

Teaching Guide

SEGMENT 3, WEBISODE 2

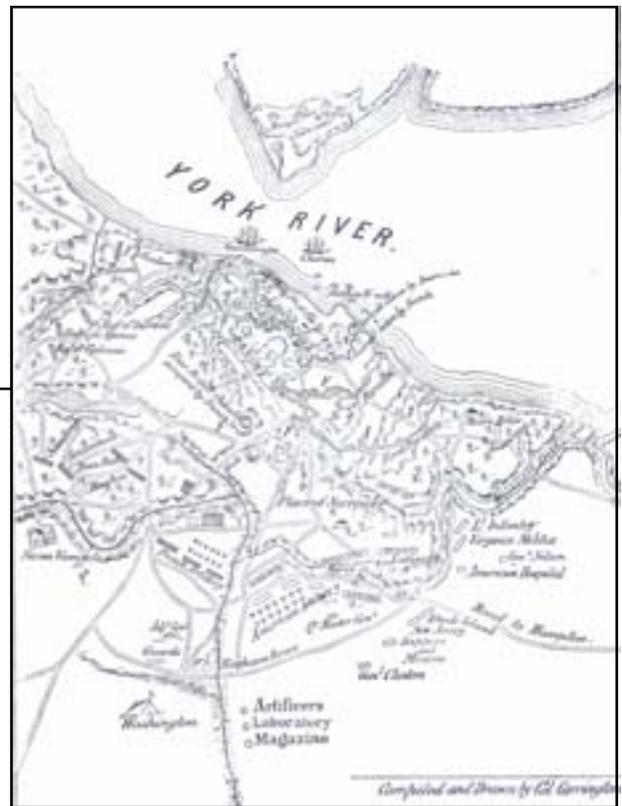
Please note: Each segment in this Webisode has its own Teaching Guide



Segment Overview

The war dragged on for over six years, but the determined Continental soldiers refused to be crushed by the better-supplied, more experienced British troops. After their defeat at Saratoga, New York, the British shifted the war south, hoping to draw in loyalist support. British General Cornwallis captured Savannah and Charleston, but patriot guerrilla bands thwarted his efforts to gain more significant military victories.

Cornwallis established his headquarters at the port city of Yorktown, Virginia, in August 1781, and awaited supply ships from General Sir Henry Clinton in New York. When Washington and his French ally Comte de Rochambeau learned that a French fleet was sailing for the Chesapeake Bay to blockade it and prevent Cornwallis' resupply, they marched nearly five hundred miles south to Yorktown. There they joined the Marquis de Lafayette and learned that the French ships had forced the British fleet back to New York and had brought additional troops. The allied troops stealthily dug trenches at night, and the redcoats awoke to find themselves trapped. After nearly two weeks of relentless shelling, the British surrendered. A ragtag colonial army had defeated the most powerful nation in the world. Like the words of a Revolutionary War era song, the world had, indeed, been turned upside down.



Teacher Directions

1. Students, in small teams, discuss the following questions.

- What advantages did the British have?
- What advantages did the American forces have?
- Compare/contrast fighting tactics of British and American forces, especially in the south.
- What did the British expect to gain by invading the south? Were they right?
- How did people in Britain feel about the war?
- Why was the War for American Independence compared to the Biblical story of David and Goliath?

2. **Speculate:** Could the Americans have won without French aid?



Let's Discuss

Let's Discuss, Cont.

3. Make sure students understand the following points in discussing the questions.

The British had a more experienced, better-equipped army, but the Americans were deeply committed to their cause and fought to defend their homes and lives from tyranny. In many cases, the Americans were more familiar with the terrain. The Continental army's use of Native American guerilla tactics gave them a strategic advantage over the British, who still fought by conventional methods. By invading the south, the British hoped not only to isolate the southern patriot forces but also to join with the many loyalists they believed would support them. The war became increasingly unpopular in England. King George III and his prime minister were embattled on many fronts, and in 1780, mobs rioted in London. The revolution could be compared to the Biblical account of David and Goliath, in which an under-equipped boy defeated a fearsome, well-armored giant, because of the disparity of age, experience, and military strength of the two parties involved. It is not likely that the colonies could have won independence without French aid.

Teacher Directions

1. Distribute the Student Sheet: *Yorktown: A Miraculous Convergence*. Explain that a convergence is when separate things meet or come together. Historians call the fall of Yorktown a "miraculous convergence" because many details came together in a stunning, seemingly miraculous way.
2. Students read the Student Sheet and list with teammates the many details that came together to enable Washington to defeat Cornwallis at Yorktown. Allow several minutes at the end of the class period for a whole-class discussion.

Teacher Directions

1. Students respond to the following writing prompts.
 - You are one of the British soldiers surrendering your weapons at Yorktown. Write a letter home expressing your thoughts.
 - You are an American soldier witnessing the British surrender at Yorktown. Write a letter home expressing your thoughts.



History Sleuth



What do you Think?



Moving Toward
Freedom



Connections

Teacher Directions

1. Distribute the Student Sheets: *Winning the War: A Multinational Effort*.

Talented leaders from several nations helped the Continental army defeat the most powerful military force in the world: Baron von Steuben of Prussia; Lafayette of France; Bernardo de Galvez of Spain; and several Polish officers.

Teacher Directions

Use the following activities with your students.

Art — Students view and compare paintings of the surrender at Yorktown. One source of paintings is *Liberty! The American Revolution* by Thomas Fleming, Dover Press.

Geography — Students examine maps of the eastern United States to trace troop movements and understand the strategic importance of Yorktown.

Music — Students research the history of “Yankee Doodle.”

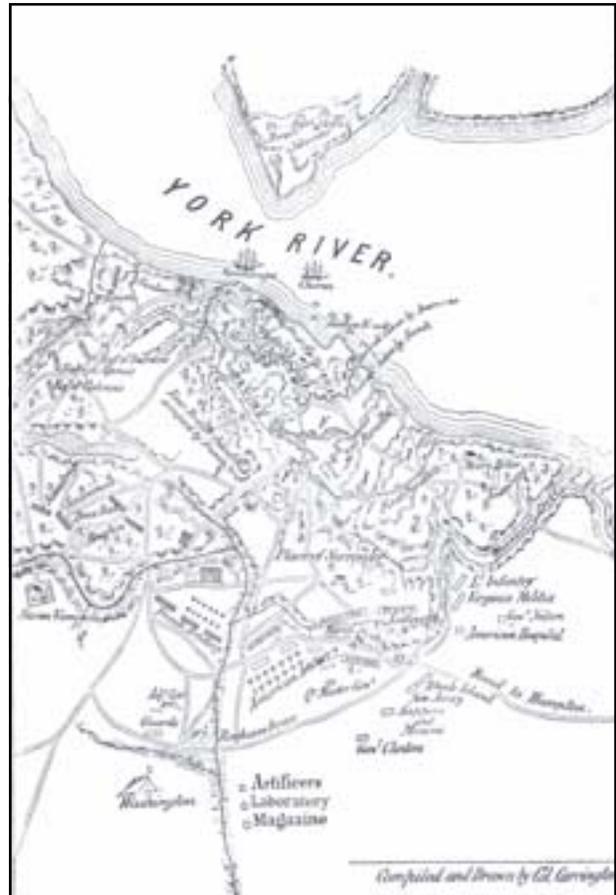
Music — Students listen to and research the history of the song, “The World Turned Upside Down.” While many historians doubt this song was played at the Yorktown surrender, it is frequently associated with this event.

Language Arts — Students read *The World Turned Upside Down: George Washington and the Battle of Yorktown* by Richard Ferrie.

Yorktown: A Miraculous Convergence

As Cornwallis fought to take the south, Patriot guerrilla forces and an American army under the command of Major General Nathanael Greene harassed him. After several fierce battles in North and South Carolina, he withdrew to Yorktown, Virginia. Cornwallis believed Virginia critical to holding the south.

General Washington, in New York with French troops under Comte de Rochambeau, received an important message from the French. The commander of the French fleet, Admiral de Grasse, would arrive off the coast of Virginia in mid-September. Washington knew that if the French could blockade the Chesapeake Bay, they would prevent Cornwallis from receiving supplies or escaping by sea. Timing was critical; the French fleet would remain in the Chesapeake Bay region only for a month.



Surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown by Howard Pyle, as it appeared in Harper's Weekly, October 22, 1881

Washington conceived a plan to corner Cornwallis in Virginia with a joint land-and-sea French and American attack. He faced many risks: the French and American armies would have to coordinate their movements, stealthily leave New York, march five hundred miles to Yorktown, and coordinate with a navy that was, at that

moment, somewhere in the Atlantic. And the French had disappointed him in the past; could he trust them this time? What if they didn't show up? If the British got word of his plans to leave, they would surely attack hard and fast. A long march to Virginia could wear out his struggling army, and the exhausted, dispirited men might desert. Should he stay in New York and keep trying to retake that city from the British? Or should he try to trap Cornwallis at Yorktown?

On August 19, Washington began marching south.

On September 5, as his troops passed Philadelphia on their march south, Washington learned that de Grasse had arrived in the Chesapeake with twenty-eight ships and 3,000 troops. This news made the usually reserved and dignified Washington so happy that he waved his hat and his handkerchief around in circles and hugged Rochambeau. Ten days later, these French ships chased off the British fleet, preventing them from assisting Cornwallis.

Cornwallis kept hoping General Clinton would send reinforcements from New York. But where was Clinton?

On the rainy night of October 6, Washington's troops dug trenches around Yorktown to lay siege to the town. When Cornwallis awoke, he was trapped. Washington's troops began pounding Yorktown with heavy artillery, reducing Cornwallis' headquarters to ruins. When Cornwallis tried to escape by sea, ferrying his men across the York River, a fierce storm blew up suddenly. Cornwallis was forced to surrender. And guess what? While Cornwallis signed terms of surrender at Yorktown, General Clinton and his 6,000 soldiers finally sailed out of New York to help Cornwallis. But it was too late.



Winning the War: A Multinational Effort

Talented leaders from several nations helped the Continental Army defeat the most powerful military force in the world: Baron von Steuben of Prussia; Lafayette of France; Bernardo de Galvez of Spain; and several Polish officers.



Friedrich Wilhelm Augustus, Baron von Steuben

Recruited by Benjamin Franklin in Paris to join the American cause, Friedrich Wilhelm Augustus Baron Von Steuben, who had been trained in the Prussian army of Frederick the Great, trained the American army to a

high standard of military professionalism. He criticized “the miserable British sergeant system” of training the men and insisted that officers themselves do the training. Many gentlemen officers felt such a task was beneath them, but the Baron insisted. He drilled a model company of one hundred men, and soon other troops wanted to imitate them. He wrote a training book. He urged officers to make sure the men under their care had adequate food and clothing. The Baron had a temper, apparently. When the trainees displeased him, he cursed them in German and French. When he ran out of words, he ordered an aide to curse the men in English.

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The Marquis de Lafayette

One of the richest men in France, the Marquis de Lafayette shared the hardships of Valley Forge with his men. He bought them clothing with his own money and his men called him “the soldier’s friend.” Lafayette deeply respected the commitment of the Continental soldiers. “The patient fortitude of the officers and soldiers was a continual miracle that each moment renewed,” he wrote. He served as a valuable general, and earned the respect of General Washington. Washington urged

Lafayette to return to France to press his countrymen for desperately needed aid. Lafayette returned with promises of French soldiers and ships to aid the war effort. Lafayette fought with Washington at Yorktown where he ordered some of his musicians to play “Yankee Doodle” as a tribute to the Americans. He strongly opposed slavery and encouraged the Americans to end it as soon as possible.

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Bernardo de Galvez

Spain, long an enemy of Great Britain, officially joined the Patriot cause in 1779. Spain controlled most of the land west of the Mississippi, and Bernardo de Galvez governed this territory of Louisiana. Even before Spain entered the war, Galvez allowed supplies to be shipped up the Mississippi to Patriot forces in the north. When Spain entered the war, he raised an army of Creoles,

Indians, free African Americans, and Spanish regular army soldiers and attacked British-held forts at Baton Rouge, Natchez, Mobile, and Pensacola. He forced the British from their positions, greatly weakening British strength in the south. The city of Galveston, Texas, is named in honor of this Spanish Patriot.

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Thaddeus Kosciuszko and Count Casimir Pulaski

Polish engineering officer **Thaddeus Kosciuszko** volunteered his services and built fortifications along the Hudson River above Albany for the battles of Saratoga. He also built important forts on the Delaware River and planned the fort at West Point.



Count Casimir Pulaski, also a Pole, was recruited by Benjamin Franklin to fight in the Revolution. He organized a cavalry unit of American, Polish, Irish, German, and French troops to fight the British. He fought with Washington at several important battles. Pulaski explained his motivation... "I came here, where freedom is being defended, to serve it, and to live or die for it..." Pulaski did indeed die for freedom. He was wounded fighting the British outside Savannah, and died. An important fort outside Savannah bears his name.