

The Battle of Yorktown

The American Revolution was a key part of the evolution of the United States. It was started when tensions between the American colonies and the British government grew due to the Intolerable Acts, Boston Tea Party, Boston Massacre, and The French and Indian War. Many colonists rejected the British Parliament and wanted their independence and finally war was the only option. In the war the American colonies were at a disadvantage being poorly trained and not having advanced equipment compared to the British. Although on the contrary, the Americans benefitted with strong military leaders, the advantage of the war being on their soil and eventually with help from the French. The war consisted of many battles won by the British and few won by the Americans, however, in the end the Americans had the overall success. Their victory was contributed from one major battle, The Battle of Yorktown.

This battle was unlike many other battles in the American Revolution. Instead of consisting of anguish and bloodshed it was more calm and peaceful. There was a relatively low causality rate and the battle only lasted about a month; although, it is considered the most important battle in the American Revolution. (history.com). Washington had been working for months in the war to defeat the British but he was lacking supplies and experience to be successful. (Wiegand 81). Now that the French had agreed to help the American colonies, this time around, Washington thought smarter and wiser to be successful to gain the first victory for the American colonies. He knew the French had a strong naval power and would eventually use that to his advantage in this battle. The Battle of Yorktown officially started when 17,000 French and colonial troops lead by George Washington faced 9,000 British troops lead by Lord Charles Cornwallis, the British commander of the South. The troops meet in Yorktown, Virginia on September 28, 1781. (history.com)

The British troops found themselves in Yorktown because Cornwallis was low on supplies and men and needed to reach a sea port so supplies and reinforcement could be delivered. George Washington with leaders Marquis de Lafayette, General Anthony Wayne, and Frederick William, all the way near New York at the time, found out about Cornwallis' retreat to Yorktown and took immediate action. Washington ordered Lafayette to block in Cornwallis troops by land so they could not escape. Then Washington himself, along with the aid of French troops led by Comte de Rochambeau immediately but secretly marched south to Yorktown where they surrounded the city from the land. (Encyclopædia Britannica). At the same time a French fleet of 24 ships under Comte de Grasse traveled from the West Indies to the Chesapeake Bay to block Cornwallis in from the sea and prevent any supplies coming in. (Rothman 117). Trapped and outnumbered with nowhere to go Cornwallis called upon the British fleet and army in New York for help. They tried to defeat the French on the sea but were unsuccessful and eventually retreated back to New York leaving Cornwallis and his troops to fend for themselves. The siege the Americans and French had created was proving to be successful and at this point Cornwallis' troops were no match to the French power and their weapons; they had no choice but to surrender.

The official date Cornwallis surrendered his 8,000 remaining troops with only about 240 guns is October 19, 1781. (history.com). This battle was a turning point for the eventual victory of Americans. Before the battle everyone thought the British would win but now American victory was happening. Some fighting still continued but nothing significantly changed and at this point and the British public began to turn against the war and just wanted it to end. Therefore, this led to a long period of time where Britain and the American colonies negotiated and settled on treaties to officially end the war on October 1783. (Princeton Review 185). One of

those treaties included the Treaty of Paris in 1783 in which the British government officially stated that the American colonies were free of their control. The Americans had gained their independence at last.

The outcome of the Revolutionary war could have been very different without the victory in the Battle of Yorktown. The French support bolstered the Americans and secured the victory in not only the Battle of Yorktown but also the overall victory in the American Revolution as well. The Battle of Yorktown was the final major battle in the war and helped led to the official end of the war along with the peaceful treaties negotiated after the war. The Americans successfully put together their known strengths to defeat the British because that is the only way they would be able to beat the powerful British. Since they were at a disadvantage, it took all their strengths together to be successful in defeating the British and gaining their independence. The Battle of Yorktown changed the outcome of the war and helped change American forever.