After studying many battles of the Revolutionary War, I questioned which one was the turning point for the colonies? Through research, I have found that the battle of King’s Mountain is one of the most, if not the most, decisive win for America in their attempt to overthrow British rule over the colonies. It was not only a morale booster for many of the troops but it also strategically crushed the royal army’s left flank that was created to capture Washington and the continental army from their backside.

In the early months of 1780, the British had control over much of the southern colonies including Georgia and the Carolinas. Lord Cornwallis, leader of the southern British army, devised a plan that would wipeout the entire patriot population by forcing them back under the King’s crown or kill them instead. With Tories controlling the southeastern seaboard, many colonists moved westward in fear that they would be captured and be at the hands of Lord Cornwallis. Many of these pioneers wanted complete independence from the British crown and would stop at nothing to achieve it.

As colonists moved westward of the Appalachia Mountains, Cornwallis received word and took immediate action. He went on a hunt for several leaders in the British army that could lead groups of men into the heart of America’s countryside. After going through an extensive search, Cornwallis chose two highly qualified and renowned military men in the royal army. One was General Banastre
Tarleton and the other was Major Patrick Ferguson(4). Both were very infamous in the crown's army and were seen as British war heroes. Tarleton was a vicious man who was known to kill every single, resistant patriot that crossed his path. He was an expert horseman and headed a group known as the “Green Dragoons”. Unlike Tarleton, Ferguson was a noble man who respected his enemy. One of Ferguson's most notable actions while fighting in the war was when he spotted two patriot generals on horseback riding through the woods. The Overmountain Victory Trail Association stated, “He gave and then recalled an order to fire three shots near them...but his principles forbade him to ‘fire at the back of an unoffending individual, who was acquitting himself very coolly of his duty’”(3). With the two being such different men, they made a great pair to carryout Cornwallis’ orders. Those orders were to “scour the countryside, raise Tory regiments, scatter patriot troops and crush what opposition remained”(3). While on the hunt, Ferguson issued a proclamation to any patriot exclaiming, “If you do not lay down your weapons, we will lay waste to your land and homes with fire and sword and kill everyone not willing to fall under the King’s rule.” Although Ferguson thought he had done himself a service by threatening the backwoodsmen, it would lead to something much bigger than what Ferguson had expected.

After receiving word of Ferguson's proclamation, many of the frontiersmen took offense to his actions and decided that they would do something about it. On September 24, 1780 almost a thousand inexperienced militiamen gathered at Quaker’s Meadow in Abingdon, Virginia and began, what would be, a 2 week march to find Ferguson and his loyalist army(1). While on the march, many men suffered
from lack of food and sleep. They walked miles in the pouring rain, sleet, and even snow. Along the way, the group was met by a patriot spy who informed them of Ferguson’s whereabouts. As a result, they headed south to a little place called King’s Mountain, somewhere in western South Carolina.

On October 7, 1780, the militiamen gathered around the base of the mountain and strategized their every move. Putting their individual problems aside, the patriots banded together for a little less than one hour and wiped out Ferguson’s entire army. Having suffered only 28 casualties and 62 wounded, the militiamen killed, wounded, and/or captured all 800 plus of Ferguson and his army. By the mountain men taking King’s Mountain and annihilating Cornwallis’ left flank, Cornwallis was now stuck between a rock and a hard place. Having nowhere to retreat except into Virginia, the general was pushed all the way to the eastern seaboard. He would eventually flee all the way to Yorktown where he was met by George Washington and the continental army. Washington was able to defeat Cornwallis, forcing the British army to surrender on October 19, 1781; exactly one year and 12 days after the battle of King’s Mountain.

After the war, Thomas Jefferson stated, “It was the joyful annunciation of that turn of the tide of success which terminated the Revolutionary War, with the seal of our independence.” In conclusion, I strongly believe that because the mountain men were able to defeat a highly trained, sophisticated army at the battle of King’s Mountain and absolutely crush Cornwallis’ plan to attack Washington from the backside, this battle was the true turning point of the American Revolution.
References and Citations


2) Grandpa Jones. "Sweet Lips: The Battle of King’s Mountain." N.d. CD.


5) Historian Scott Bowen, associated with Overmountain Victory Trail Association