

## Investigating Cause for British Surrender following the Battle of Yorktown: A Circle of Knowledge Exercise with Historical Documents

1. **Establish the topic and purpose of the discussion**

- *The Battle of Yorktown and causes pertaining to British surrender negotiations, Treaty of Paris, 1783.*

2. **Develop a focus question**

- *Which factors were most influential in the British decision to negotiate surrender following the Battle of Yorktown?*

3. **Develop a sparking question**

- *Think about recent or historical moments of conflict in our Nation's history, domestic or international. In those instances, what are/were the circumstances/factors that brought about an end to the conflict or to a resolution?*

(OR)

- *Think about an argument that you may have had with a friend, acquaintance or family member. In those instances, what are/were the circumstances/factors that brought about an end to the conflict or to a resolution?*

4. **Decide how students will acquire the information they need to participate in the discussion:**

- *Students will view a short video on the Battle of Yorktown (and/or) take part in a short mini-lecture discussion.*
- *Students will be divided into three groups:*
  - **Group 1:** *Economic Factors*
  - **Group 2:** *Social Factors*
  - **Group 3:** *Political/Intellectual Factors*
- *Each group will read through key documents relevant to their assigned category. Each student in the group can read the same text or different texts.*
- **NOTE:** *While there are three categories used to frame the discussion, teachers may choose to have multiple sets of each category depending on class size, learning needs, etc.*

5. **Develop a kindling activity.**

- a. **Part 1: Have students answer their questions individually**
- b. **Part 2: Have students answer their questions in a small group.**
- c. **Part 3: Have students discuss as a large group. Keep track of answers.**

- **Part I:** *After reading their assigned documents individually, each group member will discuss why they think their category/factor (e.g., social, political, economic) was the most the significant leading to negotiated surrender. Have students write their group's comments on the handout provided.*
- **Part II:** *Break students into groups of 3 (one for each original group; or adapt as needed while ensuring category representation). Have students discuss their respective category/factor and why they believe that each was most significant.*
- **Part III:** *Bring class back as a whole group. Have them discuss the original prompt together as a class:*

**PROMPT:** *Which of these elements, social, political/intellectual, or economic, had the greatest impact on the British decision to negotiate surrender following the Battle of Yorktown in 1781?*

4. **Create a synthesis activity for the discussion**

- a. **A written summary of all the opinions**
- b. **A defense of one's own opinion against the others**
- c. **A group project**
- d. **A visual organizer**

**Option B:** *What mattered most! Given what students have learned in their small groups and during the whole-class discussion, have them write a short essay answering the activity prompt for themselves. In the essays, ensure that there is a commitment to evidence-based reasoning. Teachers may wish to require that students incorporate at least 2-3 documentary sources to support their claims. Also, depending on time constraints and grade-level, this assignment may be most appropriate as a homework/extension of the lesson activity.*

**Adapted from: Silver, H.F., Strong, R.W., & Perini, M.J. (2007). *The strategic teacher: Selecting the right research –based strategy for every lesson*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.**