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<p>In February 1778, in the midst of the frozen winter at Valley Forge, American troops began an amazing transformation. Friedrich von Steuben captain and talented drillmaster, volunteered his services to General Washington and went to work “to make regular soldiers out of country bumpkins.” Von Steuben taught the colonial soldiers to stand at attention, execute field maneuvers, fire and reload quickly, and wield bayonets. With the help of such</p>	<p>European military leaders, the raw Continental Army was becoming an effective fighting force.</p> <p>Around the same time, another military leader, the Marquis de Lafayette, a brave, French aristocrat, offered his assistance. The young Lafayette joined Washington’s staff and bore the misery of Valley Forge, lobbied for French reinforcements in France in 1779, and led a command in Virginia in the last years of the war.</p>
Main Idea:	

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<p>After their devastating defeat at Saratoga, the British changed their military strategy; in the summer of 1778 they began to shift their operations to the South. There, the British hoped to rally Loyalist support, reclaim their former colonies in the region, and then slowly fight their way back north.</p> <p>At the end of 1778, a British expedition easily took Savannah, Georgia, and by the spring of 1779, a royal governor once again commanded Georgia. In 1780, General Henry Clinton, who had replaced Howe in New York, along with the ambitious general Charles Cornwallis sailed south with 8,500 men. In their greatest victory of the war, the British captured Charles Town, South Carolina, in May 1780 and marched 5,500 American soldiers off as prisoners of war. Clinton then left for New York, leaving Cornwallis to command the British forces in the South and to conquer South and North Carol</p>	<p>A For most of 1780, Cornwallis succeeded. As the redcoats advanced, they were joined by thousands of African Americans who had escaped from Patriot slave owners to join the British and win their freedom. In August, Cornwallis’s army smashed American forces at Camden, South Carolina, and within three months the British had established forts across the state. However, when Cornwallis and his forces advanced into North Carolina, Patriot bands attacked them and cut British communication lines. The continuous harassment forced the redcoats to retreat to South Carolina..</p>
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Washington ordered Nathanael Greene, his ablest general, to march south and harass Cornwallis as he retreated. Greene divided his force into two groups, sending 600 soldiers under the command of General Daniel Morgan to South Carolina. Cornwallis in turn sent Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton and his troops to pursue Morgan's soldiers.

Morgan and his men led the British on a grueling chase through rough countryside. When the forces met in January 1781 at Cowpens, South Carolina, the British expected the outnumbered Americans to flee; but the Continental Army fought back, and forced the redcoats to surrender.

Angered by the defeat at Cowpens, Cornwallis attacked Greene two months later at Guilford Court House, North Carolina. Cornwallis won the battle, but the victory cost him nearly a fourth of his troops—93 were killed, over 400 were wounded, and 26 were missing. B Greene had weakened the British, but he worried about the fight for the South. On April 3, 1781, he wrote a letter to Lafayette, asking for help:

[I] wish you to March your force Southward by Alexandria & Fredricksburg to Richmond. . . . It is impossible for the Southern States with all the exertions they can make under the many disadvantages they labour to save themselves. Subsistence is very difficult to be got and therefore it is necessary that the best of troops should be employed. . . . Every exertion should be made for the salvation of the Southern States for on them depend the liberty of the Northern. - from *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*

After the exhausting battle in the Carolinas, Cornwallis chose to move the fight to Virginia, where he met up with reinforcements. First he tried to capture the divisions led by Lafayette and von Steuben. When that failed, Cornwallis made a fateful mistake: he led his army of 7,500 onto the peninsula between the James and York rivers and camped at Yorktown, a few miles from the original English settlement of Jamestown. Cornwallis planned to fortify Yorktown, take Virginia, and then move north to join Clinton's forces.

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