

The Franco-American Alliance: Transition to a New Diplomatic Era

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When I heard about the theme for National History Day, I immediately thought of Benjamin Franklin, arguably the greatest diplomat of all times. I started looking at the most interesting part of his life for me: his work during the American Revolution. I also wanted a project tied with France, my birthplace. I started searching on the Internet for Franklin's diplomatic action during the American Revolution. This research led me to Franklin's trip to France as an envoy. He was part of a committee that negotiated two treaties with France, thus, I decided to work on the treaties.

I first did research on Jstor, looking for academic journals giving overviews of my topic. I did a lot of research on the Library of Congress and France's National Library websites. Many primary sources were available because the treaties are official documents. After reading numerous online articles, I identified the key authors in this field, and I started to look for their work. I faced some challenges finding the books I needed because they were not available in the local libraries, so I bought books and used inter-library loans, meaning delays.

I decided to create a website because I had already created one last year, and I enjoyed it. I believe it is the best resource to present a complex topic and show relevant images. I had a lot of facts, ideas, quotes, and images from my research, so the selection process was challenging. Things fell into place when I found the guiding line for my story: the 1778 alliance really was an international marriage turned sour but still worth it. My story follows its different stages, from patient courtship and triumphant alliance to bitter betrayal and break-up, but also a great legacy. Once I had my storyline, I faced the daunting challenge of the word limit. I also enjoyed selecting primary documents and working on my website layout to make my pages both informative and attractive. My website was much improved thanks to the regional and state judges' comments.

My argument is that the 1778 treaties between France and the United States marked a transition to a new diplomatic era. By signing the treaties with America, France enabled the creation of the first modern democracy, creating a new way for a nation to be governed, thus a new way to use diplomacy. The project focuses on diplomacy and debates during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, in America, in France, and also in Britain. It highlights the successes and failures of the treaties, as well as their importance in the creation of today's diplomatic world.

The Franco-American Alliance changed the world through the creation of the first modern democracy. The United States set an example for other countries and helped many revolutions, like the French Revolution. The Alliance also marked the beginning of a new diplomatic era, creating the world we now know, shaped by ideas of rights, liberty, and democracy, in an era of free trade.