

Landmark Events in American History



The Battle of Yorktown

Teacher's Guide written by Debra Voegel, M.A., with Susan Nations, M.Ed.

Series Overview:

The *Landmark Events in American History* series examines important events in the history of the United States. It explores the causes and significance of key moments and developments and takes a fresh look at both myths and heroes. The legacies of these events, whether good or bad, are also explained. Each book is 48 pages in length and includes both full-color photos and archival illustrations. In addition, each book uses an array of informational text features to bring alive these stories of the nation's past, from the cultures of ancient America to the turning points of recent times.

Features of Informational Text:

Each title in the series *Landmark Events in American History* is filled with such features as clear maps, charts, time lines, archival illustrations, and primary-source documents that enhance and supplement the running text. These important features of informational text invite student inquiry and investigation both in the classroom and independently.

The Battle of Yorktown:

In 1781, more than five years after the beginning of the American Revolution, an important battle took place in Virginia that would determine the outcome of the long struggle. This book explains the events leading up to the Battle of Yorktown, looks at the leading figures among the British, American, and French participants, and tells the story of the battle itself. It also shows how the American victory at Yorktown won the bigger battle for independence from Britain.

The following three pages of the Teacher's Guide include:

- Discussion Questions and Inquiries for Readers
- Introduction and prediction
- Reading the Introduction
- Chapter-by-chapter discussion questions and conversation
- Conclusion discussion
- Time Line investigation
- Focus on Informational Text Features
- Vocabulary Building
- Critical Reading Strategies and Test Preparation

The Battle of Yorktown

Discussion Questions and Inquiries for Readers:

Introduction and prediction. Ask students to read the back cover information about the Battle of Yorktown and browse through the book. You may need to discuss the word “siege.” After students have had time to look at the book, ask them to make a statement about what they already know about this battle. Then ask students to use this discussion and their book browsing to help them make a prediction about what they will learn as they read. Record these predictions on a chart to revisit later.

Read the Introduction (pages 4–5). Students should read this section independently. Remind them to read the photo captions as well as the running text. Students can add what they know now about the Battle of Yorktown to the chart created during the introduction and prediction discussion. In addition, ask students to locate the bold words on these two pages. Discuss the meaning of each word and why it is important to understanding the information given about the battle.

Chapter 1: Coming to Blows (pages 6–11). Students can read this chapter independently. Remind them that in addition to reading the running text, they need to think about the illustrations, text boxes, quote boxes, and captions as they think about the relationships between Britain and the thirteen colonies. Ask each student to identify three important facts from this chapter. Students can compare their facts.

Chapter 2: The Early Years of the War (pages 12–17). Students should read this chapter independently or with a partner. Ask each student to keep a simple note-taking page tracking the forming of the Continental Army and the early battles that were fought. Students should use details and information from their reading to support their statements. Let each student share his or her notes during the group discussion.

Chapter 3: The Road to Yorktown (pages 18–25). Prior to reading this chapter, each student should create an *Incident/Result* T-chart. As they read, students should write dates and battles in the left “Incident” column and the outcomes in the right “Result” column. Students can share their notes during the group discussion.

Chapter 4: Trapping Cornwallis (pages 26–31). Divide this chapter into parts using the subheadings. Assign one or more students to read each part. Ask them to discuss the significance of the information in their assigned part about the trapping of Cornwallis, the British general. Each student should explain the subheading accompanying his or her part using the information read and the map or associated illustrations and captions.

Chapter 5: Siege and Surrender (pages 32–39). Prior to reading this chapter, ask each student to look at the map on page 32 and brainstorm what strategies George Washington might use to force Cornwallis to surrender. Students should use details and information from the previous chapters and discussions to support their answers. Students should then read this chapter and confirm or revise their strategies.

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Chapter 6: After the Battle (pages 40–41). Students can read this chapter independently or with a partner. Discuss the logistics involved in the development and signing of the Treaty of Paris, which granted the independence of the United States of America. Ask students what role they think the Battle of Yorktown played in the writing of the U.S. Constitution and the election of the first president of the United States.

Conclusion (pages 42–43). Students should read this section independently or with a partner. After reading, revisit the prediction chart created during the introduction discussion. Ask students to confirm or revise their predictions based on their reading. Also, ask students to identify what they know now that they have read this book.

Time Line (page 44). Explain that the time line on page 44 covers about twenty years of events that led to the colonies achieving independence from Britain. Have students select and discuss certain entries on the time line that they feel were most significant. Ask them to identify and justify other events they think should appear on the time line.

Choose one of the following activities to invite students to revisit the text:

Focus on Informational Text Features: Read the book’s back cover blurb. Ask students how this blurb helps the reader decide whether or not to read the book. Then have students turn to page 46 and look at the “Further Information” section, which gives additional resources on the topic of the book. Have the students work independently or with a partner to access one of the listed resources to learn more about a person, place, or event associated with the Battle of Yorktown. Each student or pair should then write a blurb for the resource they reviewed using a copy of page 4 of this guide.

Vocabulary Building: When students read informational books and articles, it is important for them to think about the specialized vocabulary in the text. The vocabulary helps them know and understand more about the topic. Strategic readers can sort and organize vocabulary into categories. Write selected vocabulary words from the Glossary of the book (on page 45) on small index cards. Students can practice thinking about word meanings and sorting specialized vocabulary using the following headings: “People,” “Places,” and “Resources.” (You may wish to define “resources” for your students as helpful items or materials.) Students can add other words from the text under each heading.

Critical Reading Strategies and Test Preparation: Good readers often use note-taking strategies as they read. One strategy involves using small sticky notes with the following symbols on them: “!”, “?”, or “.”. As each student reads, a sticky note can be placed to mark the text as follows: “An interesting or important fact I found” (!), “A question I have” (?), or “Something I already knew” (.). Select a chapter from the book for students to practice marking the text. After practicing, have students discuss with a partner what text they marked and why. Then ask students to share with the class how this helps them understand the text better and if it would be a useful strategy to use when reading both fiction and nonfiction.

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Name: _____ Date: _____

Back-Cover Blurbs

Think About It: The back-cover blurb in an informational text gives the reader a glimpse of what he or she will read in the text. It is a brief summary of the material in the book. It is also a way to hook the reader into reading the book.

Directions: Use the "Further Information" section from page 46 of the book *The Battle of Yorktown* to select a resource for reading more about a person, place, or specific event referenced on that page. Write an informational blurb about the resource you selected. Remember to use language that both summarizes the resource and makes the reader want to read more.

Resource I Used: _____

Important thoughts, words, or ideas: _____

My Blurb

Debra Voegel, M.A., is currently an elementary school data coach living in Sarasota, Florida. She has more than twenty-five years of experience in the field of education and has taught students from early intervention programs through the doctoral level, as well as serving as an elementary school principal for nine years. Susan Nations, M.Ed., is a literacy coach, author, and staff developer living in Sarasota, Florida. She has worked with teachers around the United States on literacy development and instruction in the elementary classroom.

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