

Summary: The War for Independence

Patriots and Loyalists

In 1776, the colonies were at war against Britain. About half the colonists were Patriots. A smaller group of colonists were Loyalists. Many colonists were neutral. Many enslaved African Americans were Loyalists because Britain promised them freedom. About 5,000 African Americans fought for America's independence. Most American Indians were neutral or Loyalists because they believed the British would stop settlers from moving onto Indian lands.

The British army had good training and weapons. Soldiers in the Continental Army had few supplies and little money. But the Continental Army had some strengths. General George Washington led the Continental Army. He was a strong leader. American soldiers knew the land better than the British soldiers did. American soldiers believed strongly in their cause. For British soldiers, fighting was just a job.

Fighting the War

In 1776, the colonists drove the British from Boston. Later, American troops lost battles in New York City. In December 1776, Washington and his army crossed the Delaware River. They surprised the British and defeated them in Trenton, New Jersey.

Then the Continental Army won a major battle near Saratoga. This convinced France to help the Americans by sending supplies and soldiers.

By 1779, neither side was winning. The British invaded the South. But southern Patriot commanders started to win battles too. Francis Marion led surprise attacks. Nathanael Greene wore out the British by tricking them into chasing his army.

Finally in 1781, Washington's army surrounded the British at Yorktown, Virginia. Cornwallis surrendered. In 1783, the United States and Britain signed the Treaty of Paris to end the war. The United States had won its independence.

Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

Patriot *noun*, a colonist who wanted independence from Britain

Loyalist *noun*, a colonist who believed Britain should rule the colonies

neutral *adjective*, to not take a side in a conflict

treaty *noun*, an agreement between countries

After You Read

REVIEW Why did some people living in the colonies support the British? Underline the sentence that tells why some African Americans were Loyalists. Circle the sentence that tells why some American Indians were Loyalists.

REVIEW What led to Cornwallis's defeat? Draw a box around the sentence that tells what Francis Marion and Nathanael Greene did.