

SHAPING America

LESSON 9: "WINNING INDEPENDENCE"

Lesson Assignments

You are encouraged to be very attentive while viewing the video program. Review the video objectives and be prepared to record possible answers, in abbreviated form as you view the video. The topics and time periods may differ somewhat from the chapters of the textbook your school system is using. Each video program chronicles a wide array of events and personalities during a specific time period of American history prior to 1877. Keep in mind that one of the overarching goals of each lesson is to help you understand how past historical events and actions by historical personalities did not occur in a vacuum, and that they are inextricably interwoven in your society today.

Activities:

Your teacher may assign one or more activities for each lesson. Refer to your course syllabus for details.

OVERVIEW

The brash Americans rebelled against a mighty British Empire. The odds were overwhelmingly in favor of the English in terms of monetary wealth and naval power. The British not only enjoyed a great advantage with reference to a professional army, but they also had the funds to hire thousands of Germans (Hessians) to fight the ill-equipped and wretchedly trained American militia. One British officer boasted that the war would offer no problems that could not be solved by an "experienced sheep herder."

However, the British also faced significant obstacles. Many Britons had no desire to kill their American cousins, and English merchants feared the repercussions war would have on colonial markets. British troops received mediocre leadership that at best, and provisions left much to be desired. On one occasion, a supply of biscuits, captured some fifteen years earlier from the French, was softened by dropping cannonballs on them. The British army had to conquer the American while the colonists only had to fight a defensive war and hope that the British population would grow disillusioned with the war and grant the Americans independence by default. The American geographic expanse was enormous and the colonies had no urban nerve center that could be captured and the head of the revolutionary movement cut off. The British occupied key cities such as Charleston, New York, Boston, and Philadelphia but could not control the rural areas.



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The colonists, on the other hand, enjoyed outstanding leadership under the guidance of Washington in the military arena, and Franklin was a master diplomat. Americans also were convinced they enjoyed the superior moral position. In addition, colonial marksmen were far superior to the British troops, who often pointed rather than aimed their weapons. An American rifleman could hit a man's head at 200 yards.

The Americans also faced some major challenges. They were far from a united nation. Sectionalism and state sovereignty were many times as threatening to the revolution as the British soldiers. They also faced internal problems from Indians, Loyalists, and the threat of slaves joining forces with the British, who promised them freedom. Economic difficulties were nearly insurmountable. Metallic money had been drained away from unfavorable balances of trade with England, and the Continental Congress was reluctant to force individual colonies to pay taxes to support the war effort. Consequently, "Continental" currency poured from the presses. Inflation of the currency led inevitably to skyrocketing prices. American militiamen were underpaid, underfed, and undertrained. The latter was partially remedied with the organizational genius of the German Baron von Steuben.

The military fortunes of war for the Americans varied from the depths of depression at Valley Forge to the euphoria of victory at Saratoga, which resulted in the French Treaty of Alliance. The colonists suffered a calamitous defeat with the loss of Charleston but Nathanael Greene's guerrilla-type warfare in the south took its toll on General Cornwallis. The French navy under Admiral de Grasse and the joint forces of French General Rochambeau and George Washington finally forced Cornwallis to surrender his forces at Yorktown. Indeed the world had been turned upside down for the British forces and the Loyalists in colonial America.

The American victory was the result of the efforts of strange bedfellows, which included the French military, women such as Molly Pitcher and Margaret Corbin, African Americans, Indian allies, and the multitude of colonists from the diverse New England and Southern colonies. The ability of such a diverse group of people to successfully defeat the mighty British army was due largely to the efforts of one man—George Washington. General Washington was not a great military strategist, but he possessed the intangible attributes that all great leaders seem to possess. He rallied men and women to the cause of independence and held them together when a lesser individual would have succumbed to the overwhelming odds faced by the American revolutionaries.

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VIDEO OBJECTIVES

The following objectives are designed to assist the viewer in identifying the most significant aspects of the video segment of this lesson. You should take succinct notes while viewing the video.

1. Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the British and American forces.
2. Assess the significance of the roles played by Native Americans, women, Loyalists, and African Americans during the Revolution.
3. Examine the contributions made to the American victory by the French and Prussian military leaders.
4. Compare and contrast the military strategy and leadership of the American and British military leaders.
5. Evaluate the key military battles of the Revolutionary War and indicate which battles you think were most significant. Defend your choices.
6. Analyze the effects of the Revolutionary War on the various segments of colonial society.



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WEB ACTIVITIES

These activities are assigned at the discretion of your teacher. They are offered as suggestions to help you learn more about the material presented in this lesson.

Activity 1: Women of the Revolution

a. Access and review the following web sites:

Soldier: <http://www.coe.ilstu.edu/jabraun/students/schultz/soldier.htm>

Molly Pitcher:

<http://osage.voorhees.k12.nj.us/fourth/larsen/jkids/MOLLY.HTM>

Margaret Corbin: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/articles/51524.html>

Molly Pitcher: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/articles/10243.html>

Battle of Monmouth:

<http://encarta.msn.com/find/Concise.asp?z=1pg=2&ti=761556744>

Women of the Revolution:

<http://webpages.homestead.com/revwar/files/WOMEN.HTM>

Molly Pitcher: <http://webpages.homestead.com/revwar/files/MOLLY.HTM>

National Archives and Records Administration Document Analysis

Worksheets: <http://www.nara.gov/education/teaching/analysis/analysis.htm>

b. Compare and contrast the actions of Molly Pitcher and Margaret Corbin and address the issue of whether Molly Pitcher really manned her husband's place after his death and fired cannon balls at the Battle of Monmouth.

Activity 2: Molly Pitcher

a. Compare and contrast the following web site images of Molly Pitcher using the National Archives Photograph Analysis Worksheet as a guide for your Analysis:

Molly Pitcher:

<http://osage.voorhees.k12.nj.us/fourth/larsen/jkids/MOLLY.HTM>

Women of the Revolution:

<http://webpages.homestead.com/revwar/files/WOMEN.HTM>

Molly Pitcher:

<http://webpages.homestead.com/revwar/files/MOLLY.HTM>

Soldier: <http://www.coe.ilstu.edu/jabraun/students/schultz/soldier.htm>



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PRACTICE TEST

After watching the video and reviewing the objectives, you should be able to complete the following Practice Test. Access the Answer Key to score your answers after you have completed the Practice Test.

Multiple Choice:

Select the single best answer. It will be indicated if more than one answer is required.

- Like many revolutions, the American Revolution was:
 - A majority movement.
 - A minority movement.
 - Started by forces outside the country.
 - One in which little attention was given to those civilians who remained neutral.
- In late 1776 and early 1777, George Washington helped restore confidence in America's military by:
 - Defeating the Hessians at Trenton and the British at Princeton.
 - Securing the support of France for the American war effort with a victory in New York City.
 - Gaining a pay raise for American troops.
 - Bringing in Alexander Hamilton as his aide.
- French aid to the colonies:
 - Greatly aided America's struggle for independence.
 - Was motivated by what the French considered to be in their own national interests.
 - Forced the British to change their military strategy in America.
 - Accomplished all of the above.
- The Battle of Saratoga was a key victory for the Americans because it:
 - Brought the British to offer recognition of colonial independence.
 - Brought the colonists much-needed aid and a formal alliance with France.
 - Prevented the fighting from spreading into the southern colonies.
 - Prevented the colonial capital from being captured by the British.



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5. Some Indian nations joined the British during the Revolutionary War because:
 - A. The British threatened them with destruction if they did not help.
 - B. They believed that a British victory would restrain American expansion into the West.
 - C. The British hired them as mercenaries.
 - D. None of the above statements are accurate.



Essay Questions:

1. Compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of the American and British military forces.
2. Compare and contrast American and British military strategy.
3. Compare and contrast the roles played by the Native Americans, women, and African Americans during the American Revolution.



Answers to the Practice Test:

The correct answer is indicated first, followed by the objective (s) that correlate with the test question

1. B: 1
2. A: 1-4-5
3. D: 3
4. B: 5
5. B: 2