Activity 1

Document-Based Activity

The Revolutionary War

DOCUMENT 7

Before You Read The following words in the document below may be
new to you: *mortification, intrepidity, enfilade, capitulate, artificers.* You
may want to use a dictionary to look them up.

Sir, I have the mortification to inform your Excellency that I have been
forced to give up the posts of York and Gloucester, and to surrender the
troops under my command . . . as prisoners of war to the combined forces
of America and France . . .

Although the event has been so unfortunate, the patience of the soldiers
in bearing the greatest fatigues, and their firmness and intrepidity under a
persevering fire of shot and shells, that I believe has not often been
exceeded, deserved the highest admiration and praise. A successful
defence, however, in our situation was perhaps impossible, for the place
could only be reckoned an intrenched camp, subject in most places to
enfilade, and the ground in general so disadvantageous, that nothing but the
necessity of fortifying it as a post to protect the navy, could have induced
any person to erect works upon it. Our force diminished daily by sickness
and other losses, and was reduced when we offered to capitulate on this
side to little more than three thousand two hundred rank and file fit for
duty, including officers, servants, and artificers; and at Gloucester about
six hundred, including cavalry. The enemy's army consisted of upwards of
eight thousand French, nearly as many continentals, and five thousand
militia. They brought an immense train of heavy artillery, most amply
furnished with ammunition, and perfectly well manned.

—Lord Cornwallis, British general
Letter to Henry Clinton, commander of British forces in America
October 20, 1781, Yorktown, Virginia

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1. What was Cornwallis's reason for writing to General Clinton?

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2. According to Cornwallis, what factors determined the outcome of the Battle of
Yorktown?

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