

## UNIT 3 ACTIVITIES

Artist Don Troiani introduces his viewers to the experiences of different soldiers from the many armies of the Revolutionary War. The purpose of this unit is to help students learn more about these armies and the soldiers within them. In doing so, students will learn how the war created both challenges and opportunities for individual combatants and consider the ways in which soldiers' motivations and experiences both connected and separated them from one another across their national, political, and cultural divides.

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

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

- Identify the different armies of the Revolutionary War
- Recognize and describe similarities and differences between the experiences of soldiers from different armies in the Revolutionary War.
- Practice close-looking while becoming familiar with some of the material culture of the Revolutionary War.
- Analyze and understand the rationales behind soldiers' participation in the war.
- Examine contemporary representations of the Revolutionary War and consider what they can teach us, or suggest, about the lived experiences of it.



Courtesy of Don Troiani

### MATERIALS

#### [Big Idea 3 – Soldiers of the Revolution](#)

Painting: *Nathan Hale, September 22, 1776* by Don Troiani, 2009 (Courtesy of Don Troiani)

Painting: *Victory at Yorktown* by Don Troiani, 2020 (Courtesy of Don Troiani)

Figure Study: *A Soldier of the 8th Massachusetts Regiment, 1777* by Don Troiani, 2018 (Courtesy of Don Troiani)

Painting: *Breymann's Redoubt, Battle of Saratoga, 1777* by Don Troiani, 2006 (Courtesy of Don Troiani)

Object: Canteen Marked "USTATES" (Museum of the American Revolution)

Figure Study: *53rd Regiment of Foot Private, 1777* by Don Troiani, 2015 (Courtesy of Don Troiani)

Painting: *Freeman's Farm* by Don Troiani, 2015 (Courtesy of Don Troiani)

Object: 62nd Regiment of Foot Cartridge Pouch (Troiani Collection)

Figure Study: *Hesse-Cassel Grenadier of the 3rd Garde Regiment, 1776* by Don Troiani, 2017 (Courtesy of Don Troiani)

Painting: *Battle of Trenton, December 26, 1776* by Don Troiani, 2008 (Courtesy of Don Troiani)

Object: Hessian Cap Plates (Colonel J. Craig Nannos Collection)

[Handout: Stay or Go Home?](#)

[Worksheet: Meet Joseph Plumb Martin](#)

[Worksheet: Soldier of the Revolution](#)

[Worksheet: Soldier Art Investigation](#)

[Art Card: Canteen Comparison](#)

# PROCEDURES

## Engagement, Option 1

10-15 minutes

### DAILY LIFE OF A SOLDIER — GLAMOROUS OR GLUM?

*Teacher preparation: Review Big Idea 3: Soldiers of the Revolution and print enough copies for each student to have one.*

Ask students to brainstorm a list of adjectives describing what they think a typical day looked like for a soldier fighting in the Revolutionary War. Write, display or project their responses. Then, have them read the Big Idea 3 section on daily life. After reading, ask students again to use adjectives to describe the life of a soldier during the Revolutionary War. Write, display or project their responses, if possible alongside the earlier responses. Engage students in conversation around the following questions:

- How similar or different were the adjectives used to describe a soldier's daily life before and after you read Big Idea 3?
- Did anything surprise you about the daily life of soldiers?
- Why do people often think that fighting in a war is a glamorous adventure?

## Engagement, Option 2

10-15 minutes

### CANTEEN COMPARISON

*Teacher preparation: Project or display the images of the two canteens or distribute copies of the art card – Canteen Comparison.*

Engage students in a conversation around the following questions:

- What do you think these objects are? What do you see that makes you think this?
- How were they used by soldiers? Why were these objects important to soldiers who fought in the Revolutionary War?
- How are the two objects similar and different?
- Why does one of the canteens have USTATES on it?
- Do you use a similar object today? When do you use it? Why is it important to you?

## Development, Option 1

35-40 minutes

### STAY OR GO HOME?

*Teacher Preparation: Review Big Idea 3: Soldiers of the Revolution. Print enough copies of the section on the Hessians and the handout Stay or Go Home? for each student.*

During the war, American Revolutionaries tried to convince the Hessians to join their side. Congress offered 50 acres of land, hoping that the knowledge that land was scarce in their homeland and the prospect for property of their own in America would convince them. Most Hessian soldiers went back to Europe with their regiments, but approximately 3,000-5,000 Hessians remained in America after the Revolutionary War.

Have students read the section in Big Idea 3 about Hessian Soldiers. Afterwards, explain to students that at the end of the Revolutionary War thousands of Hessian soldiers decided to remain in the United States. Then, have students read the primary source handout Stay or Go Home? Afterwards, lead students in a discussion around the following questions:

- According to Johan Conrad Döhla, what did the Hessians witness in their travels during the war that made them consider staying in the United States?
- How was the United States different from the places in Germany that Hessian soldiers came from?
- What about the new United States do you feel factored in their decision to remain?
- What would you have done? Would you have stayed in the United States or returned to your home?
- How does thinking about these questions help explain the rationales behind the Hessian soldiers' participation in the war?

## Development, Option 2

25-30 minutes

### A SOLDIER OF THE REVOLUTION

*Teacher preparation: Review Big Idea 3: Soldiers of the Revolution and print enough copies for each student to have one. In addition, print the worksheet – A Soldier of the Revolution for each student or small group.*

Divide students into groups of four. Distribute the worksheet, A Soldier of the Revolution. In their groups, have each student choose a soldier to focus on as they fill in the chart using Big Idea 3. Once students have filled in the chart for their soldier, have them present what they learned to the other three students in their groups. Once all four students have helped each other complete the chart, discuss the following questions together as a class:

- What similarities did you discover between the four soldiers?
- What differences did you find between the four soldiers?
- Did the soldiers have more similarities or differences?
- Do you think the soldiers in the different armies ever thought about their similarities?
- How do you/have you ever end(ed) up on the other side of a conflict from people who are very similar to you?

**EXTEND:** Have the students look for primary sources on soldiers expressing their beliefs and experiences with soldiers of the other armies.

Research how soldiers in other wars thought about their similarities to and differences from soldiers on the other side.

## Development, Option 3

35-40 minutes

### SOLDIER ART INVESTIGATION

*Teacher Preparation: Ensure students have access to computers, tablets or other devices with working internet connections. Print out copies of the worksheet Soldier Art Investigation for each student or group.*

Divide students into three groups — The Continental Soldier, the British Soldier and the Hessian Soldier. Using the image links found on the virtual exhibit, have students complete the worksheet Soldier Art Investigation in their soldier group. After the groups have had time to complete the handout for their soldier, have them present their findings to the other two groups. Engage students in a class discussion around the following questions:

- How did first examining the soldier and then the object help in understanding your soldier's experience in battle?
- Did examining the painting help in understanding the experience of soldiers in battle? Why or why not?
- Based on Don Troiani's paintings, did all three groups have any similar experiences in battle? Any different experiences?

**EXTEND:** Ask students what questions they have about their soldier or the battle he fought in. Have students research the answer to their question.

## Development, Option 4

30-40 minutes

### MEET JOSEPH PLUMB MARTIN

*Teacher Preparation: Print out the worksheet Meet Joseph Plumb Martin or each student.*

Have students complete the worksheet as an individual or as part of a group activity. You can also assign the handout for homework. Once students complete the handout, discuss the questions on the handout together as a class.

**EXTEND:** Play the following first person performance (32 minutes) — Meet Joseph Plumb Martin.

<https://www.amrevmuseum.org/meet-joseph-plumb-martin-performance>

Engage students in conversation around the following questions:

- How did this performance give you a better understanding of the challenges Joseph Plumb Martin faced during the Revolutionary War?
- What experiences did Joseph Plumb Martin remember from fighting in the war?
- If you could interview Joseph Plumb Martin today, what questions would you ask him?
- Ask students to research: What happened to Joseph Plumb Martin after the war?

## Culmination

### CALL TO ARMS! PROJECT

*Teacher preparation: Review Big Idea 3: Soldiers of the Revolution. Complete an internet search of recruitment posters from other wars and prepare to display or project them.*

Review with students why soldiers joined the various armies during the Revolutionary War. Then, engage students in discussion around the following questions:

- What, if anything, would make you consider joining an army?
- How would your personal finances impact your decision?
- What other factors would you need to consider before deciding to join an army or take a job?

Display or project recruitment posters from wars throughout American history. One World War II example can be found here: <https://www.amrevmuseum.org/collection/americans-will-always-fight-for-liberty-poster>.

Divide students into small groups and assign them one of the four armies (Continental, British, Hessian or French). Have them create either a recruitment radio or television commercial (presentation or video) or recruitment poster for their specific army. Encourage students to be creative and have fun by focusing on the benefits of joining the army. Have students present their recruitment efforts to the rest of the class. After each presentation, have students ask the presenters any questions they would continue to have for the military recruiter. Students can then decide whether or not they would join the army by discussing and debating their rationales.

## EXTENSIONS AND ADAPTATIONS

### SOLDIER SCAVENGER HUNT

*Teacher preparation: Project or Display the painting Victory at Yorktown by Don Troiani. Familiarize yourself with the three groups of soldiers featured in the painting: Continental Army, French Army, and British Army.*

Ask students to find the three different groups of soldiers in the painting. By looking at their facial expressions, what was each group experiencing? Do you think they were experiencing similar emotions? What do you see that makes you think this? Finally, ask students what looking closely at the painting can reveal about how different groups can experience the same event.

### LETTER HOME

*Teacher preparation: Review Big Idea 3: Soldiers of the Revolution and print enough copies for each student to have one.*

Using Big Idea 3, have students place themselves in the shoes of a soldier and write a letter home describing their experience in either the Continental, British Hessian, or French army.

### YOUR BACKPACK

Explain to students that soldiers that fought in the Revolutionary War carried many items in their knapsacks, a type of backpack (often carrying up to 50 pounds). Personal items might include a tin cup, bowl, spoon, extra clothing, spare shoes and, if lucky, an extra blanket. Ask students if they were going to war and could only bring five personal items, what they would be and why.

### MEASURE YOUR MOTIVATION

*Teacher preparation: Review Big Idea 3: Soldiers of the Revolution and print enough copies for each student to have one.*

Have students read the Big Idea 3 on the Hessian soldiers. Ask them how they might feel if they were a Hessian soldier and had no control of where they were assigned to fight. Then engage students in conversations around the following questions. Bullet the questions. How would this affect the soldiers' motivation? How motivated would you be if you were placed in a job that you did not choose? How important is motivation to the success of an army or at a job?

### STORIES THEY LEFT BEHIND

Ask students how they think historians learned about life during the Revolutionary War for the everyday soldier. Explain that other than pension records, we have very few diaries or memoirs from soldiers that fought in the Revolutionary War. Ask students why they believe this is the case.

**EXTEND:** Have students research one of the following primary source memoirs from a soldier who fought in the Revolutionary War focusing on a specific adventure they had or a hardship they overcame. Have students create a short story or children's book about them.

- *A Hessian Diary of the American Revolution* by Johann Conrad Döhla

- *Memoir of a Revolutionary Soldier: The Narrative of Joseph Plumb Martin*
- *Memoir of William Burke, a Soldier of the Revolution*
- *The Blind African Slave* by Jeffrey Brace as told to Benjamin F. Prentiss, Esq.

### HESSIANS IN THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

*Teacher preparation: Display or project the text of the Declaration of Independence, Review Big Idea 3: Soldiers of the Revolution and print out for students.*

Explain to students that the Declaration of Independence contains a list of 27 grievances against King George III. Show them the grievance about "transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to [complete] the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation." This grievance refers to the large number of Hessian soldiers arriving in the colonies.

Ask students why they feel this was one of the grievances against the King. How would this have swayed Colonist's minds about the Hessian soldiers? Then have students read the Big Idea 3 section about the Hessians. Finally, have them write an editorial from the point of view of a colonist in 1776 about the Hessian soldiers.

### A TENT WITH THE TROOPS?

*Teacher preparation: Review the Virtual Tour of Washington's Field Headquarters and prepare to navigate to George Washington's sleeping marquee tent and project or display the painting: Nathan Hale, September 22, 1776 by Don Troiani. Ensure students have access to computers, tablets or other devices with working internet connections.*

<https://tent.amrevmuseum.org/>

Explain to students that most battles of the Revolutionary War were fought from the spring through fall, the campaign season. During this time, each six-man group (called a mess) shared a tent. Often, a shortage of canvas led to less tents being created, causing eight or more soldiers to share a tent made for six. Officers lived in tents with more space. Display or project the painting: *Nathan Hale, September 22, 1776* by Don Troiani.

Engage students in conversations around the following questions:

- Can you locate the British Army tents in the painting, *Nathan Hale, September 22, 1776* by Don Troiani?
- Why do you think the artist, Don Troiani, painted the tents in this scene?
- Who do you think slept in the larger tent at the top of the hill? Why?
- Do you think George Washington shared a tent with

common soldiers, his officers, or did he have better, sturdier accommodations?

- What kind of tent do you think he had?

Then, project or have students explore with their devices the Virtual Tour to learn more about Washington's mobile headquarters while on campaign with the Continental Army. Afterwards, ask students how Washington's tent differed from the tent used by the common soldier. What does this reveal about the structure of the Continental Army?

### CAREER CONNECTIONS

Both the British and Hessian armies provided the opportunity for a job for life. Discuss with students if, when deciding on a career, this would be important to them. Are there both advantages and disadvantages to a career for life?

### BRITISH PURCHASING POWER

During the 1700s, laws in Britain (called primogeniture laws) gave all the family's land to the oldest son upon the death of his father. These laws encouraged non-inheriting sons of wealthy families to join the army. In addition, families could purchase officer's commissions for their sons. About 65% of the British officer corps in the Revolutionary War purchased their commissions. As a result, the men in charge of the British Army came from a higher social class than the average soldier.

Engage students in a conversation around the following questions:

- Do you think this is fair?
- What do you think the consequences of this system were?
- Are there any similar practices like this today?