Military Geography

Exercise 12 (REQUIRED) explores the interrelationship between the physical landscape and places in NYS that have important military significance in American military history.

- French and Indian Wars
- American Revolution
- War of 1812

Landforms and Elevations

Conflict between England and France for control of North America.

The New York Colony was strategically located between the French and English territories, allowing the easiest and shortest passage between Canada and the Atlantic seaboard.

Strategic Passages

Fort Ticonderoga between Lake Champlain and Lake George
Oneida Carry

Historically, the site of Ticonderoga was considered a strategic position because it controlled the route between Lake Champlain and the Hudson Valley. It was important to the Iroquois, the French, British and Americans.

Site of Ticonderoga

Site of Fort Ticonderoga

Site of Fort Ticonderoga

NY and the American Revolution

Control of this site meant control of all travel between Canada and New York Harbor.

NY and the American Revolution

July 4, 1776 the Declaration of Independence is signed in Philadelphia.

Great Britain controlled the seas. The Royal Navy quickly blockaded all primary colonial ports and controlled coastal traffic.

August 22-30, 1776

Battle of Long Island (Brooklyn) for control of New York Harbor
NYC was quickly secured by the British and remained under British control throughout the Revolution.

The Battle of Long Island was fought across Kings County (Brooklyn) from Gravesend Bay to “The Heights” to the ferry crossing at the original village of Brooklyn.

NYC and the American Revolution

About one third of all battles of the American Revolution were fought on New York soil.

What Happened?

- Howe never made it past West Point.
- Americans controlled the Hudson Highlands. Because of the S-shape of the Hudson there, British ships had to slow down.
- The Americans put an iron chain across the river to block passage.
- Howe retreated to NYC, not able to deliver supplies to Burgoyne.

NY and the American Revolution

- The British attempted to end the war by splitting the colonies in half.
- Gen. Howe moves north from NYC.
- Col. St. Leger moves east from Oswego.
- All were to meet at Albany in victory.
What Happened?

- St. Leger never made it past Rome.
- British and Indian forces moving into the Mohawk Valley encountered a large American militia at Oriskany.
- After one of the bloodiest battles of the war and with false rumors present, the Indian forces disengaged.
- St. Leger retreated to Oswego.

What Happened?

- Burgoyne never made it past Saratoga.
- Meeting much militia resistance as his force moved south, dealing with bad weather, and running low on supplies, Burgoyne was forced to surrender after the second battle of Saratoga.
- This defeat convinced France to join the war on the American side.

Oriskany Battlefield

Considered to be a significant turning point in the War of Independence, the Battle of Oriskany, fought on August 6, 1777, has been described as one of the bloodiest battles of the war.

Battle of Saratoga

American victory at Saratoga is considered one of the most important events that changed world history.
The Aftermath

- After the Battle of Saratoga (1777), only the area south of West Point, including NYC, remained under British control.
- The New England Colonies were linked to the Middle and Southern Colonies via inland routes. Food and manufactured goods were exchanged.
- Only one other battle (1779) was fought in NY.
- Revolutionary War ends in 1781.

War of 1812

Sackett's Harbor, NY was the site of the principal American shipyard and naval base on Lake Ontario. The British crossed Lake Ontario in an attempt to capture it but were repulsed by the Americans.

War of 1812

Battle of Plattsburgh

- The Battle of Plattsburgh (Battle of Lake Champlain) in Sept., 1814 ended the final British invasion of the northern states during the War of 1812.
- The Americans were able to use the victory to demand exclusive rights to Lake Champlain, deny the British exclusive rights to the Great Lakes and to any territorial gains made against the New England states during the war.