

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Hour \_\_\_\_\_

## Strengths and Weaknesses

### Continental Soldiers v. British Regulars in the American Revolution

Directions: Read pgs 197-198 and 217-218 in the textbook. Use the space below to take notes about the strengths and weaknesses of Continental Soldiers and British Regulars. Then read the information provided in this packet. There are paragraphs and an outline that help you to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the armies. Use a highlighter to mark strengths and weaknesses as you read and take margin notes to make information easier to find. Finally, you will use your notes to create a caricature of each soldier. You need to include 10 things on each caricature that reflect the strengths and weaknesses of each.

Combatants	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>Continental Soldiers</b>		
<b>British Regulars</b>		

## British Strengths and American Weaknesses

The British seemed unbeatable. During the previous 100 years, the British had enjoyed triumph after triumph over nations as powerful as France and Spain. At first glance, the odds were clearly against the Americans. A closer look provides insight into how the underdogs emerged victorious.

Britain's military was the best in the world. Their soldiers were well equipped, well disciplined, well paid, and well fed. The British navy dominated the seas. Funds or money were much more easily raised by the British government than by the Continental Congress.

Some of that money was used to hire Hessian mercenaries to fight the Americans. The description below is a primary document about the Hessians.

*... and the Hessians, who are allowed to be the best of the German troops, are by no means equal to the British in any respect. I believe them steady, but their slowness is of the greatest disadvantage in a country almost covered with woods, and against an Enemy whose chief qualification is agility in running from fence to fence and thence keeping up an irregular, but galling fire on troops who advance with the same pace as at their exercise. Light infantry accustomed to fight from tree to tree, or charge even in woods; and Grenadiers who after the first fire lose no time in loading again, but rush on, trusting entirely to that most decisive of weapons the bayonet, will ever be superior to any troops the Rebels can bring against them. Such are the British, and such the method of fighting which has been attended with constant success ....*

- Lieutenant W. Hale, letter to unknown recipient (March 23, 1778)



The Americans had tremendous difficulty raising enough money to purchase basic supplies for their troops, including shoes and blankets. Other strengths of the British Regulars included their winning tradition and support. Around one in five Americans were loyalists, openly supporting Great Britain, with about half of the population hoping to avoid the conflict altogether. Most Indian tribes sided with Britain, who promised protection of tribal lands.



Although American troops may not have had the military force and economic base that their British rivals had, they did believe strongly in their fight for freedom and liberty. Americans had a grand cause: fighting for their rights, their independence and their liberty. This cause is much more than just waging a war to deny independence. Furthermore, American military and political leaders were inexperienced, but proved surprisingly competent. Many decisions of the leaders helped strengthen the army. For example, the Continental Congress adopted this "Stars and Stripes" as its official flag on June 14, 1777. This became an early symbol of their cause and rallied the Continental troops to fight.

The Americans also had other strengths. Many of their strengths were the weaknesses of the British. For example, the British fought a war far from home. Military orders, troops, and supplies sometimes took months to reach their destinations. The geographic vastness of the colonies proved a hindrance to the British effort. They did not know the lay of the land, backwoods trails or ways to cope with the challenges that the continent presented. Despite occupying every major city, the British remained at a disadvantage.

Finally, the alliance with the French gave Americans courage and a tangible threat that tipped the scales in America's favor.

## I. Strengths and Weaknesses of Opposing Sides

### A. Great Britain

#### 1. Strengths (Great Britain)

- a) Population (7.5 million to 2.5 million colonists)
- b) Monetary wealth
- c) Naval forces
- d) Professional army
  - i) 50,000 British
  - ii) 30,000 Hessians
  - iii) 30,000 American Loyalists

#### 2. Weaknesses (Great Britain)

- a) Unrest in Ireland
- b) British government disorganized and confused, led by King George III and Lord North
- c) Lack of British desire to crush American cousins. Whigs cheered American victories.
- d) Military difficulties
  - i) Second-rate generals
  - ii) Brutal treatment of soldiers (one lashed 800 times for striking an officer)

- iii) Inadequate, poor provisions (old, rancid, wormy)
- iv) Need for clear victory. A draw would be a colonial victory.
- v) Armies were 3000 miles from home. Orders took months to reach the front.
- vi) Vast colonial territory (1000 by 600 miles) to subdue. No urban nerve center to conquer.

## **B. American**

### **1. Strengths (American)**

- a) Outstanding leadership
  - i) Military--Washington
  - ii) Diplomatic--Franklin
  - iii) European soldiers to help--Lafayette, Baron von Steuben
- b) Colonists fighting defensively
- c) Self-sustaining agricultural base
- d) Colonists were better marksmen (Americans accurate at 200 yds.)
- e) Moral advantage. Americans were supporting a just cause with a positive goal.

### **2. Weaknesses (American)**

- a) Colonies were badly organized, disunited for war.
- b) Continental Congress debated, but took little action and exercised less leadership
- c) Written constitution (Articles of Confederation) not adopted until 1781.
- d) Colonies were jealous of Congress, each other's region
- e) Economic difficulties
  - i) Little metallic currency available
  - ii) Fearful of taxation, Congress issued virtually worthless Continental currency
  - iii) Inflation led to increased prices, desertions from army.
- f) Limited military supplies
  - i) Inadequate firearms and powder
  - ii) Clothing and shoes scarce. At Valley Forge, 2800 men barefooted
- g) American soldiers were numerous but unreliable
- h) Profiteers used greed and speculation to weaken morale and aid the British

Directions: Now that you have read information about the Continental Army and British Army you are going to create a caricature to represent each side of the conflict. A caricature is a cartoon image that includes descriptions of the person. In a caricature, you try to relate the information about the person to certain physical attributes. (“He had a big heart during battles” so you would point to the heart and write the description).

Your caricature needs to effectively demonstrate that you understand both the STRENGTHS and WEAKNESSES of the Continental Army and the British Army. You need to include at least 10 facts for EACH Caricature to receive minimum credit on effort for this assignment.

## **Continental Soldier**

**British Regular**