Battle of Saratoga

Image: The Surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga, October 16, 1777, John Trumbull, c. 1822-1832, oil on canvas, courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery, Trumbull Collection, 1832.7

Object: Trophy Cannon (British light three-pounder cannon), cast by Jan and Pieter Verbruggen, Royal Arsenal, Woolwich, England, 1776, cast bronze on reproduction wood and iron cannon carriage, courtesy of Saratoga National Historical Park, SARA-3725
The Capital Region in 50 Objects

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When British General John Burgoyne began his northern campaign from Canada through New York in 1777, he brought along the best available artillery including this three-pounder cannon, cast in bronze in England in 1776. Weighing over 200 pounds, the cannon fired an iron ball weighing about three pounds, thus, the name three-pounder cannon.

Facing General Horatio Gates and the American Continental Army at Bemis Heights, north of the modern-day Village of Stillwater in Saratoga County, the British army fought two battles: one on September 19 and the other on October 7. After the American victory on October 7, the British retreated north to Saratoga (today Schuylerville), where after a siege and negotiating terms of surrender, the mightiest army in the world surrendered to the newest on October 17, 1777.

The victory at Saratoga brought much-needed aid to the American cause, and the Battles of Saratoga are considered a turning point in the American War for Independence. This cannon was one of forty-seven artillery pieces surrendered to the American Army at Saratoga. It was engraved with the honors of war several years later at West Point: “Surrendered by the Convention of Saratoga / Octr. 17. 1777.” Today, the Saratoga trophy cannons are icons of the American victory during the Revolutionary War.

Vocabulary

Artillery - large guns that are used to shoot over a great distance

Campaign - a connected series of military operations forming a distinct phase of a war

Cast - to give a shape to (a substance) by pouring in liquid or plastic, forming into a mold, and letting harden without pressure

Negotiate - to discuss something formally in order to make an agreement

Retreat - movement by soldiers away from an enemy because the enemy is winning or has won a battle

Siege - a military blockade of a city or fortified place to compel it to surrender

Surrender - to agree to stop fighting, hiding, resisting, etc., because you know that you will not win or succeed

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Name ___________________________ Date ______________________

Directions

Use the depiction of the object, image, and corresponding text to answer the following questions.

1. What is the name of the object? __________________________________________________________________________
2. What is significant about the object’s name? __________________________________________________________________________
3. During what historic event was the object used? __________________________________________________________________________
4. How was it acquired by the American Army? __________________________________________________________________________
5. What event does the painting depict? __________________________________________________________________________
6. Identify two people represented in the painting:
   a. ____________________________________________________________________  b. ____________________________________________________________________
7. Why are the two Battles of Saratoga considered a turning point in the American Revolution? __________________________________________________________________________
8. Based on what you see in the painting, what is the story the artist is trying to tell? __________________________________________________________________________