Name: Date:

Ms. Centonze Period:

Battle of Saratoga

Burgoyne kept pushing southward toward Albany. His strategy was to divide his army into three columns. Burgoyne commanded the center column. On September 17,1777, Burgoyne ran into an American army at Freeman’s Farm near Saratoga. The Americans were under the command of General Horatio Gates, who had replaced General Schuyler. Benedict Arnold and Gates violently disagreed about the American strategy. Arnold wanted to attack the divided British forces, while gates wished to remain entrenched, doing nothing. Gates finally allowed a troop of light infantry to move against the British.

Burgoyne was moving toward a small clearing which would allow his men to fight in the open in traditional European fashion. The Americans arrived first and set up an effective ambush. With the first volley, the British officers were struck down. Burgoyne’s gunnery forces were shot down before they could load and fire. The British ranks broke and fled into the trees. Once in the trees the British adopted the frontier method of fighting and forced the Americans to fall back.

Burgoyne rode among his troops urging them on. In spite of his bravery, his men were unable to rally enough to fight off the Americans. Just as the British force was about to collapse, fresh troops arrived, forcing the Americans to fall back.

The Battle of Freeman’s Farm is considered an American victory, due to the brilliance of Benedict Arnold and Dan Morgan’s country Virginia riflemen, the Americans inflicted very heavy losses on the British.

Burgoyne refused to retreat. He dug his own trenches and waited for help to come. He waited in vain. He decided to try one last desperate attack. On October 7, 1777, Burgoyne massed his fifteen hundred men in a wheat field at Bemis Heights and waited.

He did not wait long. The Americans attacked Burgoyne’s front and rear lines. The frontier rifles of Dan Morgan took a deadly toll of the British forces. With great difficulty, Burgoyne was able to turn back the first American attack. In the midst of the confusion that followed, Benedict Arnold charge onto the field and rallied the American units for a final massive attack. He was everywhere, leading the cheering American troops in the headlong attack. Not until he had been wounded in the leg did he leave the field. An American officer wrote, “Nothing could exceed the bravery of Arnold on this day.”

When Arnold left the field, the attack slowed, and Burgoyne was able to withdraw his troops from Bemis heights and retreat to Saratoga. His army had lost the will to fight.

Gates refused to act directly to crush the British, but other American troops moved in cutting off Burgoyne’s supplies and blocking any chances of retreat.

Burgoyne knew his position was hopeless. He himself was “sunk in mind and body”, his men were exhausted, his supply lines had been cut, and he had been let down by those who might have helped him.

On October 17, 1777, he surrendered his entire army of five thousand British and German troops to general gates as the American band played “Yankee Doddle.”

Although General Horatio Gates is very often given credit for the victory at Saratoga, he did not even appear on the field of battle. He was a loud, self-centered person who tried to get himself appointed commander in chief in place of George Washington. The heroes of the Battle of Saratoga were, without question, Benedict Arnold and Daniel Morgan.

The Battle of Saratoga was a tremendous victory for the Americans and proved to be the turning point of the war. A whole British army had been defeated and of even greater importance was the entry of France into the war against England. The victory at Saratoga had proven to the French king that the English could be beaten and France decided to officially come to the aid of the Americans.

Questions:

1. How successful were the British Troops when they fought in the traditional way?

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1. When the British adopted the frontier method, how did they do?

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1. Who was the hero of the day for the Colonial Army? What did he do?

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1. What two things made the Battle of Saratoga such a tremendous story?

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