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AMERICAN REVOLUTION



Battles of Saratoga



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Cover Image Courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery



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Additional Resources and Activities can be found at:



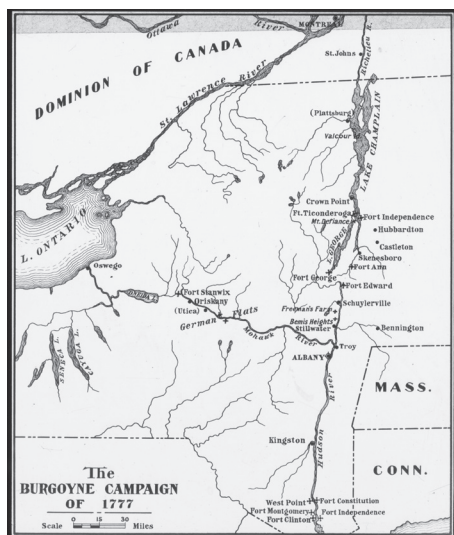
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Battles of Saratoga

History—it's all in the past, right? Wrong! Sometimes information that has been taught for over 200 years can be found to be inaccurate. When historians find new documents, they sometimes must revise what they thought to be true. This is the case with the Battles of Saratoga.

The British wanted to capture Albany. The original belief was that General John Burgoyne made a plan that involved having three armies come from three different directions to take Albany. This has been taught as the “Three Pronged Attack.” In recent years more primary source documents have been discovered that changed what historians understood about these battles and plans.

British General John Burgoyne and his army were in Canada. In 1777, General Burgoyne thought that he might be able to help the British in the war by capturing Lakes Champlain and George, and the upper Hudson River Valley, including the city of Albany. This would give the British control of the major waterways and cut off the New England Colonies from those south of New York.



*Courtesy:
New York
State Archives*

The Plan—How it Started

Prong 1: General Burgoyne was in Canada. He planned to lead his troops south, along Lake Champlain and the Hudson River Valley to Albany.

Prong 2: Colonel St. Leger would go east from Lake Ontario, through the Mohawk Valley.

The British would have the Americans almost surrounded and outnumbered. They were sure they could win.



General Burgoyne submitted a plan to King George. His plan included having Colonel Barry St. Leger bring his army from near Lake Ontario, through the Mohawk Valley to Albany. This plan was approved.

For over two centuries historians believed that Burgoyne's plan also included having British General William Howe, who was in New York City, bring his army north to Albany. As the story of the battles has been written about and taught, General Howe was often given much of the blame for the British loss at Saratoga because he took his army to Philadelphia, instead of Albany.

New research shows that this was not the case. General Howe submitted his own plan to King George before General Burgoyne submitted his plan. He wanted to move his army to Philadelphia. King George approved his plan. The documents show that General Burgoyne would have known that General Howe would not be in New York City, and that General Howe would not be included in General Burgoyne's plan. This was a two-pronged attack, not three!

The Battles—How it Ended

General Burgoyne's plan did not go the way he hoped.

- Colonel St. Leger was caught up in the siege at Fort Stanwix in Rome and did not join Burgoyne.
- General Burgoyne did not have the number of troops he expected, and he was running low on supplies.

19 September 1777—The Battle of Freeman's Farm

The British held the field, but they were stopped from advancing and taking General Gates' troops at Bemis Heights.

7 October 1777—The Battle of Bemus Heights

General Gates and the Americans defeated the British and Burgoyne is forced to surrender.

17 October 1777—General John Burgoyne Formally Surrenders to General Horatio Gates.

The victory at the Battles of Saratoga was a turning point in the war. Americans renewed their hope of having independence from Great Britain. This win convinced the French to back the Americans in the war, helping them to eventually defeat Great Britain.



Take a Closer Look

Student Name _____

Camera's were not invented until the 1800s, so there are no photographs of the American Revolution. Artists drew or painted historical events. Many times these artworks are not historically accurate. Art showing historical events is often made to look beautiful and to communicate ideas. Art was sometimes used to tell a story, rather than report facts.

Directions: Record your observations below. Use the information from the article to help you make inferences—what is happening? Who are the people? Why was this painting made? A larger response sheet is available through the online resources link on the front cover.



Artist: John Trumbull
Date: 1821
Courtesy: Yale
University Art Gallery



Observe:



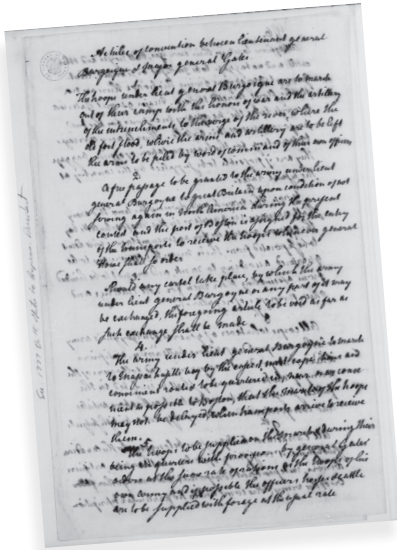
Infer:

Questions to gnaw on:

- Do you think the artist who created this painting was a Patriot or a Loyalist? Why?
- How might the artist's point of view affect how this event is depicted in the painting?
- How would knowing the artist's point of view help you as you analyze this painting?



Learning Activity



This is a page from the terms of surrender with General Burgoyne found in George Washington's papers at the *Library of Congress*.

Historians can use this document to find out what the Americans demanded from General Burgoyne as part of his surrender.

You can view a transcript of this document in our online resources for **Jr!** Archivists at <https://considerthesourceny.org/document/articles-convention-between-lieutenant-general-burgoyne-and-major-general-gates>

Use the information in the document to complete the chart below. In the boxes take notes on what the terms of surrender say about each group.



Courtesy: Library of Congress

Burgoyne	
Burgoyne's Troops	
Canadians	
Messengers	