A. The War Shifts to the South

The first half of the American Revolution mainly took place in the New England Colonies and the Middle Colonies. Key geographical sites, such as Boston, the Hudson River, and the capital at Philadelphia, were in that region. Patriot support was strong there and, from 1775 to 1778, the American military held its ground. The British controlled New York City, however, and had a sizeable military force there. They had also successfully defended their possessions in Canada. However, the British made little progress elsewhere in the north toward ending the American rebellion.

The British military tried a different strategy in 1779. They believed that the support of Loyalists (American colonists who supported the British) was strongest in the Southern Colonies. For decades these colonies had sent their cash crops, such as tobacco, hemp, indigo, sugar, and rice, to English markets. Plantation owners in the South had also been strong buyers of British imports. Also, the British thought that they might convince slaves to fight for the Mother Country in exchange for their freedom.

The British military decided to look for victory by concentrating new forces in the South. By the spring of 1779, they controlled the important harbors of Savannah, Georgia and Charleston, South Carolina and set up a blockade of naval ships along the Atlantic coastline to try to prevent new supplies from reaching the Southern Colonies.

B. British Strategy Backfires

The British military was effective at invading and controlling coastal harbor towns, but they found that it was very difficult to fight the Americans inland from the coast. It was hard to move troops, food, and military supplies through southern forests and swamps.

The British over-estimated Loyalist and slave support. Americans in the Southern Colonies were upset to see their harbor towns conquered, their trade routes blocked, their plantation homes threatened by the destruction of war, and the possible loss of their slaves. As the war continued, more and more Southern colonists turned to the Patriot cause.

Americans knew their way around southern woods and swamps. They only engaged in

“The Swamp Fox,” Francis Marion

battles with the British when the geography of the interior was in their favor. One of the best at this tactic was a South Carolinian named Francis Marion. Marion had experienced fighting in the forests during the French and Indian War. Now fighting for the Patriots, Marion earned the nickname “Swamp Fox” because he commanded a militia unit that hid in the wilderness and used clever hit-and-run tactics. Even though Marion and his men were often outnumbered, they were usually successful in these surprise attacks, which frustrated the British. Regular Continental Army generals like Nathaniel Greene, Horatio Gates, and Daniel Morgan also successfully battled the British with these tactics.

By 1781, the British realized they could not seize control of the Southern Colonies, so they ordered their troops there to the Virginia coast so they could be transported by ship back to New York City to reinforce the British troops there. The British troops were commanded by General Charles Cornwallis.

C. Victory at Yorktown

George Washington had been stationing his units of the Continental Army near New York City from 1779 to 1781 to keep British forces bottled up there. When Washington received reports that the British troops were moving out of the lower South and heading to Virginia, he set a trap that eventually won the American Revolution.
First he ordered his Southern generals to chase the British north as they retreated. Next he asked the French navy to sail to the Virginia coast to block the British fleet from entering Chesapeake Bay where the British hoped to resupply their southern army. Then Washington sent his Patriot troops 300 miles south to Virginia. Along the way, he faked some military maneuvers to keep the British guessing his real intent—to trap the British at Chesapeake Bay.

By the fall of 1781, the trap was set at Yorktown, Virginia. Cornwallis and his British troops were stuck there on the shores of the bay between the French navy, two units of the American army, and a large unit of the French army under the command of the young Marquis de Lafayette. The French alliance had truly proven to be of value to the American cause.

After several weeks of fighting, Cornwallis was forced to surrender his 8,000 men to General Washington on October 19, 1781. The battle was the final straw of the British war effort. Britain was tired of war and citizens there elected a pro-American Parliament the next spring and started negotiations to end the Revolutionary War.

**D. The Peace Treaty**

Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and John Jay were the American delegates sent overseas to negotiate a peace treaty. The talks were held in the French capital and the treaty became known as the Treaty of Paris of 1783.

The treaty called for the payment of debts owed by Americans to the British before the war. Also, Loyalists were allowed to leave the colonies without punishment. Many fled to England or Canada, some with their slaves.

America won two important points, however. First, America was recognized as a new country, truly independent of Britain. Second, the size of the new country was huge. Britain was allowed to keep her Canadian possessions. However, the new United States would not only own the lands of the original thirteen colonies, it would also control the lands west of the Appalachians all the way west to the Mississippi River.

**Revolutionary War in the South, 1779-1781**

![Map of Revolutionary War in the South]

**Fun Fact Feature**

France was America's first ally in the Revolutionary War. Over a century later, America returned the favor, helping France during the Great War (World War I). Who did General Pershing, the American commander, remember when he landed his troops in France to help in 1917?
1. Where did most of the fighting take place in the first half of the Revolutionary War?
   a. New England and Middle Colonies
   b. Canada
   c. Southern Colonies
   d. west of the Appalachian Mountains

Which sentence best supports the answer?

2. Where did the British hope to claim victory in the Revolutionary War after 1778?
   a. New England and Middle Colonies
   b. Canada
   c. Southern Colonies
   d. west of the Appalachian Mountains

Which sentence best supports the answer?

3. The British hoped they would find support for their cause in the Southern Colonies from which group of Americans?
   a. Patriots
   b. people who lived in the woods and swamps
   c. Loyalists
   d. French

Which sentence best supports the answer?

4. In which areas of the Southern Colonies did the British mostly maintain military control?
   a. the swamps and woods of the interior
   b. the coastal cities
   c. the areas around Chesapeake Bay
   d. west of the Appalachian Mountains

Which sentence best supports the answer?

5. Which American was nicknamed “The Swamp Fox”?
   a. George Washington
   b. Nathaniel Greene
   c. Charles Cornwallis
   d. Francis Marion

Which sentence best supports the answer?

6. Where was the British army, under Cornwallis, trapped in 1781 and forced to surrender?
   a. New York City
   b. Charleston
   c. Yorktown
   d. Savannah

Which sentences best support the answer?

7. Which country greatly assisted the Americans during the Revolutionary War and was the home of the Marquis de Lafayette?
   a. France
   b. Spain
   c. Canada
   d. Britain

Which sentences best support the answer?

8. The peace treaty that ended the Revolutionary War was negotiated at the capitol of which country?
   a. France
   b. Britain
   c. United States
   d. Canada

Which sentence best supports the answer?

9. What became the western boundary of the United States at the end of the Revolutionary War?
   a. Canada
   b. Mississippi River
   c. Appalachian Mountains
   d. Chesapeake Bay

Which sentence best supports the answer?
Written Response Question

10. Use complete sentences to explain why the British decided to focus their war effort in the Southern Colonies midway through the Revolutionary War. Why did this fail?

Fun Fact Finale

France was America’s first ally in the Revolutionary War. Over a century later, America helped France during the Great War (World War I).

General Pershing, the American WWI commander, remembered the French commander who helped America at Yorktown during the Revolutionary War. When he landed his troops in France to help, he declared: “Lafayette, we are here!”