Against the Odds

Trace how the colonies overcame Britain's advantages.

8.C.2.3 "Evaluate the challenges and reasons for the colonial victory over the British Empire. Compare military strength and available resources, including financial support from private individuals and allied nations..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two challenges the Americans faced, circle two kinds of help they received, and number Boston, Trenton, Saratoga, and Yorktown in the order they occurred to trace how a weaker army won.

How the Colonies Won

1. At the start of the Revolutionary War, Britain had a trained army, a powerful navy, and more money to buy supplies. The colonies had fewer trained soldiers and often struggled to feed and pay them. Yet fighting across the Atlantic made it hard for Britain to replace supplies quickly. In March 1776, American cannon on heights above Boston helped force British troops to leave the city. That December, Washington's surprise attack at Trenton captured a Hessian garrison fighting for Britain. This small victory lifted American spirits when enlistments were running out.

2. Victory at Saratoga in 1777 showed that American forces could defeat a large British army. It helped Benjamin Franklin persuade France to sign a formal alliance with the United States in 1778. France sent money, soldiers, and warships, while private individuals, including merchant Robert Morris, lent money or used personal credit to help supply American troops. At Yorktown in 1781, French warships blocked British escape by sea as American and French forces surrounded the British army on land. The surrender ended major fighting and made American independence far more likely.

3. Winning took more than battlefield plans. George Washington kept the army together through defeats and shortages, including a harsh winter at Valley Forge in 1777 to 1778. There, soldiers suffered from hunger, illness, and inadequate clothing, but they also practiced drills that improved their fighting. Thomas Paine's pamphlet *The Crisis* urged Americans not to quit during hard times. The Treaty of Paris in 1783 recognized the United States as independent. Britain also ceded territory west to the Mississippi River, though Native nations lived on much of that land and were not parties to the treaty.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Britain's military and resources compare with the colonies', and how did private individuals help the Americans?

2. How did the victories at Boston and Trenton help the Americans in different ways?

3. How did the victory at Saratoga help lead to the British surrender at Yorktown?

4. How did Washington, Paine, and the experience at Valley Forge help the American army keep fighting?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five- or six-sentence explanation of how the colonies won independence despite Britain's advantages. Link one battlefield victory, one form of support, and one way Americans kept fighting, then explain both results of the Treaty of Paris described in the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Against the Odds

GRADE 8 · 8.C.2.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two challenges the Americans faced, circle two kinds of help they received, and number Boston, Trenton, Saratoga, and Yorktown in the order they occurred to trace how a weaker army won. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Britain's military and resources compare with the colonies', and how did private individuals help the Americans?	**Britain had a trained army, a powerful navy, and more money. The colonies had fewer trained soldiers and struggled to feed and pay them, so private individuals lent money or used personal credit to help supply troops.**
2	How did the victories at Boston and Trenton help the Americans in different ways?	**Cannon above Boston helped force British troops to leave the city. The surprise victory at Trenton lifted American spirits when enlistments were running out.**
3	How did the victory at Saratoga help lead to the British surrender at Yorktown?	**Saratoga helped Franklin persuade France to become an ally. At Yorktown, French warships blocked British escape by sea while American and French forces surrounded the British army on land.**
4	How did Washington, Paine, and the experience at Valley Forge help the American army keep fighting?	**Washington held the army together through defeats and shortages. Paine urged Americans not to quit, and drills at Valley Forge improved the soldiers' fighting despite harsh conditions.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Britain had a stronger navy and more money, but the colonies kept fighting despite shortages. Washington held the army together, and training at Valley Forge made its soldiers more effective. The victory at Saratoga helped Franklin win a French alliance, which brought money, troops, and ships. French ships later helped trap the British at Yorktown, where they surrendered. In the Treaty of Paris in 1783, Britain recognized the United States as independent and ceded territory west to the Mississippi River.

Accept other accurate links between a named victory, support, and the army's ability to keep fighting. The response must state both treaty results: recognition of independence and Britain's cession of western territory.