Name: Date:

Ms. Centonze Period:

**The French Enter The War**

It is probable that France would have been brought into the war as a natural result of the antagonism between France and England. This event was hastened, however, by the shrewd maneuvers of Benjamin Franklin, who had been sent to France in 1776. Franklin had been given two tasks: he was to seek immediate aid for the colonists, and he was able to get a clear recognition of the United States of America.

Franklin was a natural choice for this mission. He was a write, inventor, and philosopher. The French took him to their hearts at once. Franklin wisely played up his reputation as a country bumpkin from a primitive land. Using this appearance as a weapon, Franklin was able to obtain increased arms shipments for the colonies. His strategy for gaining the formal alliance called for more clever action. Franklin pretended that the Americans were not too eager for a formal alliance, for he feared a hasty agreement might cause the new nation to lose more than it gained.

The French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Vergennes, began to actively pursue the kindly old philosopher to persuade him that an alliance was in the best interest of both nations. The French had watched the events in the colonies closely. They were impressed with the ability of Washington’s army, and Saratoga proved that the Americans were capable of winning the war. The loss of the colonies would be a humiliating defeat for England. France saw a chance to once more become the leading power in Europe and to pay England back for the humiliating defeats in the French and Indian War.

But France had to act quickly. Early in 1778 Lord North, the British Prime Minister, finally realized the seriousness of the struggle in the colonies. Hr was ready to ask Parliament to grant the colonies everything they demanded if they would swear allegiance to the British Crown. There was a slim chance that the colonies would accept such an offer if France did not act quickly.

King Louis XVI made the decision to declare war with England. On February 6, 1778, the treaty of alliance was signed an on March 20, the American representatives were formally recognized at Versailles. Congress turned down the proposals of Lord North, and on May 4, ratified the alliance with France.

The French dispatched a fleet of twelve ships and a number of regiments to the American shores. Americans rejoiced at the news of the French alliance, and the feeling that a new and successful era had opened in the war for independence spread throughout the new nation.

The French alliance was followed by similar agreements with Spain and Holland. Spain allied herself with the Americans in 1779, and in 1780, Holland joined the struggle against England.

The news that the French were at war with England shocked British General Henry Clinton, who had replaced Howe in command of the forces at Philadelphia. Clinton feared that a French fleet might bottle him up, so he attempted to march his men across New Jersey to New York.

Torrential rains slowed Clinton’s march, and Washington decided to ignore the advice of General Charles Lee and attack the struggling British. Lee was offered the command of the attacking troops but refused, and it was given to the Marquis de Lafayette. When Lee discovered that Lafayette would have 6,000 men under his command, Lee, impressed with the size of the force, demanded that he be allowed to lead the troops.

Lee and his army met Clinton at Monmouth on June 28, 1778. Clinton’s line would have been cut in two, but General Lee ordered a needless retreat, issued conflicting orders to his troops and nearly panicked his troops by his irrational behavior. Washington arrived in time to turn the Battle of Monmouth into a victory for the Americans. Lee was later court martialed for his performance at Monmouth and dismissed from the army in disgrace.

**Questions:**

1. Why was Ben Franklin sent to France? (Two Tasks)

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1. What did France want to pay England back for?

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1. What other countries joined in America’s struggle?

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1. Why was General Charles Lee dismissed from the army?

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1. Who led the Americans to victory at Monmouth?

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