Military Geography

- Exercise 12 (REQUIRED) explores the interrelationship between the physical landscape and places in NYS that have important military significance in American military history.
  - French and Indian Wars
  - American Revolution
  - War of 1812

Landforms and Elevations

Inland Corridor

French and Indian Wars

Conflict between England and France for control of North America.

The New York Colony was strategically located between the French and English territories, allowing the easiest and shortest passage between Canada (St. Lawrence R valley) and the Atlantic seaboard.

Fort Niagara – a player in 3 wars

The fort played an important role in the struggles of France, England, and the United States to control the Great Lakes region and also helped shape the destinies of the Iroquois (Six Nations) peoples.

The French established a fort in 1659 on a bluff overlooking the mouth of the Niagara River.

Britain gained control of Fort Niagara in 1759, during the French & Indian War, after a 19 day siege.

The British held it throughout the American Revolution and yielded it to the U.S. in 1796 by the treaty.

During the War of 1812 Fort Niagara was captured by the British (1813). It was returned to the United States in 1815 at the end of the war.
Strategic Passages

- Geography (terrain, weather, climate and culture) plays an important role in planning and execution of battle plans.
- The location of routes and passages as well as bottlenecks and areas of unimpeded movement have always been important. Control of these areas have been the goal of strategists.
- Among the most important strategic sites in America in the 1700s are 3 sites in NYS:
  - the Oneida Carry at Rome,
  - Fort Ticonderoga between Lake Champlain and Lake George
  - the Gorge of the Hudson at West Point.

Oneida Carry

Site of Ticonderoga

The site of Ticonderoga was considered a strategic position because it controlled the route between Lake Champlain and the Hudson Valley.

It was important to the Iroquois, the French, British and Americans.
Site of Fort Ticonderoga
Control of this site meant control of all travel between Canada and New York Harbor.

NY and the American Revolution
July 4, 1776 the Declaration of Independence is signed in Philadelphia.
Great Britain controlled the seas. The Royal Navy quickly blockaded all primary colonial ports and controlled coastal traffic.
August 22-30, 1776
Battle of Long Island (Brooklyn) for control of New York Harbor

NYC and the American Revolution
NYC was quickly secured by the British and remained under British control throughout the Revolution.

NYC and the American Revolution
The Battle of Long Island was fought across Kings County (Brooklyn) from Gravesend Bay to “The Heights” to the ferry crossing at the original village of Brooklyn.

Battle of Long Island

NYC and the American Revolution
About one third of all battles of the American Revolution were fought on New York soil.
NY and the American Revolution

- The British attempted to end the war by splitting the colonies in half.
- Gen. Howe moves north from NYC.
- Col. St. Leger moves east from Oswego.
- All were to meet at Albany in victory!

What Happened?

- Howe never made it past West Point.
- Americans controlled the Hudson Highlands. Because of the S-shape of the Hudson there, British ships had to slow down.
- The Americans put an iron chain across the river to block passage.
- Howe retreated to NYC, not able to deliver supplies to Burgoyne.

Hudson River Gorge at Bear Mountain

Site of Fort Montgomery

Looking south (NY harbor 50 mi away)

Hudson River Gorge at West Point

Location of the Chains in the Hudson Gorge

Constructed in 1778

What Happened?

- St. Leger never made it past Rome.
- British and Indian forces moving into the Mohawk Valley encountered a large American militia at Oriskany.
- After one of the bloodiest battles of the war and with false rumors present, the Indian forces disengaged.
- St. Leger retreated to Oswego.
Considered to be a significant turning point in the War of Independence, the Battle of Oriskany, fought on August 6, 1777, has been described as one of the bloodiest battles of the war.

**What Happened?**

- Burgoyne never made it past Saratoga.
- Meeting much militia resistance as his force moved south, dealing with bad weather, and running low on supplies, Burgoyne was forced to surrender after the second battle of Saratoga.
- This defeat convinced France to join the war on the American side.

American victory at Saratoga is considered one of the most important events that changed world history.

**The Aftermath**

- After the Battle of Saratoga (1777), only the area south of Bear Mountain, including NYC, remained under British control.
- The New England Colonies were linked to the Middle and Southern Colonies via inland routes. Food and manufactured goods were exchanged.
- Only one other battle (1779) was fought in NY.
- Revolutionary War ends in 1781.

War of 1812

**War of 1812**

- Lake Champlain
- St. Lawrence River Valley
- Niagara Frontier
- Lake Ontario
Niagara Frontier - War of 1812

Military outposts along the Niagara Frontier.

Sackett’s Harbor, NY was the site of the principal American shipyard and naval base on Lake Ontario. The British crossed Lake Ontario in an attempt to capture it but were repulsed by the Americans.

War of 1812

War of 1812

Fort Oswego, NY guarded the mouth of the Oswego River which was a route into central New York.

War of 1812

Battle of Plattsburgh

- The Battle of Plattsburgh (Battle of Lake Champlain) in September of 1814 ended the final British invasion of the northern states during the War of 1812.
- The Americans were able to use the victory to demand exclusive rights to Lake Champlain, deny the British exclusive rights to the Great Lakes and to any territorial gains made against the New England states during the war.