

UNIT 4 ACTIVITIES

While the experiences of women differed depending on their social status, education, location, and loyalties, the Revolutionary War affected all women. In this unit, students will use Don Troiani's paintings as a starting point to explore how women played an important role in the Revolutionary War, especially when joining the armies as camp followers. Students will discover various ways in which women helped the war effort, including maintaining their homes and communities, following the army, and even fighting in battle.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The modular activities and extensions in this unit provide opportunities for students to:

- Explore the various roles that women played in the armies during the Revolutionary War and how their participation impacted the war.
- Consider how wartime experiences impacted women's lives during the Revolutionary War.
- Discover how others perceived the participation of women in the armies.

MATERIALS

[Big Idea 4: A Women's War](#)

Figure Study: *Brunswick Camp Follower* by Don Troiani, 2015 (Courtesy of Don Troiani)

Painting: *Molly Pitcher, Battle of Monmouth, 1778* by Don Troiani, 2004 (Courtesy of Don Troiani)

Painting: *Margaret Corbin, Fort Mifflin* by Don Troiani, 2011 (Courtesy of Don Troiani)

Painting: *Raiders of the Mohawk Valley* by Don Troiani, 2019 (Courtesy of Don Troiani)

[Role Cards: Revolutionary Roles](#)

Object: French Musket Marked "UNITED STATES" (Museum of the American Revolution) <https://www.amrevmuseum.org/collection/french-musket-marked-united-states>

Object: Deborah Sampson Wedding Dress (Courtesy of Historic New England. Gift of Ann B. Gilbert, Carol Bostock Kraner, Susan Goldstone and Louise Bostock Lehman Sonneborn in memory of Beatrice Weeks Bostock, 1998.5875) <https://www.historicnewengland.org/explore/collections-access/gusn/189811/>

[Art Card: Toy Lamb \(New-York Historical Society\)](#)

[Worksheet: Views of Camp Followers](#)

[Worksheet: Women's Worries at Home](#)

[Handout: A New Touch On The Times](#)



Courtesy of Don Troiani

PROCEDURES

Engagement, Option 1

10-15 minutes

TWO OBJECTS, ONE STORY

Teacher preparation: Review Big Idea 4: A Women's War, especially the section on Deborah Sampson. Prepare to display or project images of the following two objects:

French Musket Marked "United States"

<https://www.amrevmuseum.org/collection/french-musket-marked-united-states>

Deborah Sampson's Wedding Dress

<https://www.historicnewengland.org/explore/collections-access/gusn/189811/>

First, show students the musket. Have them describe the person they think would have used the musket during the Revolutionary War. What might that person's life have looked like? Next, show students the wedding dress and repeat the exercise. Who might have worn this dress? What might their life have looked like during the Revolutionary War?

Reveal to students that the same woman who wore this wedding dress in 1785 also used a musket like this one as a soldier during the Revolutionary War. Ask students what the woman would have used the musket for. Reveal the story of Deborah Sampson and engage students in a conversation around the following questions:

- What about this story did you find surprising?
- What about this story did you find interesting?
- What else do you want to know about the work and experiences of women during the Revolutionary War?

Engagement, Option 2

10-15 minutes

OBJECT OBSERVATION

Teacher preparation: Review Big Idea 4: A Women's War, particularly the section on camp followers. Display or project the image of the Toy Lamb.

Engage students in a close examination of the Toy Lamb object image, without revealing to the students that the object is a toy. Questions and prompts include:

- Describe what we are looking at. (Explore size, shape, texture, material, weight, color, etc.)
- What do you think this object used for?
- Who do you think may have used this object? Who do you think it was meant for?

Explain to students that this object was recovered during an archaeological excavation of a British military camp in New York City, and is one of the only artifacts we have documenting the daily life of women and children who followed the British Army

during the Revolutionary War. Engage students in conversation around the following questions:

- What do you think life was like in a British military encampment?
- What do you think this toy (or the child who played with it) saw, heard, or experienced while there?
- Why do you think the child was at the military encampment?
- Who was taking care of him or her?
- What do you think the child's mother was doing in a military encampment? What roles might she have had in supporting the armies?

Development, Option 1

35-45 minutes

DEPUTY HUSBANDS

Teacher preparation: Review Big Idea 4: A Women's War. Print out enough copies of the Big Idea 4 and the handout: A New Touch On the Times for each student or ensure they have access to computers, tablets, or other devices with working internet connection.

Ask students what they think daily life was like for the many women during the Revolutionary War who remained at home when the significant men in their lives - fathers, brothers, sons, husbands, etc. - left to fight in the war? What responsibilities might they have had to provide for their families and maintain stability?

Then, have students read the Big Idea 4 section on Women at Home and discuss with students why women were called "deputy husbands" for their contributions to the war while at home?

Afterwards, distribute the handout: A New Touch On the Times and allow students time to read the poem. After students have read the poem, engage them in a conversation around the following questions:

- Why do you think Molly Gutridge wrote this poem?
- What was she concerned about?
- Do you think Molly Gutridge was acting as a "deputy husband" during the Revolutionary War?

Have students create a diary entry from a woman on the home front who acted as a "deputy husband" considering both her challenges and accomplishments.

EXTEND: Have students research how the roles and responsibilities of women at home might have been different as a result of location, race, class, and religion.

Development, Option 2 25-35 minutes

WOMEN'S WORRIES AT HOME

Teacher preparation: Review Big Idea 4: A Women's War, especially the section on Women at Home. Print out the handout: Women's Worries at Home. Prepare to display or project Don Troiani's Raiders of the Mohawk Valley.

Ask students what fears women might have had when the significant men in their lives left for war. What dangerous or challenging situations might they have encountered?

Display or project Don Troiani's *Raiders of the Mohawk Valley*. Hand out the worksheet *Worries of Women at War* and allow students time to complete.

After students present their adjectives, share with the class the information from the Big Idea about women on the home front.

Finally, have a class discussion around the following questions:

- What were other fears that women might have had while being alone without the men in their lives?
- What are ways that women might have overcome these fears? What actions might they have taken?
- How might these experiences have changed women's perceptions on their roles in society?

EXTEND: Have students research how Martha Bratton defended herself when British soldiers attempted to steal gunpowder hidden on her farm. How might her actions have challenged views on the role of women in society?

Development, Option 3 35-45 minutes

MARGARET AND MOLLY

Teacher preparation: Review Big Idea 4: A Women's War and print out enough copies for each student or ensure they have access to computers, tablets, or other devices with working internet connection. Display or project the paintings, Margaret Corbin, Fort Washington and Molly Pitcher, Battle of Monmouth, 1778 by Don Troiani.

Engage students in a discussion around the following questions:

- What is happening in each painting?
- Why are these women on a battlefield?
- What do you think the artist was trying to portray about these women?
- How do others involved seem to relate to them?
- What do you think these two women have in common?

Afterwards, read the following excerpt from Joseph Plumb Martin to students. Martin, a soldier with the Continental Army, wrote about seeing a woman at the Battle of Monmouth in his

memoir. "A woman whose husband belonged to the Artillery, and who was attached to a piece in the engagement, attended with her husband at the piece the whole time; while in the act of reaching a cartridge and having one of her feet as far before the other as she could step, a cannon shot from the enemy passed directly between her legs without doing any other damage than carrying away all the lower part of her petticoat."

Ask students why they think Martin chose to write about this event in his memoir.

Then, have students read Big Idea 4 (the section called Women at War).

Engage students in a conversation around the following questions, inserting your own knowledge as appropriate:

- What do these two women have in common?
- How did their contributions in battle impact the way that you view the role of women in the Revolutionary War? The way people in their time viewed women's roles in the war?
- Can you think of other examples of individual acts of bravery by women that have shaped history?

EXTEND: Have students find images and poems about the legend of Molly Pitcher throughout American history.

EXTEND: Return to the story of Molly Pitcher when your students are studying World War II. Have students compare Pitcher to Rosie the Riveter. How were these two cultural icons similar and different? How were they used during and after their respective wars to discuss women's roles in American life?

Development, Option 4 35-45 minutes

REVOLUTIONARY ROLES

Teacher Preparation: Review Big Idea 4: A Women's War. Make enough copies of the role cards, one for each student.

Hand out a role card to each student. On the front, have students write down their first impression of the role and how they think a woman in the Revolutionary War would fulfill it. Then turn the cards over. Discuss with students how their first impressions corresponded to the real roles.

Continue the activity by having students group up with peers who received the same role card. Have them read Big Idea 4 and assign them to brainstorm a list of challenges that the women in that role would have faced. Then have them present their findings to the class and discuss.

EXTEND: Assign students to research one woman within their assigned category during the Revolutionary War and create a resume or report on that woman.

Culmination

PERSUASIVE WRITING ACTIVITY - MULTIPLE CLASS PERIODS OR PROJECT

A CAMP WITHOUT FOLLOWERS

Teacher preparation: Review Big Idea 4: A Women's War and print enough copies of the section on camp followers for each student or ensure students have access to computers, tablets, or other devices with working internet connection. Print the worksheet Views of Camp Followers for each student.

Give students enough time to read the Big Idea 4 section on camp followers. Then engage them in a conversation around the following questions:

- What roles were filled by camp followers?
- How would you describe the importance of their roles in the day-to-day operations of the armies?

- Imagine if women had been banned from following the army. How might the army camps have operated differently? What challenges would the soldiers have faced?

Then, hand out the worksheet, Views of Camp Followers and allow students ample time to read and analyze the included quotations.

Assign students to write a letter to George Washington as if they were soldiers in the Continental Army, encouraging him to recruit camp followers to their encampment and pay them wages. The letter should focus on why camp followers are needed, how their lives as soldiers would improve, and the pay (full, half, quarter, or no rations) they believe the camp followers deserve. Encourage students to use the primary sources from the worksheet in their letter.

EXTENSIONS AND ADAPTATIONS

BRUNSWICK CAMP FOLLOWER

Review Big Idea 4: A Women's War. Prepare to display the Figure Study Brunswick Camp Follower by Don Troiani.

Display Troiani's image of a Brunswick camp follower. Engage students in conversation around the following questions:

- Describe the camp follower in the image and the items she is carrying.
- Why do you think she is carrying these heavy items?
- What might she and the child have been experiencing?
- Do you think that she is glad to be with the army or that she should have made a different decision?

LOADS OF LAUNDRY

Engage students in conversation around the following questions:

- How do you clean your clothes?
- Do you think it is easy or difficult?
- How would you do laundry without machines?
- Why would someone who does laundry be important in an army?

CAMP FOLLOWER DISCOVERY CART

Have students explore the following Virtual Discovery Cart to learn more about camp followers and their belongings.

<https://www.amrevmuseum.org/forgotten-revolutionaries-camp-followers-discovery-cart>

Afterwards have students create a short story, drawing, or comic on the life of a camp follower using the replica objects featured on the cart.

THE BARONESS RIEDESEL

Teacher preparation: Review the video linked below. Prepare to play the following sections of the video: 0-2 minutes, 5-8 minutes, and 12 minutes until the end.

Play the video sections for the students. Afterwards, engage students in a conversation around the following questions:

- How was the Baroness different from the typical camp follower?
- Would any of her experiences have been similar to those of a typical camp follower?
- Why was her diary so important to historians that study the Revolutionary War?
- What did she name her last two daughters? What does this tell you about her experiences during the war?

<https://www.amrevmuseum.org/discovering-history-baroness-von-riedesel>

DEBORAH SAMPSON'S STORY

While historians agree that Deborah Sampson fought as a soldier in uniform, gaps in her account have long led some to wonder whether her tale has been romanticized and exaggerated—possibly even by her. Have students research the following and report their findings to the class:

- As she later stated on multiple occasions, did Sampson fight in the decisive Battle of Yorktown?
- How did she keep her secret for the many months that she served in the Continental Army's light infantry?
- How did people learn about her service during her lifetime? How did historians learn about it later?

COOKING WITH WHAT YOU HAVE

Teacher preparation: Gather 5 or 6 random food items. Prepare to show students an example of a tin kettle found on the Camp Followers Discovery Cart.

<https://www.amrevmuseum.org/forgotten-revolutionaries-camp-followers-discovery-cart>

Explain to students that during the war, food rations were limited. Women were often given half of the rations that men received and had to make do with what they had. Ask students what they would create with the list of ingredients you brought to class.

Share with students the following food rations that women and soldiers were given during the Revolutionary War. Ask students what they would create with this list of food items using only a tin kettle and a fire.

1775 Continental Army Food Rations, Common Soldier:

- one pound of beef (or three-quarters of a pound of pork or one pound of salted fish) per day
- one pound of flour or bread per day
- three pounds of peas or beans per week
- one pint of milk per day
- one pint of rice per week
- one quart of spruce beer or cider per day
- Molasses if available