

0. CORNWALLIS SURRENDERS - Story Preface

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This image—online via [Wikimedia Commons](#)—depicts the British surrender at Yorktown in 1781. John Trumbull created this large painting which is featured at the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol Building. The “Architect of the Capitol” provides [more detail about this commemorative work](#) which is known as *Surrender of Lord Cornwallis*:

“In the center of the scene, American General Benjamin Lincoln appears mounted on a white horse. He extends his right hand toward the sword carried by the surrendering British officer, who heads the long line of troops that extends into the background. To the left, French officers appear standing and mounted beneath the white banner of the royal Bourbon family. On the right are American officers beneath the Stars and Stripes; among them are the Marquis de Lafayette and Colonel Jonathan Trumbull, the brother of the painter. General George Washington, riding a brown horse, stayed in the background because Lord Cornwallis himself was not present for the surrender.” Click on the image for a full-page view.

As [Cornwallis](#) moved north, his troops were demoralized and weakened. By the time [he reached](#) the Virginia village of Yorktown, England's second-in-command had made a series of blunders.

General Washington, meanwhile, was coordinating his scattered land and sea forces. With American [infantry](#) and [artillery](#), French naval power and land forces, Washington surrounded the Redcoats and laid siege for twenty days. When the battle at Yorktown was [fought](#), it would be the last of the war. By October 17, 1781, Cornwallis sent a message to Washington:

I propose a cessation of hostilities for twenty-four hours, and that two officers may be appointed by each side, to meet at Mr. Moore's house, to settle terms for the surrender of the posts of York and Gloucester.

Washington agreed:

An ardent desire to spare the further effusion of Blood, will readily incline me to listen to such terms for the surrender of your Posts of York and Gloucester, as are admissible.

By the next day, October 18, 1781, Cornwallis was ready to talk about complete capitulation:

I agree to open a treaty of capitulation upon the basis of the garrisons of York and Gloucester...

Washington proposed the terms of surrender and gave Cornwallis two hours to accept. If the British rejected, the battle would resume. Cornwallis agreed to the terms.

Although the Treaty of Paris, formally ending the war, would not be signed for two more years, the fighting stopped. (Follow these links to view the original signatures and seals, treaty negotiating map and land mass of the new country.) The United Colonies would soon become the United States of America.

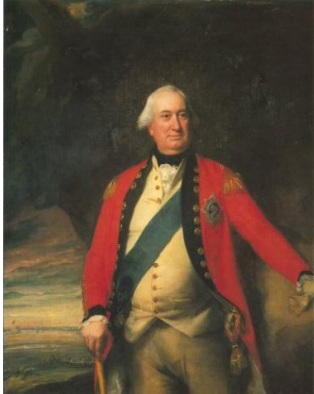
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/CORNWALLIS-SURRENDERS-Patriot-The>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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Media Stream



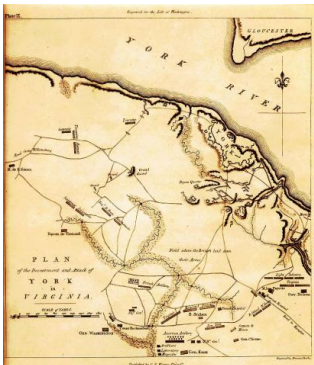
Cornwallis - British Commander During the American Revolution

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Yorktown - Final Campaign of American Revolution

Plan of the Investment and Attack of York in Virginia, originally published in Philadelphia by C. P. Wayne, 1806.

Image, Library of Congress.

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