

Summary: The War in the North

Washington's First Battles

The Continental Army was not as large or strong as the British army when the War for Independence started. British soldiers had better weapons and training. But the Americans had a great leader, George Washington. They were on their own land, which made it easier to plan attacks and defend themselves.

The Americans forced the British to leave Boston in the spring of 1776. In August, the British won the Battle of Long Island in New York. The Americans retreated and marched into Pennsylvania. George Washington planned an attack on the British in Trenton, New Jersey. He wanted to win a battle so his soldiers would not give up. On the night of December 25, the Americans rowed across the Delaware River. They attacked at dawn. The soldiers in Trenton were German mercenaries. They were still sleepy from celebrating Christmas, and the soldiers surprised them. The Americans won the battle and took almost 1,000 prisoners. The Patriots were very happy about this victory.

A Turning Point

The British marched into New York from Canada. They met the Americans at Saratoga. It was a hard battle, but the Americans won. After the Battle of Saratoga, France decided to help the Americans. They sent money, soldiers, and a navy. Later, Spain, the Netherlands, and Russia also helped the Americans.

The British captured Philadelphia and stayed there for the winter of 1777. The Americans stayed in tents at Valley Forge, about 20 miles away. Soldiers slept on the cold ground, and many men had no shoes. There was not enough food. Many soldiers died. Washington worked hard to get more food and uniforms. In the spring, Friedrich von Steuben, a German soldier, joined the army at Valley Forge. He trained the Americans to march and use their weapons better. They became better soldiers because of their training.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

retreat *verb*, to move away from the enemy

mercenary *noun*, a soldier who is paid to fight for a foreign country

victory *noun*, the defeat of an enemy



After You Read

REVIEW Why did Washington decide to attack Trenton? Circle the sentence that tells why George Washington wanted to win in Trenton.

REVIEW What happened at Valley Forge to make the Continental Army better soldiers? Underline two sentences that tell who joined the soldiers at Valley Forge and how he helped them become better soldiers.