

Why England Lost the War

- **There was no city that England could capture to end the war.** In fact, the English were able to capture most major American cities at some point in the war -- including New York, Philadelphia, Savannah, and Charleston. But most Americans did not live in cities (most Americans were farmers living in small towns and communities away from major cities). What's more, the Continental Congress moved from city to city. As a result, there was no one city that the English army could capture that would quickly bring about the surrender of the entire colonies.
- **England greatly underestimated the colonists' determination to win the war once it began.** They expected colonists to give up their resistance once thousands of troops landed in America. They expected colonial support for their leaders to crumble, especially because none of the colonial leaders had had any previous experience in leading a national government or a major war.
- **English commanders seriously underestimated the skills, talents, maturity, and charisma of George Washington.** Though inexperienced compared to the English generals that he was facing, Washington was a remarkably effective leader who was able to command the respect and admiration of his troops.
- **Because of its huge debts, the English government had to avoid spending an enormous amount of money on the war.** As a result, the English army oftentimes experienced delays in the arrival of new soldiers and supplies from England.
- **Communications and transportation across the Atlantic Ocean was extremely slow.** A typical voyage across the Atlantic took four to six weeks. This resulted in very costly delays in news, orders, and supplies.
- **England's use of foreign mercenaries proved to be a useful propaganda weapon for colonial newspapers.** These foreigners were viewed as hired killers of the king to fight against the king's own people. Many colonists who were uncertain of their loyalties were convinced to join the patriot side because England was willing to hire German mercenaries in their fight against the colonists.

- **England's army (and especially its generals) suffered from extreme overconfidence.** Regular officers and men were sure of victory, especially after examining the ragged appearance of the colonial militia and the early problems with discipline among the colonists.
- **England relied on military techniques that were common practice in Europe.** Throughout the war, England used traditional European tactics -- such as lining up in neatly arranged rows, marching in organized patterns the open field, and wearing brightly colored uniforms. These tactics did not work very well in the environment of the colonies and even worse against the hit-and-run tactics that the colonists learned to use.
- **English officers were more gentlemen than soldiers.** They were used to the comforts of life that they were used to in England. Every English general's way of life as an English gentleman had to be maintained at all time on the march and near the battlefield. As a result, English armies traveled very slowly and English generals were unwilling to undergo hardships that colonial generals faced to gain an edge in battles.
- **England was not prepared for a long, intense war.** Not until after the Battle of Bunker Hill did England even begin to think in terms of war rather than a small rebellion. England never planned for a long war and was always looking for the one decisive victory.
- **England had no allies to help fight a war to protect its overseas empire.** After the Seven Years' War, no country would support England in its fight with the colonies. Apart from hiring mercenaries from Germany, England had to fight entirely alone. On the other hand, the colonies were able to get support from France, Spain, and the Netherlands.
- **England never received Loyalist support on a large scale.** England's generals and politicians never did what was needed to gain the support of Loyalists and they often did not recognize the support that Loyalists did give. As a result, England could never get a large number of Loyalists to help them in the war.
- **The English navy was far superior to the colonies navy, but compared to other European countries it had many older ships.** As a result the English navy was not very prepared for any large-scale operations. When France entered the war, they were able to use their navy to defeat the English navy and help Washington trap Cornwallis at Yorktown.