*, a powerful British frigate, on 23 September 1779.

carried thirty-six guns, and three smaller French vessels. The captain of the *Alliance* was an unpredictable Frenchman named Pierre Landais.

On 23 September 1779 Jones's squadron was trailing a large English convoy off the northeast coast of England when its two escorts approached at dusk. The British warships were the fifty-gun HMS *Serapis*, under Captain Richard Pearson, and the twenty-gun *Countess of Scarborough*. Jones immediately ordered an attack, but the small French ships turned away. Later, though, the French frigate *Pallas* took the *Countess* after a sharp fight.

The *Richard* and the *Serapis* both began to fire broadsides as soon as they came into range. Early in the exchange, however, two of Jones's 18-pounder cannons exploded on the lower gun deck, killing all the crewmen there and blowing a huge hole in the deck above. Jones saw that his only hope was to lay the *Richard* alongside and take the *Serapis* by boarding. He ordered grapples heaved, and then he seized one of the forestays from the British vessel and tied it to the *Richard*'s mizzenmast himself. For the rest of the battle, the two ships swung together stern to bow and bow to stern, their guns firing directly into each other.

After two hours of fighting, the crew of the *Richard* had cleared the topside weather decks of the *Serapis*, but the *Richard* was full of holes. At this point the *Alliance* reappeared. A glad shout went up from the Americans, but it was quickly drowned out when the *Alliance* fired a broadside that ripped into the *Richard* instead of the *Serapis*. The *Alliance* fired two more broadsides into the *Richard*, and then withdrew. Landais later told a friend

that he had hoped to become the victor by sinking the *Richard* and capturing the *Serapis* himself. Jones later brought charges against Landais, and he was dismissed from the French Navy.

The *Richard* slowly began to sink. At this point Captain Pearson of the British ship asked if Jones was ready to strike. Jones replied with the immortal words, "I have not yet begun to fight!" At about 2130 hours an American seaman dropped a grenade through an open hatch on the *Serapis*. The grenade hit powder cartridges in the British vessel, and the explosions killed many of her gunners.

Jones's crew now came topside to fight hand to hand. The fighting continued for an hour, until at 2230 Captain Pearson tore down his flag with his own hands. He had been shaken by the explosions and the ferocity of the hand-to-hand fighting and was afraid his tottering mainmast would collapse.

The battered *Richard* went down two days later, and Jones raised the American flag on board the *Serapis*. Then, avoiding the British ships that were trying to find him, he sailed his squadron and prizes to Holland.

THE CLOSING CAMPAIGNS

With France its enemy, Britain could no longer concentrate all its efforts in the colonies. The British were now determined to stand on the defensive in the north, mount an offensive in the south, and take the war to the West Indies.

Sir Henry Clinton, who was put in command of the British forces in the colonies, abandoned Philadelphia

and moved his army through New Jersey to reinforce New York City. Meanwhile the French vice admiral Comte d'Estaing was on his way to America with a French fleet of twelve ships. Had he arrived sooner, he could have caught General Howe, who was transporting Clinton's artillery and supplies on the Delaware River. But d'Estaing arrived too late, and Howe completed his transit of the Delaware on 28 June 1778. Howe delivered Clinton's supplies the next day, and then he stationed frigates in New York Harbor to warn of the approach of the French naval forces.

When d'Estaing arrived off New York on 11 July, General Washington offered to launch a land attack while d'Estaing attacked by sea. But the French ships could not get into the shallow harbor, so d'Estaing sailed away to the Caribbean, where he remained for over a year.

D'Estaing returned to the colonies in September 1779 to help the Americans try to recapture New York. On 9 October French ships and troops, together with American troops, launched an attack, but the British held them off. D'Estaing returned to France with his fleet.

In Morristown, Washington's troops were suffering through their most difficult winter. Confident that these troops were not a threat to New York City, Clinton mounted a major offensive in the south in February 1780. His large fleet set sail for Charleston, South Carolina, and surrounded the American forces there. The city had held off the British for three years, but Clinton's new force was overwhelming, and the city's defenses soon broke down. On 12 May the entire garrison of 5,000 men surrendered to the British. The last Continental naval squadron was captured in Charleston Harbor at about this time, so the Continental Navy was never again an effective fighting force.

In August 1780 Clinton received word that a French fleet bringing 5,500 soldiers had arrived in Newport, Rhode Island. He left General Lord Cornwallis, who had come with him, in command in the south and hurried back to New York. Cornwallis defeated General Gates's forces at Camden, South Carolina, and took the city in mid-August. Then Cornwallis moved into North Carolina, and Washington could do nothing to stop him.

In October General Nathaniel Greene's troops defeated a Tory force at King's Mountain, South Carolina, and in January 1781 General Morgan destroyed a British force under General Tarleton at Cowpens. Cornwallis followed Morgan and Greene through North Carolina. He won a battle at Guilford Courthouse, but he lost so many men that he had to retreat. Cornwallis retreated to Wilmington, North Carolina, and asked the Royal Navy to send help to him there. When help did not arrive, he disobeyed Clinton's orders and led his troops into Virginia, where he would soon be trapped.

THE BATTLE OF YORKTOWN

Cornwallis successfully raided some areas in Virginia, then he followed Clinton's orders to entrench his army at Yorktown, on the Chesapeake Bay, late in the summer. The Marquis de Lafayette, an influential young Frenchman who had been appointed a general in the Continental Army in 1777, immediately sent word of Cornwallis's move to General Washington. Lafayette and General "Mad Anthony" Wayne commanded about 5,000 ragged militia in the area, and these troops kept Cornwallis under observation.

In the meantime, French general Comte de Rochambeau, who had brought troops to Newport a year earlier to aid Washington, learned in May 1781 that reinforcements were not coming. In spite of this, he and Washington agreed to battle Clinton's superior troops in New York. Washington wrote to the French minister to ask him to urge Admiral de Grasse, in command of French naval forces in the West Indies, to come north from the Caribbean to join the New York operation.

On 14 August 1781 the letter on which everything hinged arrived at Washington's headquarters. De Grasse reported that he would arrive in the Chesapeake with more than twenty-five warships and 3,000 troops in September. Four days later, Washington ordered 4,500 Americans and General Rochambeau's French army of 5,500 to march from New York to Yorktown. He left enough men behind to protect West Point and to keep Clinton busy in New York. The French fleet sailed south from Newport. Washington hoped to bring all these land and sea forces together to battle the British at Yorktown.

On 5 September the American and French troops passed through Philadelphia, and General Washington learned that de Grasse was in Chesapeake Bay. On the evening of 14 September Washington and Rochambeau greeted Lafayette and Wayne at Williamsburg, Virginia, and then set up siege lines around Yorktown. The next morning the land forces learned that off the Virginia Capes, de Grasse had driven the British fleet back to New York on 5 September, and that the French fleet from Newport had arrived with artillery and supplies on 10 September. The stage was now set for the attack against Cornwallis.

Twenty thousand French and American troops attacked Yorktown on 9 October. For eight days the combined land forces fired artillery at the British while the French fleets bombarded the city. American forces also stormed two key defensive positions and kept the British from fleeing across the York River to Gloucester. The British fleet that had retreated to New York returned to the Chesapeake with Clinton and 6,000 British troops one week too late to help Cornwallis. He had surrendered his entire army of 7,600 men to General Washington on 19 October 1781.

The British loss at Yorktown marked the end of the fighting in the colonies. The war then shifted to the West

Indies, the Mediterranean, and India. England, tired of war, now faced the powerful combined forces of France, Spain, and the Netherlands in Europe.

In February 1782 Lord North resigned, and the new pacifist cabinet in Parliament decided not to launch any more offensive attacks in North America. England sent a representative to Paris to discuss peace with the Americans there. The American delegation, headed by Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, and John Adams, insisted on American independence. England still held New York, Charleston, and Savannah in the colonies, but the pressure in Europe was working to the Americans' advantage.

The treaty that the Americans and the British drew up gave the colonies their full independence. They would not be under British rule or protection in any way. The colonies received a territory that extended west to the Mississippi, north to the Great Lakes, and south to Florida. The U.S. Congress declared the war over on 11 April 1783, but it was not until 3 September that the American and British representatives signed the Peace of Paris.

The small Continental Navy was generally ineffective throughout the war in the face of what was then the most powerful navy on earth. But it was plain that sea power had played a major role in America gaining its independence. Much of the artillery and other supplies used by the Continental Army came from prizes captured at sea and were delivered by sea routes of supply. Though no one won the battle off the Virginia Capes in 1781, the French fleet prevented the British from helping Cornwallis, leading directly to his surrender. To many Americans, it had become obvious that to keep its freedom America needed a navy of its own. ■

CRITICAL THINKING

1. Describe the major advantages and disadvantages of each of the two combatants of the American Revolutionary War, 1775–83.
2. Elaborate on the statement that sea power played a major role in America gaining its independence during the American Revolutionary War.

Chronology

1775	Revolution begins
13 Oct. 1775	Congress establishes Navy
11–13 Oct. 1776	Battle of Lake Champlain
25 Dec. 1776	Washington crosses Delaware
17 Oct. 1777	Burgoyne surrenders at Saratoga
6 Feb. 1778	France allies with America
23 Sept. 1779	Jones defeats <i>Serapis</i>
12 May 1780	Charleston surrenders
9–19 Oct. 1781	Battle of Yorktown

Study Guide Questions

1. As a result of the Seven Years' War, whose world-wide colonial possessions did Britain obtain?
2. A. Why did the British Parliament begin to lay burdensome taxes on the American colonies?
B. What happened in 1773 as a result of the Townshend Act?
3. What did the British response to the Boston Tea Party lead to in April 1775?
4. What naval materials did the colonies supply to the British Navy?
5. When was the Marine Corps established?
6. What were the problems of recruiting a crew in the early Continental Navy?
7. How did the American invasion of Canada in 1775 turn out?
8. A. Who was the American commander at the first Battle of Lake Champlain in 1776?
B. What was the important outcome of the battle?
9. A. What was the overall British plan to defeat the Americans in 1777?
B. What happened?
C. Why was the Battle of Saratoga vital to the American cause?
D. What were the names of the opposing generals in this battle?
10. Who was the great American diplomat who brought about the French alliance early in 1778?
11. Who was the greatest American naval hero of the Revolutionary War?
12. A. Where did John Paul Jones have his famous battle with HMS *Serapis*?
B. What was the name of the ship commanded by Jones?
C. What was Jones's strategy in the fight?
13. What was Jones's famous reply when the British captain asked if he was ready to strike his colors?
14. A. What crucial naval battle made victory at the Battle of Yorktown possible?
B. Who were the American and French commanders at Yorktown?
15. A. After Yorktown, where did the British concentrate their war effort?
B. When did the war officially end?

Vocabulary

impressment	desertion
artillery	reinforcements
delegation	grenade
powder cartridge	topside
weather decks	broadside
forestay	mainmast
mizzenmast	militia
garrison	