

0. DECEPTION - Story Preface

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During the American Revolutionary War, West Point - located on the Hudson River - was an important location for both sides. If British forces controlled it, they would have water access all the way to their forces in Canada (via the Hudson, Lake George and Lake Champlain) and could split the Colonies in two. If the Patriots controlled it, they could prevent the Redcoats from gaining the upper hand. This image, depicting West Point looking north up the Hudson, helps us to understand why the area was known as the "Key to the Continent."

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Andre was an Adjunct General to the British army. It was his job to help the Crown win the war.

Benedict Arnold's actions, however, are hard to understand. Not only did he leak intelligence to the other side, by 1780 he lobbied hard for the command of West Point. He wanted to be able to give-up the fort, and its 3,000 men, to the enemy.

When General Washington gave Arnold what he asked for, the Commander-in-Chief had no idea what his friend was plotting. A strategically significant American stronghold on the Hudson River, [West Point](#) in British hands would have split the colonies in two.

[Writing in code](#) to Andre, Benedict Arnold proposed his plan: He would surrender West Point to the British for 20,000 pounds. (Follow this link to Arnold's [decoded letter](#).)

Knowing [Arnold](#) had already scattered his troops (to diminish West Point's defenses), [General Clinton](#) (who had taken over the British high command from [General Howe](#)) made ready to capture West Point.

By September 19, 1780 all that remained were final negotiations between Andre and Arnold.

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