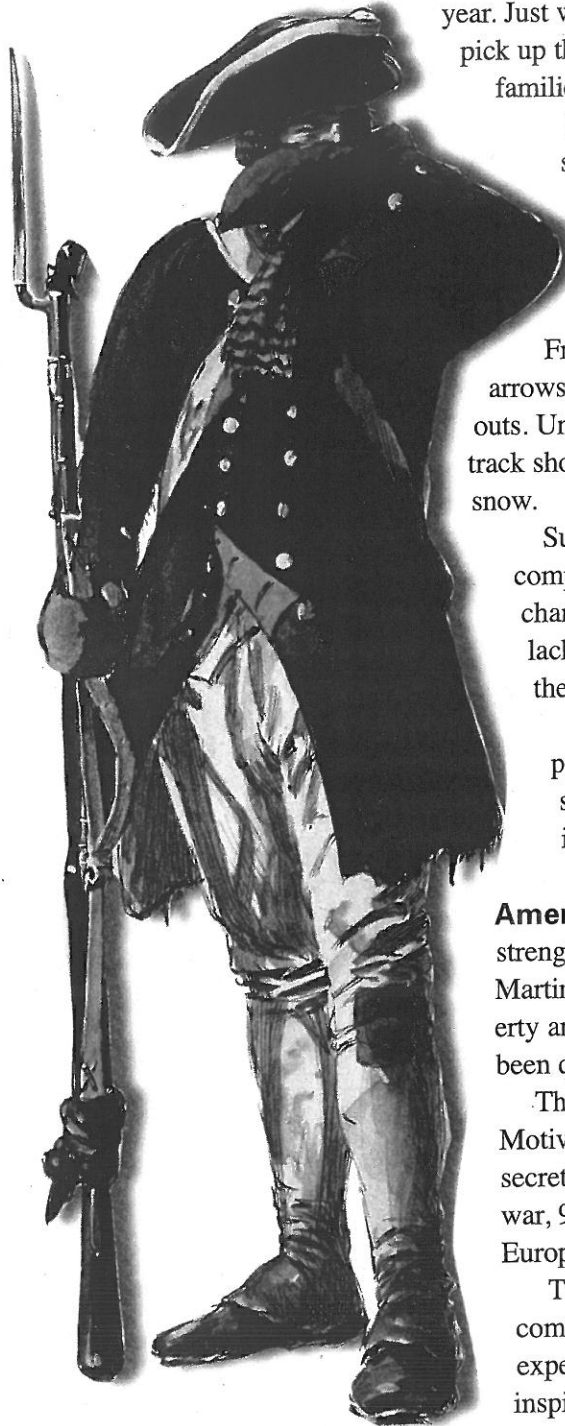


## 7.2 American Strengths and Weaknesses

At first, the Continental soldier was poorly trained and poorly equipped. He suffered a lack of gunpowder, rifles, food, and clothing. Some men had only spears or axes for weapons.



**T**he Patriots began their revolution in a weak position. They had a hastily organized, untrained army and a tiny navy. Their weaknesses were far more obvious than their strengths.

**American Weaknesses** The Continental Army was always short of men. General Washington never had more than 20,000 troops at one time and place. Many soldiers enlisted for six months or a year. Just when they were learning how to fight, they would pick up their muskets and go home to tend to their farms and families.

Few Americans were trained for battle. Some could shoot well enough from behind a tree. But when facing a mass of well-disciplined redcoats, they were likely to turn and run.

The army was plagued by shortages. Guns and gunpowder were so scarce that Benjamin Franklin suggested arming the troops with bows and arrows. Food shortages forced soldiers to beg for hand-outs. Uniforms were scarce as well. In winter, one could track shoeless soldiers by their bloody footprints in the snow.

Such shortages outraged Washington. But when he complained to the Continental Congress, nothing changed. Congress, the new nation's only government, lacked the power to raise money for supplies by taxing the states (the former colonies).

In desperation, Congress printed paper money to pay for the war. But the value of this money dropped so low that merchants demanded to be paid in gold instead. And like everything else, gold was scarce.

**American Strengths** Still, the Americans had strengths. One was the patriotism of people like Joseph Martin, who willingly gave their lives to defend their liberty and their homes. Without them, the war would have been quickly lost.

The Americans also received help from overseas. Motivated by their old hatred of the English, the French secretly aided the rebels. During the first two years of the war, 90 percent of the Americans' gunpowder came from Europe, mostly from France.

The Americans' other great strength was their commander. George Washington was more than an experienced military leader. He was also a man who inspired courage and confidence. In the dark days to come, it was Washington who would keep the ragtag Continental army together.

### 7.3 British Strengths and Weaknesses

**B**ritain, in contrast to the American colonies, entered the war with many advantages. But looks can be deceiving, and the British encountered many problems as well.

**British Strengths** With a professional army of 50,000 troops, British forces greatly outnumbered the Continental Army. In addition, George III hired 30,000 **mercenaries**. These hired soldiers were known as Hessians because they came from a part of Germany called Hesse-Cassel. The British were also able to recruit many Loyalists, African Americans, and Native Americans into their forces.

British and Hessian troops were well trained in European military tactics. They excelled in large battles fought by a mass of troops on open ground. They also had far more experience than Americans at firing artillery.

The British forces were also well supplied. Compared to the pitifully equipped Continental Army, they seldom lacked for food, uniforms, weapons, or ammunition.

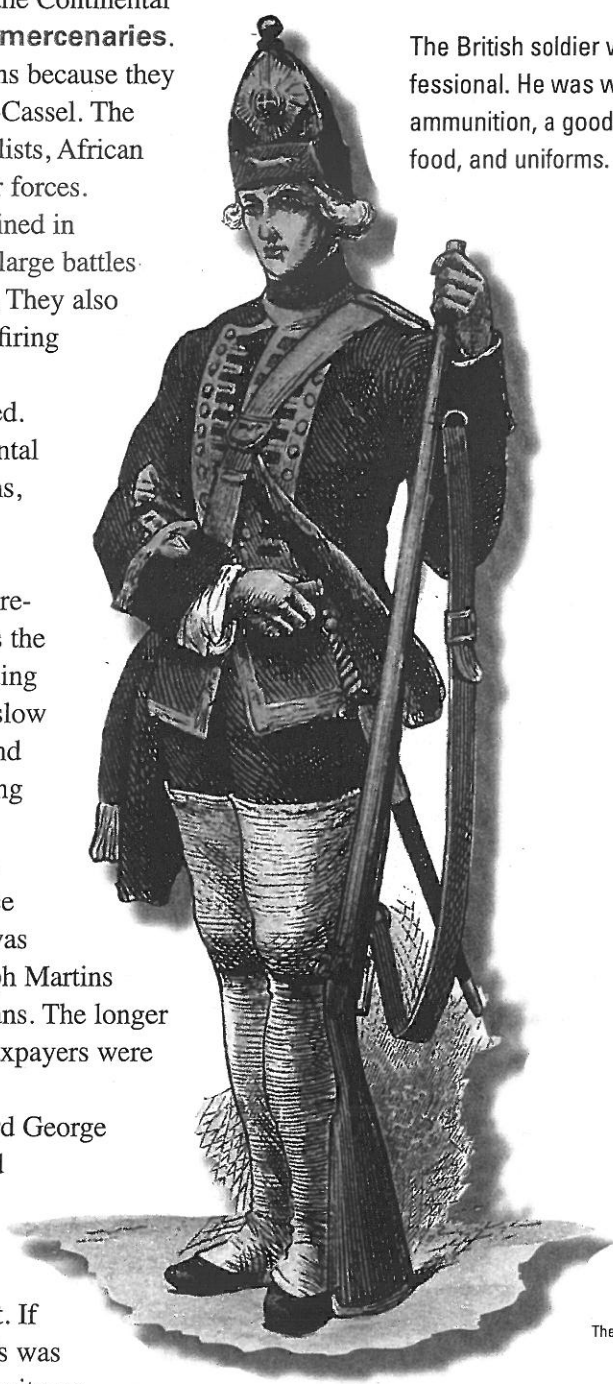
**British Weaknesses** Even so, the war presented Britain with huge problems. One was the distance between Britain and America. Sending troops and supplies across the Atlantic was slow and costly. News of battles arrived in England long after they had occurred, making planning difficult.

A second problem was that King George and his ministers were never able to convince the British people that defeating the rebels was vital to Britain's future. There were no Joseph Martins in England volunteering to fight the Americans. The longer the war dragged on, the less happy British taxpayers were about paying its heavy costs.

A third problem was poor leadership. Lord George Germain, the man chosen to run the war, had no real sense of how to defeat the rebels. How could he? He had never set foot in America. Nor did it occur to him to go see for himself what his army was up against. If he had, Germain might have realized that this was not a war that could be won by conquering a city or two. To end the revolution, his forces would have to crush the Patriots' will to fight, state by state. Instead, Germain kept changing plans and generals, hoping that some combination of the two would bring him an easy victory.

**mercenaries** professional soldiers who fight for anyone who will pay them

The British soldier was a trained professional. He was well equipped with ammunition, a good musket, adequate food, and uniforms.



The Granger Collection, New York



This engraving shows Francis Marion crossing the Pee Dee River in South Carolina. Marion, known as the Swamp Fox because of his tactic of ambushing the British from the marshes of the South, never led a force of more than 70 men.

**guerrillas** soldiers who operate on their own and are not part of a regular army

## 7.7 The War Goes South

After failing to conquer any state in the North, the British changed strategies yet again. Their new plan was to move the war to the South. There, they believed, thousands of Loyalists were just waiting to join the king's cause.

Clinton began his "southern campaign" with a successful attack on Savannah, Georgia. From Georgia, he moved on to take control of North and South Carolina. At that point, Clinton returned to New York City, leaving Lord Charles Cornwallis to run the war in the South.

### Saving the South Cornwallis

soon learned that he did not really control the Carolinas after all.

**Guerrillas**—soldiers who are not part of a regular army—kept the American cause alive. One of them was Francis Marion, who was also known as the "Swamp Fox." Marion's band of rebels harassed the British with hit-and-run raids. Then they faded into the swamps and forests like foxes.

Late in 1780, Washington sent General Nathaniel Greene to slow the British advance through the South. Greene's army was too small to meet Cornwallis in a major battle. Instead, Greene led Cornwallis's troops on an exhausting chase through the southern backcountry. He wrote of his strategy, "We fight, get beat, rise, and fight again."

Greene's strategy worked wonderfully. In April 1781, Cornwallis wrote that he was "quite tired of marching about the country." He moved his army to Yorktown, a sleepy tobacco port on Chesapeake Bay in Virginia, for a good rest.

**A Trap at Yorktown** By the time Cornwallis was settling into Yorktown, France had sent nearly 5,000 troops to join Washington's army in New York. In August, Washington learned that another 3,000 troops were scheduled to arrive soon in 29 French warships.

Washington used this information to set a trap for Cornwallis. Secretly, he moved his army south to Virginia. When they arrived, they joined the French and surrounded Yorktown on land with more than 16,000 troops.

Meanwhile, the French warships showed up just in time to seal off the entrance to Chesapeake Bay. Their appearance was a crucial help to the Americans. Now Cornwallis was cut off from the British navy and any hope of rescue by sea.





The trap was sprung on October 6, 1781. Joseph Martin watched as a flag was raised to signal American and French gunners to open fire on Yorktown. "I confess I felt a secret pride swell in my heart," he wrote, "when I saw the 'star-spangled banner' waving majestically." The shelling went on for days, until "most of the guns in the enemy's works were silenced."

**Cornwallis Surrenders** With Yorktown exploding around him, at first Cornwallis clung to the hope that the British navy would come to his rescue. When no ships arrived, he finally agreed to surrender.

On October 19, 1781, American and French troops formed two long lines that stretched for more than a mile along the road to Yorktown—the French on one side, the Americans on the other. The two lines could not have looked more different. The French were dressed in elegant uniforms that gleamed with gold and silver braid in the afternoon sun. The Americans' uniforms—and not everyone even had uniforms—were patched and faded. Behind the lines stood civilians who had traveled for miles to witness this glorious event.

After hours of waiting, the crowd watched as 8,000 British troops left Yorktown to lay down their arms. The defeated troops moved "with slow and solemn step." They were accompanied by a slow tune known as "The World Turned Upside Down." This same sad tune had been played at Saratoga after the British surrender.

Cornwallis did not take part in this ceremony, saying that he was ill. In reality, the British commander could not bear to surrender publicly to an army that he looked down on as "a contemptible and undisciplined rabble [mob]." While Cornwallis sulked in his tent, his men surrendered their arms. Many of them wept bitter tears.

To the watching Americans, there was nothing sad about that day. "It was a noble sight to us," wrote Martin, "and the more so, as it seemed to promise a speedy conclusion to the contest."

This painting by John Trumbull shows the British surrender at Yorktown on October 19, 1781. At the center is General Benjamin Lincoln leading the British. On the right is General Washington in front of the American flag. On the left are French, Polish, and Prussian soldiers.

## The Revolutionary War -- NBE #15

1. In order to be successful, a "good" army needs to be **well-staffed** (have lots of soldiers), **well-equipped**, **well-trained**, **well-funded** (backed by money), **have a reason to fight** (a purpose or cause), **have support from allies**, and **have excellent leadership**. Read pages 88-89 in the textbook. Then fill out the report card for both the Continental and British armies.

### Continental Army (the Patriots) Report Card

|                  | Grade (A-F) | Reason(s) ***provide textual evidence to support your grade |
|------------------|-------------|---|
| Well-staffed     |             |   |
| Well-equipped    |             |   |
| Well-trained     |             |   |
| Well-funded      |             |   |
| Reason to fight  |             |   |
| Support (allies) |             |   |
| Leadership       |             |   |

### British Army Report Card

|                  | Grade (A-F) | Reason(s) ***provide textual evidence to support your grade |
|------------------|-------------|---|
| Well-staffed     |             |   |
| Well-equipped    |             |   |
| Well-trained     |             |   |
| Well-funded      |             |   |
| Reason to fight  |             |   |
| Support (allies) |             |   |
| Leadership       |             |   |

2. Read pages 96-97, and answer the following:

A. What is a *guerilla*?

B. How did guerilla warfare help the Patriot cause?

C. How did Nathaniel Greene help the Patriot cause?

D. Use the map (below) and the key (in the map) to draw a visual representation of the final battle of the Revolutionary War

