Name _____ Date _____

Turning Points of the Revolutionary War: A Timeline from 1775 to 1783

Directions: Read the passage and study the timeline. Then answer each question.

Turning Points of the Revolutionary War

How the Tide Turned

A turning point is an event that changes the direction of a war. By late 1776, the war was going badly for the Americans. A large British force had driven George Washington's army out of New York, and many of his soldiers had gone home. Then, on a freezing night in December, Washington led his troops across the Delaware River and surprised Hessian soldiers, Germans fighting for Britain, at Trenton, New Jersey. The small victory lifted American spirits.

The biggest turning point came in 1777. At Saratoga, New York, Americans forced a whole British army to surrender. The victory showed France that the Americans could win. France, Britain's longtime rival, signed an alliance with the United States and sent soldiers, warships and money.

In late 1778, the British turned to the South, where they hoped to find more support. They captured major ports, but they could not control the countryside. In 1781, American and French troops trapped a British army at Yorktown, Virginia, while French warships blocked its escape by sea. The British army surrendered. Soon after, Britain's leaders decided to make peace.

Timeline: Turning points of the Revolutionary War, 1775 to 1783

Date	**Event**
April 1775	Fighting at Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts, begins the war.
June 1775	Congress chooses George Washington to command the Continental Army.
June 1775	Battle of Bunker Hill near Boston: the British take the hill but lose more than 1,000 soldiers killed or wounded.
March 1776	The British leave Boston after Americans place cannons on the hills above the city.
July 1776	Congress approves the Declaration of Independence.
August 1776	British troops defeat Washington's army at the Battle of Long Island, New York.
December 1776	Washington crosses the Delaware River and wins a surprise victory at Trenton, New Jersey.
October 1777	A British army surrenders after the Battles of Saratoga, New York.
December 1777	Washington's army sets up winter camp at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

Date	Event
February 1778	France signs a treaty of alliance with the United States.
December 1778	British troops capture Savannah, Georgia.
May 1780	British troops capture Charleston, South Carolina.
October 1781	Trapped by American and French forces, a British army surrenders at Yorktown, Virginia.
September 1783	The Treaty of Paris ends the war, and Britain recognizes American independence.

1. According to the passage, why was the British surrender at Saratoga a turning point?

A. It gave Britain control of the ports in the South.

B. It convinced France to join the war on the American side.

C. It ended the war and won American independence.

D. It forced Washington's army out of New York.

2. Use the timeline. About how long after the British surrender at Saratoga did France sign its alliance with the United States?

A. About one month

B. About four months

C. About one year

D. About four years

3. Put these three events in the order they happened, using the timeline's dates. Match each one to First, Second or Third.

Write the letter of the matching answer on each line.

1. _____ Washington wins a surprise victory at Trenton
2. _____ Washington's army sets up winter camp at Valley Forge
3. _____ The British leave Boston

A. First

B. Third

C. Second

4. The passage says the British captured major ports in the South. Use the timeline to complete the sentence with names from the word bank.

Word bank

Yorktown • Savannah • Boston • Trenton • Charleston

British troops captured _____ in December 1778 and _____ in May 1780.

5. According to the passage, what was one effect of the alliance with France?

A. France took command of the Continental Army.

B. Britain gave up and left the colonies at once.

C. France sent soldiers, warships and money to help the Americans.

D. The Americans moved the war into Canada.

6. According to the passage, why did the British army at Yorktown surrender?

A. American and French troops trapped it on land while French warships blocked its escape by sea.

B. It learned that the Treaty of Paris had already been signed.

C. Washington's army surprised it after crossing the Delaware River.

D. It had run out of soldiers after the Battle of Bunker Hill.

7. Based on the passage and the timeline, which two of these events happened after France joined the war?

☐ A. Washington wins at Trenton

☐ B. A British army surrenders at Saratoga

☐ C. Congress approves the Declaration of Independence

☐ D. British troops capture Charleston

☐ E. A British army surrenders at Yorktown

8. Which statement best describes how the war changed from 1776 to 1781, based on the passage and the timeline?

A. France fought against the Americans after 1778.

B. The Americans won every battle from 1776 to 1781.

C. The war ended in 1776 when Congress declared independence.

D. After early defeats, the Americans won key victories and, with French help, forced a British surrender.