

# Geography and History Activity

## The American Revolution

### Lesson 1 *The War for Independence*

#### **Understanding Location: Albany and the Hudson River**

Albany, New York was the target of British forces early in the American Revolution. The British believed that if they could control Albany, they could quickly win the war. This was due to Albany's key location as a port on the Hudson River.

#### **Geography of Albany and the Hudson River**

Albany lies at the very north end of the deep Hudson River Channel. This is about 10 miles (6 km) south of where the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers meet. It is 143 miles (230 km) north of New York City. Albany is directly accessible by way of the river. Ships could sail out of the Hudson River into Upper New York Bay, then to the Atlantic Ocean.

The Hudson River flows from north to south. It originates from lakes in the Adirondack Mountain and flows through New York. Its southern end becomes the border between New York and New Jersey.

#### **History of the Hudson River**

The British believed the city of Albany was the key to securing the Hudson River. By placing a stranglehold on this vital waterway, the British would be able to cut New England off from the Middle Colonies.

The Hudson River was named after British explorer Henry Hudson. He was working for the Dutch East India Company, searching for the Northwest Passage, a way of crossing from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean through the arctic. He sailed up the vast river to see where it led.

The local Native Americans had called the river Muhheakunnuk, which meant "great waters constantly in motion." It was first noted in Western explorations by navigator Giovanni de Verrazano in 1524. In the 1540s, French explorers called the waterway La Grande Rivière (the great river).

During the American Revolution, the Hudson River was a critical battleground. While capturing Albany was the goal of the British, momentum turned to the important Battle of Saratoga, further north along the Hudson River. This battle, a victory for the Americans, is widely considered to be the turning point in the fight to gain independence.

# Geography and History Activity *Cont.*



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### History of Albany

The area around modern-day Albany was first scouted by Henry Hudson on his trip up the river that would later be named after him. Soon afterward, a trading post was set up by the New Netherland Company. The area was under Dutch control until surrendered to the British in 1664. England's Charles II granted a large section of the region to his brother James, who was the Duke of York and Albany. The city was then renamed Albany in honor of James. Today, Albany is the capital of New York. It remains an important port city, not only because of its direct connection to New York City, but also its access to the Great Lakes through the New York State Canal System.



### Understanding the Concept

**Directions:** Answer the following questions.

**1. Locating** What is the geographical relationship between Albany and the Hudson River?

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**2. Describing** Why was Albany's location desirable?

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# Geography and History Activity *Cont.*



## The American Revolution

**3. Identifying** List two other names by which the Hudson River has been identified.

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### Applying the Concept

**4. Analyzing** Why did the British believe that controlling Albany would lead to victory in the American Revolution?

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