

firepower. However, the Americans used their knowledge of the landscape to keep one step ahead of the advancing British. Greene's strategy was to let the British wear themselves out. When the Americans did fight, they did their best to make sure the British suffered heavy losses. In fact, Cornwallis lost so many men at the Battle of Guilford Court House that he decided to retreat to Wilmington, on the coast. With his army exhausted, Cornwallis had to face a bitter truth: there were more active Patriots than Loyalists in the South. Britain's southern strategy had failed.

CAUSES AND EFFECTS Explain what happened when the British shifted the war to the South.



The End of the War

KEY QUESTION How was Cornwallis trapped?

Cornwallis was frustrated by his setbacks in the Carolinas. He had come to believe that Southern rebels were relying on Virginia for their supplies. So, in 1781, without waiting for orders, he marched north into Virginia. In August Cornwallis set up his base at Yorktown, located on a peninsula in Chesapeake Bay. From there, his army could receive supplies by ship from New York. It was a fatal mistake.

Setting the Trap Cornwallis's decision gave Washington a golden opportunity to trap the British on the peninsula. Washington first joined forces with General Jean Rochambeau's French army in New York and headed south. In August 1781, as these armies came south, a large French fleet arrived from the West Indies and blocked Chesapeake Bay. (See map at left.) The French fleet prevented the British ships from reaching Yorktown and delivering supplies—and prevented the British in Yorktown from escaping.

Meanwhile, the **Battle of Yorktown** had begun. The British tried to protect themselves by encircling the town with numerous **redoubts**, or small forts. These forts were meant to keep the allies' artillery at a distance from the town. But as the allies captured British redoubts, they brought their artillery closer to the town's defenses. The American and French cannon bombarded Yorktown, turning its buildings to rubble. Cornwallis had no way out. On October 19, 1781, he surrendered his force of about 8,000.