Name: Date:

Ms. Centonze Period:

**The Final Campaigns**

An almost forgotten sea battle brought the American Revolution practically to an end. A French fleet under the command of Admiral Comte de Grasse defeated two British admirals in Chesapeake Bay and sent their damaged ships limping for New York. This fleet of ships had been on its way to Cornwallis to set up a base on the seacoast where he could be supplied by the Royal Navy. Clinton had hoped to use Yorktown as a base for an offensive which he hoped would conquer Virginia.

Meanwhile, George Washington had conferred with Jean Baptiste de Rochambeau, the commander of the French forces in America. Under cover the two commanders secretly moved their forces across New Jersey toward Yorktown.

Once de Grasse had successfully blockaded the British, Cornwallis’ fate was sealed. There was no escape by sea. Washington and Rochambeau were joined by Lafayette and Anthony Wayne. The patriot force of sixteen thousand circled Yorktown. Massed cannon pounded the British night and day. The French attacked from the left, while Alexander Hamilton and his troops attacked from the right. Behind them the American artillery moved closer to the British fortifications. On October 17, 1781, the British guns failed to respond. Instead, a single drummer pounded out a fateful message. The British were asking for a meeting. A short time later Washington was handed the official message from Cornwallis. The British commander was asking for a meeting to discuss the terms of a surrender.

On October 19, 1781, the American and French troops stood in two straight lines as the British forces left their fortifications and surrendered. British General Charles O’Hara resented Cornwallis and presented his sword to Benjamin Lincoln, who was Washington’s representative. As the British slowly passed between the American and French lines, the British band played “The World Turned Upside Down.”

The war was over, but no one knew it at the time. The French and Americans knew only that they had won a great victory. There were minot squirmishes for two long years, but Yorktown marked the last major battle of the war. The Americans grew tired of waiting, and Washington’s army began to dwindle. Late in 1782 the British troops in Charleston and Savannah were recalled by Sir Guy Carelton, who had replaced Clinton.

In London, Prime Minister Lord North finally admitted, “My God! It is all over.”

Geroge III refused to accept the truth. Spain and France pressed their war with England on the sea until at last the British were forced to admit that the war was lost. There was nothing left to do but to make peace.

The new American nation waited for many long months as the peace negotiations went on in Paris. It was not until Novermber 25, 1783, the General Henry Knox led the American army into New York City and made it an American city for the first time since 1776.

On Decemeber 4, 1783, George Washington met with his officers in New York City, He thanked each of the men who had served him and the American cause so faithfully. He assumed that this was to be his final public act. Washington did not know that in four short yeats he would once more be called upon to serve his country as its first President.

**Questions:**

1. Why was the American sea victory in Chesapeake Bay so important?

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1. How were the British troops pinned at Yorktown?

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1. How did the Americans know the British wanted a meeting?

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1. Why were countries like France and Spain so willing to help the Americans?

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