

LESSON TITLE:

The Turning Point



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Course: History of the United States and New York State (Social Studies)

Grade Level: Middle School (6th through 8th Grade)

Time: 45 minutes

Developed by: Peter Arruda, Cobleskill-Richmondville Central School District

Funding Acknowledgment

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Lesson Objective:

- Students will be able to analyze how the Northern Campaign of 1777 failed for the British and explain how the Battle of Saratoga impacted the course of the American Revolutionary War through French involvement.
- Students will be able to summarize the meaning of the idiom “turning point” and apply it to the Battle of Saratoga.

NYS Social Studies Standards:

This lesson is directly linked with NYS K-8 Social Studies Framework Standard 7.3d (Indicator #2):

- Students will examine the strategic importance of the New York colony. Students will examine the American victory at the Battle of Saratoga in terms of its effects on American and British morale and on European views on American prospects for victory in the Revolution.

NYS Next Generation Learning Standards for Literacy:

This lesson is directly aligned with two NYS Next Generation Learning Standards for Literacy:

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including content-specific vocabulary related to history/social studies. (NYS Reading Standard RH4 in History/Social Studies for grades 6-8).
- Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts. (NYS Reading Standard RH7 in History/Social Studies for grades 6-8).

Prior to this lesson:

Before completing this lesson, students will have compared the British and Continental Armies, highlighting the difference in leadership, training, supplies, and most importantly, what each is fighting for. This learning contributes to this lesson in the sense that it provides students with a framework for the War of Independence. Further, students will have already examined the Siege of Boston, the British withdrawal from Boston, and the subsequent British capture of New York City.



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Procedure:

1. The teacher should begin the lesson by distributing the reading titled “The Turning Point” to students. Once students have the article, the teacher can point out the title and ask students to brainstorm ways they have heard this phrase used before. Students may then be called on to provide answers and/or specific examples of “turning points” (ex. students may discuss a turning point in their soccer game). The teacher should attempt to solicit a response along the lines of “the point in which things begin to change.” If required, the teacher can provide a simple but literal example by walking briskly in one direction across the room, making a 180° turn, and walking back in the other direction. Students can then identify the place where the teacher made the turn as the turning point.
2. The teacher should then facilitate a reading of the article. Student volunteers can be selected to read aloud while others follow along. After reading the text under the first heading “Background and Context,” the teacher should consolidate understanding by having students stop and work with a nearby partner to answer questions #1 and #2. In addition, students should use colored pencils at this time to label on their map who controlled Boston, Philadelphia, and New York City (Blue = American; Red = British) in 1777. To ensure student understanding before moving on, the teacher should ask student volunteers to share their answers in a whole class setting.
3. Next, the instructor will facilitate as different student volunteers continue the reading for the heading titled “The Plan—Three Armies Invade New York.” After reading the text, students should work with their partners to label their maps with arrows indicating the planned movement of the three British commanders (Burgoyne, St. Ledger, and Howe). Then moving on to the following heading titled “What Really Happens,” students can answer question #3 with their partner. Taking the time to consolidate understanding by reviewing the map and question #3, the teacher will indicate that these were the circumstances that led to the Battle of Saratoga.
4. The teacher will then read aloud the final section of the text with the heading “The Battle of Saratoga and its Impact.” Students will then complete the remaining questions (#4 through #6) independently. Moving around the room, the teacher will provide guidance to students who need help with the questions. After sufficient time has passed, the teacher will review and collect the questions.

Lesson Alterations and Accommodations:

There are several alterations that could be applied to this lesson as the teacher sees fit to adjust for time or student ability. Primarily, the teacher may choose for students to complete the final questions with their partner. This provides for more peer-to-peer interaction and modeling, which is a necessary step toward independence and agency. However, if this alteration is made in the lesson the teacher must also consider how to evaluate and assess students individually. This can be done simply by asking question #6 again as a bell ringer question the following class period.



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Assessment:

By collecting and evaluating the final three questions of the worksheet, the teacher can make direct connections to students' comprehension in alignment with the lesson objectives. The following grading scale is suggested:

3 of 3 questions correct	3 pts
2 of 3 questions correct	2 pts
1 of 3 questions correct	1 pt
0 of 3 questions correct	0 pts

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

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The Turning Point

DIRECTIONS:

Read the text below and complete the Mapping the Battles of Saratoga Worksheet.

Link to the virtual tour: <https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=aSCa1YQymVH>



Breymann's
Redoubt, 2005

Credit: Private
Collection
©Don Troiani

Background and Context

In the first two years of the American Revolutionary War (1775-1776), the Continental Army had few victories against the British. Though the Americans were able to create a patriot stronghold in Boston, the Continental Army struggled after the British captured New York City in July 1776. Suffering from a shortage of supplies such as uniforms, muskets, gunpowder, and medicine, the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia had little money to buy these supplies from other countries.

Representatives from the new United States traveled to France to convince the French King, King Louis XVI, to provide them with supplies and a loan. Still recovering from the French and Indian War themselves, France was only able to provide some muskets, cannons on loan, gunpowder, tents, and some other equipment. However, the French needed to keep their involvement limited, because their support of the Americans might pull them into another war with the British. In addition, the French were unsure if the new United States would even last. If the French gave a large loan to the Second Continental Congress and the Americans lost the war, such a loan would never be repaid.

Nevertheless, this would all change in the fall of 1777 when the British planned an attack on New York that they hoped would swiftly end the American Rebellion. Originally planned in London, the Northern Campaign of 1777 was designed to take control of the Hudson and Mohawk Valleys, take Albany, and from there, if ordered, possibly even threaten the New England, Middle, and Southern Colonies.



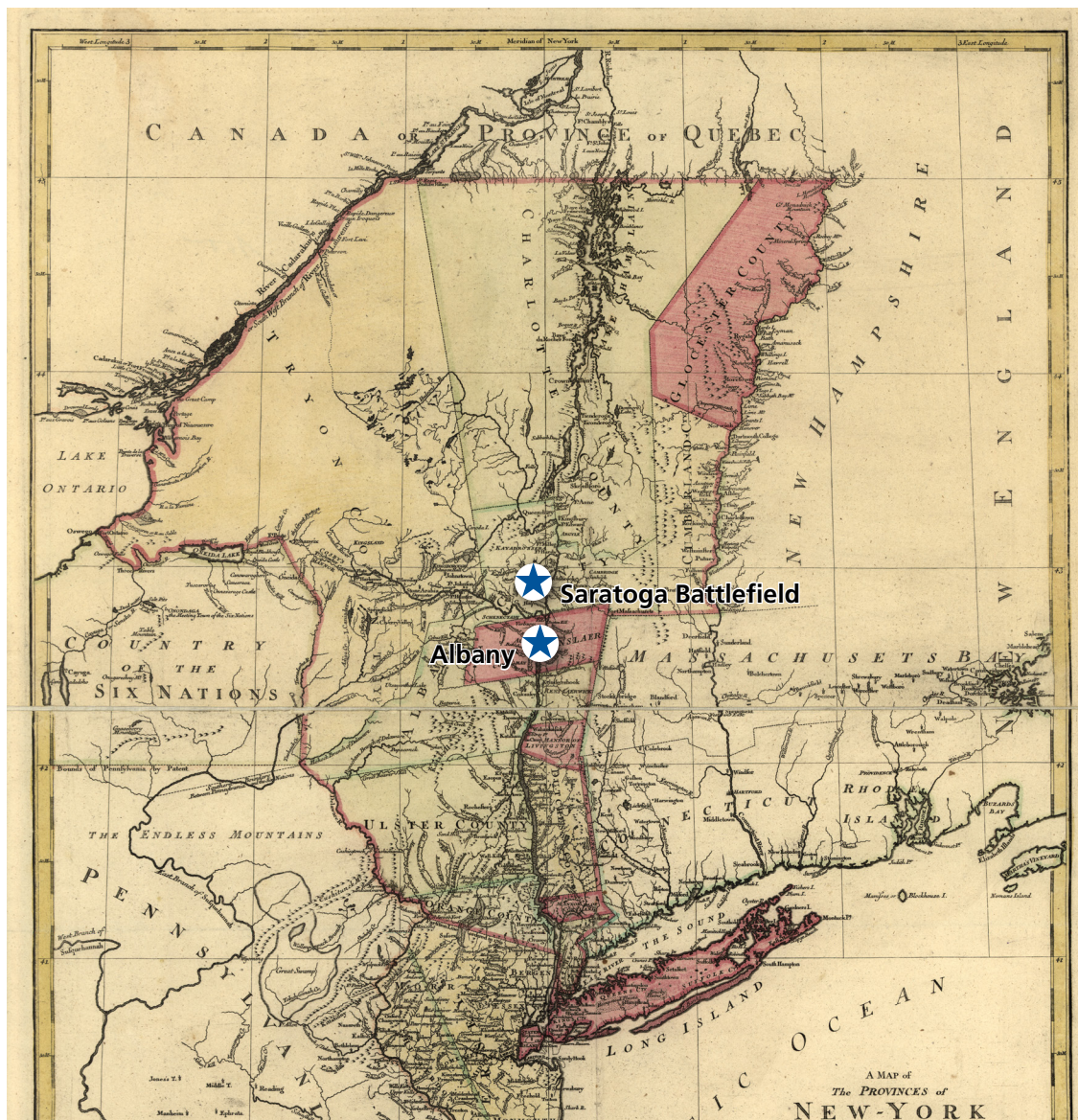
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THE TURNING POINT

The Plan—Three Armies Invade New York

To accomplish this plan of controlling New York's major waterways, a large British force would march south from Canada (Quebec and Montreal) to take control of Lake Champlain, Lake George, and the northern Hudson River. This would be led by British General John Burgoyne. Further, the plan called for British General William Howe to lead a force up the Hudson River from New York City to draw American forces south into the Hudson Highlands. A third force of British troops would attack along the Mohawk River and serve as a diversion. This would be led by British Lieutenant Colonel Barry St. Ledger.

If successful, the British would take control of Albany, New York. From there, the British could control the Hudson River by limiting communication between the colonies, reducing the movement of American troops and supplies, and restricting any trade. Further, Albany provided a strategic location from which the British could launch further attacks in nearly any direction.



Detail of a map from 1777 showing location of Saratoga Battlefield and Albany, NY.

Image Source: Library of Congress <https://www.loc.gov/item/74692641/>

THE TURNING POINT



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What Really Happens

The strategy created by the British in the Northern Campaign did not go as planned. First, General William Howe, stationed in New York City, amended his part of the plan by attacking the American capitol, Philadelphia. This drew American attention away from New York City as he then sent a smaller force up the Hudson River to assist General John Burgoyne. Second, the diversionary attack led by Barry St. Ledger met with disaster. After failing to overcome American troops at Fort Stanwix along the Mohawk River, Barry St. Ledger was forced to retreat to Canada. Now alone in the campaign, British General John Burgoyne continued his march south toward Albany where he met American resistance at Saratoga.

The Battle of Saratoga and its Impact

Led by the American General Horatio Gates, American forces created fortifications overlooking the Hudson River to block Burgoyne's path to Albany. The two armies clashed at Freeman's Farm on September 19th. By the end of the day, the British had pushed the Americans from the battlefield. Making a second attempt to push around the American lines on October 7th, Burgoyne's army was forced to retreat about 8 miles north. After waiting for reinforcements, the British army became surrounded and was forced to surrender on October 17th, 1777.

With the victory at Saratoga, the Americans received a major boost to their morale. Further, the victory convinced France to formally recognize the United States as an independent country. Within months, France declared war against Great Britain and soon started providing larger amounts of much needed supplies to the Continental Army. The French also began sending experienced military officers to provide training and support to the Americans. However, most importantly, the French sent their navy to fight the British at sea, something the Americans had struggled to do.

In addition to the French, Spain and the Netherlands soon joined in the war against the British. By 1778, the British were fighting several wars against multiple countries in different places in the world. The British would be forced to fight in Europe, the Caribbean, Africa, and even as far away as India. With their soldiers now spread out across the globe, the British would have fewer resources to fight the American rebellion. None of this would have happened without the American victory in the Battle of Saratoga. Thus, the Battle of Saratoga is often called "the Turning Point of the Revolutionary War."



Cannon overlooking the Hudson River at Saratoga National Historical Park

Credit: National Park Service



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THE TURNING POINT

DIRECTIONS: Use the text on the previous pages to answer the following questions.

1. Why did the United States send representatives to France?

2. Why didn't the French provide more supplies for the Continental Army during the early years of the American Revolutionary War?

3. What is one reason why the British Northern Campaign did not go as planned?

4. What things did France supply after the American victory at Saratoga?

5. Why did the British have fewer resources to fight the Americans after Saratoga?

6. Why do you think the American victory at Saratoga is called the "turning point" of the American Revolutionary War?

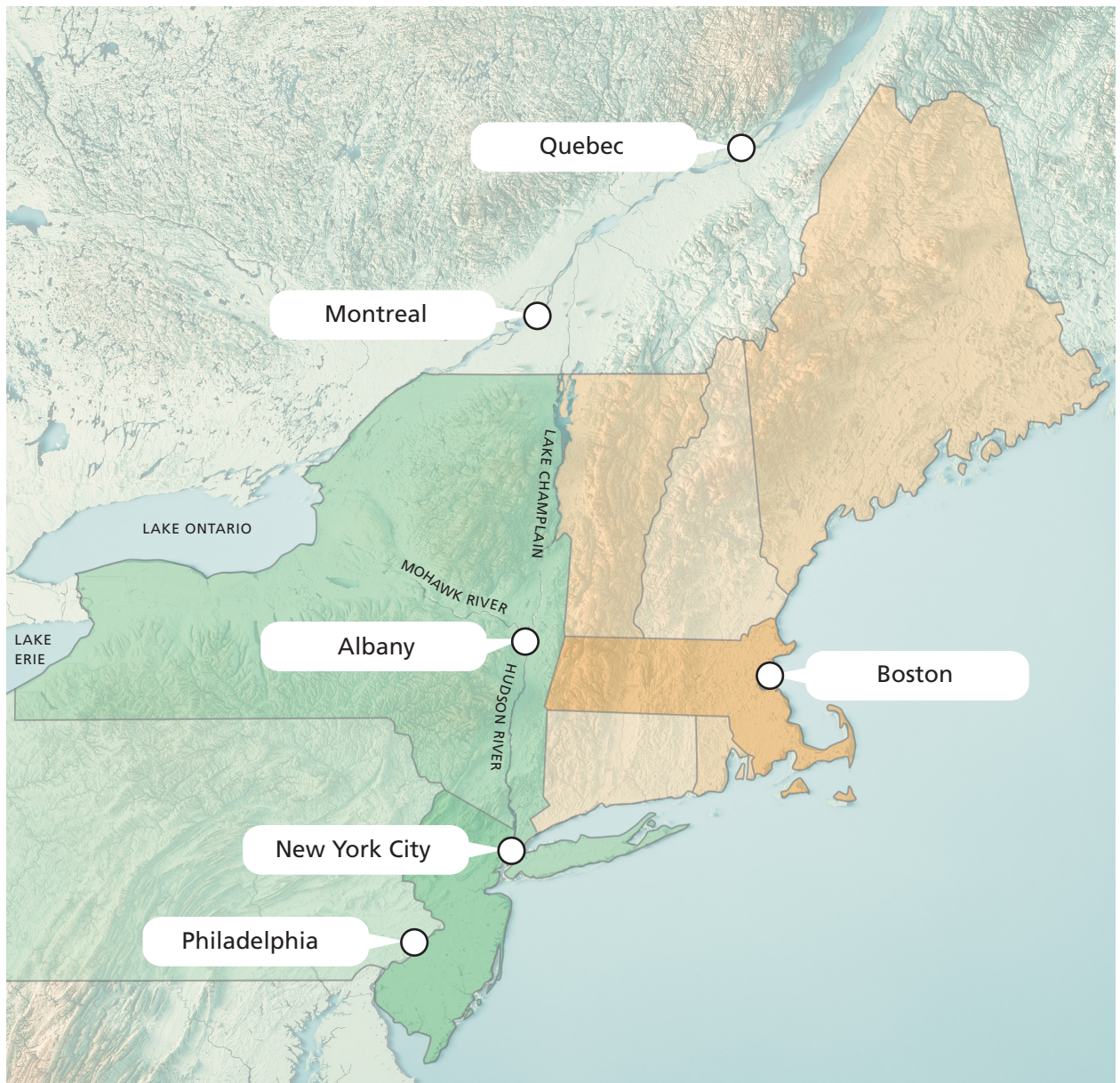
THE TURNING POINT

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Mapping the Battles of Saratoga

DIRECTIONS:

1. Use colored pencils to fill in bubbles for the following cities on the map and who controlled them (Blue = American; Red = British) in 1777: Albany, Boston, Montreal, New York City, Philadelphia, and Quebec.
2. After reading "The Plan—Three Armies Invade New York," work with your partner to label the map with arrows indicating the planned movement of the three British commanders (Burgoyne, St. Ledger, and Howe).





Mapping the Battles of Saratoga—KEY

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