Closing In on Yorktown

How French forces helped trap Cornwallis

5.C.4.4.F "Describe how the support of the French army and navy helped Americans defeat Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two actions by French soldiers and circle two actions by French ships. Beside each marked action, write what it helped prevent Cornwallis from doing.

A Trap on Land and Sea

1. In September 1781, Lord Cornwallis and his British army waited at Yorktown, Virginia, beside the York River. Cornwallis hoped ships could bring supplies or carry his men away if needed. General George Washington saw a chance to trap him. But American soldiers alone could not close every route. To win, they needed help on land and on the water.

2. French soldiers led by General Rochambeau joined Washington's Americans and marched toward Yorktown. Together, the armies surrounded the British on land. They dug trenches that let them move closer while staying safer from enemy fire. From those trenches, French and American troops fired cannons at British defenses. Each day, Cornwallis had less room to move and fewer ways to fight back.

3. Meanwhile, a French fleet led by Admiral de Grasse guarded the waters near Yorktown. In the Battle of the Chesapeake, French ships fought a British fleet that had come to help Cornwallis. The British ships turned back, so supplies and reinforcements could not reach his army by sea. Trapped by French and American forces on land and French ships at sea, Cornwallis surrendered on October 19, 1781.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did French soldiers joining the Americans help trap Cornwallis on land?

2. How did digging trenches and firing cannons help the French and American troops close in?

3. How did French ships keep British help from reaching Cornwallis?

4. Why did the French army and navy's actions together leave Cornwallis with few choices?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence letter from an American soldier near Yorktown to someone at home. Include one detail you might have noticed, and explain how French help on land and at sea led to Cornwallis's surrender.

ANSWER KEY

Closing In on Yorktown

GRADE 5 · 5.C.4.4.F

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two actions by French soldiers and circle two actions by French ships. Beside each marked action, write what it helped prevent Cornwallis from doing. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did French soldiers joining the Americans help trap Cornwallis on land?	**The combined armies surrounded Cornwallis's troops, leaving them less room to move.**
2	How did digging trenches and firing cannons help the French and American troops close in?	**The trenches let troops move closer while staying safer, and their cannons struck British defenses.**
3	How did French ships keep British help from reaching Cornwallis?	**They fought a British fleet, which turned back, preventing supplies and reinforcements from reaching Yorktown by sea.**
4	Why did the French army and navy's actions together leave Cornwallis with few choices?	**French and American troops surrounded him on land, while French ships blocked help and escape by sea.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Dear Mother, I heard French soldiers' shovels scrape as they dug trenches with us outside Yorktown. We learned that French ships had turned back British help at sea. With their troops pressing on land and their ships blocking the water, Cornwallis could not get help or escape, so he surrendered.

Accept answers that connect a specific French army or navy action to its effect on Cornwallis. In the letter, the noticed detail may be imagined but must fit the historical setting.