

<p>After the colonists had declared independence, few people thought the rebellion would last. A divided colonial population of about two and a half million people faced a nation of 10 million that was backed by a worldwide empire.</p> <p>Albigense Waldo worked as a surgeon at Valley Forge outside Philadelphia, which served as the site of the Continental Army’s camp during the winter of 1777–1778. While British troops occupied Philadelphia and found quarters inside warm homes, the underclothed and underfed Patriots huddled in makeshift huts in the freezing, snow-covered Pennsylvania woods. Waldo, who wrote of his stay at Valley Forge, reported</p>	<p>on what was a common sight at the camp. “Here comes a bowl of beef soup full of dead leaves and dirt. There comes a soldier. His bare feet are seen through his wornout shoes—his legs nearly naked from the tattered remains of an only pair of stockings—his Breeches [trousers] are not sufficient to cover his nakedness—his Shirt hanging in Strings—his hair disheveled—his face meager.” quoted in <i>Valley Forge, the Making of an Army</i></p> <p>The ordeal at Valley Forge marked a low point for General Washington’s troops, but even as it occurred, the Americans’ hopes of winning began to improve.</p>
<p>Main Idea</p>	

<p>The British had previously retreated from Boston in March 1776, moving the theater of war to the Middle states. As part of a grand plan to stop the rebellion by isolating New England, the British decided to seize New York City.</p> <p>Two brothers, General William Howe and Admiral Richard Howe, joined forces on Staten Island and sailed into New York harbor in the summer of 1776 with the largest British expeditionary force ever assembled— 32,000 soldiers, including thousands of German mercenaries, or soldiers who fight solely for money. The Americans called these troops Hessians, because many of them came from the German region of Hesse. Washington rallied 23,000 men to New York’s defense, but he was vastly outnumbered. Most of his troops were untrained recruits with poor equipment. The battle for New York ended in late August with an American retreat following heavy losses. Michael Graham, a Continental Army volunteer, described the chaotic withdrawal on August 27, 1776.</p> <p>“It is impossible for me to describe the confusion and horror of the scene that ensued: the artillery flying . . . over the horses’ backs, our men running in almost every direction, . . . [a]nd the enemy huzzahing when they took prisoners. . . . At the time, I could not account for how it was that our troops were so completely surrounded but have since understood there was another road across the ridge several miles above Flatbush that was left unoccupied by our troops. Here the British passed and got betwixt them and Brooklyn</p>	<p>unobserved. This accounts for the disaster of that day.” — quoted in <i>The Revolution Remembered: Eyewitness Accounts of the War for Independence</i>.</p> <p>By late fall, the British had pushed Washington’s army across the Delaware River into Pennsylvania. The vast majority of Washington’s men had either deserted or had been killed or captured. Fewer than 8,000 men remained under Washington’s command, and the terms of their enlistment were due to end on December 31. Washington desperately needed some kind of victory for his men to keep them from going home.</p> <p>Washington resolved to risk everything on one bold stroke set for Christmas night, 1776. In the face of a fierce storm, he led 2,400 men in small rowboats across the ice-choked Delaware River.</p> <p>By 8 o’clock the next morning, the men had marched nine miles through sleet and snow to the objective—Trenton, New Jersey, held by a garrison of Hessians. Lulled into confidence by the storm, most of the Hessians had drunk too much rum the night before and were still sleeping it off. In a surprise attack, the Americans killed 30 of the enemy and took 918 captives and six Hessian cannons.</p> <p>The Americans were rallied by another astonishing victory eight days later against 1,200 British stationed at Princeton. Encouraged by these victories, Washington marched his army into winter camp near Morristown, in northern New Jersey.</p>
<p>Main Idea</p>	

<p>As the muddy fields dried out in the spring of 1777, General Howe began his campaign to seize the American capital at Philadelphia. His troops sailed from New York to the head of Chesapeake Bay, and landed near the capital in late August. The Continental Congress fled the city while Washington's troops unsuccessfully tried to block the redcoats at nearby Brandywine Creek. The British captured Philadelphia, and the pleasure-loving General Howe settled in to enjoy the hospitality of the city's grateful Loyalists.</p> <p>Meanwhile, one of Howe's fellow British generals, General John "Gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne, convinced the London high command to allow him to pursue a complex scheme. Burgoyne's plan was to lead an army down a route of lakes from Canada to Albany, where he would meet Howe's troops as they arrived from New York City. According to Burgoyne's plan, the two generals would then join forces to isolate New England from the rest of the colonies.</p> <p>Burgoyne set out with 4,000 redcoats, 3,000 mercenaries, and 1,000 Mohawk under his command. His army had to haul 30 wagons containing 138 pieces of artillery along with extra</p>	<p>personal items, such as fine clothes and champagne. South of Lake Champlain, swamps and gullies, as well as thick underbrush, bogged down Burgoyne's army. Food supplies ran low.</p> <p>The Continental Congress had appointed General Horatio Gates to command the Northern Department of the Continental Army. Gates, a popular commander, gathered militiamen and soldiers from all over New York and New England. Burgoyne lost several hundred men every time his forces clashed with the Americans, such as when Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys attacked Burgoyne at Bennington, in what is now Vermont. Even worse, Burgoyne didn't realize that Howe was preoccupied with conquering and occupying Philadelphia and wasn't coming to meet him.</p> <p>Massed American troops finally surrounded Burgoyne at Saratoga, where he surrendered his battered army to General Gates on October 17, 1777. The surrender at Saratoga dramatically changed Britain's war strategy. From that time on, the British generally kept their troops along the coast, close to the big guns and supply bases of the British fleet.</p>
<p>Main Idea</p>	

<p>Still bitter from their defeat by the British in the French and Indian War, the French had secretly sent weapons to the Patriots since early 1776. The Saratoga victory bolstered French trust in the American army, and France now agreed to support the Revolution. The French recognized American independence and signed an alliance, or treaty of cooperation, with the Americans in February 1778. According to the terms, France agreed not to make peace with Britain unless Britain also recognized American independence.</p>	<p>It would take months for French aid to arrive. In the meantime, the British controlled New York and parts of New England. While British troops wintered comfortably in Philadelphia, Washington and his meager Continental Army struggled to stay alive amidst bitter cold and primitive conditions at winter camp in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Soldiers suffered from exposure and frostbite, and surgeons like Albigense Waldo worked constantly but often unsuccessfully to save arms and limbs from amputation. Washington's letters to the Congress and his friends were filled with reports of the suffering and endurance of his men.</p>
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