

Social Studies Lab: British, German and Loyalists Perspectives of the Battle of Saratoga

Introduction: The Battle of Saratoga is considered the “turning point” of the American Revolution because it was an important victory for the Americans and would encourage the French to officially support the American War effort. It was also an important loss for the British army. British General John Burgoyne and other British leaders believed that if the New England colonies could be cut off from the rest of the colonies the war would end. The plan was for General Burgoyne to move south down the Champlain-Hudson River corridor to Albany, where he would meet up with General Barry St. Ledger who was traveling down the Mohawk River from the west and with General Howe who would travel north, along the Hudson River from New York City. They believed that controlling the Champlain-Hudson River corridor would effectively cut off New England but Burgoyne surrendering at Saratoga put an end to the plan to cut off New England and the war continued, eventually ending with a British surrender at Yorktown in 1783.

Review: Anger and frustration on the part of the British colonists in North America began following the French and Indian War when Great Britain changed its colonial policy from Salutary Neglect to “Obey and Pay” and began to enforce taxes and pass new taxes on the colonists. They also restricted colonial movement into the Ohio River Valley which angered land speculators, trappers and farmers who hoped to spread into the rich land. Tensions peaked when British soldiers were garrisoned in Boston, resulting in the Boston Massacre. The British government believed that the citizens of Massachusetts and the rest of New England were troublemakers who needed to be put under control. When fighting broke out in the spring of 1775 in Lexington the British believed that if they could cut New England off from the other colonies the war would end. They felt that the New England colonists were encouraging rebellion in the Mid-Atlantic and Southern Colonies.

Compelling Question: How did the Loyalists and British and German soldiers with Burgoyne’s army perceive the Battles of Saratoga and the capitulation? Who is to blame for the British loss and capitulation at Saratoga?

Step 1: Look at the question above. What is your hunch before looking at any documents?

Name: _____ Block: _____

Step 2: Examine the pieces of evidence. What is each source telling us about the perception of the Loyalists, German and British soldiers that were with Burgoyne's Army at Saratoga and/or who is to blame for the loss at Saratoga.

Source I:



Is this a primary or secondary source? _____

What is the source showing you? _____

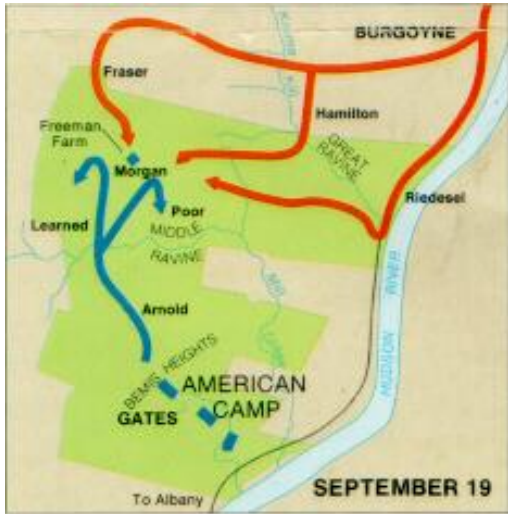
How does this source help you to understand the British campaign plan in 1777?

Do you think this is a good strategy? _____

Pretend that the Clinton arrow and St. Leger arrows are no longer there, now is this a good strategy?

Knowing that Clinton and St. Leger failed to follow the plan, describe the problems that may have arisen for General John Burgoyne? _____

Source 2: Battlefield Map for Battle of Freeman's Farm (Saratoga), Sept. 19, 1777



Is this a primary or secondary source? How can you tell? _____

Based on this map, who do you think had the advantage during this battle? Why do you think so?

Source 3: Battlefield Map of the Battle of Bemis Heights (Saratoga), Oct. 7th, 1777



Based on this map who do you think won this battle? How did you come to that conclusions? _____

Source 4: Journal of Johann Bense, a Brunswick Grenadier with Burgoyne's Army, Oct 7-19

7th: General Burgoyne attacked the enemy [with] a commando of 2,000 men; the enemy were 30,000 men strong and at first suffered the cannonade quietly. In the end, they pressed forcefully against us and made us withdraw. The Grenadiers and Chasseurs had to abandon their camp with the baggage, tents, knapsacks, and everything. Colonel Breyman was killed in action and we left a few dead, wounded and prisoners behind.

8th: The army started the march back. We came to stop on a high mountain above Dovegot; the enemy moved around in front of us and blocked our road across the Hudson.

9th: At night, we went up to the waist through a tributary of the Hudson and camped at the barracks in Saratoga in heavy hoarfrost. We were thoroughly wet and camped in open air.

10th: On the height above the barracks, we made small entrenchments around us.

17th: According to the Convention, we were given over to the Americans today and grounded arms on orders of our own officers.

18th: We set out for Boston and came near Stillwater tonight.

Why do you think that attack on October 7th led to a surrender? _____

According to the Convention what happened to the German soldiers that were with Burgoyne? _____

Source 5: Account of Lt. Thomas Anbury, British 24th Regiment of Foot

The courage and obstinacy with which the Americans fought were the astonishment of everyone, and we now became fully convinced that they are not that contemptible enemy we had hitherto imagined them, incapable of standing a regular engagement, and that they would only fight behind strong and powerful works

What was this officer surprised about? _____

Source 6: Memoir of Baroness Frederika Charlotte Louise von Riedesel, wife of Baron Friedrich Adolph von Riedesel, commander of all German forces with the British Army

[Oct. 7] I noticed a great deal of commotion among the soldiers. My husband told me that they were to go out on a reconnaissance, of which I thought nothing, as this often happened. On my way back the house I met a number of savages [Native Americans] in war dress, carrying guns. When I asked them whither they were bound, they replied, "War! War!"—which meant that they were going into battle. I was completely overwhelmed and had hardly returned to the house, when I heard firing which grew heavier and heavier until the noise was frightful. It was a terrible bombardment, and I was more dead than alive! ...Toward three o'clock in the afternoon, instead of my dinner guests arriving as expected, poor General Fraser, who was to have been one of them, was brought to me on a stretcher, mortally wounded.

Is this a primary or secondary source? How do you know? _____

Who is Frederika von Riedesel? _____

What was her reaction to the Battle on October 7, 1777? _____

Based on the evidence in this source, who do you think won this battle? _____

Source 7: Journal of an Officer in the Prinz Friedrich Regiment (German), October 11, 17, 20, 1777

Oct. 11: As we had to do every morning after the reveille shot, we assembled fully armed.—From now on, we expected a general retreat of the army, which could arrive at our quarters any day.

Oct. 17: It was peculiar that the large Engl. Flag on the barracks on Mt. Indep. fell down from the tall pole twice today. Many saw this as a bad omen.

Oct. 20: They were confirmed in their opinion since we got the reliable news that our army had surrendered as prisoners of war on the 17th.

What was the bad omen: _____

When did the Germans find out about the surrender? _____

Source 8: Letter from General Howe to Lord George Germain Oct. 22, 1777—in response to a letter from General Burgoyne telling him that he had expected reinforcements from Howe and that is why he had to surrender at Saratoga.

“I am surprised to find the General's (Burgoyne's) declaration, in his message to Sir Henry Clinton by Captain Campbell, ' that he would not have given up his communications with Ticonderoga had he not expected a co-operating army at Albany,' since in my letter to Sir Guy Carleton, a copy of which was transmitted to your lordship in my dispatch of 2 April 1777, No. 47, and of which his majesty was pleased to approve, I positively mentioned that no direct assistance could be given by the Southern army. This letter I am assured was received by Sir Guy Carleton and carried by him to Montreal, before General Burgoyne's departure from thence.”

Why did General Burgoyne write to Lord Germain? _____

Why does Howe say that he is surprised by Burgoyne's letter? _____

Who do you believe is telling the truth, Burgoyne or Howe? Why? _____

Source 9: Letter from Major-General Burgoyne to his nieces, Albany, 20 October 1777

There are few situations in a military life exposed to more personal hazard than I have lately undergone. I have been surrounded with enemies, ill-treated by pretended friends, abandoned by a considerable part of my own army, totally unassisted by Sir William Howe.... Under perpetual fire, and exhausted with laborious days, and 16 almost sleepless nights, without change of clothes, or other covering than the sky. I have been with my army within the jaws of famine; shot through my hat and waistcoat, my nearest friends killed round me; and from these combined misfortunes and escapes, I imagine I am reserved to stand a war with ministers who will always lay the blame upon the employed who miscarries.

In all these complicated anxieties, believe me, my dear girls, my heart has a large space filled with you; and I will bring it home, when God shall permit, as replete with affection as when I left you.

What does Burgoyne say caused him to surrender at Saratoga? _____

Source 10: A Brunswick soldier's account September 17, 1777

When the English saw us coming they picked up courage again. They shouted one hurrah after another and we answered with a VIVAT and drums beating so that the air resounded...It did not take more than one quarter of an hour before the enemy took flight and left the battlefield to us. The enemy withdrew to their entrenched camp at Stillwater [Bemis Heights] with the greatest speed...Our losses were not light seeing that about 500 of the English had been wounded, yet the losses of the enemy had been far greater and the battlefield was covered with dead...I believe that no regular troops can ever be found in any war who have stood under fire more courageously and more steadfastly than these farmers and citizens have done.

What does this German soldier have to say about the British soldiers? _____

What does this German soldier have to say about the American soldiers? _____

Source 11: Memoir of Baroness Frederika Charlotte Louise von Riedesel, wife of Baron Friedrich Adolph von Riedesel, commander of all German forces with the British Army

I asked General Phillips, who came up to where we were, why we did not continue our retreat while there was yet more time, as my husband had pledged himself to cover it, and bring the army through? "Poor woman," answered he, "I am amazed at you! to go further in this weather! I wish that you were only our commanding general! He halts because he is tired, and intends to spent the night here and give us a supper." In very fond of indulging. He spent half the night in singing and drinking, and amusing himself with the wife of a commissary, who was his mistress, and who, as well as he loved champagne...General Burgoyne, in order to cover our retreat, caused the beautiful houses and mills at Saratoga, belonging to General Schuyler, to be burned...Thereupon we set out upon our march, but only as far as another place not far from where we started. The greatest misery and the utmost disorder prevailed in the army. The commissaries had forgotten to distribute provisions among the troops.

Summarize Baroness Riedesel's opinion of General Burgoyne. _____

What does Baroness Riedesel think are the problems with the British army? _____

Source 12: Narrative of George Fox, 7th and 47th Regiments of Foot (British)

Then General Burgoyne ordered the 47th Regiment to attempt a retreat to Fort George. We started by 9 o'clock in morning; we got as far as Fort Edward, 19 miles and just crossing the river we saw the rebels had taken possession of Fort Edward hill and had a large number of cannon planted to prevent our crossing over...A smart action for ½ hour; by order of Colonel Sutherland the chief of the 47th Regiment the ceased with only one man wounded—wounded....Next morning they sent a flag of truce that if we did not ordered a counsel to sit immediately. General Burgoyne went they concluded upon the Articles of Convention. When he came back he acquired us of a cessation of arms....After every thing was completed according to the Articles of Convention, the Canadians, artificers, the wagoners and drivers of cannons were permitted to go down to Canada without being molested. The soldiers were march down to Boston to be sent to England and were not to serve again during the war. The articles were made on the 16th October 1777. We stacked our arms and marched 17 miles, the rebels formed themselves in two lines on each side the road and we marched through them in the centre. General Gates ordered that no man of his army was to cast any reflection as we passed. We were received by a strong guard of 500; they marched us to Freeman's Farm that night. Surrendered were 6572 Germans, 4000 regulars of the 9th, 20th, 21st, 24th, 48th and 62nd besides grenadiers and light infantry belonging to other regiments.

Why couldn't the troops retreat? _____

Why do you think General Gates ordered his men to not "cast any reflections" as the British passed? _____

Why do you think the Canadians were allowed to return to Canada while the British and Germans were marched to Boston? _____

How many total people surrendered? _____

Source 13: The Surrender of John Burgoyne by John Trumbull, 1822



Is this a primary or secondary source? How do you know? _____

Describe what you see in this painting: _____

What does this painting tell you about the British surrender at Saratoga? _____

Source 14: Articles of Capitulation signed by General Gates and General Burgoyne, October 16, 1777

I. The troops under Lieutenant-general Burgoyne, to march out of their camp with the honours of war, and the artillery of the entrenchments, to the verge of the river where the old fort stood, where the arms and artillery are to be left; the arms to be piled by word of command from their own officers.

II. A free passage to be granted to the army under Lieutenant-general Burgoyne to Great Britain, on condition of not serving again in North America during the present contest; and the port of Boston is assigned for the entry of transports to receive the troops, whenever General Howe shall so order.

III. Should any cartel take place, by which the army under General Burgoyne, or any part of it, may be exchanged, the foregoing article to be void as far as such exchange shall be made.

IV. The army under Lieutenant-general Burgoyne, to march to Massachusetts Bay, by the easiest, most expeditious, and convenient route; and to be quartered in, near, or as convenient as possible to Boston, that the march of the troops may not be delayed, when transports arrive to receive them.

V. The troops to be supplied on their march, and during their being in quarters, with provisions, by General Gates's orders, at the same rate of rations as the troops of his own army; and if possible the officers' horses and cattle are to be supplied with forage at the usual rates.

VI. All officers to retain their carriages, batt-horses and other cattle, and no baggage to be molested or searched; Lieutenant-general Burgoyne giving his honour that there are no public stores secreted therein. Major-general Gates will of course take the necessary measures for the due performance of this article. Should any carriages be wanted during the march for the transportation of officers' baggage, they are if possible, to be supplied by the country at the usual rates.

VII. Upon the march, and during the time the army shall remain in quarters in Massachusetts Bay, the officers are not, as far as circumstances will admit, to be separated from their men. The officers are to be quartered according to rank, and are not to be hindered from assembling their men for roll call, and other necessary purposes of regularity.

VIII. All corps whatever, of General Burgoyne's army, whether composed of sailors, batteamen, artificers, drivers, independent companies, and followers of the army, of whatever country, shall be included in the fullest sense and utmost extent of the above articles, and comprehended in every respect as British subjects.

IX. All Canadians, and persons belonging to the Canadian establishment, consisting of sailors, batteamen, artificers, drivers, independent companies, and many other followers of the army, who come under no particular description, are to be permitted to return there; they are to be conducted immediately by the shortest route to the first British port on Lake George, are to be supplied with provisions in the same manner as other troops, and are to be bound by the same condition of not serving during the present contest in North America.

X. Passports to be immediately granted for three officers, not exceeding the rank of captains, who shall be appointed by Lieutenant-general Burgoyne, to carry dispatches to Sir William Howe, Sir Guy Carleton, and to Great Britain, by the way of New York; and Major-general Gates engages the public faith, that these dispatches shall not be opened. These officers are to set out immediately after receiving their dispatches, and are to travel the shortest route and in the most expeditious manner.

XII. Should the army under Lieutenant-general Burgoyne find it necessary to send for their clothing and other baggage to Canada, they are to be permitted to do it in the most convenient manner, and the necessary passports granted for that purpose.

XIII. These articles are to be mutually signed and exchanged to-morrow morning at 9 o'clock, and the troops under Lieutenant-general Burgoyne are to march out of their entrenchments at three o'clock in the afternoon.

[signed] Horatio Gates, Major-general

[signed] J. Burgoyne, Lieutenant-general

Saratoga, Oct. 16th, 1777

To prevent any doubts that might arise from Lieutenant-general Burgoyne's name not being mentioned in the above treaty, Major-general Gates hereby declares, that he is understood to be comprehended in it, as fully as if his name had been specifically mentioned.

Horatio Gates

Why would the Americans require the soldiers with Burgoyne to leave their arms and artillery? _____

What is the stipulation for sending the soldiers and officers back to England? _____

Why are the officers allowed more privileges, like keeping their baggage, than the regular soldiers? _____

What do the Americans get out of this agreement? _____

What do the British get out of this agreement? _____

Do you think this is a fair agreement? Why or why not? _____

Step 3: Based on the evidence in these documents, how did the British and German soldiers with Burgoyne's army perceive the Battles of Saratoga? Who is to blame for the British loss and capitulation at Saratoga?

Develop a Claim: _____

Step 4: What specific evidence do the sources provide to support your claim?

Cite evidence supporting your claim: _____

Step 5: Communicating your conclusions: In TWO paragraphs (8-10 sentences each), communicate your conclusion. Be sure to begin your paragraph by identifying your claim and then support your claim with evidence from the courses.

Compelling Question: How did the Loyalists and British and German soldiers with Burgoyne's army perceive the Battles of Saratoga and the capitulation? Who is to blame for the British loss and capitulation at Saratoga?

