

Benedict arnold: impact on american history



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During the middle of the eighteenth century, many questions arose regarding the future of the American Colonies, a relatively vast collection of British Colonial settlements along the Atlantic coast of the New World. As a schism divided the citizens of the Colonies, war appeared to be the inevitable future. Due to countless years of benign neglect shown by the British to its ' little child', patriots felt that it was time for an epic revolution. This era of great revolutionary movements is characterized by many popular figureheads in American history. Great minds such as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and George Washington are accredited for being most influential. One man, however, is often overlooked in playing a vital role, both positive and negative, in the revolutionary landscape. His name is associated with ' traitor' and he is quite possibly the most infamous person in American history. People have vilified him to the point where they compare him to Judas, betrayer of Jesus Christ (Martin). Benedict Arnold, one of the most controversial men to have called himself an American, is considered to be one of the greatest military minds in the history of the world. The question is: what made him switch sides? His impact is undeniable, but unfortunately, his actions against the United States are, quite simply, too immense to forget.

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SIGNIFICANCE:

Background: Early Life and Pre-Revolution

Benedict Arnold was born January 14, 1741 in Norwich, Connecticut. His Father, Benedict, was a successful businessman and his mother, Hannah Waterman-King, was a wealthy widow prior to re-marrying. His family's financial stature in Norwich was well recognized. Benedict was enrolled in a private school at a young age with the expectation that he would go on to be educated in an elite university (Creighton). His Father's mismanagement of money, however, saw Benedict drop out of school, forcing him to take an apprenticeship with his mother's pharmaceutical business. Four of Arnold's siblings would eventually succumb to Yellow Fever. The combination of the death of his children, mismanagement of the fortune, and eventually, the death of his wife in 1759, saw Benedict's father to become a severe alcoholic (Sheinkin). Arnold would eventually see his first military action during the French & Indian War, leaving his apprenticeship to join the cause. He enlisted in the Connecticut militia and marched to Lake George and Albany to oppose the French in the Battle of Fort William Henry. The Indians supporting the French would go against the will of their French leaders who had promised them scalps and booty, going on to mercilessly massacring several hundred men in the militia (Hickman). From this moment, Arnold despised the French, which have said to influence him later on. After the crushing defeat, Benedict grew tired of the constant discipline and returned to his apprenticeship. <http://www.ushistory.org/valleyforge/served/images/arnold.jpg>

Sons of Liberty Benedict Arnold grew to become a successful businessman. His rich cousins supplied him with enough money to go out on his own in the pharmaceutical business. Arnold traveled to Europe, where he bought necessary supplies for his own pharmaceutical business which he would go on to establish in New Haven ("Benedict Arnold"). His business ambitions soon expanded after he made significant profit in his first business venture. He involved himself in the West India Trade and also traded with Canada. Arnold acquired three ships in partnership with his friend, Adam Babcock (Hickman). Their business was successful, until England's implementation of the Sugar and Stamp Acts. Arnold became displeased with Britain's overwhelming taxation on imported goods in order to make up for their indebted crisis after the French & Indian War. His outrage led him to become the passionate leader of the Sons of Liberty in New Haven, building up his anger towards the British stranglehold placed upon the Colonies. Arnold, however, was not the only one with growing hatred towards the British.

http://media.giantbomb.com/uploads/4/48363/1108061-sons_of_liberty_poster_p228640904795152089trma_400_super.jpg

In the middle of the 1700s, Britain began to impose several acts, taxes, and laws that paralyzed the progression of the Colonies. For example, in 1764, Britain imposed the Sugar Act, which increased the duties on non-British goods being traded with the Colonies. Later, in 1765, Britain passed the Quartering Act which forced the Colonies to supply and provide barracks for British troops. The last of the three initial Acts in the 1760s was the Stamp Act of 1765. The Stamp Act was the first direct taxation of the citizens of the Colonies, taxing all paper goods such as newspapers, pamphlets, and even

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playing cards. As a way of rebelling against the British oppression, the Stamp Act Congress was convened. "The Stamp Act Congress passed a "Declaration of Rights and Grievances," which claimed that American colonists were equal to all other British citizens, protested taxation without representation, and stated that, without colonial representation in Parliament, Parliament could not tax colonists. In addition, the colonists increased their non-importation efforts" (Morris). In the big scheme of things, this was just the beginning of tensions between the Colonies and Britain in the events before the Revolution.

The tumult regarding the impositions put in place by the British initiated a power struggle within the colonies. Britain was consistently attempting to stamp out the flame that the Colonists were trying to start. Although the Brits repealed the Stamp Act in 1766, they fired right back by passing the Declaratory Act. This Act stated that the British government could establish laws in the colonies in "all cases whatsoever" (Morris). This squashed the Americans' slogan of "no taxation without representation". The first real call for revolution came in the form of Samuel Adams, who issued his Massachusetts Circular Letter which attacked Parliament's audacity to tax them at free will. Adams called for a unified revolt within all the colonies, which raised the question of, "Can we really do this?". That question was answered by Thomas Paine, who wrote his famous pamphlet, *Common Sense*, to stimulate thought within the American population. Paine wrote in a manner that was well understood by all people, making his writings very successful. Paine said that it was only logical for the colonists to rebel, which

caused many neutral thinkers to choose sides. This, however, only highlighted the schism between the American people. Commonsense. jpg

An indicator of how tensions were breaking in this era is shown in the Boston Massacre of 1770. The arrival of British troops in Boston marked the beginning of conflict between soldiers and citizens. A group of three British soldiers were surrounded by an angry Bostonian crowd, which inexplicably caused the soldiers to fire randomly into the crowd, killing three and wounding two more (Morris). Crispus Attucks, one of the casualties in the Massacre, was said to be “ The first death of the Revolution”, as he lay mercilessly slain on the cold ground.

Later, in 1773, Parliament instituted the Tea Act, considered to be the last revolutionary spark in Boston. It was a last ditch attempt to save the East India Company, forcing colonists to buy British tea with the Townshend taxes still in place. The colonists saw this as a direct attempt to undercut the revenue of local merchants. As reaction to this Act, the famous Boston Tea Party resulted in men dressed up as Indians and dumping all tea into the harbor. Tensions had reached their breaking point, and it was time for organized revolution. It is out of this revolution that gave rise to one of the greatest generals in American history, one that would rival Patton, Washington, and Eisenhower. However, his name is more despised than it is revered, but his impact is nonetheless undeniable.

Benedict Arnold: American General

With his livelihood significantly impaired by the British involvement imposed in the colonies, Benedict Arnold devoted himself to the resistance of British
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tyranny. As tensions with London increased, Arnold increasingly became interested in military matters and was elected a captain in the Connecticut militia in March 1775 (Hickman). When word was spread about the first shots being fired in the Revolution at Lexington and Concord, Benedict jumped at the chance to ruin the British. Arnold assembled his 60 troops in the college green, and decided to have them march north to partake in the Siege of Boston.

Fort Ticonderoga

As Arnold approached Boston from the south, he proposed an aggressive siege upon Fort Ticonderoga in New York to the Massachusetts Committee of Safety. He was commissioned as a colonel to lead the mission. He soon found out, however, that Ethan Allen and his “ Green Mountain Boys” were set to accomplish the same task. When Arnold and Allen met up, they clashed and battled for the right to control the siege. In the end, cooler heads prevailed, and The Green Mountain Boys fought with Arnold’s men in a convincing takeover of Fort Ticonderoga under the joint command of Allen and Arnold. The battle itself took about a total of ten minutes, as the American revolutionaries attacked the fort at 3: 00 AM, catching the guards totally off guard. After the siege, Allen’s men decided to have a party by plundering the fort. Arnold was far from amused, and reported to the Massachusetts Committee of Safety, “ There is here at present 100 men, who are in the greatest confusion and anarchy, destroying and plundering private property, committing every enormity, and paying no attention to public service” (Sheinkin).

Arnold's hatred of stagnation and inactivity made him want more. He had control of the southern portion of Lake Champlain, but sought full control of the lake. A fort on the opposite bank of the lake, Fort St. John's, had possession of the greatest warship on the lake, the George. Arnold selected his 30 best troops to join him as they sailed across the lake to seize control of Ft. St. John's, their primary objective being the seizure of the George. They reached the opposite bank on May 18, and were able to secure control of the Fort and the George without firing a single shot (Sheinkin). Arnold's quick actions and bravery were evident from the get-go, and it was only uphill for him from then on. http://www.lcmm.org/images/img_education/img_outreaches/brassier_map.jpg

Benedict Arnold's brash and bold manner was recognized quickly by Congress. In fact, they were scared. Arnold's lightning quick seizure of Fort St. John's came as a shock to many. The Americans didn't even have an official army yet, and Arnold was eager for more action. Benedict was often characterized when he had too much free time as, "restless, frustrated, and irritated" (Martin). Fortunately, Arnold wasn't held idle for long, but not for the reason he hoped. He returned to see to his sickly wife, who died at the young age of 30.

Quebec

The Continental Army had officially been formed, but Arnold's return home saw him catch severe symptoms of gout. After his brief term of absence, he returned to Cambridge to meet with George Washington. Their plan was to invade Quebec, and Arnold was to be Washington's right-hand man. Arnold

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pitched the idea that he would approach Quebec from an uncharted and treacherous route through the dense forest of Maine. Arnold hand chose 1000 men to aid him on his perilous journey to seize Quebec. Arnold brought along Jacataqua, a friend of young Aaron Burr. She knew the areas around the Kennebec River, and proved to be a crucial asset to their journey. The terrain they encountered was characterized by dense, wooded areas with swampy grounds, making traversing them next to impossible. Almost one quarter of the troops eventually turned around and headed back. Conditions of survival were rough also, as many of the boats leaked, which in turn spoiled the food and gunpowder aboard. Once the group finally reached the St. Lawrence River, only 600 of the 1050 initial troops remained. They had travelled almost 400 miles through uncharted territory and were relatively unarmed. The Battle of Quebec began, however, despite the damage cause to Arnold and his troops. Arnold met up with Major General Richard Montgomery and united their meager forces against the fortified city of Quebec (Hickman). The Americans saw a crushing defeat on December 30, and December 31 at the hands of the British and their reinforcements, almost putting Arnold's perilous journey in vain. Arnold was severely wounded in his leg and along with the death of Gen. Montgomery, the Americans were left with poor spirits. File: American attack on Quebec. svg

Question of Character

Benedict Arnold was promoted to Brigadier General and commanded the retreat south from Montreal in 1776. After a strong defense at Fort Ticonderoga, Arnold's bravery remained intact, but the trust and support of his troops did not. Some of his officers often called him cocky and even <https://assignbuster.com/benedict-arnold-impact-on-american-history/>

arrogant. Benedict saw many of his troops question his tactics and thought he was overly aggressive. Arnold was, in fact, falsely accused to have stolen war supplies so that he could be replaced. Fellow General, Horatio Gates, saw that Benedict's tight following to the rules and guidelines of war were too great for him to have stolen supplies. The court found him guilty, but Gates blocked this potential decision. Benedict " had the right to feel angry over the his treatment by the other men" (" Benedict Arnold"). It was occurrences such as these where he was mistreated that contributed to him eventually switching sides in the war. Much to Arnold's relief, he was sent back to Rhode Island to report to George Washington in order to rearrange defenses in response to the British occupation of Rhode Island.

Arnold's Frustration

Arnold's first feelings of discontent with his treatment by Congress and his peers were evident as he was consistently passed up to be promoted to Major General. His peers, who were also inferior officers, generated rumors about him that permanently damaged his reputation. Arnold had evident jealousies also, which were seen as weak because such a minute outside interference could affect him on the inside. " Virtue is a key concept in the Revolution, and Congress repeatedly insulted Arnold's virtue" (Martin). Arnold twice withdrew from the army with the firm belief that his honor and hard work were not being recognized. Benedict was deeply unhappy with his treatment, and it wouldn't get much better.

Redemption at Saratoga

Commander Philip Schuyler was the man who convinced Arnold to stay in the Continental Army. He saw Arnold as someone who could provide a spark in the Northern Army, a unit with some disunion and lack of firepower. He was dispatched with some 900 men to relieve the siege at Fort Stanwix (Henretta). This siege was almost too easy for Arnold, who was surprised to return to find out it was now Horatio Gates who was in command. Gates, who is defined as a generally defensive commander, would not gel well with his polar opposite in terms of military mindset, Benedict Arnold. As General Burgoyne's army moved south, Arnold sought aggressive attack on the vulnerable Brits. Gates, however, was reluctant, and held his men back. " At the pivotal Battle of Bemis Heights on October 7, 1777, Arnold defied Gates' authority and took command of a group of American soldiers whom he led in an assault against the British line. Arnold's attack threw the enemy into disarray and contributed greatly to the American victory. Ten days later, Burgoyne surrendered his entire army at Saratoga" (" Benedict Arnold"). Arnold's brave and risky actions actually saw himself relieved from Gates' command. This, however, is just an example of how inferior minds were above Arnold in caste system of the Continental Army. The Battle of Saratoga is often considered to be the turning point in the war, and without Benedict Arnold, it all could've gone in a disastrous direction.

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[https://bmshistory7p8.wikispaces.com/file/view/fauvel-the-surrender-of-general-john-burgoyne-at-the-battle-of-saratoga-7th-october-1777.jpg](https://bmshistory7p8.wikispaces.com/file/view/fauvel-the-surrender-of-general-john-burgoyne-at-the-battle-of-saratoga-7th-october-1777.jpg/198767254/fauvel-the-surrender-of-general-john-burgoyne-at-the-battle-of-saratoga-7th-october-1777.jpg)

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After the battle of Saratoga, a great momentum shift was recognized throughout the world. France decided they might finally have a chance to be part of a victory in a war, so they took up the prospect of joining the rebel campaign. The Continental Army was having a hard time matching man for man the numbers that the British had. If not for the British having to travel a vast ocean to re-supply and send troops, the results could have shifted in their favor.

Benedict's Demons

What may have been the final straw for Benedict Arnold was when Horatio Gates peevishly took all credit for the defeat of mighty Burgoyne's troops. At the time, Arnold was bedridden in an Albany hospital due to a near fatal wound to the same leg wounded in the Battle of Quebec. " Bedridden and helpless, Benedict Arnold gnashed his teeth at the distressing thought of ' Granny Gates' receiving honors won by the blood and grit of better men" (Creighton). Arnold then was forced to reassess his sacrifices and his rewards. The more he thought, the more bitter he grew. Describing his situation in the hospital, a firsthand account of a hospital worker said, " Poison may have stopped oozing from his leg, but his heart remained full of rancor". Arnold wrote about his frustration with the American cause, he believed the patriots to be worse off than at the beginning of the war. Popular support for the Revolution was waning, and many saw loved ones lost. Much of his anger also focused on civilians in Congress who shorted supplies for the military and failed to acknowledge the contributions made by fighting patriots. " How can Congress allow this army to starve in a land of plenty?" he penned.

The Turning Point

George Washington, who still had bountiful faith in Arnold, told the permanently crippled Benedict that he was to protect the recently seized Philadelphia. Benedict even partook in the first recorded Oath of Allegiance, ironically, which shows one's loyalty to the United States (Sheinkin). Once in command of Philadelphia, Arnold began to envelop himself in questionable business deals in order to regain his previous financial losses suffered during much of the Revolutionary War. Basically, Benedict used his position as Military Commander to profit from war-related supply movements. Many people in the city recognized his sketchy behavior, and many began to accumulate significant evidence against him. Arnold learned to live extravagantly in Philadelphia, which despite its recent change in occupants, remained to have Tory influences (Henretta). These influences are known to have helped convince Benedict to switch sides. On top of all his newfound wealth and stature, Benedict re-married a woman by the name of Peggy Shippen, daughter of judge Edward Shippen, a notorious advocate of the loyalist cause. http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/e/e2/Peggy_Shippen_and_daughter.jpg/220px-Peggy_Shippen_and_daughter.jpg

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/e/e2/Peggy_Shippen_and_daughter.jpg/220px-Peggy_Shippen_and_daughter.jpg

Arnold would eventually be tried by a court-martial on two accounts of illegal activity as Military Commander in Philadelphia. Eventually, the judge reached a verdict that he should be reprimanded by the commander-in-chief.

Washington saw Arnold as being used as a scapegoat and as a victim or persecution. George Washington pushed the matter aside, instead granting Arnold complete control over the seizure of West Point. Washington was

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oblivious to Arnold's sense of unhappiness, and now is the time when Benedict jumps ship.

Espionage

Arnold grew tired of the American stagnation; he had seen the cost at which freedom comes. Arnold saw the atrocities that followed the rough winter at Valley Forge, where soldiers were reduced to eating shoe leather outside of British occupied Philadelphia. The only question in his mind was, " Does the end really justify the means?"

Arnold's disgust towards the American causes reached its boiling point at the time of French intervention in the war. Arnold had grown to despise the French, ever since his early days of contributing in the French & Indian War. He had been affected by the Tory influence that resided in Philadelphia, which played a crucial role in his change of mindset.

Benedict Arnold was said to have first reached out to the enemy in May of 1779. Major John Andre, a British officer, acted as a courier between Arnold and Sir Henry Clinton. It was through Andre that the two men delivered secret encrypted messages regarding the possibility of a tradeoff. Benedict Arnold was in a particular position that would allow him to give the British what they had wanted since the beginning of the Revolutionary War: the Hudson River (Hickman). In exchange, Arnold was to receive around three million US dollars (in today's currency). Another influence in Arnold's decision was his new wife. Peggy Shippen proved to have been a close friend of Andre's, and is credited with having set up the whole communication

system. http://25.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_mafy5aVDpp1rtn3ufo1_400.jpg

Arnold resigned his post as Military Commander of Philadelphia, and gained total control of West Point on August 3, 1780. On August 15, Arnold received an encrypted letter from General Clinton, which included his final offer of £20, 000. In return, Arnold sent his acceptance of the offer and inside information regarding French reinforcements and the movements of Washington's troops. Arnold became more and more comfortable at West Point, and systematically weakened his defenses in order to let his scheme flow better. The goal was for a siege without a single bullet. Arnold drained West Point of supplies to the point that his subordinates thought he was crazy. An eventual meeting was scheduled between Andre and Arnold to meet face to face on September 21. The HMS Vulture, the ship meant to carry Andre back to New York, was fired upon, causing it to retreat back down the Hudson River. Andre, as a result, had to return to New York on foot. He was given instructions and maps to wiggle his way through enemy lines, but he was eventually caught two days later with Arnold's documents in place.

George Washington was said to have been calm at the time he found out, but one thing was on his mind. " Washington knew that they had to destroy this guy top, bottom, and sideways and forever associate him with treason" (Martin). There was nothing Washington wanted more than Arnold at his feet, begging for his mercy. Washington negotiated with the British, hoping to get an exchange for the captured Andre. To no avail, Andre was hanged October 2, 1780 on account of being a spy.

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The “ New” Arnold

There’s an old saying I’ve always known, and it says: “ No one likes a traitor, even if he’s your traitor.” And this couldn’t have been more evident than the case of Benedict Arnold. He was never trusted by the British, whether it was on the battlefield, or just in general. He was never promoted above the rank of Brigadier, and he was never handed any major military operations under the Crown. Until the eventual fall of Cornwallis at Yorktown, Arnold was never considered to be a major factor in the British scheme of the Revolutionary War. George Washington ordered his immediate hanging should he be caught. All Americans knew about his becoming a traitor; his name was wiped from all military records and was essentially deleted from the very country that revered him as a Revolutionary hero. <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/d/dc/WestPoint1780.jpg/220px-WestPoint1780.jpg>

Arnold, however never lost his military touch. He acted as an advisor in the British Army, and begged that Cornwallis flee Yorktown in favor of a landlocked base instead of one bound by land and sea. This, however, led to the eminent downfall of the British Army. They were surrounded by the French Navy by sea, and the Continental Army by land. This led to the surrender at Yorktown on October 19, 1781.

Legacy

Arnold’s legacy is best represented by Benjamin Franklin’s quote, “ Judas sold only one man, Arnold sold three million”. Biographers over the times have characterized him as a demonic and miserable figure. Some have even <https://assignbuster.com/benedict-arnold-impact-on-american-history/>

told stories about how he entered the world as the antichrist. Benedict Arnold's military gains shouldn't be overlooked, however. His impact on the Revolutionary War goes without saying, albeit both positive and negative. He played the most significant role in the turning point of the war, along with being one of the bravest and most intelligent military leaders of all time. Unfortunately, in the end, his negatives greatly outweigh his positives. His legacy has been so tarnished, that a memorial commemorating his honor and valor cannot show his face. Instead, it shows his leg, commemorating the Battle of Saratoga and all he did for his nation that day. It reads, " In memory of the most brilliant soldier of the Continental army, who was desperately wounded on this spot, winning for his countrymen the decisive battle of the American Revolution, and for himself the rank of Major General." He deserted the country that had learned to embrace him. He deserted the country that turned out to be the greatest country to ever exist. And he deserted those who believed in him, like his brothers on the battlefield and his children back home. Benedict Arnold was the first traitor in the history of the United States of America, and hopefully there will be no more. <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/56/JeffersonDavisBenedictArnoldTreasonCartoon1865.jpg/240px-JeffersonDavisBenedictArnoldTreasonCartoon1865.jpg><http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/e/e0/Arnold-boot.jpg/220px-Arnold-boot.jpg>

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<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/e/e0/Arnold-boot.jpg/220px-Arnold-boot.jpg>

Significance

Words cannot describe the significance of Benedict Arnold's impact on the United States of America. You could ask the majority of the people in the

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country, and the very thought of him will make some people gag. How someone could rise to the prowess of being a Revolutionary hero to the pit of being the most despised man in American history is beyond me.

On the positive side of his significance, Arnold exemplifies all characteristics of being a great General. Whether it's his bravery to throw himself and others into a situation with confidence shows his great ability as a military mind. Without the confidence to throw yourself into desperate situations, how could you possibly win over the respect and confidence of your men? His military mind is unmatched in regards to other Generals of the Continental Army. George Washington is revered in the United States as the "Golden Boy". In hindsight, he was nothing more than an average military leader. Washington overshadows Arnold all because of Arnold's inability to stay true to the Revolutionary cause. Lastly, Arnold wasn't afraid to stand up for what he believed in. Arnold had an ability to actively express his opinions, which most of the time were right. Even in the time he was "down and out" on himself, he attempted to help the cause by expressing his knowledgeable opinion, one thing many people don't have the ability to do. Arnold's contributions for the construction of the United States shouldn't be overlooked because what he actually did was truly astounding.

On the negative side, Arnold is significant because he is, quite clearly, one of the most hated men in American history. He is an example for all people in the world, not just the United States, as to what exactly you DO NOT want to be. Arnold shows the world why you shouldn't turn your back on your country, it tarnishes your name forever, and you will never have the chance to amend for your mistakes. Not one person should aspire to turn on your

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country; it makes you seem to be a coward and spineless. Arnold is also significant because it shows us how we must respect and treat our military with the utmost concern and respect. Albeit Arnold was frequently outspoken and a diva, he recognized early on that the early United States didn't properly recognize all of its prized military officers.

In the end, Arnold's reasoning for deserting the United States doesn't justify him doing it. Although he wasn't respected as the military genius he knew he was, Arnold was too easily tempted by money and by concrete things. His temptation for money and greed overshadowed the love and respect for his country that all men and women alike should have. Not just in the United States, but in all other corners of the Globe as well.

What-Ifs

What-If #1: What if Benedict Arnold hadn't changed sides?

Had Benedict Arnold not changed sides, he most certainly would have been revered up in the same ranks as George Washington. Washington's accomplishments are incredible, no doubt, but Arnold's are a close rival. The impact Arnold played during the war was something most people probably don't know. You could ask someone about Arnold, and they would probably call him "a traitor because he gave Britain information". Little do most people know is that he was in many opinions the greatest General of the Revolutionary War. If you look at how he climbed in the ranks of the Continental Army, you would see him go from just the Commander of his local militia into a Major General in the span of about three years. In today's military, that is something that takes years, decades even. Had Arnold

remained true to the United States, he would be revered as a hero, and up in the ranks with the likes of Franklin, Jefferson, Hancock, John Adams, Sam Adams, and Alexander Hamilton. He would be attributed with helping build this country not through speech or on a piece of paper like most of the Founding Fathers, but through his bravery and active duty in the Revolutionary War. Had he remained true to the United States, there would be memorials in his honor. For example, the one at Saratoga wouldn't be just an unspecified leg; it could be of him standing on a hill symbolizing his complete domination of the most crucial battle during the Revolutionary War. It could have been Arnold who would have strategized the defeat of the British at Yorktown, that would surely make him an American hero, wouldn't it? It's sad to see such a great General fall from fame in the manner of which Arnold did. He could've become the most iconic spectacle in all of American history. If only he could've had the vision that Washington had for this country, or Jefferson, for that matter, he quite literally could have been great.

What-If #2: What if Arnold's scheme had worked?

Had Arnold's plan of giving up West Point to the British worked, it could have completely changed the outcome of the war. West point was considered to be so valuable due to its prime location, right on the Hudson River. West Point was the most wanted object by the British. They saw West Point as a crucial port where they could control what went in and what came out. The spot was hand selected by Washington because of its great natural fortifications and geographic spot. Had the British succeeded in their attempt to capture West Point, momentum could have greatly shifted in their favor.

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Americans would be disappointed and low on morale because one of their own had plotted their downfall, and the British could have capitalized by crushing the demoralized Continental Army. To this day, we could be under British control, having our daily tea and crumpets along with having a monarchial body in our government (Weird to think about, huh?). This is why it was so important that Arnold was caught, however. That very moment in our history could have very well dictated the very outcome of the war. If not for Arnold's plan being foiled, The United States of America may not exist. Talk about something that would not only impact us, but