Standard 8.25 Lesson
American Rev (Trenton to Valley Forge)

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8.25 Identify and explain the significance of the major battles, leaders, and events of the American Revolution, including: (C, E, H, P, TN)

- Battle of Trenton and Princeton
- Battle of Saratoga
- Valley Forge

Battle of Trenton and Princeton

The 10 Days That Changed the World, Washington’s Crossing of the Delaware (15 min)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KF-Y7s_YIAU
Washington and his men surprised the Hessians on Christmas night in 1776. New Jersey was left in the care of the Hessians. Hessians were soldiers from the German state of Hesse and were mercenaries. Mercenaries were foreign soldiers hired and paid to fight for a country. They had no loyalty to the country for which they were fighting.

Washington and his men rowed across the icy Delaware River and attacked the Hessian army. Many of the Hessians were still asleep after a long night of celebrating. This was a victory for the Patriots and 900 men were taken prisoner. Washington then moved on to Princeton and circled behind the British troops and attacking. This renewed the patriotism. Many soldiers re-enlisted and new soldiers joined the cause. The Revolution would continue.
Prior to Christmas, moral of the Continental Army was at an all time low. Most soldiers contracts would be up by the end of the year, and it seemed that the Revolution was lost. Washington knew he needed a quick victory in order to inspire new recruits and get old ones to stay. He decided that they would attack the British at Trenton.

The American plan relied on launching coordinated attacks from three different directions. General John Cadwalder would launch a diversionary attack against the British garrison at Bordentown, in order to block off any reinforcements. General James Ewing would take 700 militia across the river at Trenton Ferry, seize the bridge over the Assunpink Creek and prevent any enemy troops from escaping. The main assault force of 2,400 men would cross the river nine miles north of Trenton, and then split into two groups, one under Greene and one under Sullivan, in order to launch a pre-dawn attack. Depending on the success of the operation, the Americans might possibly follow up with separate attacks on Princeton and New Brunswick.

During the week prior to Christmas, American advance parties had begun to ambush enemy cavalry patrols, capturing dispatch riders, and attacking Hessian pickets. This became so effective, that the Hessian commander had to send 100 infantry and an artillery detachment to protect his letter to the British commander at Princeton.

Trenton had two main streets, King (now Warren) Street and Queen (now Broad) Street. Rall had been ordered to build a redoubt at the head of these two streets (where the battle monument stands today) by his superior, Count Carl von Donop, whose own brigade was stationed in Bordentown. Donop himself had marched south to Mount Holly on December 22 to deal with the South Jersey Rising, and clashed with the New Jersey militia there on December 23.

Rall was a 36-year professional soldier with a great deal of battle experience who had requested reinforcements and been turned down by British commander General James Grant. Grant regarded the Americans with great disdain and sent no reinforcements. Rall’s subordinates were convinced that the Americans were going to attack, but Rall himself was not worried, he believed that one bayonet charge would send the Americans fleeing with panic, as bayonet charges had done before.
A small guard post was set up by the Hessians in Pennington about nine miles (14 km) north of Trenton, east of Washington's route to the city. When the squad guarding this post saw the large American force on the march, Lieutenant von Wiederholdt, in command of this Pennington picket, made an organized retreat. Once in Trenton the picket began to receive support from other Hessian guard companies on the outskirts of the town. Another guard company nearer to the Delaware River rushed east to their aid, leaving open the River Road into Trenton. General John Sullivan, leading the southern American column entered Trenton by this route and made hard for the only crossing over the Assunpink Creek, which was the only way out of Trenton to the south, in hopes of cutting off the Hessian escape.

![Washington leading the attack on Trenton](image)

When the 35 Hessian Jägers under the command of Lieutenant Grothausen who were stationed at the barracks on the northern edge of the town saw the vanguard of Sullivan’s forces charging into Trenton, they ran over the Assunpink bridge and left Trenton. Slowly, various companies of the three defending regiments formed and entered the battle. Lieutenant Biel, Rall’s brigade adjutant, finally awoke his commander, who found that the rebels had taken the "V" of the major streets of the town where earlier that month Pauli would have constructed the redoubt. The northern American column quickly took this position. The Americans stationed two cannon on a rise that guarded the two main routes out of the town. The Hessians tried to bring four guns into action, but American fire kept them silent, and denied the Hessians a chance to form in the streets. The remaining men in the column, along with the other American column near the river, moved to surround the Hessians.

The Knyphausen regiment of Hessians was separated from the other two regiments and driven back through the southern end of Trenton by John Sullivan’s column. The other two Hessian regiments, Lossberg and Rall, retreated into an open field and attempted a counterattack that was quickly driven back. Rall ordered his force to retreat southeast into an apple orchard just outside Trenton. The Hessians in the orchard attempted to reorganize, and make one last attempt to retake the town so they could escape to Princeton.

The Americans, by this time, occupied the majority of the buildings and, from cover, fired into the ranks of the Rall regiment as the Hessians advanced. As the Hessians fought back into the streets of Trenton, they came under fire from cannons, and even some civilians who had joined the battle. Their formations were broken up by cannon fire. At this point, Rall was mortally wounded. The Hessians then retreated back to the Orchard, where they were then surrounded and forced to surrender.

The remains of the Knyphausen Regiment were attempting to escape to Bordentown, but they were slowed when they tried to haul their cannon through boggy ground. They were cut off from the bridge, surrounded by Sullivan’s men, and forced to surrender. The regiment surrendered just minutes before the rest of the brigade.
Battle of Trenton — Summary and Movie


The Battle of Saratoga

( Pictured Above: British general John Burgoyne earned the nickname "Gentleman Johnny" for his love of leisure and his tendency to throw parties between battles. His surrender to American forces at the Battle of Saratoga marked a turning point in the Revolutionary War.)

From www.historychannel.com, read and watch about the Battle of Saratoga.

http://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/battle-of-saratoga
The Battle of Saratoga was the turning point of the Revolutionary War.

The scope of the victory is made clear by a few key facts: On October 17, 1777, 5,895 British and Hessian troops surrendered their arms. General John Burgoyne had lost 86 percent of his expeditionary force that had triumphantly marched into New York from Canada in the early summer of 1777.

Divide and Conquer

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YPy3o1vGaH4

The divide-and-conquer strategy that Burgoyne presented to British ministers in London was to invade America from Canada by advancing down the Hudson Valley to Albany. There, he would be joined by other British troops under the command of Sir William Howe. Howe would be bringing his troops north from New Jersey and New York City.
Burgoyne believed that this bold stroke would not only isolate New England from the other American colonies, but achieve command of the Hudson River and demoralize Americans and their would-be allies, such as the French.

(Pictured Above: Some historians today are unsure if her death came at Native American hands or by other means, but the murder of Jane McCrea united Americans against the British and their Native American allies.)

In June 1777, Burgoyne's army of over 7,000 men (half of whom were British troops and the other half Hessian troops from Brunswick and Hesse-Hanau) departed from St. Johns on Lake Champlain, bound for Fort Ticonderoga, at the southern end of the lake.

As the army proceeded southward, Burgoyne drafted and had his men distribute a proclamation that, among other things, included the statement "I have but to give stretch to the Indian forces under my direction, and they amount to thousands," which implied that Britain’s enemies would suffer attacks from Native Americans allied to the British.

More than any other act during the campaign, this threat and subsequent widely reported atrocities such as the scalping of Jane McCrea stiffened the resolve of the Americans to do whatever it took to assure that the threat did not become reality.

Instead of heading north to help Burgoyne fight the rebels in Saratoga, General Howe sailed south and embarked on a campaign to capture Philadelphia.

Round One to the British

The American forces at Fort Ticonderoga recognized that once the British mounted artillery on high ground near the fort, Ticonderoga would be indefensible. A retreat from the Fort was ordered, and the Americans floated troops, cannon, and supplies across Lake Champlain to Mount Independence.

From there the army set out for Hubbardton where the British and German troops caught up with them and gave battle. Round one to the British.

Burgoyne continued his march towards Albany, but miles to the south a disturbing event occurred. Sir William Howe decided to attack the Rebel capital at Philadelphia rather than deploying his army to meet up with Burgoyne and cut off New England from the other Colonies. Meanwhile, as Burgoyne marched south, his supply lines from Canada were becoming longer and less reliable.

“I have the honor to inform your Lordship that the enemy [were] dislodged from Ticonderoga and Mount Independent, on the 6th instant, and were driven on the same day, beyond Skeneborough on the right, and the Humerton [Hubbardton] on the left with the loss of 128 pieces of cannon, all their armed vessels and bateaux, the greatest part of their baggage and ammunition, provision and military stores . . . ”

– General John Burgoyne, letter to Lord George Germain (1777)
Bennington: "the completest Victory gain’d this War"

As Burgoyne and his troops marched down from Canada, the British managed to win several successful campaigns as well as infuriate the colonists. By the time the Burgoyne reached Saratoga, Americans had successfully rallied support to beat him.

In early August, word came that a substantial supply depot at Bennington, Vermont, was alleged to be lightly guarded, and Burgoyne dispatched German troops to take the depot and return with the supplies. This time, however, stiff resistance was encountered, and American general John Stark surrounded and captured almost 500 German soldiers. One observer reported Bennington as "the completest Victory gain’d this War."

Burgoyne now realized, too late, that the Loyalists (Tories) who were supposed to have come to his aid by the hundreds had not appeared, and that his Native American allies were also undependable.

American general Schuyler proceed to burn supplies and crops in the line of Burgoyne’s advance so that the British were forced to rely on their ever-longer and more and more unreliable supply line to Canada. On the American side, General Horatio Gates arrived in New York to take command of the American forces.

**Battle of Freeman’s Farm**

( Pictured Above: Mask letters, invisible ink, and secret code are the tricks of the trade for any good spy. Loyalist Henry Clinton used a mask letter to communicate with Burgoyne.)

By mid-September, with the fall weather reminding Burgoyne that he could not winter where he was and needed to proceed rapidly toward Albany, the British army crossed the Hudson and headed for Saratoga.

On September 19 the two forces met at Freeman’s Farm north of Albany. While the British were left as "masters of the field," they sustained heavy human losses. Years later, American Henry Dearborn expressed the sentiment that "we had something more at stake than fighting for six Pence pr Day."

**Battle of Saratoga**

In late September and during the first week of October 1777, Gate’s American army was positioned between Burgoyne’s army and Albany. On October 7, Burgoyne took the offensive. The troops crashed together south of the town of Saratoga, and Burgoyne’s army was broken. In mop-up operations 86 percent of Burgoyne’s command was captured.

The victory gave new life to the American cause at a critical time. Americans had just suffered a major setback the Battle of the Brandywine along with news of the fall of Philadelphia to the British.
One American soldier declared, "It was a glorious sight to see the haughty Brittons march out & surrender their arms to an army which but a little before they despised and called patroons."

A stupendous American victory in October 1777, the success at Saratoga gave France the confidence in the American cause to enter the war as an American ally. Later American successes owed a great deal to French aid in the form of financial and military assistance.

Summary of the Battle of Saratoga and a short video.

A Word about Spies

Spies worked for both British and American armies. Secret messages and battle plans were passed in a variety of creative ways, including being sewn into buttons. Patriots and loyalists penned these secret letters either in code, with invisible ink, or as mask letters.

Here is an example of Loyalist Sir Henry Clinton’s mask letter. The letter on the left is the mask letter with the secret message decoded; to the right is an excerpt of the full letter.

“Sir. W. Howe is gone to the Chesapeake bay with the greatest part of the army. I hear he is landed but am not certain. I am left to command here with too small a force to make any effectual diversion in your favour. I shall try something at any rate. It may be of use to you. I own to you I think Sr W’s move just at this time the worst he could take. Much joy on your success.”
“I shall try some thing certainly towards the close of the year, not till then at any rate. It may be of use to inform you that report says all yields to you. I own to you that I think the business will quickly be over now. Sr. W’s move just at this time has been capital. Washingtons have been the worst he could take in every respect. sincerely give you much joy on your success and am with great Sincerity your HC.”

– Henry Clinton, letter to John Burgoyne (August 10, 1777)

From "Web Rangers" try your luck at being a Patriot Spy!
http://www.nps.gov/webrangers/activities/patriot/

From the History Channel, watch the Culper Spy Ring.
http://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/culper-spy-ring/videos
Washington at Valley Forge

(Shown Above: Cold, hunger, and sickness marked the Continental Army’s stay at Valley Forge in Pennsylvania. Today, Valley Forge’s wide fields are dotted with revolutionary relics, reminders of the brutal winter endured by Washington’s troops.)

American spirits reached a low point during the harsh winter of 1777-78.

British troops had marched triumphantly into Philadelphia the previous autumn. Philadelphia was the largest city in the Colonies and the seat of political power. After the British swept into Philadelphia, the Continental Congress had fled west, first to Lancaster then to York.

Valley Forge
Washington’s army had spent the summer of 1777 fighting a string of losing battles. The Americans harassed the British army in skirmishes and minor battles for much of the fighting season. In the fall, the Americans showed pluck at the Battle of Brandywine in September and the Battle of Germantown in October. Yet the Americans were unable to keep the British out of Philadelphia.

In December, Washington marched his tired, beaten, hungry and sick army to Valley Forge, a location about 20 miles northwest of British-occupied Philadelphia. From Valley Forge, Washington could keep an eye on General Howe’s British army ensconced in Philadelphia.

At Valley Forge, there were shortages of everything from food to clothing to medicine. Washington’s men were sick from disease, hunger, and exposure. The Continental Army camped in crude log cabins and endured cold conditions while the Redcoats warmed themselves in colonial homes. The patriots went hungry while the British soldiers ate well.

Terms of enlistment were ending for many soldiers in Washington’s army. The General wondered if he would even have an army left when the spring thaw finally arrived.

**Washington under Siege**

Great events generate great legends. Did an Oneida woman named Polly Cooper, really ease the suffering of Washington and his troops at Valley Forge? Historians may never know for sure, but the legend lives on.

General Washington was upset that local farmers were hoarding much-needed food waiting to earn higher profits in the spring. Some farmers even sneaked grain into Philadelphia to feed the British army, who paid in gold or silver. With each passing night came more desertions. Washington grew privately disgusted at the lack of commitment of his so-called patriot fighters.

Then there was the grumbling of some in Congress and among some of Washington’s own officers. Washington’s leadership skills were openly questioned. Many said General Horatio Gates was better-suited to leading the army. After all, hadn’t he scored a major victory in October at the battle of Saratoga.? Within the environment of cold, deprivation, and rebellion, how long could Washington and his army endure?
Conditions at Valley Forge

http://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/american-revolution-history/videos/surviving-valley-forge

"Head Quarters, Valley Forge, February 16, 1778

Dear Sir: It is with great reluctance, I trouble you on a subject, which does not fall within your province; but it is a subject that occasions me more distress, than I have felt, since the commencement of the war; and which loudly demands the most zealous exertions of every person of weight and authority, who is interested in the success of our affairs. I mean the present dreadful situation of the army for want of provisions, and the miserable prospects before us, with respect to futurity. It is more alarming than you will probably conceive, for, to form a just idea, it were necessary to be on the spot. For some days past, there has been little less, than a famine in camp. A part of the army has been a week, without any kind of flesh, and the rest for three or four days. Naked and starving as they are, we cannot enough admire the incomparable patience and fidelity of the soldiery, that they have not been ere this excited by their sufferings, to a general mutiny or dispersion. Strong symptoms, however, discontent have appeared in particular instances; and nothing but the most active efforts everywhere can long avert so shocking a catastrophe.

Our present sufferings are not all. There is no foundation laid for any adequate relief hereafter. All the magazines provided in the States of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland, and all the immediate additional
supplies they seem capable of affording, will not be sufficient to support the army more than a month longer, if so long. Very little been done to the Eastward, and as little to the Southward; and whatever we have a right to expect from those quarters, must necessarily be very remote; and is indeed more precarious, than could be wished. When the aforementioned supplies are exhausted, what a terrible crisis must ensue, unless all the energy of the Continent is exerted to provide a timely remedy?

Impressed with this idea, I am, on my part, putting every engine to work, that I can possibly think of, to prevent the fatal consequences, we have so great a reason to apprehend. I am calling upon all those, whose stations and influence enable them to contribute their aid upon so important an occasion; and from your well known zeal, I expect every thing within the compass of your power, and that the abilities and resources of the state over which you preside, will admit. I am sensible of the disadvantages it labours under, from having been so long the scene of war, and that it must be exceedingly drained by the great demands to which it has been subject. But, tho’ you may not be able to contribute materially to our relief, you can perhaps do something towards it; and any assistance, however trifling in itself, will be of great moment at so critical a juncture, and will conduce to keeping the army together till the Commissary department can be put upon a better footing, and effectual measures concerted to secure a permanent and competent supply. What methods you can take, you will be the best judge of; but, if you can devise any means to procure a quantity of cattle, or other kind of flesh, for the use of this army, to be at camp in the course of a month, you will render a most essential service to the common cause. I have the honor etc."

– George Washington, letter to George Clinton (Feb. 16, 1778)

Help came in the form of a Prussian volunteer, Baron von Steuben. The military leader was aghast at the lack of American discipline. At Washington’s urging he trained the Continental Army, Prussian-style. The troops slowly became more professional. Among the soldiers who remained, confidence grew.

Over the course of the winter, the weather improved somewhat. Food trickled in from the surrounding countryside. Many wives of soldiers spent time at Valley Forge over the winter. Washington was able to quash those who questioned his leadership abilities.

The Continental Army encamped at Valley Forge in the fall of 1777 with about 12,000 men in its ranks. Death claimed about a quarter of them before spring arrived. Another thousand didn’t reenlist or deserted. But the army that remained was stronger. They were fewer, but more disciplined. They were weary, but firmly resolved.

The next year, 1778, brought greater fortune to the American cause. While Washington froze at Valley Forge, Benjamin Franklin was busy securing the French alliance. Now the war would be different indeed.
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