

Battle of yorktown essay sample

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The Revolutionary War was a dreadful war leaving almost 70, 000 U. S. and British soldiers dead or wounded. The war lasted eight years with America, France, Spain, and the Dutch on one side and Great Britain on the other. On October 19, 1781 the last major land battle took place, the Battle of Yorktown. Similar to other battles in the Revolutionary War, the Americans were fighting for independence from the British and as threats from them kept increasing, the situation did not get any better. George Washington is recognized to having inspired the victory achieved over the British forces. The tactics, skills, courage and the collaboration George Washington sought with the French and American allies were enough to overcome the British army and force them to surrender. The key elements in the final results of the war were the events that shaped the final revolutionary battle, the mistakes that British General Cornwallis made, and how George Washington seized that opportunity to gain victory. During the American Revolution, the Americans and French (Franco-American coalition) fought the British at the Battle of Yorktown.

The Americans and the French fielded a combined force of roughly 16, 000 soldiers to defeat the British force estimated at 7, 000 soldiers. American General George Washington and French Lieutenant General de Rochambeau led the American and French soldiers. The British commanding officer was Major General Lord Cornwallis. The battle occurred from September 28 thru October 19, 1781. Cornwallis lost his dominance in the Carolinas and decided to march his army north to Virginia and seize Yorktown and Gloucester along the York River. The American Revolution, Siege of Yorktown, the Americans and French against Britain, occurred because the British Parliament was

taking advantage of its colonies to pay for the war debt increased from the French and Indian War. The American colonist had begun to develop their own national identity and did not think it fair that they had to pay these taxes. The actual fighting started in 1775 in Massachusetts when British soldiers were ordered to confiscate an arsenal being stored there. Leading up to the battle of Yorktown, in February, 1781, Major General Marquis de Lafayette was ordered to take his Continental troops to Virginia. About a month later General Cornwallis and his army had entered Virginia believing that if the American forces had resistance, he would have victory against the Americans and the French.

Later that year in August on 1-2, 1781 Cornwallis and his army set up at Gloucester point, hoping to use it as a base for supply and weapons. A couple of weeks later, Washington heard about the base and sent a large army to destroy Cornwallis base. A month later on September 14, 1781, French General Rochambeau and General Washington arrived, and sent 400 French soldiers and 400 American soldiers to storm the British redoubt. On October 19, 1781, being taken under heavy fire from the Americans and the French, Major General Cornwallis realized that he was short of troops and decided to escape Yorktown before surrendering. Making the move to escape, a sudden storm from the Americans and French ruined his evacuation plan and Cornwallis was forced to surrender, due to the lack of troops and supplies. On October 19, 1781, the British troops under Cornwallis surrendered to Washington's combined forces, thus ending the major battle in the American Revolution. After the surrender of the British, all their troops were sent to

prison. About seven to eight days later on October 28, Cornwallis signed an agreement that would official stop the battle.

On September 3, 1783, Britain recognized the independence of the United States, and was ratified on January 14, 1784. The battle between the Americans and French vs. Britian was no way a decisive battle, the British had not been defeated, and they simply wanted to stop fighting. A peace treaty wasn't signed until two years later, when Great Britain formally recognized independence. That's when they gained there freedom. George Washington took advantage of the mistakes made by General Cornwallis to execute his winning battle at Yorktown. What could have possible led to the Battle of Yorktown? The beginning is not as clear as many would think. General Cornwallis was campaigning for the majority of the American Revolution in the southern states. He ravaged many of the southern states with his army in order to move toward achieving his main goal of the campaign; disrupting the supply lines that Washington was using and isolating the Franco-American forces. However, in Virginia, Marquis de Lafayette a young Frenchmen who led the American and French troops did not decisively engage the British. Lafayette had roughly 3, 000 soldiers to defend Virginia while the British had around 7, 000.

During this time, Cornwallis received orders from the British Commander-in-Chief, to take up a position in the Virginia peninsula where Yorktown was located. The goal was to set up a naval post to receive supplies and reinforcements from the Royal Navy. It was unknown at this time that Cornwallis was setting himself up for failure in Yorktown. The initial

movement made by Washington started on September 26, 1781. The Americans had many advantages. It is no surprise that General George Washington led the Patriots to another victory. Because of his success at the Battle of Trenton, he is recognized as a famous war hero. Another popular Patriot is Nathanael Greene who regrouped the scattered and hopeless Continental Army. Benedict Arnold is also a very well-known officer, but for the wrong reason. He was once an American general but turned traitor and joined the British. All together, the Continental Army had about 16, 000 soldiers. Even if they didn't know it, the Patriots were well prepared for the upcoming battle.

France played a big role in ensuring the fall of British control in the Battle of Yorktown. They were American allies and enemies of Britain. French troops did an excellent job of helping defeat the British. Lieutenant General Jean Rochambeau met up with Washington and bombarded the enemy by land. Admiral Count François Joseph Paul de Grasse blocked any escape by sea, trapping the British forces. Marquis de Lafayette did even greater damage by attacking and discouraging them. Obviously, the French played an important role. British troops were led by General Earl Charles Cornwallis who tried to win Yorktown. He attacked the city, hoping it would tighten his grip on the Carolinas. Cornwallis led about 7, 000 British regular troops. He was expecting a relieving force from General Clinton because his men were becoming weary and useless, but little did he know that the help would come on October 24th, five days too late. When he could not stand out any longer, Cornwallis made an attempt to flee by sea on October 16 but was driven

back by a storm. He became so desperate that he purposely sank dozens of his own ships to prevent enemies from coming too close.

Finally, on October 19, 1781, Cornwallis and his troops surrendered. They played a tune called “ The World Turned Upside Down” as a sign of defeat. The Americans and French had just won another victory that would change everything. The victory obtained at Yorktown marked the last major engagement and battles of the American Revolution, effectively ending the conflict in American’s favor. The battle claimed few fatalities to either sides, though the British side suffered more 156 killed and 326 wounded against 72 killed, 180 wounded Americans. Clinton and Cornwallis eventually went back to England, where the public did not know who to blame for the defeat. While the British mourned the loss, the Americans celebrated. As an aftermath of the war, the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1783, establishing the independence of the United States. Prior to the treaty, the British Parliament had already passed a resolution in March 1782, saying that the British must cease to engage the United States in war. As a tradition, American and French officers treated the British generals to dinner. When he heard the news, Prime Minister Lord North declared, “ It is all over!” Indeed, it is. The horrifying American Revolution that raged for years is finally coming to an end, all because of the Battle of Yorktown that lasted from September 28 to October 19, 1781.

References

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