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National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



Colonial National Historical Park

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# THE FORTUNES OF WAR

*The Past  
Always Touches  
The Present*



**THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND YORKTOWN  
1775-1783**

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# TO THE TEACHER

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This traveling trunk is designed to offer your students interactive, hands-on activities for studying the American Revolutionary War and the 1781 Siege of Yorktown. Primary emphasis is placed on **Virginia History and Social Science Standards of Learning: Virginia Studies, Colonization and Conflict: 1607 through the American Revolution, VS.5; and Revolution and the New Nation: 1770s to the Early 1800s, USI.6.**

This Fortunes of War Resource manual contains information on the American Revolutionary War; the countries involved in the conflict; the 1781 Siege of Yorktown; and the effects of the war on people, as well as the role in the war by citizens and soldiers, whether male or female, adult or child, white or black. The manual also has suggested classroom activities and worksheets.

The trunk contains reproduction military uniforms and accessories; period flags; and children's toys and games. Also included is a copy of the surrender document from the 1781 Yorktown siege and reproduction newspapers from 1776.

## TRUNK CONTENTS

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### Soldier's Personal Items

Tin canteen  
Wooden canteen  
Colonial money  
Lye soap  
Soldier's housewife (sewing kit)  
Haversack  
Wooden plate  
Clay pipe  
Fork  
Tobacco twist  
Animal horn comb  
Playing cards  
British haversack  
Whistle  
Dice  
Fife  
Knapsack  
Tin Cup

### Miscellaneous

Surrender document  
Virginia Gazette newspaper

### Uniforms & Clothing

British coat  
American coat  
French coat  
Tricorner hat  
Straw hat  
Hunting shirt  
Mob Cap

### Children's Games

Quoits  
Jacob's ladder  
Playing cards

### Flags

Rhode Island flag  
French flag  
British flag  
Washington's Headquarters flag

## TRUNK CHECKOUT

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Please call the Yorktown Supervisory Park Ranger at 757-898-2412 to checkout and pick-up the traveling trunk. The trunk is stored at the Yorktown Battlefield Visitor Center. Checkout is from that building by the teacher. Please return the trunk the following **Friday**, before 5:00 p.m. or Saturday morning so that inventory can be taken and the trunk made ready to check out the following week. Reservations are for two weeks.

Please exercise care to ensure that all materials are present before returning the trunk. Cost of replacement of damaged or lost items is the responsibility of the individual who signed out the trunk. When not being used, keep the trunk in a secure area. Because the items in the trunk are supposed to be handled, normal wear is expected. All items have been marked "NPS" to identify ownership.

# THE FORTUNES OF WAR

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The American Revolutionary War formally began at Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775, with the “shot heard ‘round the world.” But John Adams, an American patriot, stated the Revolution actually began in the hearts and minds of the people long before the fighting started. (Smith, Volume one, p. 2)

This study of the American Revolution is about people and ethnic groups: men, women, and children; African-Americans, Whites and American Indians; whose lives were affected by the war. Whether as soldiers or civilians, in battle, in camp or at home, the people of the American Revolution came to know the “fortunes of war.”

## OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to state that war affects civilians and soldiers, at all times throughout history.
2. Students will be able to give two examples of how war affected the lives of someone from the American Revolution and either themselves or someone they know today.

## ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASS

1. Question students, as a class, on how they believe the American Revolution might have affected people. Compile a list of their answers.
2. Ask each student if his/her life has been affected by a military conflict and if so, to make a list of three ways the conflict has affected him/her. If not, ask the student to talk with someone who has lived in times of war describing to the student how the war affected them, their family, and their friends. Have the students compile a list of the answers they receive.
3. Have the students compare and contrast the two lists and discuss their findings.
4. Ask students to name or make a list of the ways their lives might be different if Great Britain had won the Revolutionary War. (Examples: No July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday; would our form of government be different; etc.)

# THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION: A WORLD WAR

Most people think of the soldiers who fought the American Revolutionary War as being either American or British. But, soldiers from other countries also fought in the war.

The British army was composed of soldiers from England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. Because Great Britain was unable to recruit or enlist enough men for its own army, King George III contracted with several German principalities to hire some of their army's regiments to help fight the Americans.

Germany was not one, unified country in the 18th century, but a collection of over 100 Germanic principalities, dukedoms, and small countries. Seven of these German states (Anhalt-Zerbst, Anspach-Bayreuth, Brunswick, Hanover, Hesse-Cassel, Hesse-Hanau and Waldeck) sold nearly 30,000 soldiers to Great Britain during the war. Each German ruler, not the soldiers, received the money paid, with one ruler getting \$22.50 for each of the 4,300 soldiers he sent to fight in America. The reason these German soldiers were called "Hessians" was because over half of them came from Hesse-Cassel. (See *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*, Mark Boatner, pp. 424-426).

The American army, commanded by General George Washington, was made up mostly of soldiers from the 13 states. Some soldiers in Washington's army were also from France, Switzerland, Poland, Prussia, Canada, and even Great Britain who volunteered to fight for American independence. The United States also had an ally, France. But, unlike Great Britain, the United States did not pay money for French help. Rather, in 1778, the United States and France had signed a treaty of alliance against Great Britain. The French army, whose soldiers were primarily French, included one regiment from the Duchy of Zweibrucken (Germanic) and troops from Ireland. Additionally, Spain and Holland, while not officially allied with the United States, were also at war with Great Britain. As a result, the British were fighting naval battles on the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans, and in land battles in North America, the West Indies, Europe, Africa, the East Indies and India. Without the assistance of France, the United States may not have won its independence.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to state one reason why the American Revolutionary War was part of a world war.
2. Students will be able to locate on a map at least four of the countries or geographic areas which played major roles in the American Revolutionary War.
3. Students will be able to compare and contrast a current world map with one of the 18th century, listing at least two differences and two similarities.
4. Students will be able to define the following: enlist, ally, principality, and dukedom.
5. Students will be able to state which countries were allied with each other during the American Revolutionary War.

## DEFINITIONS

1. **Enlist** — to officially join the military, usually voluntarily.
2. **Principality** — a country ruled by a prince.
3. **Dukedom** — a state or territory ruled by a duke.
4. **Ally** — one country united with another for a common purpose.

## **ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASS**

- 1.** Make maps of 18th century North America and Europe and have your students locate the following areas: North America, the original 13 states of the United States of America, Canada, the West Indies, the Atlantic Ocean, Europe, Great Britain (i.e., 1781 - England, Scotland and Ireland), France, Spain, Holland (United Provinces 1775-1783), and the seven German states which provided Great Britain with troops.
- 2.** Have your students compare and contrast the 18th century maps with a map of today, identifying and discussing the differences and similarities.





# TIMELINE OF THE REVOLUTION

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## ▶ 1760

George III becomes King of England during the Seven Years' War, also known by Americans as the French and Indian War.

## ▶ 1763

The Peace of Paris ends the French and Indian War.

## ▶ 1764

The Sugar Act is passed by Parliament in its first attempt to tax the colonies to pay for part of the costs incurred from the French and Indian War.

## ▶ 1765

June -- The Stamp Act is passed by Parliament to raise additional funds from the colonies. Several of the colonies call for the creation of the Stamp Act Congress to protest the revenue acts passed by Parliament.

October -- The Stamp Act Congress meets in New York City.

## ▶ 1766

Parliament repeals the Stamp Act, but passes the Declaratory Act maintaining their right to tax the colonies.

## ▶ 1767

The Townshend Acts are passed by Parliament placing taxes on lead, paper, paint and other items imported to the colonies.

## ▶ 1768

October -- Several colonies adopt the Nonimportation Agreement as a protest to the Townshend Acts. Parliament orders the placement of British troops in Boston to maintain order.

## ▶ 1770

March -- The Boston Massacre leads to a partial repeal of the Townshend duties by Parliament.

By August, the Nonimportation Agreement becomes null and void in the colonies.

## ▶ 1772

Tensions begin to increase once again between Great Britain and the colonies. Sam Adams organizes the Committees of Correspondence in Massachusetts.

► **1773**

December -- Parliament passes the Tea Act giving the East India Company a monopoly on the tea trade with the colonies. In protest, some citizens of Boston conduct a "Tea Party."

► **1774**

September -- Parliament passes the Coercive Acts as punishment for Boston's destruction of the tea. The First Continental Congress meets at Carpenter's Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

October -- The Continental Congress adopts the Continental Association pledging the colonies to an agreement of non-importation of British goods.

► **1775**

April 19 -- The battles of Lexington and Concord are fought in Massachusetts.

May -- The Second Continental Congress meets in Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

June 15 -- George Washington is named Commander In Chief of the newly created American (Continental) Army by the Continental Congress.

June 17 -- The Battle of Bunker Hill is fought near Boston, Massachusetts.

July 3 -- General Washington takes command of the Continental Army at Cambridge, Massachusetts.

July to March 17, 1776 -- The Americans lay siege to Boston forcing the British to evacuate the city.

October -- American forces invade Canada and are repulsed in their attack on Quebec, December 31.

► **1776**

January -- Thomas Paine publishes *Common Sense*.

May 15 -- The Virginia Convention, meeting in Williamsburg, passes a resolution instructing its delegates in Congress to propose independence. The authors of the resolution are Patrick Henry, Edmund Pendleton and Thomas Nelson, Jr.

June 17 -- Richard Henry Lee of Virginia presents to Congress Virginia's resolution that "these United Colonies are and of right ought to be free and independent States."

July 2 -- Congress unanimously votes for independence.

July 4 -- Congress adopts the Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson. Eventually, 56 members of Congress will sign this document, including Thomas Nelson, Jr. of Yorktown, Virginia.

August 27 -- The British attack and defeat the American forces on Long Island, New York.

September 15 -- The British capture New York City from General Washington's army.

November -- General Washington's army retreats through New Jersey and crosses the Delaware River into Pennsylvania. The war appears to be over for the Americans.

December 25-26 -- General Washington launches a surprise attack on the Hessians stationed in Trenton, New Jersey by secretly crossing the Delaware River on Christmas night. The victory restores American morale, and the fight for independence continues.

### ► 1777

September 11 -- General Washington loses the Battle of Brandywine.

September 19 -- American forces, under the command of Horatio Gates and Benedict Arnold, defeat a British army advancing from Canada along the Hudson River at Freeman's Farm, New York. On October 7, this same British army is defeated once again at Bemis Heights and forced to surrender on October 17, thus ending the Battle(s) of Saratoga.

September 27 -- The British capture Philadelphia.

October-June (1778) – The Continental Army is encamped at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

### ► 1778

February 6 -- France signs an alliance treaty with the United States.

June 18 -- Fearing the arrival of an army from France, the British army evacuates Philadelphia.

June 28 -- General Washington engages the British army at Monmouth Courthouse, New Jersey as it retreats from Philadelphia to New York City. The battle is a draw, but the Americans stand toe-to-toe with the British and are not driven from the battlefield. The Continental Army can now be called a professional army for the first time.

December 29 -- The British capture Savannah, Georgia.

## ► 1779

June 16 -- Spain declares war upon Great Britain.

September 23 -- John Paul Jones wins his great naval battle with his ship, the *Bonhomme Richard*. During this battle when the British asked he surrender, he responded with the now infamous line: "I have not yet begun to fight."

October 9 -- French and American forces are repulsed in their attempt to recapture Savannah, Georgia.

## ► 1780

May 12 -- The British capture Charleston, South Carolina after a six-week siege.

July 10 -- A French army, commanded by General Rochambeau, arrives at Newport, Rhode Island.

August 16 -- Lord Cornwallis smashes an American force commanded by General Horatio Gates, at Camden, South Carolina. The South is completely void of an organized American force. General Washington sends General Nathanael Greene to correct the situation.

September 23 -- Benedict Arnold is foiled in his attempt to surrender the American fort at West Point, New York to the British for money. The traitor narrowly escapes capture, fleeing to New York City to join the British army as a brigadier general.

October 7 -- Frontier militia, called "Over the Mountain Men" destroy a British force at King's Mountain, South Carolina. The tide of war in the South is beginning to turn toward the Americans.

December 30 -- Great Britain declares war upon Holland.

## ► 1781

January 17 -- A British force is soundly defeated at Cowpens, South Carolina.

March 1 --The states formally ratify the Articles of Confederation.

March 15 -- General Nathanael Greene fights a severe battle with Lord Cornwallis at Guilford Courthouse, North Carolina. Although the Americans withdraw from the battlefield, allowing the British to claim a victory, the British army is so shattered by the experience that Cornwallis is forced to retire to Wilmington, North Carolina. There, he formulates his plan to join forces with General William Phillips British army in Virginia.

May 10 -- Lord Cornwallis and his army arrive in Virginia, linking up with other British forces already in the state.

July 6 -- Lord Cornwallis defeats General Lafayette at the Battle of Green Spring near Jamestown, Virginia.

August 1 -- Lord Cornwallis arrives at Yorktown to establish a naval base.

August 29 -- A French fleet of approximately 150 vessels, including 28 ships-of-the-line (battleships), commanded by Admiral de Grasse, arrives at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay from the West Indies.

September 5 -- At the Battle of the Capes, French Admiral de Grasse, with 24 battleships, defeats British Admiral Graves's fleet of 19 battleships and secures French control of the Chesapeake Bay and the York River.

October 19 -- Lord Cornwallis surrenders his army to General Washington.  
\*\*(Please see the section "The History of the Battle of Yorktown" for more information.)

### ► 1782

November 30 -- American and British commissioners sign the Preliminary Articles of Peace between Great Britain and the United States.

### ► 1783

September 3 -- The Treaty of Paris is signed by the United States and Great Britain, officially ending the American Revolutionary War. Great Britain recognizes the independence of the United States.

November 25 -- British troops withdraw from their last remaining garrison in the United States; New York City.

December 23 -- General Washington resigns his commission as Commander in Chief to the Continental Congress at Annapolis, Maryland.

# **HISTORY OF THE BATTLE OF YORKTOWN**

By the summer of 1781, the United States had been at war with Great Britain for over six years. The first shots of the war were fired on April 19, 1775 at Lexington and Concord, two villages west of Boston, Massachusetts. A year later, on July 4, 1776, the Declaration of Independence was adopted by the Continental Congress. General George Washington, commander of the Continental Army, had witnessed defeats and disappointments in his attempts to secure American independence. Merely sustaining the Continental Army had been a major accomplishment for Washington. The Continental Congress and state governments could not or would not provide the army with enough money, food or clothing. The winter military encampments of 1777-1778 at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, and 1779-1780 at Morristown, New Jersey, ravaged the army, with some soldiers giving up and going home. The remaining soldiers' belief in the cause of independence, and their faith in Washington kept the Continental Army together.

A major boost for the U.S. occurred on February 6, 1778 when Louis XVI, king of France, signed a treaty of alliance with the United States. As early as 1776, France had been secretly sending military supplies and money to the Americans. In July 1778, France declared war on Great Britain. France's reason for the alliance was her defeat at the hands of Great Britain during the Seven Years War (also known as the French and Indian War). France viewed the American Revolutionary War as an opportunity to economically cripple the British Empire by helping the U.S. become independent. Believing a grateful U.S. would be an ally against Great Britain; France planned to use the U.S. as a political pawn to help maintain a balance of power in European and world affairs. Having lost most of her territories in the New World at the end of the French and Indian War, France was also interested in trade with the U.S. for many of the new world's natural resources. Under British control, the colonies had been restricted primarily to commerce with Great Britain.

On July 10, 1780 a French army of 5,500 soldiers, commanded by General Comte de Rochambeau, arrived in Newport, Rhode Island, to assist General Washington. Another French army and navy had come to the U.S. in

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. Students will be able to name the last major battle of the American Revolution – Yorktown ending on October 19, 1781.
2. Students will be able to state that the victory at Yorktown secured American independence.
3. Students will be able to use a time line of the Revolution stating the opening year of the war was 1775, the Declaration of Independence was adopted in 1776, the Battle of Yorktown was fought in 1781, and the end of the war was in 1783.
4. Students will be able to identify the commanders of the Allied and British armies at Yorktown – General Washington and Lord Cornwallis, respectively.
5. Students will be able to recite three contributions of France to the victory at Yorktown (1) their navy, (2) their army, (3) money and supplies.

1778, but problems in cooperation between French and American commanders had hindered military operations. General Rochambeau was different. The military situation was as follows when Rochambeau arrived in the U.S.: General Henry Clinton, commander of all British forces in North America, was headquartered with the British garrison at New York City (which had been captured in September 1776). Washington was commanding the Continental Army positioned northwest of New York City. General Charles Lord Cornwallis was advancing through the South with his British army. The British had already captured Savannah, Georgia (December 1779), and Charleston, South Carolina (May 1780). A small American army, under General Nathanael Greene, was trying to stop Cornwallis' advance through the Carolinas.

On May 22, 1781 Washington and Rochambeau planned their strategy at a meeting in Wethersfield, Connecticut. They agreed to unite their armies to attack Clinton, if Admiral Comte de Grasse's French battle fleet, currently in the West Indies, assisted them. Both commanders realized it was vital to control the waters around New York City to prevent the evacuation of Clinton's army by the British navy. The U.S. had no battleships to challenge the ever-present British warships. Only Admiral de Grasse's fleet could possibly defeat the British navy and prevent Clinton's escape. Washington hoped to force Clinton to surrender his garrison and troops before Cornwallis could send help, giving Washington the victory needed to win independence.

From mid-June to early July 1781, Rochambeau marched his army from Rhode Island to New York to join Washington for their attack on Clinton. But two major events altered the plan. Early in June, Washington learned Cornwallis had invaded Virginia. Washington could do little to assist a small American army under the Marquis de Lafayette opposing Cornwallis. Washington also realized Cornwallis had placed himself closer to the American and French armies in New York. More importantly, on August 14, a letter arrived from De Grasse stating that, due to time constraints, the French fleet was not sailing to New York, but to the Chesapeake Bay, hoping a military campaign could be conducted in the South. Washington quickly changed his strategy. Instead of attacking Clinton, he ordered the French Army and a portion of the Continental Army, (i.e., allied army), to Virginia and capture Cornwallis' forces with the help of the French fleet.

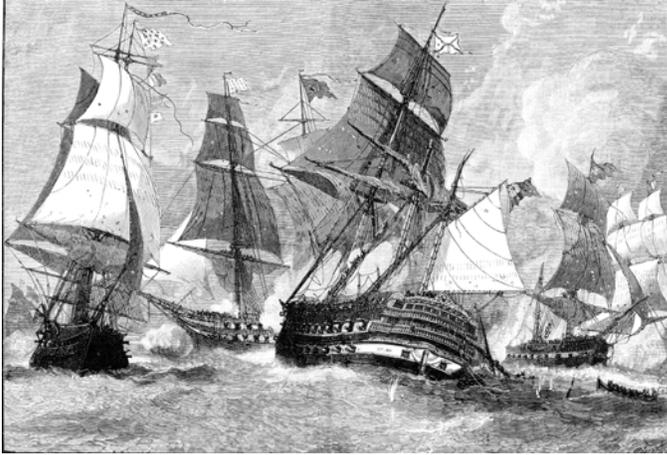
Washington's new plan was bold and daring. To succeed, he had to mislead Clinton into thinking the allies still intended to attack him so Clinton would not send assistance to Cornwallis. Through trickery, Washington accomplished his task. First, he let false plans for an attack on New York City fall into Clinton's hands. Next, he constructed a large military camp in northern New Jersey to give the appearance that the allies intended to attack New York City from there. Finally, in late August, as the allies moved from New York toward Virginia, they marched through New Jersey in three separate columns, as if headed for their northern New Jersey camp. Clinton was completely fooled.

Meanwhile, on August 1, 1781 Cornwallis's army of 8,300 British, German, and Loyalist soldiers occupied Yorktown after an unproductive offensive in Virginia. Although Clinton had disapproved of Cornwallis's invasion of Virginia, he had, nonetheless, ordered Cornwallis to establish a naval base in Virginia to provide the British fleet with a central location between New York City and Charleston, South Carolina. Clinton also, anticipating Washington's attack, directed Cornwallis to prepare part of his army for redeployment to New York (which never took place). Cornwallis chose Yorktown because of its deep-water harbor and port facilities on the York River. The York River flows into the Chesapeake Bay, and the bay into the Atlantic Ocean, which provided Cornwallis with a life line to New York City. Also, Yorktown is located at the river's narrowest point, with only a half mile separating Yorktown on the south bank, and Gloucester Point on the north bank, making it an ideal area from which to defend the fleet. Though Cornwallis did not expect an attack, he had earthworks constructed surrounding Yorktown and Gloucester Point.

*No one knows how many slaves, hoping for freedom, followed Cornwallis's army to Yorktown. Some estimate as many as 2,000. Most slaves were ultimately disappointed. Cornwallis used them to build his earthworks. During the siege, as Cornwallis concern about his dwindling supplies increased, he cast many of them out of his lines with no food or medical care. Dreading the consequences of being runaways, these forlorn African-Americans were afraid to seek help from the Allies. Soldiers wrote of large numbers of the runaways dying from famine and small pox in the woods and ravines around the edges of Yorktown. The number of African-Americans who died during the siege is unknown. Most who survived were collected and placed under guard by the Americans until reclaimed by their owners. The irony and tragedy of the victory at Yorktown is that it gave one some American citizens independence, while others remained in bondage.*

Cornwallis expected a quiet autumn, but an unforeseen development at the end of August changed his outlook. The French fleet arrived and blockaded the Chesapeake Bay, cutting him off from accessing the Atlantic Ocean and consequently, New York City. The first phase of Washington's plan to defeat Cornwallis had come to fruition! Cornwallis was certain, however, that the British fleet would arrive and defeat the French. De Grasse also expected the British fleet, but he was confident of victory. He had gambled by bringing most of his battle fleet which included 28 battleships (called ships-of-the-line in the 18<sup>th</sup> century) and approximately 120 other vessels. This was against naval strategy, as normal procedure was to use half the fleet to protect the valuable merchant ships leaving the West Indies for France.

On September 5, 1781, one of the most important naval battles in American history was fought. Ironically, no Americans played a part. When the British navy, in New York City, learned De Grasse had moved northward from the West Indies, they sailed south with 19 battleships, expecting to find a French fleet of only 12 to 15 battleships. Unfortunately, they underestimated the strength of Admiral de Grasse's fleet, which included 24 battleships at the entrance to the



Chesapeake Bay. (Four additional French ships were guarding the York and James Rivers and were unavailable for the battle. The French ships in the battle carried 1,800 cannons versus the British 1,400.) De Grasse, after a two and one-half hour battle, maintained his vital control of the Chesapeake Bay. The British fleet, extensively damaged, returned to New York for

repairs. This naval battle, called the Battle of the Capes (*due to Capes Henry and Charles at the bay's entrance*), isolated Cornwallis from receiving aid via water. It was now up to Washington's allied army to surround Cornwallis's army on land.

Incredibly, by September 26, only 40 days after the start of the advance from New York, General Washington had assembled in Williamsburg an allied army of 9,000 Americans and 8,600 French. Included in the American forces were 3,500 soldiers from the Virginia militia. On September 28, the allied forces marched 12 miles from Williamsburg to Yorktown to begin the siege.

*De Grasse brought 3,000 French soldiers from the West Indies. These troops disembarked at Jamestown Island and joined the Marquis de Lafayette's forces in Williamsburg. Lafayette, in 1777 at age of 19, came to the U.S. from his native France and volunteered for the Continental Army. In June 1781, Washington sent him to Virginia to deal with Cornwallis. Lafayette placed his army of 2,000 continental soldiers in Williamsburg once Cornwallis was at Yorktown.*

The Allied Army reached Yorktown on the afternoon of September 28. Washington knew Cornwallis was a very capable general. To slow the allies' advance, Cornwallis had constructed outer defenses called redoubts, a French term meaning "earth fort." Three redoubts (*See the map, numbers 1, 2, and 3.*) were approximately a half mile southwest of the British Inner Defense Line surrounding Yorktown. These redoubts protected the critical half mile "land bridge" between the headwaters of Yorktown and Wormley Creeks – creeks not fordable by heavy artillery. Washington planned to capture these redoubts so his army could gain closer access to Yorktown.

Meanwhile, Cornwallis requested Clinton's help. On September 29, Cornwallis received a letter from Clinton that had slipped through the French naval blockade on a small, fast sailing vessel. In the letter, Clinton replied that the British battle fleet would leave New York around October 5 with over 5,000 soldiers and arrive at the Chesapeake about a week later. Expecting this relief fleet, Cornwallis decided to consolidate his troops behind his inner defense line encircling the town and ordered the outer three redoubts abandoned. He did retain control, however, of other areas of his outer defenses: Redoubts 9 and 10

and the Fusiliers' Redoubt, located in front of the flanks (ends) of his inner defense line. Cornwallis felt his army could hold out behind his main line until reinforcements arrived. In abandoning these three outer redoubts, Cornwallis opened the "land bridge," giving Washington easier access to the open plain in front of the British Inner Defense Line.

On the morning of September 30, the allies discovered the British withdrawal. Washington quickly ordered his men to occupy the abandoned redoubts and begin preparations to build their own protective earthworks, called siege lines, in the open plain. (*Refer to the map.*) These siege lines would protect allied artillery and soldiers from enemy fire as they moved closer and closer to the British. Behind the siege lines, the allied artillery would be within effective, destructive range of the British earthworks. With Cornwallis' army surrounded, it was up to the allied artillery to bombard the British into submission. Hopefully it would only be a matter of time before the British had to surrender.

On the night of October 6, 1,500 men, using picks and shovels, began digging the first siege line approximately 800 yards from the British earthworks. Covered by darkness and a light rain (which muffled the noise, softened the soil, and the rain clouds blanketed the moonlight and starlight), the men worked silently all night, undetected by the British. At dawn, the British awoke to face a siege line over one mile in length, stretching from the headwaters of Yorktown Creek to the York River bluff east of town. (*Refer to the map.*)

By October 9, the allies had positioned most of their siege artillery in the first siege line, and began bombarding the British. The bombardment soon damaged many British cannon. On the night of October 11, the allies started digging their second siege line only 400 yards from the British Inner Defense Line. This second, closer line would enable them to move their cannon within point blank range of the British. But, the allies had a major problem - Redoubts 9 and 10. By controlling these two redoubts, Cornwallis was preventing the allies from completing the second siege line to the river bluff. Only able to build half of the second siege line, the allies needed to capture the two redoubts.



On the night of October 14, after firing upon the redoubts most of the day, 400 American soldiers assaulted Redoubt 10, and 400 French soldiers assaulted Redoubt 9. Both attacks succeeded, and with the redoubts captured, the allies worked throughout the rest of the night to extend the second siege line.

Two nights later, on October 16, Cornwallis made a desperate attempt to evacuate his army from Yorktown. Throughout the siege, 1,000 of his soldiers held Gloucester Point, across the river from Yorktown. Washington had a force of 3,000 containing those troops within their defenses. Cornwallis reasoned however, that if he transported most of his army to Gloucester Point, he would have numerical superiority to break

through the allied forces on that side of the river. If need be, he was preparing his army for an overland retreat all the way to New York City. Around midnight, under dark cloud cover, about 1,000 of his men were ferried across the river. Before more could cross, a violent storm, with strong winds, sunk some of the boats, and others were scattered down the river. Mother Nature had foiled Cornwallis's plans.

Cornwallis' fate was sealed. A recent letter from Clinton had revealed the British relief fleet had not left New York as planned and there was no guarantee when it would depart. With no help now expected from Clinton; some of his supplies diminishing, including ammunition for his few remaining cannon; many of his soldiers infected with smallpox and others sick with fevers and the affects of bad food and water; and the allied artillery blowing huge holes in his defenses, Cornwallis realized he had to surrender rather than risk further death and destruction to his soldiers.

On the morning of October 17, a British drummer stood atop the British earthworks and beat a signal which meant Cornwallis was asking for a cease firing. A British officer then carried a letter from Cornwallis to Washington. In the letter, Cornwallis asked to discuss surrender terms. The next day, October 18, four officers; one American, one French, and two British, met at the Moore House, one mile east of Yorktown, and negotiated the surrender terms, known as the Articles of Capitulation. October 19, 1781, on a beautiful autumn afternoon, Cornwallis's army formally surrendered. They marched out of Yorktown, regiment by regiment, file by file, between two lines of allied soldiers, Americans on one side of the road and the French on the other, to an open field about two miles south of town and laid down their muskets. At the same time Cornwallis's men were surrendering, Clinton's relief force sailed from New York and arrived off the Virginia coast five days too late. The last major battle of the American Revolutionary War was over!

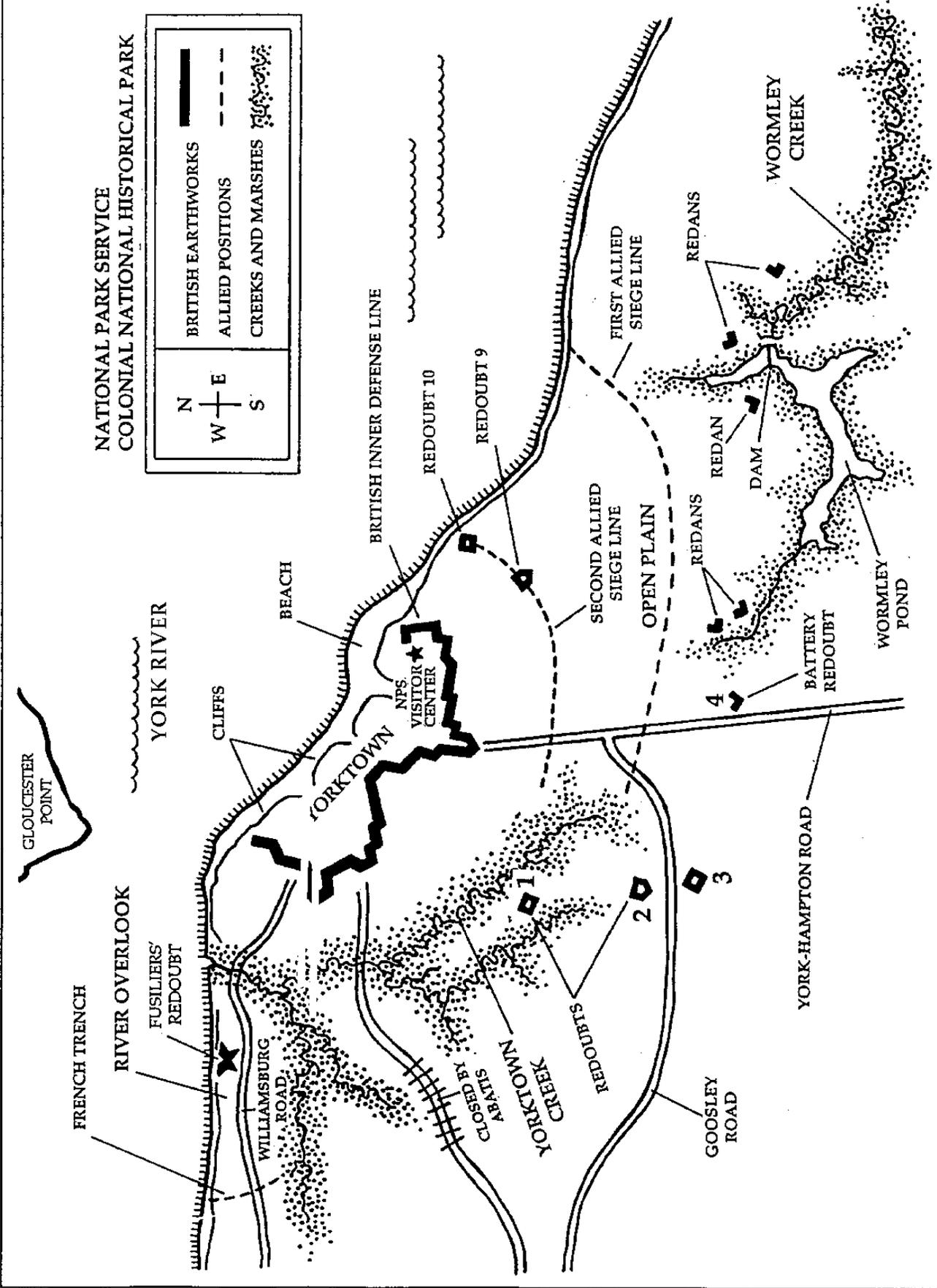


This is a 1930s image of a portion of reconstructed Allied earthworks, showing some of the components of the earthwork structure.

News of Cornwallis's defeat spread quickly. Celebrations took place throughout the U.S. and France. London was shocked. Although the British still had over 17,000 soldiers in North America, the people of Great Britain were tired of the war. To the chagrin and opposition of King George III, in March 1782, Parliament passed a resolution barring future military operations in the colonies. Later that year, commissioners of the U.S. and British governments signed provisional articles of peace. On September 3, 1783 the two countries signed the Treaty of Paris, officially ending the American Revolutionary War.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
 COLONIAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

	 BRITISH EARTHWORKS
	 ALLIED POSITIONS
	 CREEKS AND MARSHES



## APPENDIX

E. James Ferguson, in his *The Power of the Purse: A History of American Public Finance, 1776-1790*, page 103, states it cost the United States approximately \$168 million to wage the Revolution. The cost to France is estimated at two billion livres (Higginbotham, p. 435) and to Great Britain 140 million pounds sterling (Miller, *Triumph of Freedom*, p. 617). According to John J. McCusker, in 1776 a British pound was equal to 24 French livres. (*Money and Exchange in Europe and America, 1600-1775*; p. 97). Therefore, the French war costs convert to approximately 83,333,333 pounds sterling.

Converting these sums into today's dollars is difficult due to the distortion of monetary values for commodities and labor costs of the 18th century versus the 20th century. For example, we cannot equate a horse and wagon bought in the 18th century to an automobile purchased today. Eighteenth century items were predominately handmade versus today's machine technology, so how do we compare labor costs? Nonetheless, in 1896, W.A. Shaw (*The History of Currency, 1252 to 1896*), using gold as a yardstick, achieved a logical approximation for measuring relative worth.

All one needs to know is how many monetary units purchased one Troy ounce of gold in the past and compare it to the price of one ounce of gold today. The following calculations were made on April 19, 1988 when the price of gold in London opened at \$450.00 an ounce. You can update these values by checking current gold prices.

Ratios are in the English Tariff of 1750 and confirmed in the Continental Congress' Tariff of April 19, 1776. (Shaw, p. 247)

1 Troy Ounce of Gold	=	102 English Shillings
1 Troy Ounce of Gold	=	17 Spanish Dollars (Pieces of Eight)
1 Spanish Dollar	=	6 Shillings
28 Shillings	=	1 Guinea
20 Shillings	=	1 Pound
12 Pence	=	1 Shilling
1 U.S. Dollar	=	1 Spanish Dollar

Pence - plural for penny, One Penny = 1/12 of a Shilling

April 19, 1776		April 19, 1988	
1 English Pound	=	\$ 88.20 (U.S. Dollars)	
1 English Guinea	=	123.48	"
1 English Crown	=	29.90	"
1 English Shilling	=	4.41	"
1 English SixPence	=	2.20	"
1 English SixPence	=	.36	"
1 Spanish Dollar (Pieces of Eight)	=	26.47	"
8 Bits = 8 Reales (Pieces of Eight)	=	26.47	"
1 Bit = 1 Reale	=	3.30	"
1 Cent U.S.	=	.26	"
1 Half Disme U.S.	=	1.32	"
1 Disme U.S.	=	2.65	"
1 Dollar U.S.	=	26.47	"

Using the above table as a guide, and rounding the dollar equivalent of the pound up to \$90, we can convert the cost of the war into 1988 U.S. dollars. The French paid approximately \$7,499,999,970 the British \$12,600,000,000, and the United States, rounding the 1988 dollar conversion up from \$26.47 to \$30.00, spent \$5,040,000,000! (*France — 83,333,333 pounds x \$90.00; Britain — 140,000,000 pounds x \$90.00; the United States — \$168,000,000 x \$30.00.*)

### ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASS

1. Make an oversized copy of the game map and divide the class into groups and race from New York to Yorktown. The game is designed to reconstruct the movement of Washington's army from New York to Yorktown.
2. Have the class draw pictures depicting the Battle of Yorktown.
3. Have the class complete the problems on the After"math" of Victory worksheet.

### RULES FOR THE GAME "RACE TO YORKTOWN"

Objective: To reconstruct the movement of Washington's army from New York to Yorktown. The first group or player to arrive at Yorktown wins the game.

1. All groups or players start at New York City.

2. Each group or player rolls one die per turn and moves that number of dots toward Yorktown.

3. Make note of the following **DELAYS** along the route:

A. **SPY SPACES**

1. Explanation: Spy spaces symbolize a British or Tory spy. General Washington did not want the British to know where his army was going.

2. Directions: In order to avoid the spies, a group or player who lands directly on a spy space must move back two dots.

B. **PHILADELPHIA/STOP SIGN:**

1. Explanation: General Washington's army stopped at Philadelphia to get supplies and money. The French also conducted parades through the streets of the city for Congress and its citizens.

2. Directions: All groups or players must automatically **STOP** at Philadelphia, ending their current turn. They may continue toward Yorktown with their next turn.

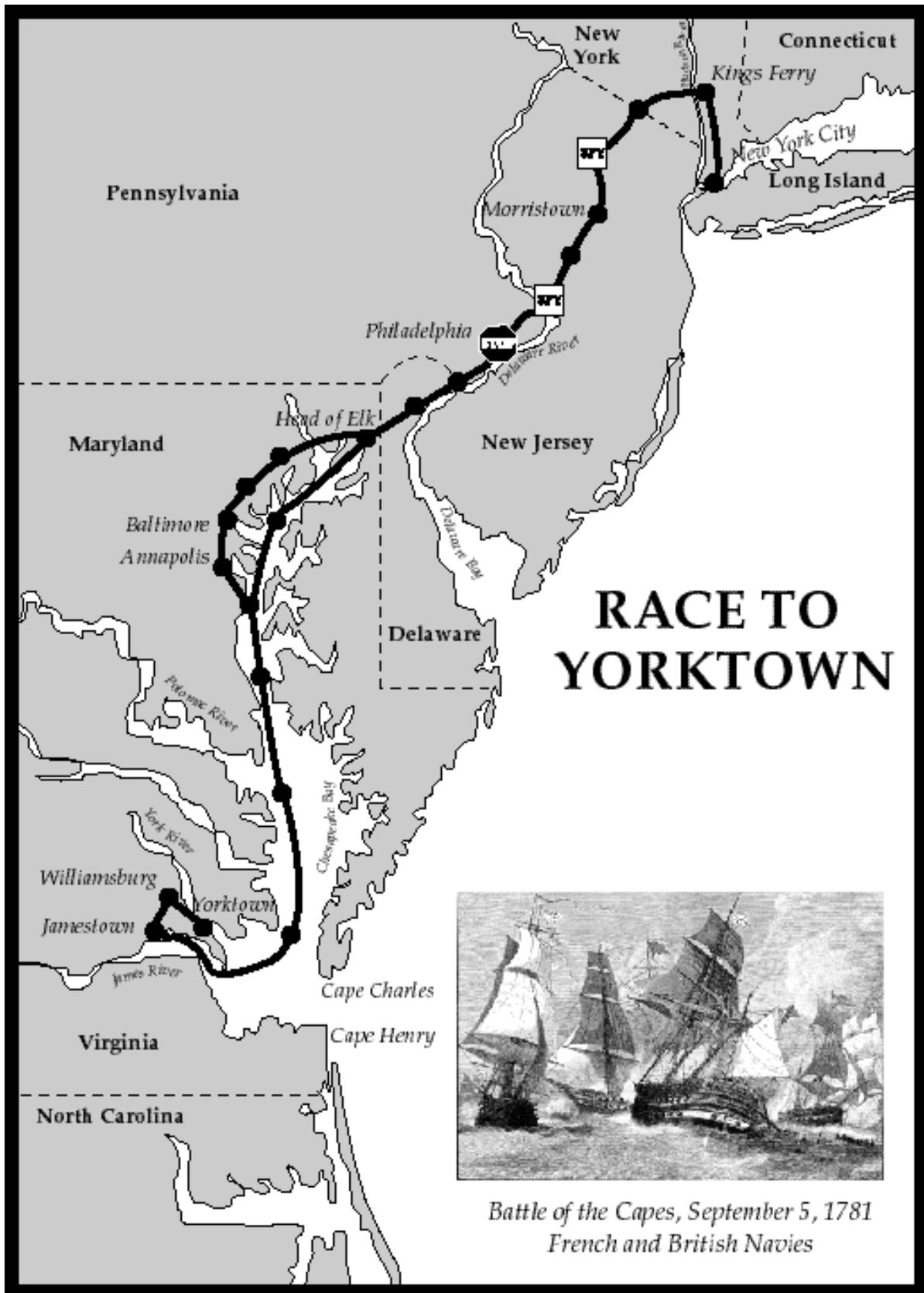
C. **HEAD OF ELK**

**BALTIMORE**

**ANNAPOLIS:**

1. Explanation: The army sailed in ships from these three ports down the Chesapeake Bay to Jamestown. Once the army arrived, it marched to Williamsburg and then to Yorktown and victory.

2. Directions: All groups or players must move down the Chesapeake Bay to Jamestown by taking a ship from one of these three ports. To board a ship, they must roll the **EXACT NUMBER** to land on one of these three ports. Moving backwards is permitted between the three ports, but only one direction (forward or backward) is allowed per turn.



## After“math” of Victory

## Worksheet

Numbers can help explain the outcome of a battle.

1. At Yorktown, the British army had 8,300 troops and the Allied Army had 17,600 troops. How many more troops were in the Allied Army than the British army?
2. Of the 8,300 in the British army, 2,000 were in German regiments, and 80 were North Carolina Loyalist militia. How many were in the remaining British regiments?
3. Of the 9,000 American troops at Yorktown, 3,500 of them were in the Virginia Militia. The rest were in the Continental Army. How many were in the Continental Army at Yorktown?
4. Of the 8,600 French troops at Yorktown, 3,000 of them were brought from the West Indies by the French Fleet. The remainder came with the French Army from New York. How many were those?
5. On the night of October 6<sup>th</sup>, General Washington’s men constructed about 3,000 yards (in length) of their first siege line in one night. A football field is 100 yards in length. How many football fields, stretched end to end, would equal the length of the earthwork that Washington’s men built?
6. Referring to question #4, about 1,500 soldiers worked on the Allied First Siege on the night of October 6<sup>th</sup>. On average, each soldier constructed how many yards of earthworks?
7. In eight days, the Americans and French fired about 15,400 artillery rounds (cannonballs and bombs). On average, how many cannonballs did they fire each day? On average, how many cannonballs did they fire each hour? Is this more or less than one per minute?
8. By the time Cornwallis surrendered, about 25% (or  $\frac{1}{4}$ ) of his army was classified as sick and not able to fight. Of the 8,300 troops he had, approximately how many were sick when he surrendered?

# EARTHWORKS AND SIEGE WARFARE

The Battle of Yorktown was actually a siege, a French word meaning “a sitting down.” Yorktown, therefore, was “a sitting down” of General Washington’s allied army before Lord Cornwallis’s British army occupying Yorktown in an attempt to isolate the British and force them to surrender.

At Yorktown, Washington’s siege was successful because he accomplished three things:

1. The Allies, called besiegers, with 17,600 men, outnumbered the British army, the besieged, which had 8,300. Washington also had many more siege guns than the British.

2. The Allies surrounded the British, preventing their escape and receiving assistance in the form of food, ammunition or reinforcements.

3. General Washington was assisted by a French battle fleet. This fleet prevented Cornwallis from evacuating Yorktown by water and a British fleet from relieving Cornwallis.

A main ingredient of any siege was earthworks. As the word implies, these were military fortifications made of earth. At Yorktown there were two major categories of earthworks, defense lines and siege lines. Defense lines protected the besieged, such as the British Inner Defense Line still existing by the Visitor Center. When constructed in 1781, this defense line stretched for approximately 1½ miles through and around Yorktown. (*Refer to the map.*) Siege lines were constructed by besiegers to protect their soldiers and artillery from the besieger’s weapon’s fire. The First and Second Allied Siege Lines enabled the Allies to move their men and artillery closer and closer to the British Defense Line.

Constructing earthworks in the 18th century was an elaborate process. (See *Diagram #1.*) In the first step, Engineers, trained officers in the art of siege warfare, located and marked the area where the earthworks were to be constructed. (*At Yorktown, the engineers marked it with pine bark strips laid on the ground end to end.*) Next, and often under the cover of darkness, men placed rows of gabions (gah-bee-hns) parallel to the designated earthwork line. Gabions were large, cylindrical, wickerwork-like, woven baskets made from tree branches and open at each end. (*See Diagram #2 for a picture of a gabion, and Diagram #1 for their placement and use.*) Using picks and shovels, men dug a trench in front of the gabions, on the side facing the enemy, and threw the dirt into them. The dirt-filled gabions became the earthwork’s foundation. With the foundation complete, more dirt was piled up to make an earthwork approximately eight feet high. The earthwork’s dirt walls were held in place and reinforced by

## OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to define the words earthworks, siege and redoubt.
2. Students will be able to state the Battle of Yorktown was a siege conducted by Washington and the Allied Army against Cornwallis and the British army.
3. Students will be able to define gabion and fascines, and state how they are used in the making of earthworks.
4. Students will be able to state that people used picks and shovels to build the earthworks at Yorktown in 1781.

bundles of sticks tied together call fascines (fah-seen). (See *Diagram #2* for a picture of a fascine and *Diagram #1* for their placement and use.) The trench in front of the earthwork was approximately eight feet deep and 16 feet wide at the top, and behind the earthwork was a three foot high dirt platform which enabled the soldiers to fire their muskets over the top of the earthwork.

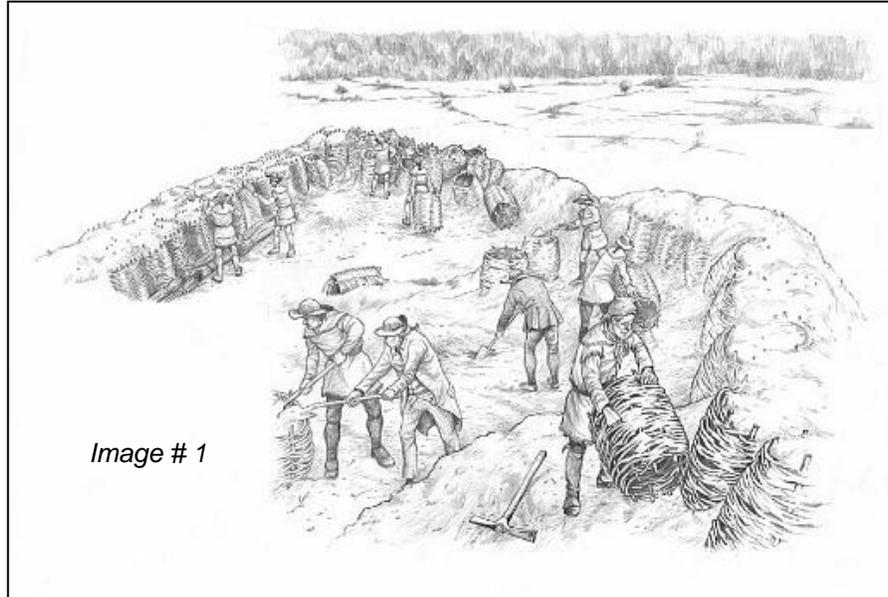


Image # 1

One type of earthwork which played a crucial role at the Siege of Yorktown was the redoubt (ruh-doot). Redoubt is a French term meaning “earth fort.” Redoubts could be any shape (round, square, five-sided, six-sided, etc.) and size, with dirt walls eight feet high and surrounded by a trench. They were usually built in advance of a critical area or weak point where a commander needed to concentrate soldiers and a few cannons. To help protect the redoubt’s defenders, long wooden poles, sharpened at the end, and called fraises (frehz), would be mounted in the outer wall of the redoubt in an upward angle.

Through effective use of earthworks and artillery, General Washington and the allied army defeated Lord Cornwallis.

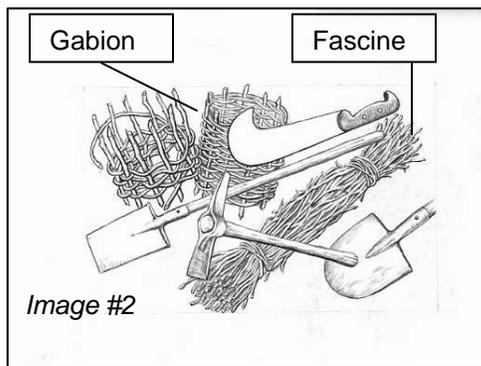


Image #2

### ACTIVITY FOR THE CLASS

Using clay or other construction materials, have the class attempt to make a model of the earthworks as seen in *Diagram #1* or create their own model of a redoubt (*Redoubt 9 was five-sided and Redoubt 10 was four-sided*).

# ARTILLERY AT YORKTOWN

Images of Revolutionary War battles usually show soldiers in combat only with muskets. Yorktown, however, was primarily an artillery battle waged at long range, with few direct troop confrontations. The estimated number of artillery pieces used by both sides is 375; Allied - 131, British - 244. Although outnumbered in artillery pieces, General Washington had more heavy siege artillery designed to destroy earthworks. Cornwallis' artillery consisted more of light guns which were ineffective against enemy fortifications. During the eight day (October 9-17) allied bombardment of the British earthworks, the Allies fired 15,437 cannon balls and bombs; an average of 1,700 per day or 1.2 every minute.

The Allies and British used three types of artillery pieces at Yorktown; guns (also known as cannon), howitzers and mortars (*see Diagram #1*). There are two categories of guns; field and siege. The carriages of field cannon and siege cannon are often discernible by their wheels. The field carriages have two large wooden wheels for battlefield mobility. The siege cannon could be mounted on a garrison carriage, characterized by four small, cast iron wheels which limited mobility. Garrison carriages were usually placed in forts or on warships. (*Garrison carriages on warships had small wooden wheels.*) At Yorktown, the allies mounted siege guns on both field and garrison carriages.

All field and siege guns fired solid, iron cannonballs. A gun was classified by the weight of the cannonball it fired. For example, the "Lafayette Cannon" at the Yorktown Visitor Center lobby, is a 12-pounder gun because it fired a cannonball weighing 12 pounds. The gun's barrel, however, weighs 2,404 pounds! The standard size for guns during the Revolutionary War ranged from three-pounder field guns up to 42-pounder heavy siege guns. The largest guns at Yorktown were 18- and 24-pounder siege guns, which had the capability of cutting huge gaps or holes in earthworks with their heavier cannonballs.

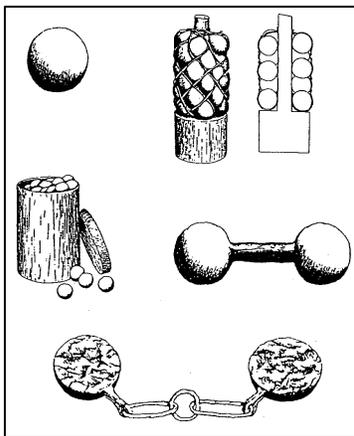


Diagram #1

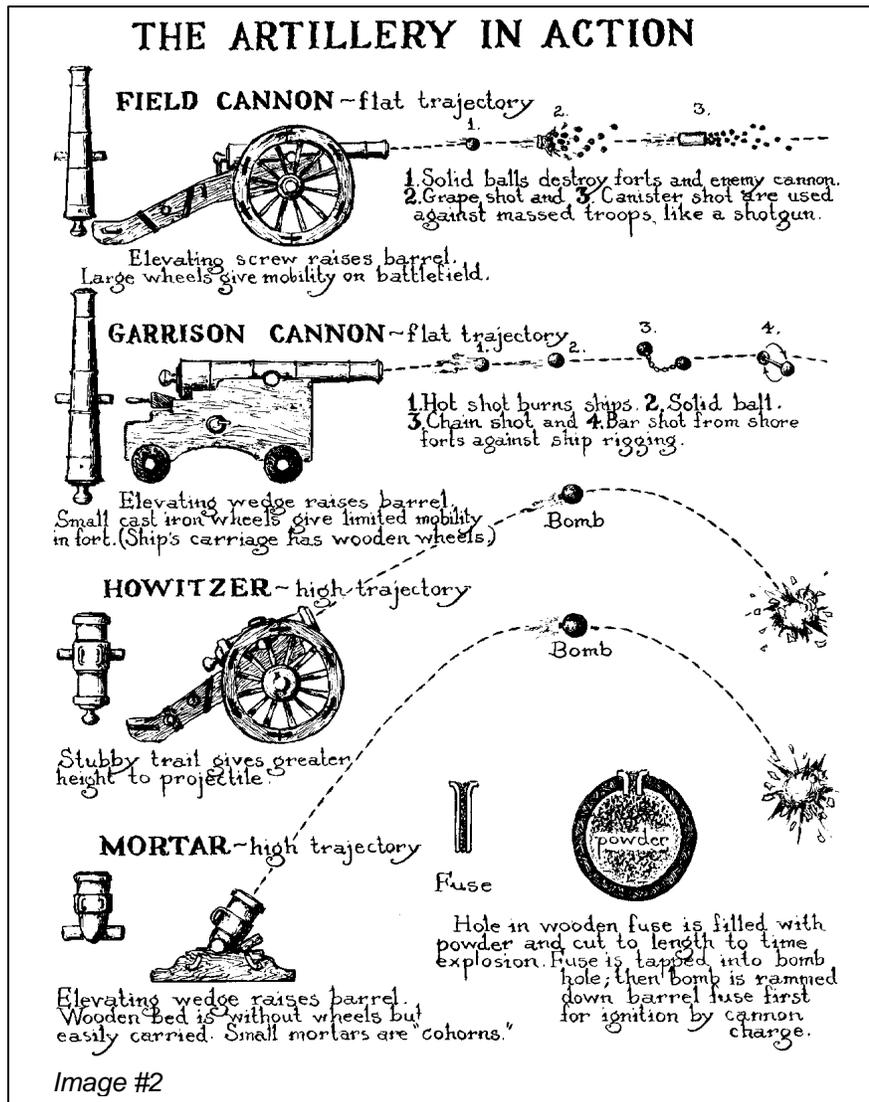
Field guns often also fired grape shot and canister upon advancing infantry. (*See Diagrams #1 and 2.*) Both projectiles consisted of musket balls or small balls that would scatter in a wide area when fired. Field and siege guns could also fire hot shot, chain shot or bar shot. Hot shot was a cannonball heated red hot and fired into a wooden ship to set it on fire. Chain shot and bar shot were two cannonballs, joined by a chain or an iron bar, fired into the ship's rigging, i.e., sails, masts and ropes. If enough rigging was destroyed, the ship could not sail.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to identify one difference between a gun, a mortar and a howitzer.
2. Students will be able to state that Washington's artillery played a large role in winning the battle of Yorktown.

## DEFINITION

**ARTILLERY** - Large, mounted cannons, including guns, howitzers and mortars.



Two other artillery pieces played a role at Yorktown: mortars and howitzers. The physical characteristics and the firing principle of the mortar differed from the cannons (guns). (See *Diagram #2.*) The mortar was mounted on a wooden, flat bed instead of a carriage. A wooden elevating wedge was used to raise the barrel, giving the mortar its characteristic high trajectory shot. Eighteenth century artillerymen used the mortar to launch explosive bombs behind enemy earthworks. The bomb was a hollow iron ball filled with gun powder equipped with a gun powder filled fuse. The fuse was lit by the discharge of the bomb from the mortar. The length of the fuse determined when the bomb would explode.

The howitzer combined the physical nature and firing principles of the cannon (gun) and mortar. The howitzer was mounted on a field carriage and could fire cannonballs, grape and/or canister shot, and bombs. Howitzers and mortars, unlike cannon, were classified by the diameter of the barrel's mouth. Eight, ten, 12, and 13-inch howitzers and mortars were used at Yorktown.

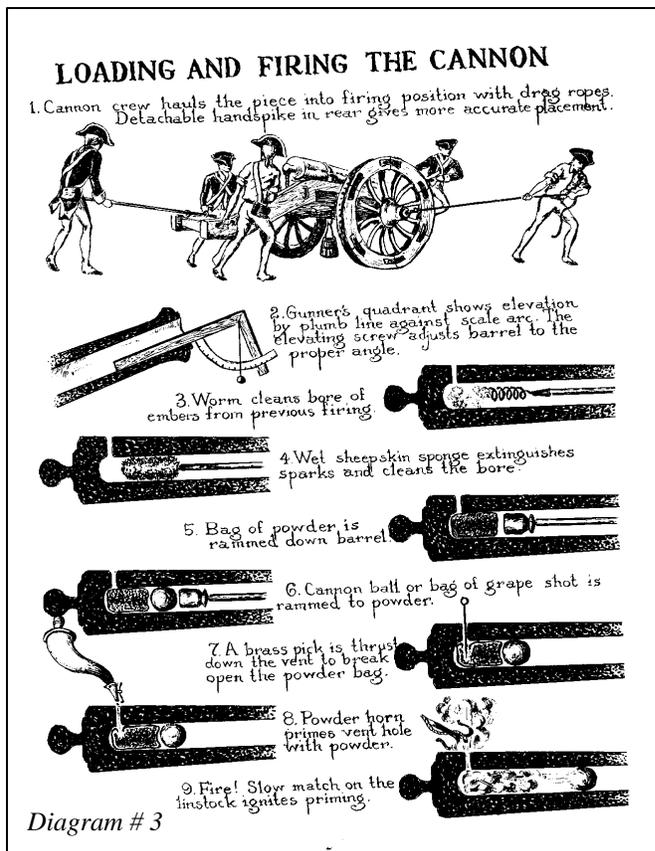
The exact firing ranges of cannons are difficult to determine. Factors such as cannon size, the amount and quality of gunpowder used, and cannon barrel elevation affected the range. Most cannons, however, could fire cannonballs over a mile, with little or no accuracy. The effective range, the distance at which

a cannonball could probably hit a target, was approximately 1,000 yards. The ideal range—500 yards or less—was called “point blank range,” where, a cannonball hit a target with the greatest force and accuracy possible. In the 18th century, firing cannons was not an exact science, but a specialized military skill.

The number of artillerymen needed to form a crew to move, load and fire a field cannon was 16. Eight to 10 of the crew were had the task of moving the cannon by drag ropes. The ropes were attached to metal hooks on the carriage wheel’s hubs. The remaining crew members were involved in the firing process. (See Diagram #3.) A good gun crew could fire cannon, two to three times per minute. Siege cannon were often only fired five times per hour because the large amount of gunpowder used to fire the siege cannon heated the cannon's barrel. The intense heat from a rapid fire rate could cause the metal barrel to soften and droop, ruining the cannon!

Gun crews used several artillery tools in the firing process. (See Diagram #4.) The wormer was a corkscrew-shaped iron tool on a long wooden staff, which was inserted into the cannon barrel to clean out debris remaining after a firing. The sponge was a wool-covered wood cylinder on the end of a long wooden staff. After being dipped in water, the sponge was inserted into the cannon barrel to cool it and extinguish any remaining sparks. The ladle was a large metal scoop attached to the end of a wooden staff used for placing gunpowder inside the cannon. The rammer, a wooden cylinder mounted on a long wooden staff, was used to

ram the powder and cannonball into the end of the cannon barrel. Finally, the linstock was a metal device attached to a short wooden pole which held a “slow match” which was cotton rope soaked in saltpeter which burned very slowly; 4-5 inches an hour. The linstock, holding the “slow match,” was used to ignite the gunpowder which resulted in the firing of the cannonball.

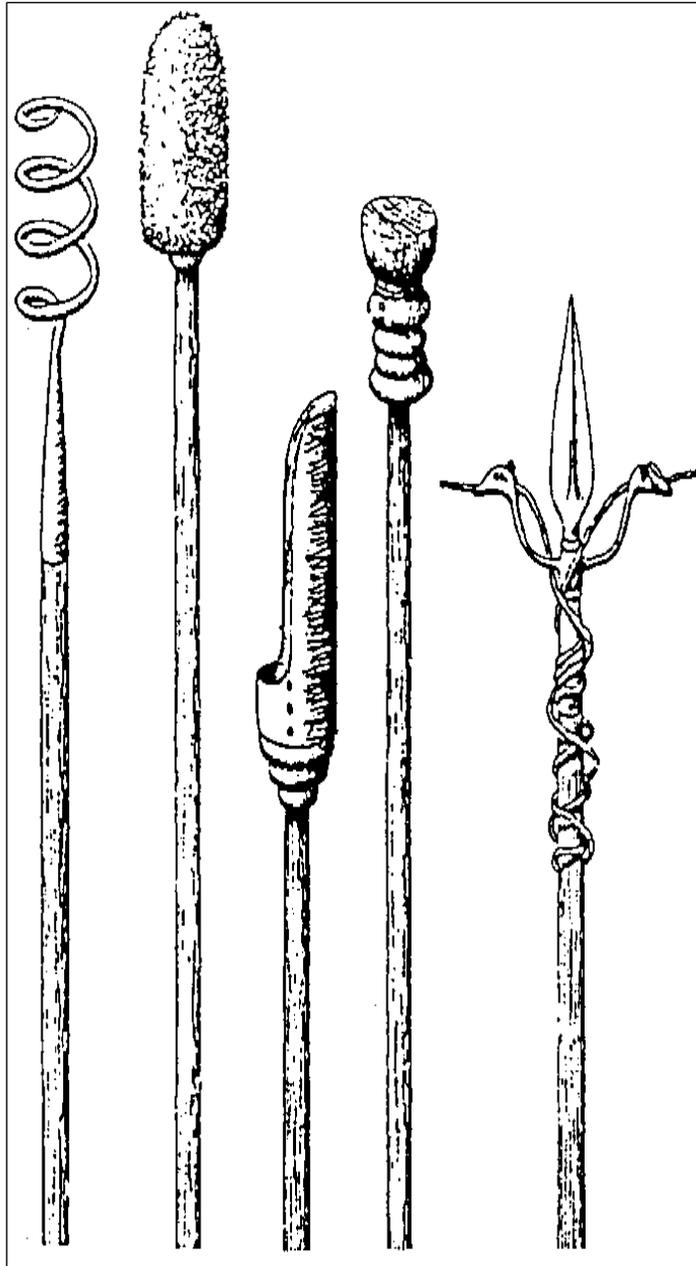


Yorktown Battlefield has on display 13 artillery pieces used by the British at the 1781 siege. Eleven of the weapons are at the Surrender Field Pavilion. The “Lafayette Cannon” and a 3-pounder field gun are on display at the Yorktown Visitor Center. The park also has several other Revolutionary War pieces. The original guns are supplemented by 20th century reproductions.

*(During the battlefield portion of your tour, students will be asked to volunteer to form an artillery crew to participate in a non-firing artillery demonstration using an authentic 6-pounder field gun from the Revolution.)*

### **ACTIVITY FOR THE CLASS**

The class will participate in a non-firing artillery demonstration during their park visit.



**Wormer   Sponge   Ladle   Rammer   Linstock**

*Diagram #4*

# MUSKETS

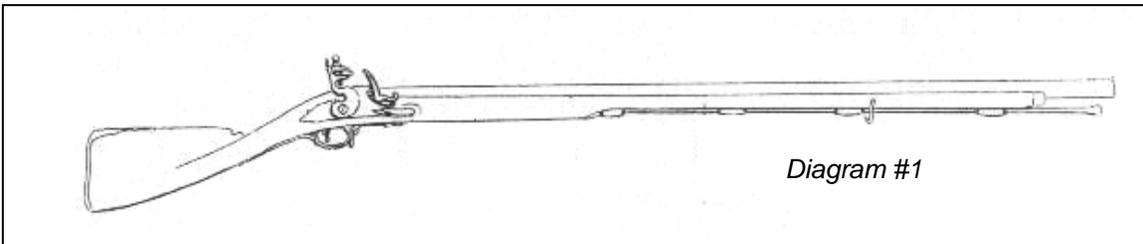
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The musket was the principal weapon used by most soldiers during the American Revolution. (See *Diagram #1.*) It is a smoothbore, muzzle-loading, single-shot shoulder gun. The term smoothbore means that the inside of the musket barrel is smooth instead of having spiraled grooves drilled along its length as in a rifle. Muzzle-loading refers to having to pour black powder and a musket ball down the musket barrel. (See *Diagram #2, step 5.*) Once a musket is fired, it requires re-loading; therefore, it is a single-shot weapon.

The musket is cumbersome. Its average weight is about ten pounds, and it is approximately 4½ feet in length. The bayonet extends the length another 14 inches. (See *Diagram #1.*) The bayonet is a sharp knife-like weapon attached to the end of the musket barrel. Redoubts 9 and 10 were attacked on the night of October 14 by allied soldiers, with the Americans having only their bayonets fixed to their unloaded muskets. This was done to prevent a premature musket shot from alerting the British and German troops of the surprise attack.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to state that the musket was the principal weapon soldiers used but it played a minor role at Yorktown.
2. Students will be able to state that the musket is a very inaccurate weapon requiring many steps to load and fire.
3. Students will be able to identify the bayonet and its importance during the assaults on Redoubts 9 and 10.



Loading and firing a musket is a laborious task of 13 steps. (See *Diagram #2.*) Soldiers were constantly drilled in these steps so they could fire in unison and with speed. Rapid-fire was key to success on the battlefield. A trained soldier could load and fire his musket three times a minute.

The musket is an inaccurate weapon because it is a smoothbore. (*The grooves or “rifling” inside a rifled barrel cause a fired bullet to spin. This increases the bullet’s accuracy and firing distance, up to three times greater than a musket. Nonetheless, rifles were used sparingly during the Revolution because they were slower to load and could not be fitted with a bayonet.*) When the musket is fired, as the musket ball goes out the barrel, because it is slightly smaller than the diameter of the barrel, it bounces inside the smoothbore barrel reducing its accuracy and flight distance. One British officer stated, “A soldier’s musket... will

strike the figure of a man at 80 yards; it may even at 100; but a soldier must be very unfortunate indeed who shall be wounded by a common musket at 150 yards." (Peterson, page 27.) The ammunition was a one ounce lead ball packaged with gunpowder in a paper cartridge. (See Diagram #3.)

Revolutionary War armies usually fought using linear tactics because of the musket's inaccuracy. The soldiers were shoulder to shoulder in a line and maneuvered in line to come within approximately 100 yards or less of the enemy's line. The two lines of soldiers then exchanged musket fire, each loading and firing as quickly as possible to send a wall of lead against the enemy to force him to flee. Because the American army initially had little military training, they lost many battles at the beginning of the war because of their poor use of linear tactics. But, as the war progressed, the Continental soldiers became as proficient as their British counterparts. Nonetheless, the musket played a minor role at Yorktown where artillery helped determine the victor.

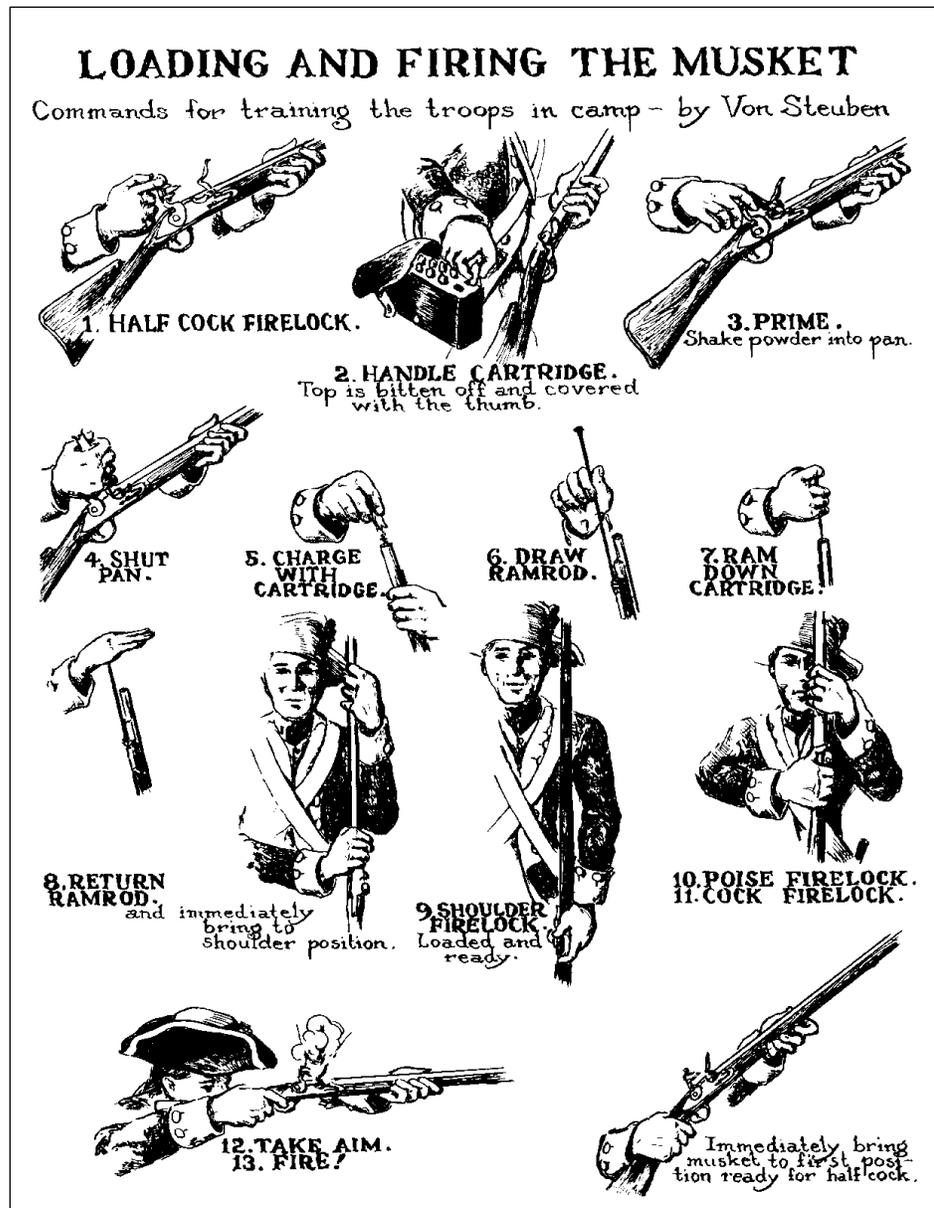
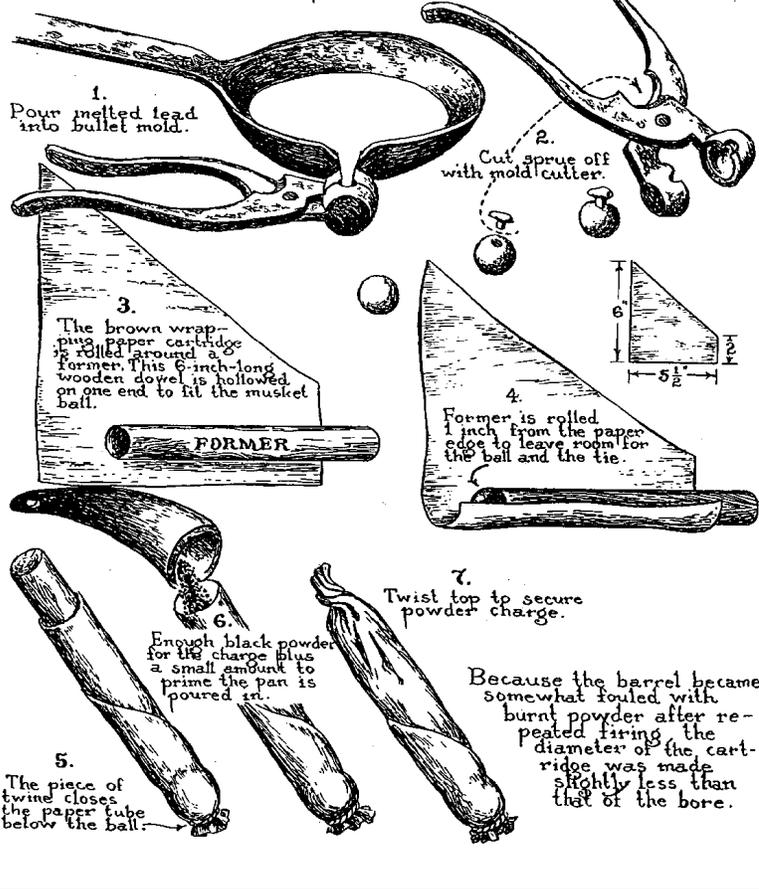


Diagram # 2

Diagram #3

## ROLL THOSE CARTRIDGES!

Certainly the proper preparation of cartridges was an important camp duty. In the heat of battle, loading the musket from a powder horn could be a nerve-racking business. Therefore a ready-made tube of measured powder and ball was a blessing to the hard-pressed soldier.



## ACTIVITY FOR THE CLASS

Have your students make cartridges following the example found in Diagram #3. In place of a musket ball, use a marble, and for the black powder, sand, potting soil, or old coffee grounds.

# CITIZEN SOLDIERS

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Soldiers of the American Revolution came from different states, backgrounds, and races and had various motives for fighting. However, most soldiers shared things in common such as occupations, wearing uniforms, the use of flags, everyday camp experiences, poor pay, and the fear of becoming ill, wounded in battle, or dying - all composed a part of the fortunes of war.

The American soldier was called a "citizen soldier." In 1775 America did not have a professional standing army. All able-bodied men (meaning only white men early in the war, until shortages in manpower prompted the recruiting of Blacks) between the ages of 16 to 60 were eligible for military service. These soldiers represented all colonial occupations. Farmers, shoemakers, blacksmiths, coopers (makers of wooden barrels), carpenters, masons, tailors, wheelwrights (wheel makers), merchants, tavern keepers, unskilled laborers and slaves all served in the American army.

The majority of British soldiers in 1775 were professional soldiers, many not having known another occupation. They were too few in numbers, however, for Great Britain to wage war against the colonies. For this reason, some British civilians, "citizen soldiers," were recruited from all walks of life, the same as their American counterparts.

The absence of "citizen soldiers" of both countries from civilian society caused great hardships and sacrifices for those on the home front and contributed to the fortunes of war.

## APPENDIX

Sylvia Frey, in her book, *The British Soldier in America*, describes how the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain did not provide jobs for everyone, especially unskilled laborers. Britain recruited and levied (drafted) many of the unemployed into the military. Paupers, fugitives from the law, convicts and deserters from foreign armies could also be found in the British army. (Frey, Chapter One.)

The American army was no different. After the patriotic furor of 1775 waned, the Continental Army, always in need of soldiers, enlisted the unemployed, the poor, free African-Americans and slaves in large numbers. (See Royster - Appendix, pp. 373-378.)

In all wars, certain occupations are exempt from military service because of their vital contributions to the army's needs. For example, during the Revolutionary War, gunsmiths were exempt because they manufactured muskets needed by the soldiers.

### OBJECTIVE

1. Students will be able to state that the American army was composed of "citizen soldiers."

### DEFINITION

**CITIZEN SOLDIER** - People who are not career (professional) soldiers, but who temporarily enter the army as soldiers.

Also, a person could purchase a “substitute,” which is to pay another person to fulfill his obligation to serve.

The unemployed and poor constituted a large percentage of manpower in both armies during the Revolution, and as Sylvia Frey states, “Military life guaranteed them a minimal security: bread, clothing, and a little money.” (p. 16.)

### **ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASS**

1. Have the class recruit four of the people listed below for service in the American army.
2. Ask the class why they chose the people they did to serve in the army.
3. Ask the class how the absence of the four people chosen will affect the lives of their families and their fellow townspeople.

### **TOWNSPEOPLE**

1. **Doctor** - was needed in the community to treat illness.
2. **Cooper** - made barrels, buckets, and all wooden containers. No town could survive without a good cooper as food stuffs and goods were stored in barrels.
3. **Wheelwright** - made wheels for wagons. Wagons were vital for transportation.
4. **Gunsmith** - was a skilled laborer usually exempt from military service because he made muskets needed by the army and the local militia.
5. **Blacksmith** - was needed to make horseshoes and to shoe the horses. Horses were used for transportation.
6. **Waterman** - was needed for water transportation and water trade because colonial roads were in horrible condition.
7. **Young boy of 13** - the legal age for enlistment was 16. Some boys lied about their age in order to join the army. Some recruiters knew they were enlisting minors illegally.
8. **Carpenter** - was needed because most structures and furniture were made of wood, especially the wooden frames of houses.
9. **Slaves** - provided much needed labor to a community, however, they often were substituted for a white man and sent to serve in the army.

# MILITIA AND THE CONTINENTAL SOLDIER

In *England and America - Rivals in the American Revolution*, on page 153, Claude H. Van Tyne states, "Fortunately for America's success, its army was not merely the armed and disciplined force, obedient throughout the years of war to its patriot leaders, but the ill-trained farmers, citizens, shopkeepers, ready to leave their work, and fight when the enemy approached, and forming at all times a potential force far beyond the army in being." This refers to an important military organization during the war: the militia. Of the 376,000 Americans who engaged in fighting the British army during the war, approximately 145,000 of those were militiamen.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to state the difference between a Continental soldier and a militiaman.
2. Students will be able to identify Thomas Nelson Jr. as commander of the Virginia militia at Yorktown.



One issue which angered the 13 colonies before the war was the placing of British troops in North America by Great Britain's parliament. Many colonists abhorred the concept of a professional standing army occupying their cities. They feared British soldiers could be used to suppress their efforts at restoring their legitimate rights as British citizens.

A principle of 18th century political thought was that no free society could exist if the national government had a standing army. All opposition to the national government could be militarily crushed. The colonists believed state militia organizations, of local, part-time, citizen soldiers, were sufficient to defend localities and prevent subterfuge of liberties by a national government. Consequently, at the beginning of the war, the states were reluctant to create a national army. But Congress realized the need for one, a Continental Army. The Continental Army was placed under the command of a well-known Virginian, George Washington, and funded by Congress.

Militia organizations were state sponsored and controlled units of all able-bodied men, (*meaning white males, sometimes free Blacks, and later in the war, slaves substituting for whites*) between ages 16 and 60, from each county or township. Militia units functioned as a home guard, called out by their state governor. If not on active military duty, militiamen could remain at home, pursuing their vocations.

Militiaman



General Washington recognized early in the war the need for a professional army. However, with service terms for a Continental soldier limited to six months or a year, the Continental Army lacked cohesiveness, continuity, and proper, professional training. Militia units also lacked extensive training to deal effectively with British troops. General Washington persuaded

Congress for more men and longer service terms. Congress consented to more regiments which would serve for three years or the war's duration – which ever came first. Many preferred fighting as militia rather than joining the Continental Army.

General Washington asked state governors to call out their militia for service with the Continental Army. Although most militia were well-meaning, they could be unreliable. Washington wrote, "if I were called upon to declare upon oath, whether the militia had been most serviceable or hurtful upon the whole, I should subscribe to the latter," (Van Tyne, *War of Independence*, p. 115). Yet, this statement was not true of all militia units. Militiamen played key roles in many American victories including Lexington and Concord, Saratoga and King's Mountain. Sir John Fortesque in his work, *A History of the British Army* (volume III, p. 306) states: "there was always the incalculable factor, the American militia, a factor which could never be counted on by its friends, but equally could never be ignored by its enemies." An excellent example of this was at Yorktown where Washington commanded 5,500 Continental soldiers and 3,500 Virginia militiamen. (*The Virginia militia at Yorktown was under direct command of Thomas Nelson, Jr., a Yorktown native and Declaration of Independence signer.*)

## **APPENDIX**

The situation for the British army was similar to that of the American army. The trained professionals of the British army were called "regulars." Although Great Britain broke with 18th century political thinking and had a standing army, most of its regulars were stationed overseas in scattered parts of the British Empire. Also, the British army had a long history of being under civil authority. During the Revolution, British regulars were assisted by "provincial" units, meaning the units were raised from men in the American provinces, i.e. the colonies. These units were composed of Americans who had remained loyal to King George III, and were also called Loyalist units. Some Loyalists also joined the British army as regulars. It is estimated that 50,000 American Loyalists fought with the British army during the course of the war. (H. E. Egerton, *The Causes and Character of the American Revolution*, page 178).

## **ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASS**

1. Using the section "Camp Life during the American Revolution" have students compare and contrast the hardships of a Continental soldier versus a militiaman.
2. Next, the teacher should assume the role of a Continental Army recruiter. Try to recruit students into the Continental Army for three years. If recruited, ask the students why they joined the army as opposed to staying with a militia unit.
3. Finally, ask the class to list what they would have done to enlist people to serve as Continental soldiers for General Washington's army. (Would they allow women and Blacks to serve? How old would their Continental soldiers be, under 16 or over 60?)

# BLACK SOLDIERS IN THE REVOLUTION

A large part of American history about black soldiers is lost. Jesse J. Johnson, in *The Black Soldier Documented*, lists four factors attributing to this: First, most Blacks were illiterate. Second, if literate, rarely did the black person hold a position which included writing records. Third, few were concerned with the contributions of slaves and freedman. Lastly, documents are scattered and expensive to compile (p. x). Consequently, the extent blacks were involved in the American Revolution may never be known. Nevertheless, blacks had a vested interest in the fight for freedom, but the issue for most was personal freedom, which was sometimes promised by both Patriots and British.

## OBJECTIVE

1. Students will discuss several of the black soldier's duties, and state the name and contribution of at least one black person.



1<sup>st</sup> Rhode Island  
Soldier

Benjamin Quarles, in *The Negro in the American Revolution*, writes that “the Negro’s role in the Revolution can best be understood by realizing that (his/her) major loyalty was not to a place nor to a people, but to a principle ... whoever invoked the image of liberty, be American or British, could count on a ready response from the Blacks” (p. vii).

Some white people began reevaluating slavery, for they were fighting for the belief that “all men are created equal.” Nonetheless, the fear of a black rebellion made many Patriots reluctant to arm black men. Nearly two years into the war, though, the enlistment of black soldiers was necessary to continue the war effort. For example, in 1777, Massachusetts began to draft Blacks and Rhode Island, in 1778, voted to raise two battalions of slaves.

South Carolina and Georgia resisted enlisting black soldiers, which the British took advantage of. According to Quarles, “in 1779, Commander in Chief Sir Henry Clinton issued a proclamation offering freedom to Negroes who would join the royal standard.” In the South, this resulted in the recruitment of hundreds of runaways. Quarles explains that these men served as shock troops, guides and spies, ship pilots, drummers, cooks and waiters. The British found that Blacks working as laborers, freed white soldiers for battle. Black Loyalists served mostly used as carpenters, blacksmiths, miners and axmen (p. x).

Quarles explains that it is difficult to identify the exact number of black soldiers in the war. Approximately 5,000 black soldiers served in the Patriot forces. These men were either enlisted by their masters, accompanied their masters into the army, ran away to serve, or in some cases, offered freedom in exchange for military service. The First Rhode Island Regiment’s roster of soldiers was 75% Black. Quarles quotes Baron von Closen, aide-de-camp to General Rochambeau, who wrote that this regiment is “the most nearly dressed, the best under arms, and the most precise in its maneuvers” (p.ix).

Johnson defines the history of the black soldier by the three “R’s.” “During peace, reject; during war, recruit; after war, reject (p. vii). Some Blacks did receive freedom, however, either from the British or the Patriots. Jacqueline Jones states that “at least 15,000 black women and men left the country aboard British ships ...” (p.326). Some even received a land bounty from Congress.

Anti-slavery sentiment continued to rise in the North after the war, and abolitionist groups, often led by Quakers, began to stir. Though black people did not taste the fruits of the new independence, they had established a direction. Benjamin Quarles writes, “the Revolutionary era in which (he/she) lived had marked out an irreversible path toward freedom, that henceforth there could be no turning back even if there was a slowing down” (p. x).

### **ACTIVITY FOR THE CLASS**

1. Read a newspaper for a week. How are women and minorities portrayed? Is this an accurate representation of these groups? Compare a modern newspaper to one from Revolutionary America included in the travelling trunk.
2. Interview a black soldier or black veteran. Compare his/her modern day war experience to that of the black soldier in the American Revolution. (*Teachers: You may want to contact an armed forces installation and ask for a guest speaker to visit your classroom.*)

### **FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION**

*Following are three black men who participated in the American Revolution:*

**Crispus Attucks** was remembered by the Patriots as a hero of the Boston Massacre. A mulatto slave, Attucks reportedly was at the front of a crowd of anti-loyalists who confronted a group of British soldiers. Crispus Attucks is said to have lunged into the group of soldiers and, as a result, become one of the first casualties of the American Revolution.

**Cesar Tarrant** was a pilot on armed boats in the Virginia Navy during the Revolution. The details of his service are vague, but he received his freedom as a result of his service. He was also given a land bounty with which he bought his wife and child out of slavery, and purchased a lot in Hampton, Virginia.

**Joseph Harris** joined Loyalist forces when he informed them about rebel smuggling. With his knowledge of the York and James Rivers, he also served as a local guide. Harris’s last known contribution is that of helping guide the British ships which attacked Hampton in Virginia’s first battle of the war.

# THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION – A CIVIL WAR: LOYALISTS VERSUS PATRIOTS

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“If I fall by the hand of such [assassins], I shall fall a victim in the noblest of causes – that of failing in maintaining the just rights of my country.” (Fowler and Coyle, *Changing Perspectives*, p. 31.) These words were surely spoken in defense of liberty by someone of the mold of Patrick Henry or Thomas Jefferson, but this is not the case. A forgotten American, a Creek Indian chief, whose cause was as noble to him and as self-rationalized as Thomas Jefferson’s, spoke these words. This chief supported Britain in the Revolutionary War. This war divided many Americans into hostile camps, waging a civil war to determine if the 13 colonies remained with the British Empire or became an independent nation.

John Adams believed one-third of the American population favored independence, one-third remained loyal to Great Britain, and one-third tried to stay neutral. We will never know the percentage of the population that supported each side in the war. Nonetheless, both sides were outspoken about their beliefs and realized what was at stake in this civil war.

Americans in favor of rebellion were called “Patriots.” Their rallying cry was, “no taxation without representation!” Patriots believed Parliament and King George III were plotting to enslave the colonies through taxation. Parliament, the British Empire’s governing body, established tax policies. Colonists, however, did not elect members of Parliament; therefore, the Patriots claimed Parliament could not tax them due to this lack of elected representation. Patriots cited the Magna Carta, King James I’s charter of 1606 granted to the Virginia Company, and the 1688 English Bill of Rights as guaranteeing to all free Englishmen that taxes could not be levied without their consent through their elected representatives. The Patriots argued that only their elected representatives in the colonial legislatures could levy taxes upon them. They further argued that denying the colonies the right of taxation through elected representation was tantamount to making the colonies slaves to Parliament. The Patriots demanded their just rights as free Englishmen.

Other Americans, called Loyalists or Tories, because of their support of Parliament and King George III fervently disagreed with the Patriots. Loyalists

## OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will be able to define civil war as an open warfare conflict which divides a nation or region and/or families.
2. Students will be able to define why the revolution was a civil war.
3. Students will be able to state that all Americans, including children, men, and women; Indian, White or Black, were affected by the revolution because they often picked sides during this civil war.
4. Students will be able to define the terms Patriot and Loyalist/Tory, stating a reason why each group chose their particular side during the Revolution.
5. Students will be able to state the Patriots goal was to form an independent nation, and the Loyalist/Tories wanted to keep the 13 colonies in the British Empire.

proclaimed Parliament did act for all people of the British Empire through virtual representation, and therefore, had the right to tax the colonies. (For an excellent discussion regarding virtual representation, read Chapter VI, "Daniel Dulany, Pamphleteer," in Morgans' *The Stamp Act Crisis*, pp. 99-119) Although Loyalists supported local taxation by colonial legislatures, they argued the British national



debt must be paid by all members of the British Empire through national taxes passed by Parliament. Furthermore, Loyalists cited that colonial taxes were far lower than taxes paid by citizens living in Great Britain.

Each group saw themselves as right, and was unwilling to compromise.

Men, women, children, whether White, American Indian or Black, slave or free, were affected by the Revolutionary War; which was also a civil war. Lucy Nelson, wife of Declaration of Independence signer, Thomas Nelson, Jr., endured the agony of knowing her brother, John Grymes, was serving in a Loyalist military unit; a story not uncommon for American families.

But what was the fate of slaves? Some clung to the hope of freedom due to the words of the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal, ... with certain unalienable Rights, ... Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness ...". Believing the document made freedom possible, some remained with their Patriot masters, occasionally substituting for them as a soldier in the American army. Other slaves, however, saw a different way to freedom; they ran away to join the British army. British commanders offered freedom to runaway slaves who joined the British army, and sometimes kept their pledge. But word spread through the slave community that the British sold some Blacks back into slavery, and disease and starvation killed others. Furthermore, a potential runaway had to consider the unknown fate of family members left behind in bondage before deciding what course to pursue to find freedom. As Benjamin Quarles wrote, "the Negro's role in the Revolution can best be understood by realizing that [his/her] major loyalty was not to a place nor to a people, but to a principle ... whoever invoked the image of liberty be [he/she] American or British, could count on a ready response from the blacks." (*The Negro in the Making of America*, p. vii.)

An often untold story of the revolution is the tragic consequences suffered by American Indians, especially the Iroquois Confederacy of western New York. Both American and British authorities initially adhered to a policy of not soliciting the aid of the powerful Indian tribes living on the western borders. However, as each side grew more desperate for victory, they sought Indian allies. The most popular potential Indian allies were the six tribes of the Iroquois Confederacy. Unfortunately, the Iroquois Confederacy did not become involved in the war as a

united nation. The tribes split their loyalties between the British and the Patriots, ultimately destroying their confederacy. (See *Changing Perspectives*, "The Forgotten Experience," by Gary Nash, pp. 27-46.)

As with Lucy Nelson, women were also affected by the civil war. Although women were not to have political opinions nor express them publicly, they were labeled Patriot or Loyalist according to the views of their husbands or male family members. If a woman did not agree with her male family member, the family could drift apart.

Americans who sided with Great Britain often sought answers to problems with Parliament and king through peaceful means, not rebellion. But once the war started, many joined the British army. One author estimated 50,000 Loyalists fought with the British army during the revolution. (H. E. Egerton, *The Cause and Characters of the American Revolution*, p. 178.) Victory, however, belonged to the Patriots, and the vanquished suffered for choosing the losing side; Loyalist lands were confiscated, their funds taken and many fled the United States. Some historians believe over 100,000 Loyalists went to Canada or Great Britain to begin new lives. (Boatner, p. 663.) A Loyalist woman, arriving in Nova Scotia, poignantly wrote in her diary, "I climbed to the top of Chipman's Hill and watched the sails disappear in the distance, and such a feeling of loneliness came over me that though I had not shed a tear through all the war, I sat down on the damp moss with my baby on my lap and cried." Sad, but, what would have been the Patriots' fate if they had lost their fight for independence?

### **ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASS**

1. Hold a mock trial. Divide the class in two, with one half defending the Boston Tea Party, and the other prosecuting it. After a short debate, have the sections reverse roles so students can defend and prosecute both sides of the issue.
2. Read aloud the quote by the Creek Indian chief at the beginning of this section. Do not identify the person who spoke these words. Ask the class if they believe the words were spoken by a Patriot or a Loyalist and why?
3. Ask the class what they would have done to avert war if they were:
  - a. Parliament
  - b. The Continental Congress.
4. Have the class read the following information about a Virginia slave and a Yorktown merchant. Ask the class to decide if the slave or merchant should become a Loyalist or a Patriot and why.

**YORKTOWN MERCHANT** - You are a wealthy Yorktown merchant, you're your prosperity depends on your trade with Great Britain for success. At first, you try to remain indifferent. But Cornwallis's army is in Virginia, and you have to make a decision. You approve of the British government, but are afraid that your property will be forfeited to the Patriots if you side with Great Britain. If caught, you could be tried for treason and shot; or tarred and feathered; or hanged. If

you enlist in the Continental Army your property might be secure, however, you could be in danger of pillaging by British raiding parties. You have a wife and family. Not wanting to leave her home and friends, she sides strongly with the Patriots. She prefers to deal with British pillaging.

**OTHER FACTORS OF POSSIBLE INFLUENCE TO YOUR DECISION:**

1. The British army has taken over Yorktown and established martial law, promising protection and refuge to all Loyalists.

2. You, and many of your friends, dislike the overall conduct of the British. They act haughty and arrogant towards citizens (both Patriots and Loyalist alike).

3. Some of your friends in other towns, who supported the British, were left with no protection from the Patriots when the British forces moved on.

4. Legislation is being enacted by the revolutionary state governments in which Loyalists' homes, property, land, etc. can be confiscated. Loyalists can be disqualified from voting, holding office, acquiring land or even keeping guns in their homes. Loyalists can also be banished from the state.

**PLANTATION SLAVE IN TIDEWATER, VIRGINIA** - You work long, strenuous hours on a Tidewater tobacco plantation. Your owner, a prominent planter, is a member of Virginia's elite. He is well-liked and respected in the community. You have a wife and four healthy children. Your living conditions are basically good, although you have occasionally been abused by the plantation overseer. You have no education, are only skilled in working the land, and have no other friends or family beyond this plantation. Your owner has chosen to side with the Patriots.

**OTHER FACTORS OF POSSIBLE INFLUENCE TO YOUR DECISION:**

1. The Declaration of Independence states that "all men are created equal."

2. Lord Dunmore issued a proclamation promising freedom to slaves owned by Patriots if they join royal troops. (*Lord Dunmore was the last royal governor of Virginia. He issued his proclamation in 1775 after relinquishing his post as royal governor. Many slaves joined his small army in Virginia, and fought at the Battle of Great Bridge in December 1775.*)

3. You have heard reports that slaves who run away to the British often don't come back alive. Contracting sickness and disease along with the regular troops in camp, they are commonly released from the army and wander aimlessly and die far from family and friends. There are also rumors runaways sold back into slavery by British officers seeking wealth.

4. Your owner is considering sending you into battle in his place.

# ARMY OCCUPATIONS

A recruit in the Continental Army probably found his new life bewildering and exciting. There were people from the new 13 states, rules and regulations to learn and dangers to face. But an American recruit was no different from a recruit in the British army. Both had to adjust to army life, and learn occupations found in the 18th century military.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to list three army occupations.
2. Students will be able to state that civilians, men, women and children, also assisted the army in various occupations.

The most prominent army occupation was infantryman, who was the backbone of all 18<sup>th</sup> century armies. An infantryman was trained to fight and travel on foot, hence the term sometimes used when referring to him—"foot soldier." The infantryman carried his equipment, and sometimes marched 15 to 25 miles a day. General Washington stated you could find his army by following the trail of blood left by the cut, bare feet of his soldiers.



*Infantryman*

Infantrymen faced severe hardships; the most difficult being in battle. Equipped with a musket, they were expected to stand in line, shoulder to shoulder, and exchange musket fire with an enemy infantry line, perhaps as little as 50 yards away. This type of fighting, called linear tactics, was common for most Revolutionary War battles, but not at Yorktown. At Yorktown the infantrymen were invaluable in digging earthworks and assaulting Redoubts 9 and 10.

A second army occupation was cavalryman. Cavalry were soldiers trained to fight on horseback. There were few cavalrymen because the expense to outfit them and their horses. Cavalrymen played minor roles in most Revolutionary War battles. Armed with sabers, they were at a disadvantage against an infantry line firing a musket volley into their mounted ranks. Therefore, cavalrymen were usually assigned the critical role of scouting the enemy.



*Cavalryman*

*Artillery Crew*



Artillerymen comprised a third army occupation. Artillerymen were soldiers trained in the art and science of handling and firing artillery. Artillerymen played a vital role in the Siege of Yorktown; without them, Washington would have been handicapped in waging siege warfare against Cornwallis.

Two other occupations in 18th century armies were miners and sappers. These soldiers were specially trained to build fortifications. Miners were also experienced in digging tunnels under the

enemy's fortifications and placing explosives under them. Sappers dug "saps" – trenches which ran in a zig-zag pattern to protect men and equipment from direct enemy fire. Both miners and sappers were heavily engaged in constructing earthworks at Yorktown.

*Sappers  
and  
Miners*



The army also had occupations utilizing soldiers' and civilians' pre-war. For example, carpenters made wooden artillery carriages, wheel-wrights crafted wooden wheels and blacksmiths shod horses. Coopers made barrels to contain food, musket balls, black powder, and other army supplies; while doctors cared for sick and wounded, and slaves performed manual labor. Camp followers performed everyday chores needed by

soldiers, i.e., cooking, cleaning, sewing and nursing. Children also accompanied an army and a few became drummers. Drummers communicated officers' orders to soldiers through different drum beats. For example, one beat told the soldiers to wake up and another to go to bed. The most critical job for drummers was during a battle. Soldiers could not often hear their officers' commands over the deafening battle noise, but they could hear the drums beating out orders.



An occupation potentially crucial to the war's success was spying. Soldiers and civilians volunteered for this dangerous job, knowing if caught, they could be hanged. American sergeant, John Champe spied on the British in New York to attempt to capture the traitor, Benedict Arnold. Arnold became a general in the British army after his attempt in 1780 to sell the American garrison at West Point, New York to the British. Washington wanted to hang this once trusted American general. Sergeant Champe, however, failed to capture Arnold (Boatner, p. 193). Women also volunteered as spies. For example, Deborah Champion provided Washington with valuable information about the British occupying Philadelphia in 1777 (Booth, pp. 55-57). Another famous American spy was a slave, James Armistead. He informed General Lafayette of Cornwallis' activities prior to the Yorktown siege. (Quarles, p. 94-95).

## **ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASS**

1. Make a handout of the four major army occupations - infantry, cavalry, artillery, miners and sappers and have the class identify the occupations using the pictures. Ask the students which occupation they would prefer and why?
2. Have the students pretend their neighborhoods have been occupied by the British army and that Lord Cornwallis is using their home as his headquarters. Ask the students to spy on the British, making maps of their neighborhoods, listing the number of British soldiers and cannons, and any other information they think General Washington would need to defeat the British army.



# FLAGS & UNIFORMS

Revolutionary War soldiers used two items to distinguish themselves and to identify their enemies – flags and uniforms.

## FLAGS

As Milo M. Quaife states in his book, *The History of the United States Flag*, “a flag is a symbol of persons united in some common association” (p. 23). Countries in the revolutionary war symbolized their nation and military units with distinctive flags.

The national flag of Great Britain in 1781 is well documented. In 1606, King James I combined the English flag (the red cross of St. George on a white field) and the Scottish flag (the diagonal white cross of St. Andrew on a blue field) into the new national flag of Great Britain. This flag, called the Union Flag, was flown by Cornwallis at Yorktown. Not until 1801 was the Irish flag, a diagonal red cross of St. Patrick on a white field, added to create the current British national flag. (Quaife, pp. 21, 23-4.) (See all English and British Flags in Diagram #1.)

### OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to list two items which soldiers used to distinguish their military units – flags and uniforms.
2. Students will be able to describe at least four flags used at Yorktown, and identify which regiment or country each represented.
3. Students will be able to describe at least four uniforms used at Yorktown, and identify which countries they represented



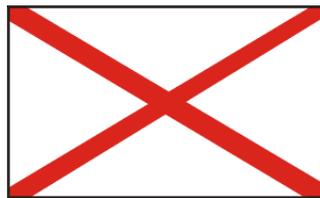
St. George



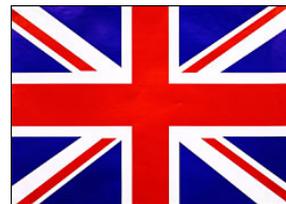
+ St. Andrew



= Union Flag, 1606-1801



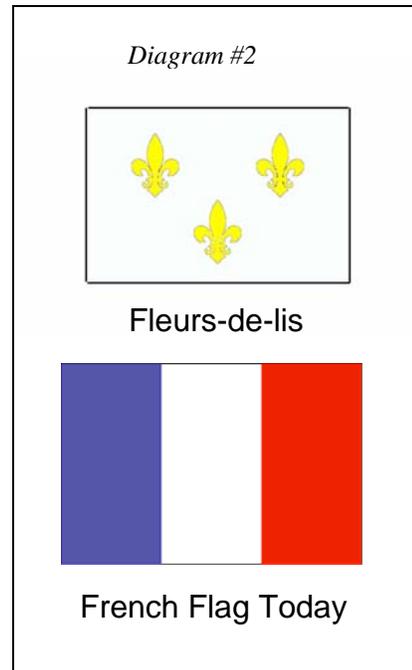
+ St. Patrick



= Union Jack, 1801-

Diagram #1

France did not have a national flag in 1781. Not until the French Revolution of 1789, did France adopt her first national flag, the tricolor of blue, white and red, which still represents France. (Schermerhorn, pp. 107-108.) The French monarchy, however, did have a royal standard, which was only flown in the king's presence. Louis XVI never came to America; so his standard was not at Yorktown. (See Schermerhorn, p. 105, Richardson, p. 142.) Richardson states, nonetheless, "the French commanders ...in America did carry white standards with gold fleurs-de-lis and other devises" (p. 144). According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the fleur-de-lis has been associated with the royal house of France as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century. At Yorktown, the National Park Service represents France with a white standard with three gold fleurs-de-lis. (Diagram #2, Fleurs-de-lis and French flag today.)



The appearance of the U.S. flag during the revolution is unknown! On June 14, 1777, Continental Congress resolved: "that the flag of the United States be made of thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation." (Quaife, p. 29.) This resolution did not specify the flag's proportion, design or size of the union, nor the stars' arrangement; resulting in many interpretations. Eyewitnesses at Yorktown in 1781 refer to the U.S. flag, but none clearly described it. (See Quaife, pp. 51-53 for a discussion of the U.S. flag.) Today, at Yorktown, the National Park Service flies the flag in Diagram #3. (Not until 1912 did Congress prescribe the exact design of the U.S. flag. Quaife, p. 44.)

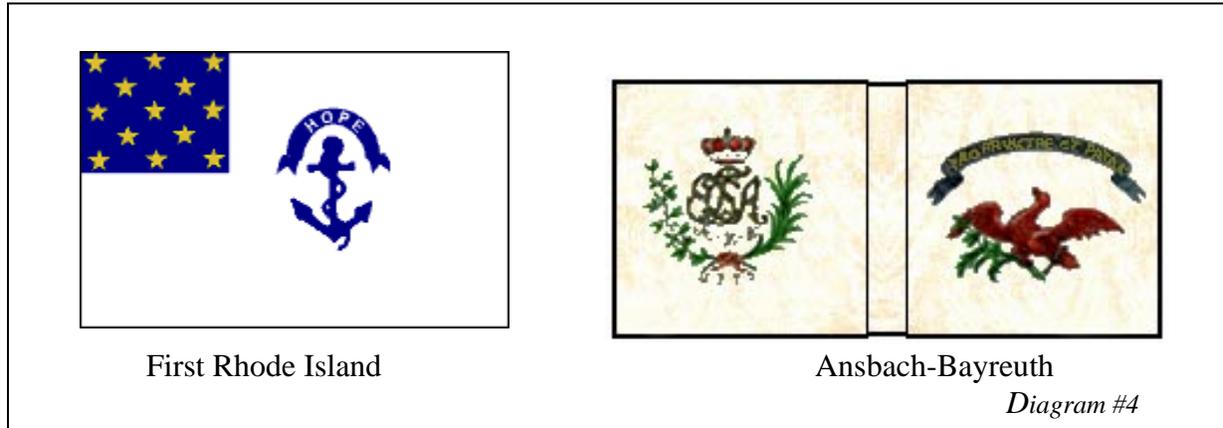


Germany did not exist as a unified nation in the 1700s. Instead, over 100 principalities occupied the area that became Germany. Hence, no German national flag existed in 1781.

In addition to "national flags" used during the war, each military unit flew a unique regimental flags. Today at Yorktown, several regimental flags are flown, including the 1<sup>st</sup> Rhode Island Regimental flag, and one of a German unit in the British army, the Ansbach-Bayreuth regimental flag. (See Diagram #4, First Rhode Island and Ansbach-Bayreuth.) The regimental flags or "colors," as they were also known, were large silk flags embroidered or painted with colorful designs and symbols. These flags served several purposes for the soldiers:

1. To friend and foe alike, it identified which regiments the soldiers belonged.

2. It was a visual rallying point for soldiers in the midst of a battle's confusion.



3. Regimental flags were a source of inspiration and dedication for soldiers, as an officer stated to his regiment on the consecration and awarding of its colors:

*Though we do not worship the colors, ... [they are] the object of peculiar veneration; they hold forth to us the ideas of the prince whose service we have undertaken, of our country's cause which we are never to forsake, and of military honor which we are ever to preserve. The colors, in short, represent everything that is dear to a soldier; at the sight of them all the powers of his soul are to rouse, they are a post to which he must repair through fire and sword, and which he must defend while life remains; to this he is bound..., by the acceptance of a most solemn oath: to desert them in the blackest perjury and eternal infamy: to lose them by such an accident, even as one might otherwise judge unavoidable, is not to be excused, because to lose them, no matter how, is to lose everything; and when they are in danger, or lost, officers and soldiers having nothing for it but to recover them or die. (See Frey, pp. 122-123.)*

The British and German soldiers at Yorktown were devastated by the loss of their flags; one unit, the Royal Welch Fusiliers, rather than surrender their flag, cut it into pieces and hid them.

### ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASS

1. To help students recognize some of the flags flown at Yorktown in 1781, have the students color the flags on their worksheets. Using the flags, stress the alliances during the war to your class: U.S. and France verses Great Britain.
2. Have each student design his/her own regimental flag. (*This flag will be with the uniforms each student will design uniforms in another activity.*)
3. Have the class vote on the best regimental flag that represents them. (The class may choose to design their own flag.) Have the class make the flag on an old sheet with paint or crayons for coloring the design. Mount the flag on a pole.

## TRAVELLING TRUNK ITEMS

1. 1781 United States 13 star flag.
2. Flag representing France – white with three yellow fleur-de-lis.
3. 1781 flag of Great Britain.
4. Rhode Island Regimental Flag.
5. General George Washington's headquarters' flag.



## UNIFORMS

The uniform was a shared characteristic for soldiers. It was a visible beacon of identification for friend or foe. Although uniforms were to be a source of pride for soldiers, to some, it was a nuisance and for others, a nonentity.

The typical Revolutionary War uniform was to consist of the following:

1. A wide-brimmed black felt hat, tacked up on three sides called a tri-corn hat.
2. A white linen pullover style shirt, fastened only at the collar with a black stock or "roler," made of black cloth or leather and placed over the collar of the shirt.
3. A white waistcoat (vest), worn over the shirt.
4. A white pair of linen or woolen breeches extending to the knee. (*As the war progressed, overalls were worn in place of breeches, with the overalls extending to the boot.*)
5. A white pair of woolen socks covered by black or white canvas or linen spatterdashers or gaiters which buttoned up the side. (*Spatterdashers only covered the leg up to the calf, the gaiters extended up to the knee.*)
6. A pair of black leather shoes covered on top by the spatterdashers or gaiters.
7. The regimental uniform coat (*See Image #5.*)

Image #5



The uniform coat was a distinctive symbol of 18<sup>th</sup> century soldiers. It was usually made of wool cloth, or a combination of linen and wool. Its color denoted the soldier's country – red or scarlet for Great Britain, white for France, blue for the Germans, and dark blue for the United States. To discern regiments within an army, a system was devised to have different “facing” colors for each regiment. “Facings” refers to the collar, cuffs and lapels of the coats. For example, in 1779, Washington ordered all Continental uniform coats be dark blue with facing colors distinguishing regiments from different states. White facings represented units from New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut; buff (light yellowish brown) facings for New York and New Jersey, red facings for Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia, and light blue facings for North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia. (Katcher, p. 23)

With a shortage of blue cloth for uniform coats however, many soldiers did not have a uniform coat. They wore whatever was available, including captured British and German uniform coats. One dominant substitute worn by Patriots



was the “hunting frock.” (See *Image #6*.) The loose fitting hunting frock was more adaptable for combat and more durable than the uniform coat. The hunting frock could be made of linen for summer wear and wool or deer skin for the winter. It could also be dyed a variety of colors for regimental recognition. Accounts from European soldiers abound with descriptions of Americans wearing the hunting frock. Many Americans at Yorktown in 1781 were clad in hunting frocks and not the picturesque blue uniform coats of army regulations.

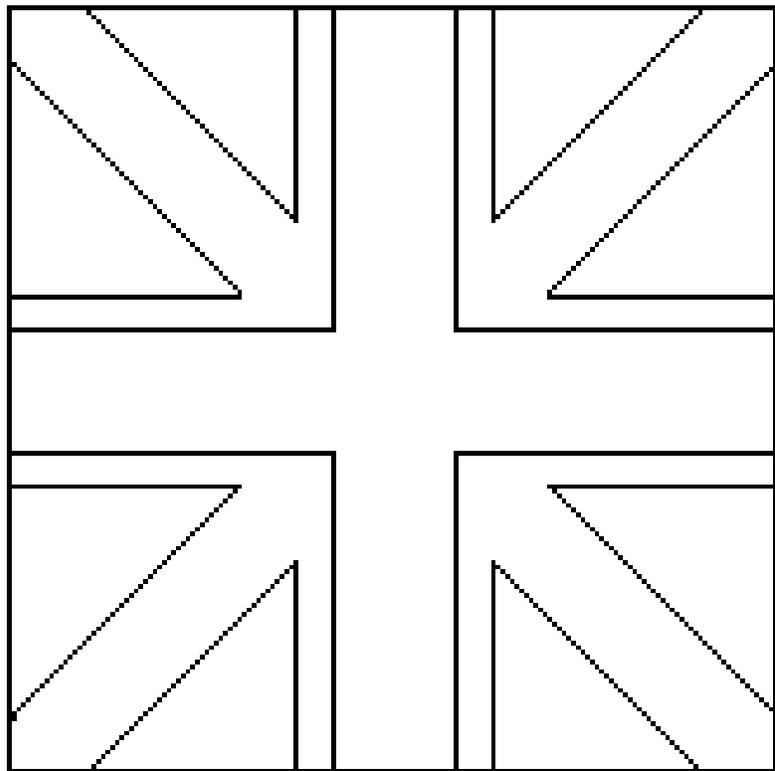
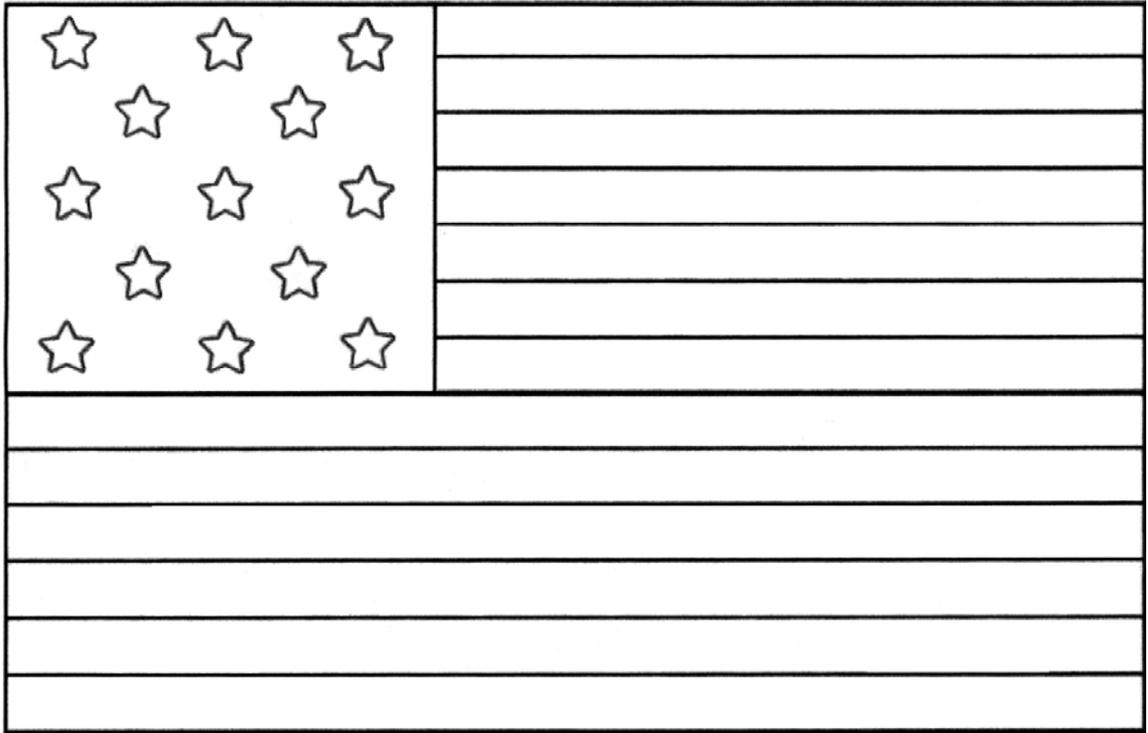


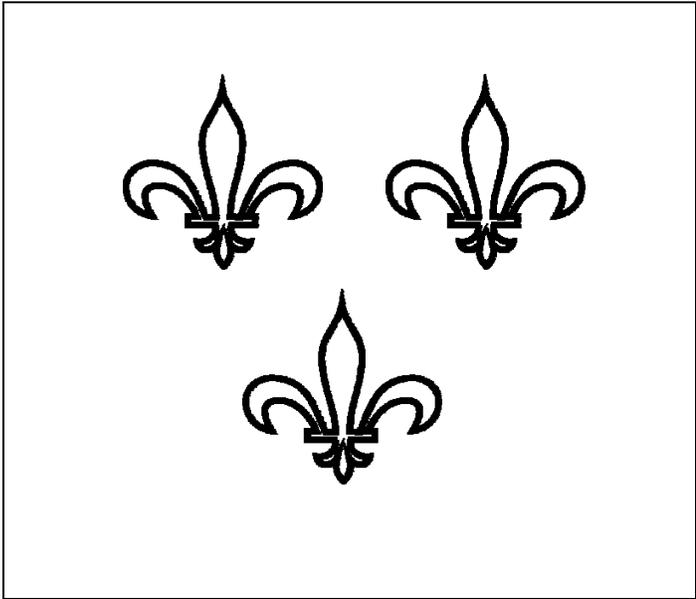
### ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASS

1. Relate to the class the uniform and facing colors for the American, French, British and German regiments. Ask the class if they were to design a uniform for their class, what colors would it be and why?
2. Have each student pick a name for their own Revolutionary War regiment. Ask them to draw and color a uniform coat to represent their regiment.

### TRAVELLING TRUNK ITEMS

1. British Uniform Coat (red).
2. Continental Army (American) Uniform Coat (blue).
3. French Uniform Coat (white).
4. A hunting shirt (similar to the hunting frock, but not open in the front).
5. A tricorne hat.





Create Your Own Flag



# CAMP LIFE DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

The American Revolution is often told through stories of important people or events. However, the Revolution is also about the average men, women and children who were part of this great world event. Revolutionary War battles were infrequent. Soldiers, whether American or foreign; White, Black or American Indian; children, women and men, suffered the danger and boredom of camp life. An average day in camp might be as follows:



## DAYBREAK

Soldiers and civilians were awakened by drumbeats. Drummers beat “The Reveille” to arouse the camp. Soldiers left their tents, a canvas structure six and one half feet square by five feet high, each shared by six soldiers; to answer roll call and inspection by a superior officer. Once assembled, the soldiers were ordered to the parade ground to drill the intricate maneuvers for a line of soldiers to march and fight in unison. The soldiers also practiced loading and firing their muskets as a unit.

## FOOD

Food was a major concern. No soldier ever assumed there would be enough, and both British and American soldiers often faced food shortages. In the winter of 1779-1780, The British garrison in New York City was near starvation until supply ships arrived. The British never secured enough food from a hostile countryside and relied on supplies from England, 3,000 miles away.

The Continental army lacked sufficient food in the midst of a land of plenty. Farmers and merchants hesitated to sell food to the U.S. government because its paper money was worthless. If they did sell food, it often rotted in warehouses awaiting transportation. Roads were poor or nearly non-existent, and there were not enough wagons and horses to haul supplies. One of the best accounts of the war and its sufferings is from an American soldier, Joseph Plumb Martin, who served from 1776 to 1783. Martin wrote in his post war journal of his camp experiences Morristown, New Jersey, during the 1780-1781 winter: “I do solemnly declare that I did not put a single morsel of victuals [food] into my mouth for four days and as many nights, except a little black birch bark which I

## OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to state that soldiers spent more time in camp than on the battlefield.
2. Students will be able to list three camp chores soldiers did.
3. Students will be able to list three items soldiers used in camp.
4. Students will be able to state that men, women and children could be found in army camps.
5. Students will be able to define the term camp followers and describe two tasks they performed.
6. Students will be able to describe two tasks done by children.
7. Students will be able to state that the soldier was poorly paid and fed.
8. Students will be able to name a disease some soldiers suffered from, and how doctors treated it.

gnawed off a stick of wood, if that can be called victuals. I saw several men roast their old shoes and eat them.” (*Yankee Doodle Boy*, p. 120.)

The prescribed ration for a Continental soldier depended upon food availability. In 1778, Congress authorized each soldier these daily amounts:

“1½ pounds of flour or bread, one pound of beef or fish, ¾ pound of pork, and one gill [4 to 5 ounces] of whiskey or beer; or 1½ pounds of flour or bread, ½ pound of pork or bacon, ½ pint of dried peas or beans, and one gill of whiskey or beer.” (Risch, p. 191.) [Vinegar was sometimes substituted for fresh fruit or vegetables because it helped prevent scurvy.]

Soldiers rarely got this ration, especially during winter. Also, without refrigeration or canning procedures, meat spoiled unless salt preserved. Accordingly, salt was as important as gunpowder, and often, just as scarce. (Risch, p. 198.) Hard bread was a common substitute for fresh bread. Joseph Martin wrote hard bread could “break the teeth of a rat.” (*Yankee Doodle Boy*, p. 27.)

*Mess Time*



Preparing food was time consuming. Six soldiers, called a “mess,” usually cooked together. Messmates had one, nine quart iron kettle, weighing about three pounds, to cook their meals in. Usually, they combined their food and one member prepared the meal. Others gathered firewood and started the fire. With the poor food quantity and quality and poor cooking, meals often tasted bad. Fortunately camp followers frequently did the cooking.

Women camp followers played important roles. These women, usually listed on army rolls as soldiers’ wives, performed many tasks including cooking, washing clothes and dishes, sewing, gathering wood and food, making soap, butter or candles, herding livestock, and nursing the ill and wounded. For this, women received ½ the food ration of a soldier. Children, performing similar tasks, were allocated ¼ of the soldiers’ rations. By 1781, for about every five British soldiers in America, there was one woman camp follower. (*How many women camp followers were with the Continental army is unknown since Washington never authorized a quota of women to soldiers. How many women participated at the Siege of Yorktown? History does not tell.*)

## **MIDDAY**

Following the morning routine, soldiers performed chores, including making or repairing equipment.

As soldiers needed drinking water, especially for long marches, canteens were indispensable. Many American soldiers made canteens from wood. Although the British usually had tin canteens, wooden canteens were adequate. They did not leak because the wood expanded when wet and wood kept water cooler than tin.



*Wooden Canteen*

Knapsacks and haversacks were also important soldier’s items. The knapsack was a linen or canvas backpack for carrying

clothing and blankets. (Some British knapsacks were made of goat skin, with the hair left on the outside of the pack for waterproofing.) The haversack was a large linen or canvas bag to hold personal belongings, food and eating utensils.

Other equipment such as tents, blankets, and clothing often needed repair. Needles (some made from animal bones), and thread, sometimes made from animal sinews or fibrous plants, were used for mending. Of course, women often performed this tedious task.

Goatskin  
Knapsack



Soldiers also did camp clean-up which included digging pits for

trash or latrines. Additional chores included foraging for food, cleaning muskets or washing clothes or even themselves. (General Washington often wrote about his soldiers' poor personal hygiene. They were issued soap, but often sold it. Strict orders for bathing, shaving and hair care were given. Soldiers tended to stay cleaner when women were in camp to ensure that soldiers bathed and washed their clothes.)

Soldiers, and sometimes women and children, also made lead musket balls and musket cartridges.

Civilian merchants and artificers also worked in camp. Merchants sold goods to the soldiers, usually at inflated prices. Artificers were skilled artisans who made or repaired vital army equipment. Carpenters, wheelwrights, blacksmiths and gunsmiths made or repaired artillery carriages, wheels, horseshoes and muskets, respectively. Some artificers were slaves rented by their owners to the army. A soldier might earn extra money using his skills.

## PAY

A British soldier earned eight pence per day, or approximately £25 a year, before deductions. Two pence a day was deducted for "off-reckoning" expenses, such as a fund for widows and orphans of soldiers. With their remaining money, called "subsistence pay," soldiers purchased food, alcohol, personal items, shoes, medicine and hospitalization. That the British soldier was not well paid is an understatement. (Frey, p. 54.) The Continental soldier, by comparison, was paid almost nothing or not at all.

At the beginning of the war, the Continental Congress authorized a wage of \$6.67 per month, or 22¢ a day, for a Continental soldier. Although initially adequate, two things changed this: the overprinting of worthless paper money and high inflation. (Boatner, p. 842 and *Private Yankee Doodle*, p. 287.)



In 1775, the U.S. was estimated to have \$12 million in hard money. (Broadus Mitchell, p. 106.) This hard money, termed "specie," was gold or silver coins, or paper money backed by the gold or silver. Additionally, during the war, France loaned the U.S. over \$8 million in hard money. (Higginbotham, p. 235.) Twenty million dollars in hard money, however, was not enough to pay America's

war costs. The Continental Congress lacked the power to tax the states, and consequently, could not raise funds for the war. Congress resorted to printing paper money not backed by specie; over \$240 million of worthless Continental script. To worsen matters, the states printed an additional \$200 million in useless paper money. (Broadus Mitchell, p. 91.)

Continental and state scripts quickly depreciated and became virtually worthless, adversely affecting soldiers' pay. (Broadus Mitchell, p. 100.) A monthly pay of \$6.67 in 1776 depreciated in real value to 20¢ by November 1781. High inflation also worsened the situation. Wholesale prices in 1776 rose over 5,000% by 1781. In Boston, a hat and a suit of clothes cost \$2,000 by 1781. (Boatner, p. 275.) *(Converting 18th century money into 20th century monetary equivalents is almost impossible. Refer to the appendix in the section "History of the Battle of Yorktown," for a monetary conversion chart. The true cost of 18th century items is distorted by labor costs, as most things were made by hand. For example, we cannot equate the cost of a wagon to an automobile. The best way to realize 18th century buying power is to compare wages with commodity prices. For instance, if a carpenter made two shillings per day, and a bushel of wheat cost four shillings to, it took two days' wages to buy the wheat. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library, letters for money exchange rates; 7/21/59 and 10/7/87.)*

Besides depreciation and inflation, money shortages often meant the U.S. government could not pay soldiers. By 1781, Congress owed six million dollars in back pay to the troops. (Miller, p. 670.) Joseph Martin recalled: "I received the six dollars and two thirds, till...the month of August 1777, when paying ceased. ...I received one month's pay in specie while on the march to Virginia, in the year 1781 and except that, I never received any pay worth the name while I belonged to the army." (*Private Yankee Doodle*, p. 287.)

But, perhaps what infuriated Continental soldiers more than poor or no pay was that some people profited at his expense. Charging high prices, hoarding goods and trading with the enemy brought riches to some unpatriotic Americans while increasing the Patriot soldier's misery. A question often heard in American camps, "How long will one part of the community [the army] bear the burden [of the war] for the whole?" (Miller, p. 672.)

## MEDICINE

Soldiers also feared visiting the camp doctor; any wound or illness could be fatal. Harold Peterson, author of *The Book of the Continental Soldier*, wrote, "It has been estimated that a Revolutionary War soldier going into battle had a 98 per cent chance of escaping death. If he entered a hospital, his chances of survival were only 75 per cent." (p. 172.)



Few 18th century doctors were academically trained; nine out of ten did not have medical degrees. Some attended European medical schools or the medical college founded in Philadelphia before the war. Most learned from another doctor, were self-taught or were mere quacks. Soldiers did not have the luxury of checking the camp doctor's medical credentials. (Risch, p. 373.)

Few diseases could be cured or controlled in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Small-pox, a dreaded disease, could be controlled with vaccination, though the process was occasionally deadly. To vaccinate, a doctor took smallpox scabs from an infected person, ground the scabs into powder and with a lancet, transferred the powder into an uninfected person's left arm. The vaccinated person contracted smallpox and suffered fever, vomiting and diarrhea, but his chances for survival increased. The death rate from smallpox vaccination was one out of 400, versus 60 out of 400 for those not vaccinated. (Wilbur, p. 77.)

Eighteenth century medical knowledge was limited. The basic remedies were laxatives (jalap, Peruvian bark and snake root), emetics such as ipecac to cause vomiting, and/or enemas. The most practical treatment was bloodletting, which was meant to purge the body of "bad humors" causing the illness. (*Greeks developed the theory of humors, which included the body fluids: blood, phlegm, black and yellow bile. An ill person was diagnosed with one or more humors out of balance. By the 17th century, the humors were renamed; acidity, alkalinity, saltiness, tension and relaxation. All treatments were to restore a balance to the humors by ridding the body of bad humors. Wilbur, Medicine, p. 10.*) Treatments could be lethal. For dysentery, the copious amounts of laxatives or enemas the doctor might prescribe to flush the body of the bad humors could cause death from dehydration and malnutrition. Bloodletting was used so extensively that some were bled to death. Doctors often did not blame themselves for a patient's death; rather the patient had too many bad humors to be cured. (Wilbur, p. 76.)

Combat wounds were also deadly. Doctors did not have operations to treat soldiers injured in the abdomen and amputation was a common treatment for limbs shattered by musket balls or cannonballs. Anesthetics were unavailable. Sterilization of medical instruments and bandages was unknown. Pure chance dictated a soldier's survival once under a doctor's care. (Risch, p. 378.)

## **EVENING**

At evening, soldiers and civilians might try to relax. A few maybe read or wrote letters, though many were illiterate. Others might play games such as cards. Whittling with their knives, some made wooden bowls, plates, spoons, canteens or maybe a toy for a child. Inevitably, someone was given the unpopular assignment of standing camp guard throughout the night.



If hunger or illness did not haunt a soldier or civilian during the night, their thoughts of home and family probably did. Certainly, the prospect of another day in camp could dampen one's spirits, and each new day brought the possibility of battle orders. All soldiers and civilians, no matter their nationality or background, shared one common link—they were all mortal.

## **ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASS**

1. Refer to the daily ration of an American soldier in 1778 described in the food section. Collect the food amounts so the class can visualize what a soldier

was to receive. Divide the rations in half for a woman camp follower, and one-quarter for children. (You may want to substitute water for the gill of rum.)

2. Have the students make their own haversacks. Using a brown paper grocery bag, cut away the top half of the front and sides of the bag, leaving the back intact for the flap to cover the bag's contents. To carry the "haversack," place the ends of a long piece of string through holes punched into the bag's sides, knotting the string's ends for it to be the "haversack's" strap which will be placed over the right shoulder with the haversack hanging on the left hip.

3. Have the students draw or cut out pictures of items they would put in their haversack if they were going to camp. (Limit the number of items.) Review what the students felt was necessary to put in their haversacks and why. Compare these items to those soldiers carried.

4. As a class, make hard bread using the recipe below. Hard bread was a substitute for fresh bread.

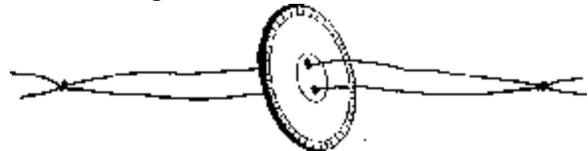
### Hard Bread Recipe

Mix one teaspoon of salt with one pound of flour. Add enough water to make a very stiff dough. Cut the whole into four inch sections and punch it with holes. Bake in a flat pan at 250° for two or three hours.

5. A Continental soldier made only \$6.67 a month, (*you can round the number up or down to make the math easier*), have the students compute how many months it would take to earn enough to buy a hat and suit of clothes which cost \$2,000 in 1781. (*You may also ask the class to compute how many months it would take to earn enough money to buy their favorite game, shoes or clothing if they made only \$6.67 a month.*)

6. Have each student make a buzz-saw according to these directions:

You will need for each student; one large button (about two inches in diameter) and two pieces of string each two feet long. Thread the string through



opposite holes in the button and knot the ends together. To operate, slip the knots over the middle finger of each hand. With your hands about 18" apart, move them rapidly in a circular motion, twisting the cords tightly together. When the string is wound, pull your hands quickly apart to start the button spinning. When the string is completely stretched out, relax your hands so the button keeps twirling, winding the string up again. Continue pulling and relaxing as long as you like. The buzz saw should produce a humming noise while spinning. Early buzz saws were often made from a wooden or bone disk, or a metal coin.

### TRAVELLING TRUNK ITEMS

1. Tin Canteen
2. Wooden Canteen
3. Colonial Money

4. Lye Soap
5. Soldier's housewife (sewing kit)
6. American Haversack
7. Wooden plate
8. Clay pipe
9. Fork
10. Tobacco twist
11. Comb made from animal horn
12. Playing cards
13. British Haversack
14. Whistle
15. Dice
16. Fife
17. Knapsack

# WOMEN IN THE REVOLUTION

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Much of what we know about women's history comes from letters and journals. Rare records of women's contributions found in textbooks are not indicative of their lack of involvement. This is certainly true of the American Revolutionary War in which women participated in a variety of ways.

Women had significant roles in shaping the United States. Linda Grant DePauw, in *Founding Mothers*, explained that household responsibilities were vast. "Women's work" included five main areas of responsibility:

- feeding the family;
- making the family's clothing and such essentials as candles and soap;
- keeping the home, the family, and the family's clothing clean;
- serving as doctor, nurse, and midwife for all members of the household, including servants and slaves;
- caring for children, both the her own and apprentices or children of relatives who lived with the family (p. 3).

A meal of chicken stew required the cook catch, slaughter, clean and pluck the chicken; situate a 40-70 pound iron kettle over a flame and cook the meal, despite the day's temperature, which may have been sweltering (pp. 4-5).

Running a household was relentless; yet some women found time to support patriotic efforts. Prior to the war, some boycotted British imports by weaving cloth. Daughters of Liberty was the name given to women's groups who gathered, often at a minister's home, to spin home-spun cloth. These women often had spinning bees or matches and engaged in stimulating conversation. Women were also involved in petitioning and fund-raising, and writing political and patriotic poems and essays.

With the war, women's duties increased. In *The Women's History of the World*, Rosalinda Miles, quoting an eyewitness account of the war's first battle at Lexington in 1775, writes that ". . .at every house women and children [were] making cartridges, running bullets, making wallets, baking biscuits, crying and bemoaning and at the same time animating their husbands and sons to fight for their liberties, though not knowing whether they should ever see them again. . . ."



making cartridges, running bullets, making wallets, baking biscuits, crying and bemoaning and at the same time animating their husbands and sons to fight for their liberties, though not knowing whether they should ever see them again. . . ."

In addition to this initial frenzy, Miles explains that women continued to run the household as well as the farm ". . .even in the midst of a revolution, there had to be food, love, warmth, shelter, light,

## OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to list three contributions women made to the Revolutionary War.
2. Students will be able to name at least one famous woman's contribution to the American Revolution.

and life, or as much of each as the female fighter on the homefront could muster” (p. 141).

Women ran mills and plantations; some even took over newspapers. They had to protect their property which sometimes meant being forced to house British soldiers. Lydia Darrah made the best of this very situation. She listened through the keyhole to a conversation between British officers taking place in her home. During the night, she snuck away to warn Washington of the British plans. Some women destroyed their property to prevent the British from using it. One woman burned her whole wheat harvest so the British would not steal it.

Women’s contributions were not confined to the homefront; some followed their husband soldiers as camp followers. Anne Firor Scott and Suzanne Lebsock explain in *The Foundations of America*, that “whenever the army marched, hundreds of women roughed it right along with the soldiers. Women scavenged for food, cooked, sewed, and did laundry and all the essential housekeeping tasks that the army could not organize for itself” (p. 32). Martha Washington was a camp follower accompanying her husband during several winter encampments.

“Molly Pitcher,” followed her husband through the war and took over his position at a cannon when he was wounded. She was later honored for her action. Deborah Sampson disguised herself as a soldier, “Robert Shirdliffe,” and fought in battle. Deborah Champion spied for Washington.



Not all women were patriots; some remained loyal to Great Britain. DePauw tells us that “the Iroquois women...used their great political influence to move their tribes to support England against the colonists.” Others, according to Linda Kerber, were judged as Loyalists based on their husband’s association. As a result, “women left at home while their loyalist husbands fought were often ostracized by their communities and forced into exile without being asked their own political opinions” (p. 9).

Despite the women’s impact, both at home and on the battlefield, on the fight to win independence, few received recognition. In fact, the founding fathers created a constitution that provided rights and freedoms for white men only, ignoring the founding mothers all together.

Prior to the war, women were experiencing a revolution in education. Their education, however, was still dictated by household needs. After the war, a new purpose for educating women surfaced. The “Republican mother” was to educate her sons to understand and uphold the new democracy; causing new tension, according to Kerber, because the old ideas of “domestic tradition condemned highly educated women as perverse threats to family stability” (p. 10).

For women, the close of the American Revolution had an ironic twist. Though they too went without food and sleep, shed tears and died, at home and

on the battlefield, they were not recognized for their contributions, and, in fact, lost much of their previous status. Nancy Wooloch writes in *Women in the American Experience*, that “by increasing men’s political rights, the Revolution increased the extent of female exclusion” (p. 66). Despite their efforts, women were not allowed to vote, and were not viewed to be created equal to “all men.”

*“If I were asked to what the singular prosperity and growing strength of Americans ought to be attributed, I should reply: ‘To the superiority of their women.’”* **Alex de Toqueville**



## ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASS

1. Introduce letters, such as those of Abigail Adams, and journals written by other 18th century women to the class. Explain that most information about women during the American Revolution is found in their letters and journals. Have the students assume a personality who lived during the American Revolution, and keep a journal or write fictitious letters explaining their experiences during the war.

## FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

**Margaret Green Draper** took over publishing the family newspaper when her husband died. She published the *Massachusetts Gazette and Boston News-Letter* from 1754-1776 and was one of the most successful female printers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**Molly Pitcher (Mary Ludwig Hays)** earned the name she is remembered by when she took on the task of carrying pitchers of water from a nearby stream to the soldiers on the battlefield. When her husband was wounded, she took over his position at a cannon. She was given a lifetime pension by Congress for her service in the war.

**Deborah Gannett Sampson** (1760-1827) disguised herself as a man, “Robert Shirdliffe,” and fought in the war. She was injured twice before her identity was discovered during a bout with brain fever. She was honored by General Washington and was given a pension and properties by Congress.

**Abigail Adams** influenced the political decisions of her husband, the second president of the United States, John Adams. She believed that women were the intellectual equals of men and had the right to an equal education. Her experiences and philosophies are reflected in her many published letters.

**Mercy Otis Warren** was the first woman historian. She wrote political satire, and other volumes of history. Her husband and brother were both forces in fueling the revolutionary movement and she often had meetings of the Patriot leaders in her home.

# BLACK WOMEN IN THE REVOLUTION

In “Race, Sex, and Self-Evident Truths: The Status of Slave Women during the American Revolution,” Jacqueline Jones explains that historians write about white woman; often elite white women. This is true of much of the information in the preceding section. Most black women of the colonial era could not read or write, thus they rarely left records of their lives in journals and letters. Because the role of the black woman is largely undocumented, she is lost in the general heading of “women.”

## OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to relate that most information about black women during the Revolution has been lost.
2. Students will be able to list two contributions black women made during the Revolution.

The black slave woman endured a double burden. She had the responsibility of working for her owners, and caring for her family. Female slaves sometimes worked as cooks or servants, but most often they worked from sunup to sundown in the fields. Slave women were rarely trained in the same skills as slave men because child bearing was a priority. As a result, it was the slave women who cared for their families and produced children for their owner’s labor needs. (p. 306)

The “women’s work” described in the previous section “Women in the Revolution,” was done by the household mistress or delegated to servants and slaves, and then overseen by her. When a white women’s work load doubled as a result of her husband and sons joining the army, it seems logical that the slave women’s responsibilities also increased. Furthermore, some black men went to fight, leaving their wives with the added responsibility of solely caring for their own family. Clearly, black women contributed, willingly or not, to the home front war effort.

It is also possible that some black women followed their husbands to the Patriot camps, as many white women did. The British troops offered promises of freedom to slaves who would desert their owners. Jones quotes Mary Beth Norton who states that “although the majority of runaways were male, women apparently sought freedom in greater numbers [that is, proportion] during the war than in peacetime. “Slave women had their children to consider but it seems that they too joined the British forces or simply ran away.”



*Phillis Wheatley*

If the contributions of black women are difficult to uncover, then information about specific black women is nearly nonexistent. One frequent name is Phillis Wheatley. Mr. and Mrs. John Wheatley bought Phillis in 1761 from a slave ship when she was around seven years old. She was educated by the Wheatley’s who taught her English, Latin and literature.

Phillis began writing poetry at age 14, and published her first poem at age 17. At age 20, she went to England

to oversee the publishing of her first volume of poetry.

Rather than being accepted as an example of the intellectual capacity of the Black race—as a talented poet in her own right—Phillis Wheatley was viewed as an anomaly and was forgotten when the novelty wore off. Though she did continue to publish poems, she died alone and impoverished at the age of 31.

Clearly, the documented involvement of black women in the Revolutionary War is vague, but, as with the example of white women, this is not an indication that they were not a crucial part of the war effort. At the very least, we must question their absence in history books and try to draw likely connections.

### **ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASS**

1. Go through your history book and count the number of photographs which have women or minorities in them. Look through the chapter on the Revolutionary War and see how many times women or minorities are mentioned.
2. Introduce poetry by Phillis Wheatley either by using her works or information about her. Following are two of her poems, including her most quoted poem on George Washington, and her correspondence with Washington regarding this poem. Have students write their own poem about George Washington or another historical figure from the American Revolution.

### **On Being Brought from Africa to America**

'Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land,  
Taught my benighted soul to understand  
That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too:  
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.  
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,  
"Their colour is a diabolic die."  
Remember, Christians, Negro's, black as Cain,  
May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.

### **Letter and Poem to General Washington**

*To His Excellency  
George Washington*

*Sir,*

*I have taken the freedom to address your Excellency in the enclosed poem, and entreat your acceptance, though I am not insensible of its inaccuracies. Your being appointed by the Grand Continental Congress to be Generalissimo of the armies of North America, together with the fame of your virtues, excite sensations not easy to suppress. Your*

*generosity, therefore, I presume, will pardon the attempt. Wishing your Excellency all possible success in the great cause you are so generously engaged in. I am,*

*Your Excellency's most obedient humble servant,  
Phillis Wheatley*

1776

Celestial choir! enthron'd in realms of light,  
Columbia's scenes of glorious toils I write.  
While freedom's cause her anxious breast alarms,  
She flashes dreadful in refulgent arms.  
See mother earth her offspring's fate bemoan,  
And nations gaze at scenes before unknown!  
See the bright beams of heaven's revolving light  
Involved in sorrows and veil of night!

The goddess comes, she moves divinely fair,  
Olive and laurel bind her golden hair:  
Wherever shines this native of the skies,  
Unnumber'd charms and recent graces rise.

Muse! bow propitious while my pen relates  
How pour her armies through a thousand gates,  
As when Eolus heaven's fair face deforms,  
Enwrapp'd in tempest and a night of storms;  
Astonish'd ocean feels the wild uproar,  
The refluent surges beat the sounding shore;  
Or thick as leaves in Autumn's golden reign,  
Such, and so many, moves the warrior's train.  
In bright array they seek the work of war,  
Where high unfurl'd the ensign waves in air.  
Shall I to Washington their praise recite?  
Enough thou know'st them in the fields of fight.  
Thee, first in peace and honours,—we demand  
The grace and glory of thy martial band.  
Fam'd for thy valour, for thy virtues more,  
Hear every tongue thy guardian aid implore!

One century scarce perform'd its destined round,  
When Gallic powers Columbia's fury found;  
And so may you, whoever dares disgrace  
The land of freedom's heaven-defended race!  
Fix'd are the eyes of nations on the scales,  
For in their hopes Columbia's arm prevails.  
Anon Britannia droops the pensive head,  
While round increase the rising hills of dead.  
Ah! cruel blindness to Columbia's state!  
Lament thy thirst of boundless power too late.

Proceed, great chief, with virtue on thy side,  
Thy ev'ry action let the goddess guide.  
A crown, a mansion, and a throne that shine,  
With gold unfading, WASHINGTON! be thine.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

### **George Washington's Reply**

*Cambridge, February 28, 1776.*

*Miss Phillis,*

*Your favour of the 26th of October did not reach my hands 'till the middle of December. Time enough, you will say, to have given an answer ere this. Granted. But a variety of important occurrences, continually interposing to distract the mind and withdraw the attention, I hope will apologize for the delay, and plead my excuse for the seeming, but not real neglect.*

*I thank you most sincerely for your polite notice of me, in the elegant Lines you enclosed; and however undeserving I may be of such encomium and panegyrick, the style and manner exhibit a striking proof of your great poetical Talents. In honour of which, and as a tribute justly due to you, I would have published the Poem, had I not been apprehensive, that, while I only meant to give the World this new instance of your genius, I might have incurred the imputation of Vanity. This and nothing else, determined me not to give it place in the public Prints.*

*If you should ever come to Cambridge, or near Head Quarters, I shall be happy to see a person so favoured by the Muses, and to whom Nature has been so liberal and beneficent in her dispensations.*

*I am, with great Respect, etc.*

# CHILDREN IN THE REVOLUTION

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During the colonial era, children's lives could be difficult and harsh. As Linda Grant DePauw explains in *Founding Mothers*, in the 1700's some adults viewed children as servants whose spirits must be broken so they could grow to adulthood. Consequently, some children had little playtime, received severe discipline and punishments, and could not show any curiosity or independence.



Children often worked with their parents, girls with mothers, and boys with fathers on farms or in shops. Area schools, if existent, were usually only for boys. Boys were often educated to work at and eventually take over their father's occupation. By colonial standards, girls did not need education. They were to become housewives and mothers. If children lived in remote rural areas, an education was a luxury and not a necessity for farming.

Sometimes, parents would "apprentice" their boys to work for a master craftsman. The child lived with the craftsman, normally for five to seven years, while being taught the skills of the craft. Once the apprentice reached adulthood, he could pursue a career with his new skills.

The Revolution affected children's lives. If boys were not old enough to be soldiers, they helped with work at home. Some children, however, joined their mothers as camp followers and shared the work of military camp life. Some boys became military drummers. These young boys (age 15 or 16, some as young as 11) marched into battle armed only with their drums. They would communicate the officers' orders to the soldiers with their drumbeats that could be heard over the din of battle.

Boys benefited most from independence. They were considered the future of the new democracy, and were educated so they would appreciate and carry out this institution. Girls were also important, because as future mothers they would be responsible for their sons' education.

## ACTIVITY FOR THE CLASS

Have students write a short story or letter about the war from a child's perspective.

### OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to state that the lives of children were changed by the Revolutionary War.
2. Students will be able to list two ways in which children participated in the Revolution.

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