

# The American Revolution

EQ: How was the Continental Army able to win the war for independence from Great Britain?

# American Strengths and Weaknesses



- The patriots were in a weak position when the war started
  - They had hastily organized
  - An untrained army
  - Small navy
  - Their weaknesses were way more obvious than their strengths

# American Weaknesses



- The Continental Army was always short of men → never had more than 20k troops in one place!!!
  - Just when they were learning to fight men took their muskets and went home to take care of their families and farms
- Few Americans were trained for battle-ran away
- Plagued w/shortages (guns, gunpowder, food, uniforms,)
- Shortages outraged Washington, but Congress lacked the power to raise taxes to support the army
- In desperation Congress printed paper money to pay for the war → dropped the value of money

# American Strengths

- Patriotism → People were willing to die for the ideal of a country based on democracy and liberty
- Americans got help from overseas-the French secretly aided the Americans.
  - For the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 years of war 90% of the gunpowder came from the Europe
- George Washington was more than a great military leader, he inspired courage and confidence

JOIN, or DIE.

# British Strengths and Weaknesses



- Great Britain, unlike the Americans entered the war from a position of strength.
  - Despite their perceived advantages the British encountered many problems
  - Can you guess what may have been a disadvantage???

A historical illustration of British soldiers in red uniforms, likely from the American Revolutionary War. The soldiers are standing in a line, some holding rifles. The background shows a hazy, outdoor setting with other figures in the distance.

# British Strengths

- Professional Army of 42k → greatly outnumbered the Continental army
  - Hired 30k mercenaries from Germany (Hessians) also they recruited loyalists, African Amer., and Native Amer.
- Well trained in European military tactics
- Well supplied-they rarely lacked food, uniforms, weapons, or ammunition

# British Weaknesses



- Distance b/w Great Britain and America
  - Sending troops and supplies was slow and costly
- King George never could convince the British people that defeating the Americans was vital to the future of G.B. Wasn't worth tax \$
- Poor Leadership-had no sense in how to beat the Americans they never step foot in North America

# Great Britain Almost Wins the War

- After the British left Boston in 1776, Germain came up with his 1<sup>st</sup> plan for winning the war
  - They would capture NYC and from there destroy the heart of the rebellion in Mass.
  - Washington → moved from Boston to NYC to stop the invasion, read the D.O.I and inspired his troops that the country was worth fighting for
- African Americans had joined the militias cause, but many were PROMISED FREEDOM to join the British and many became loyalists and fought for G.B
- Defeat in NY- August 27, 1776 Americans and British met in Brooklyn
  - Americans were no match for G.B-in 2 days of fighting British lost 377 men and Americans lost 1,407
  - Howe thought the war was nearly won, stopped the attack, and waited for Washington to surrender
  - Battle for NYC was the 1<sup>st</sup> of many American defeats
  - There also was little food, and weather was changing which added to the misery
- Only a few thousand men stayed under Washington's command the rest were seen as crazy!!!

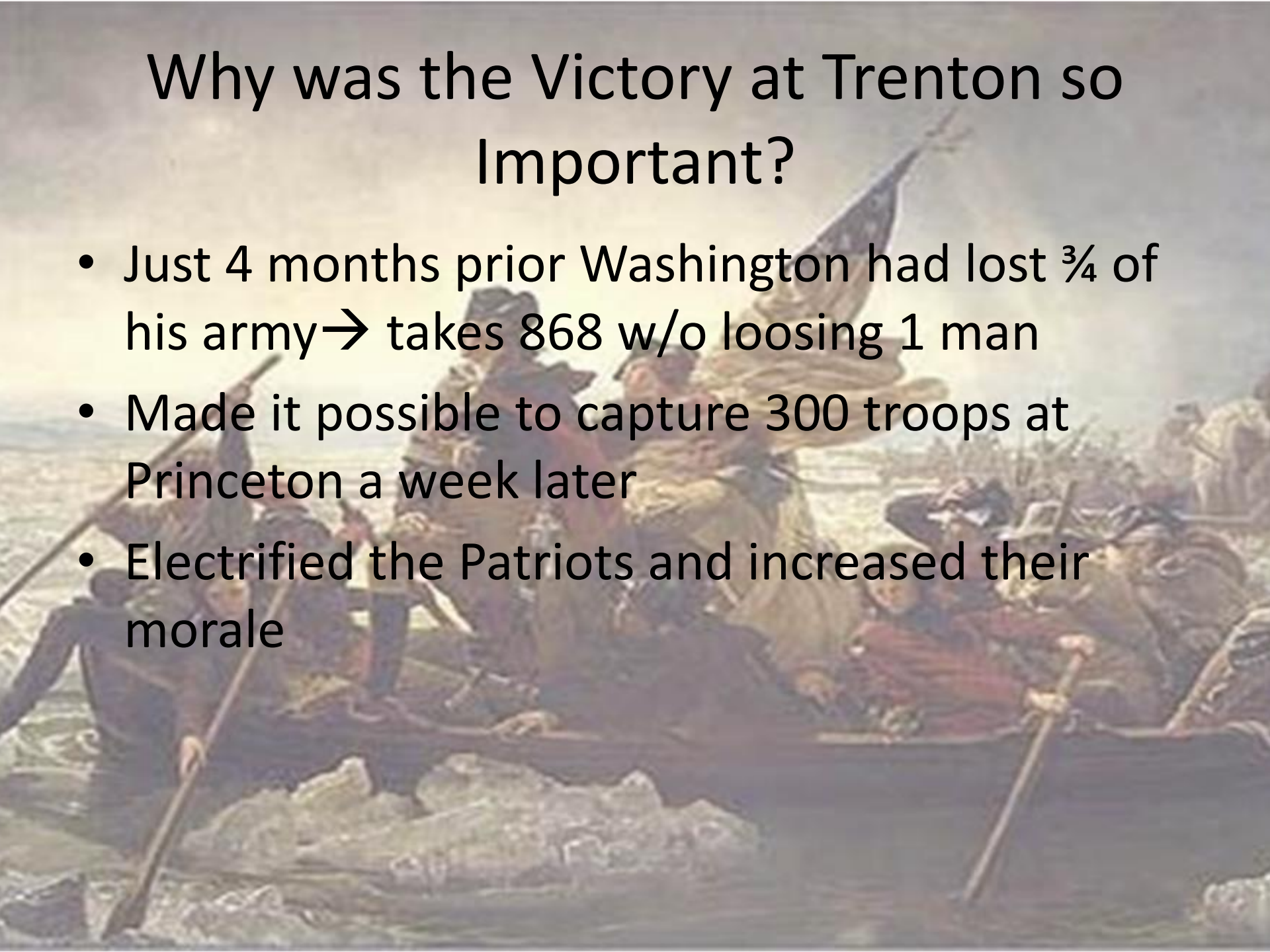


# The Crisis and Trenton

- After the defeats Washington had to do something-he gathered his troops and read to them Thomas Paine's new pamphlet "The Crisis" He planned then to attack the Hessians who were camped in Trenton
- *THESE are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman.*
- Victory in Trenton-On December 23, 1776 Washington's army crossed the Delaware River on Boats
- When they reached Trenton they found the Hessians sleeping off their Christmas feasts → caught by surprise they surrendered
  - Washington took 868 prisoners w/o losing a single man
  - 1 week later they captured 300 troops at Princeton
  - These victories electrified the Patriots and the game was not over

# Why was the Victory at Trenton so Important?

- Just 4 months prior Washington had lost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of his army → takes 868 w/o losing 1 man
- Made it possible to capture 300 troops at Princeton a week later
- Electrified the Patriots and increased their morale



# New British Strategy

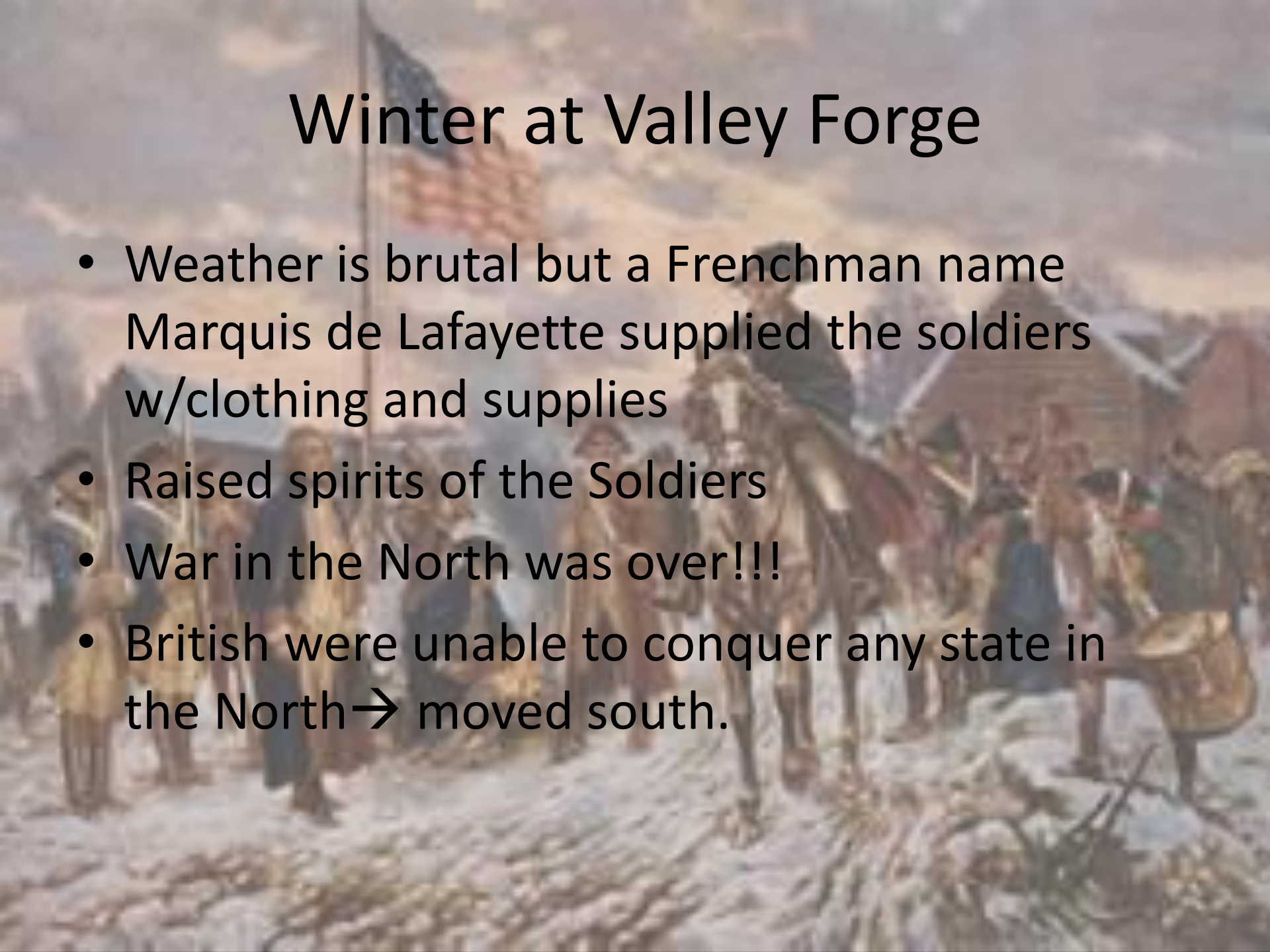
- Strategy: An overall plan for winning the war
- New Strategy-General Burgoyne was directed to carry out that plan of dividing the Continental Army in ½ and cut New England colonies off from the middle and southern colonies
- Problem with this new plan was the route from Canada to NY to meet Howe was through tangled wilderness & Burgoyne traveled w/600 wagons

# Washington's plan and the Turning Point

- Washington also had a new plan: Play hide and seek, guerilla warfare with Howe
- The guerilla tactics gain Washington a victory at Saratoga where Burgoyne accepted defeat → area was swarming with militia
- At this point the French and Spanish enter the war as allies

# Winter at Valley Forge

- Weather is brutal but a Frenchman name Marquis de Lafayette supplied the soldiers w/clothing and supplies
- Raised spirits of the Soldiers
- War in the North was over!!!
- British were unable to conquer any state in the North → moved south.



# The War moves South

- Charles Cornwallis takes over for the British
- Washington sent Nathaniel Greene to slow British advances through the South
- By the time Cornwallis settles into Yorktown France sent 5k troops to help Washington and another 3k were scheduled to arrive in August w/29 warships
- Used this info to trap Cornwallis- Washington moved his army to Virginia and they and the French surrounded Yorktown w/16k troops
- Warships showed up just in time to seal off the Chesapeake Bay → CRUCIAL TO AMERICAN VICTORY
  - Cornwallis was cut off from the British navy and no ships arrived
- Cornwallis surrenders: 8,000 British troops leave Yorktown
  - Didn't take part in ceremony and remained in his tent while his men surrendered their arms

# The War Ends

- For most Americans the end of the War was a time of joy and celebration
  - Liberty came at a high price: 6,200 died in combat/10,000 died from disease/8,500 died while in captivity → In proportion to population more Americans died in the American Rev. than in any other conflict (except the Civil War)
- Treaty of Paris: 1783-3 important parts
  - G.B agreed to recognize the US as an Independent Nation
  - G.B gave up claims to lands b/w the Atl. Coast and the Miss. River
  - U.S agreed to return all rights and property taken from loyalist during the war
- Impact of Revolution: In Europe rebels were thrilled at the idea of creating their own democracies (the French soon had their own Revolution)