

Revolutionary Geography!

Lesson for the *Atlas of New York: Legacies of the Erie Canal*

Pretend for a moment that you are a general in the 1700s. There are no tanks, bombers, and patriot missiles. The easiest way to travel is by water.

You control access to a strategic place with a fort. Unless the enemy captures your fort, they can't get any further. Of course, you don't place a fort just anywhere! What kinds of places are best for locating a fort at the time of the French and Indian War of the American Revolution?

On page 13 of the *Atlas of New York: Legacies of the Erie Canal*, there is a map titled "The American Revolution in the Northeast." Look it over carefully.

1. What symbols are used to represent Forts? _____ Battles? _____
2. In 1775 two American armies invaded Canada. Describe the route of one of them: _____

3. In geography, we always look for *patterns*. Are the forts randomly located around the map? _____ In New York, most of them are found in two valleys. What are the names of these valleys? _____ and _____
(See the map on page 8 to help you name them). These are good locations because _____.
4. In 1777, General John Burgoyne led a British army south from Canada (Quebec) into New York. His route is on the map on page 13 (color coded _____) The goal was the capture *all* of New York State. They already held New York City. He fought two major battles. Find them on the map! One was at Fort Ticonderoga on Champlain, which he won. The other one was at Saratoga. What was the outcome of that battle? _____

5. On the next page is a black and white version of this map of the American Revolution. Five forts are numbered. Match them to the names of the forts below. Clues are given next to each one.

Fort Ticonderoga (Lake Champlain) _____

Fort Ontario (Oswego, NY) _____

West Point (Hudson River, north of New York City) _____

Fort Niagara (Lake Ontario in western NY) _____

Fort Stanwix (east of Oneida Lake, a battle was fought there) _____

6. Fort Niagara is very isolated. Why bother to place a fort there? HINT: If you want to travel west, what water route would you take in 1777? _____

7. West Point is on the Hudson River where it cuts through a mountain range known as the Hudson Highlands. Why is that fort so strategically important?

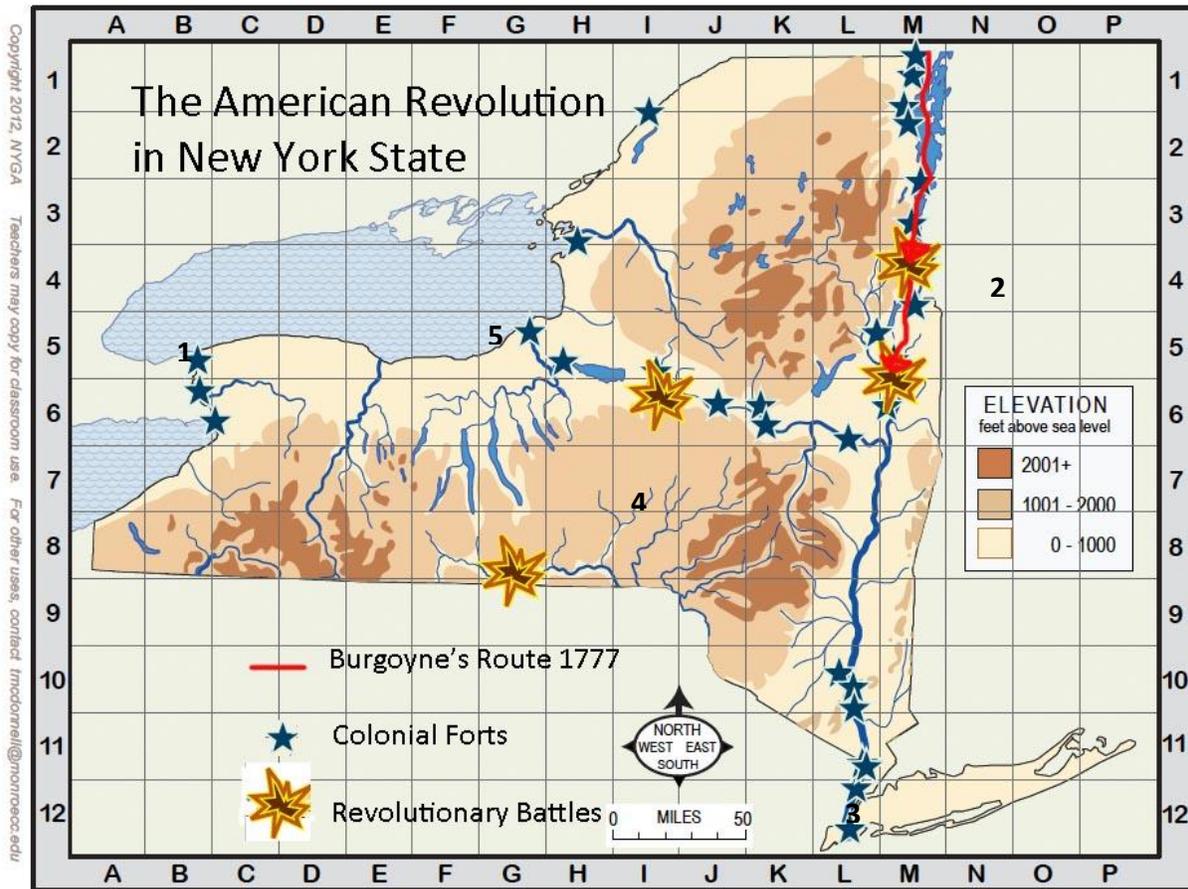
8. Why General Burgoyne was traveling south along Lake Champlain, another smaller force, led by Barry St. Leger, sailed up the **St. Lawrence River** from Quebec to **Lake Ontario** and then they landed at **Fort Ontario**. After capturing that, they went by canoes to **Oneida Lake** and overland to **Fort Stanwix**.

DRAW that route on the map on the next page. The Americans held that fort, and St. Leger could not break the siege. If he had been successful, where would he have gone next?

9. If Burgoyne had not lost at Saratoga he would have met up with St. Leger's army around New York's capital - _____.

Another British was to march up the Hudson River from New York City. Why would this have been a disaster for the American cause? _____

Forts and Battles of the American Revolution



ALTERNATE ACTIVITY: If you have the CD-ROM with “clickable PDF” maps, open up “NYClickable_2016.” In the upper left-hand corner, there is an icon for Layers. Click on it to show the different layers you can display. Show only these layers to start: *Trace Outline, Colonial forts, Scale and north, Grid lines, Grid numbers, NYBasemap.*

1. The forts appear to line up in several patterns. They are not random! Suggest one reason why this was so: _____

2. Turn on the layer *Rivers and lakes*. Write a sentence here what you observe now:

3. Turn on the layer *Detailed elevation*. What do the colors tell you? _____

What is the association between elevation and the location of these colonial forts?

“Most of the forts are _____.”

4. Turn on the layer Revolutionary battles. Four are shown on this map using what symbol? _____ Write down the grid number (i.e. “A5”) for each of them

_____ This battle was fought at the upper Mohawk River around Fort Stanwix in present day Rome, NY. The Americans held on, and the British withdrew.

_____ This battle was fought at “America’s Fort,” Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain in northeastern New York. The British won this encounter.

_____ This was a battle in Southern New York near Newtown, between the American Army and Haudenosaunee with their British allies. It was an American victory, and they marched into Indian territory.

_____ This was one of the biggest victories in American history. General Burgoyne was forced to surrender after two battles along the Hudson River near Saratoga.

5. Fort Niagara (cell B5) was held by the British during the entire American Revolution. Although no battles were fought near it, the fort was very important since it sits at the mouth (end) of the Niagara River. This waterway flows from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario. Look at the elevations of both lakes. Which one is higher? _____
Not far from the fort, the river drops over 180 feet. What is this famous landmark called?
