

**Helen Nelson (TAH 1)
5th Grade Lesson Plan**

Founding Myths: Stories That Hide our Patriotic Past: Ray Raphael

Topic: Chapter 11: Brutal British

Theme: The American Revolution was a war of neighbor against neighbor - our first civil war.

Standards: National History Standards Era 3:

Standard 1A:

The student understands the causes of the American Revolution.

5-12: *Reconstruct the chronology of the critical events leading to the outbreak of armed conflict between the American colonies and England.* **Standard 1C:**

The student understands the factors affecting the course of the war and contributing to the American victory.

5-12: *Compare and explain the different roles and perspectives in the war of men and women, including white settlers, free and enslaved African Americans, and Native Americans.*

California State Standards:

5.5.1: *Understand how the political, religious, and economic ideas and interests brought about the Revolution.*

5.6.3: *Identify the different roles women played during the Revolution.*

5.6.4: *Understand the personal impact and economic hardships of the war on families, problems of financing the war, wartime inflation, and laws against hoarding goods and materials and profiteering.*

Timeline: **Day 1:** Introductory 'hook' activities. The 'set-up' with a secondary source document. The 'sting' with a primary source document. (90 minutes)

Day 2: Reading and predicting the outcome of a novel set in the time period. Mapping the story. Conclusion. (90 minutes)

Prior Content Knowledge and Skills: My goal is to make students aware of the complexities of the Revolutionary period and to deepen understanding of divided loyalties, family divisions, and 'neighbor against neighbor' fighting. Consequently, some prior knowledge of the American Revolution is necessary in terms of place on a timeline. It is assumed that the students will know something about the life of the colonists prior to the Revolution.

Introductory “Hook”:

Day 1:

1. Read aloud a version of the traditional tale, “The Blind Men and the Elephant” – (See Resource List for online access.) In this story six young blind men each made hasty conclusions about a new and strange animal (an elephant), according to which part of the animal they had felt. They concluded various things about the elephant - it was a spear (tusk), a tree (leg), a wall (flank), a snake (trunk), a rope (tail) and a fan (ear). From this the students can be led to understand that it is not always possible to understand the whole of something when one has only experienced a part. In effect, this story will plant the seed (without the need for further explanation at this point) that there is always more than one viewpoint or perspective. (15 mins.)
2. Post this quote on the overhead or board – “He laughed again as he remembered his greater foolishness of once being unwilling to discover truth for himself, depending wholly on others’ teachings.” It comes from the above story. Lead a brief discussion about its meaning and be sure that students understand that it says something about what it takes to be a good historian and to explore something from all angles before interpreting and forming assumptions. (10 mins.)
3. Follow this up with a quick game of ‘Telephone.’ Passing a message in whispers round a circle of children will emphasize the fact that information can get distorted or changed through the process of re-telling. (10 mins.)

Lesson Content:

Day 1 continued:

1. While the ‘hook’ activities are simmering in the back of the students’ minds, introduce the students to the excerpts from “If You Lived at the Time of the American Revolution” by Kay Moore – (See Resource List.) The excerpts can be read aloud while the students jot down brief notes. This text was selected deliberately for its more traditional portrayal of the two sides of the Revolutionary War. It is a fairly standard elementary secondary source and its use will ‘set up’ the students ready for the ‘sting’ with the primary source document later. (15 mins.)
2. Make a quick T table on the board for students to record who joined the Loyalists and who joined the Patriots. It is important that the students realize the variety of ‘players’ in the Revolutionary War story, and their apparent reasons for choosing sides. (5 mins.)
3. Ask the students if this book is a primary or secondary source document. Clarify the difference between this secondary source and what constitutes a primary source document. (5 mins.)
4. Once you have listed the various types of members of the Loyalist and Patriotic causes you can refer the students to the following primary source document (it is necessary to keep the identity of the author, and her circumstances unknown at the start): “Letter from Catharine Van Cortlandt, 1777.”

to her husband Philip Van Cortlandt, dated Hanover, New Jersey, January 20, 1777." (See Attachment A). Read the excerpt. (10 mins.)

5. Ask the students to hazard guesses about the identity of the letter-writer - the circumstances, type of person, position in society, and most importantly do they think the letter-writer is a Loyalist or a Patriot? Ideally, this activity will be somewhat ambiguous. This is the 'sting'. The very ambiguity should serve to illustrate how easily we might be led to believe the simplified 'good guy, bad guy' version of history. Highlight the value of a primary source document such as this, written by someone who was really there telling it how it really was. Reveal the identity of the author. (15 mins.)

6. Now tie this activity back into the 'hook' by reminding students that keeping an open, objective mind helps us to see different perspectives. Also, that the advantage of a primary document, such as this letter by the Loyalist's wife, is that there is no potential distortion through re-telling. (5 mins.)

7. For further background and understanding on this aspect of 'choosing sides', read chapter four entitled "Loyalists and Pacifists," of "A People's History of the American Revolution" by Ray Raphael.

Day 2:

1. The novel by Avi, "The Fighting Ground," is a very accessible fast-paced book that serves to illustrate the 'civil war' aspect of the Revolutionary War. (See Attachment B for the book jacket summary and a quote by the author.) Ideally, you would have time to use this as a read aloud with your students, but reading the excerpts, (see Resource List) will serve for teaching purposes today. The book provides a great discussion opportunity about the main character, Jonathan, and his feelings of divided loyalty. It covers his eagerness to join in the fighting, his bewilderment during the fighting, his fear during an abduction, and his trust then mistrust of his kidnappers. (30 mins.)

2. On reaching the last excerpt, instruct students to do a quick-write. Ask them to anticipate or predict the ending. You can leave them hanging and wanting to know the ending! (10 mins.)

3. Lead a discussion about Jonathan's divided feelings and his confusion. What did the Hessians have to gain by supporting the British? Were the students surprised to realize that the Corporal on the Patriot side had committed the atrocity? Did they feel betrayed? At the end of the discussion ask students to give their views on cleaned up versions of history, what purpose do they serve? Do they give a true picture? (5 mins.)

Conclusion:

Day 2 continued:

1. In conclusion, a valuable activity is to map the events in "The Fighting Ground," paying particular attention to the location of the homesteads, villages and towns in relation to their neighbors. Doing a small, local map in this way should really bring home the concept of the 'neighbor against neighbor' nature of this war. This activity can be done either as a whole class or in small groups. (See Attachment C for a map of the area referred to in the story.) The map was put together using maps from an online source – <http://www.mapquest.com> . At this site students can type in the name of a place in the story, such as Pennington, New Jersey, and then interact with the map by zooming in and out

or by moving north, south, east, or west. Once a map is printed out, and at a location seven miles north of Pennington and four miles from Snyderstown the students can then add features such as where they imagine the homestead of the French Papists might have been, or the tavern with the bell, or the road on which the fighting took place. End this session by comparing the small local map to the larger area of the eastern United States where the Revolutionary War fighting occurred. (45 mins.)

Evaluation:

Instruct students to do one of the following activities:

A: Put Yourself in Their Shoes

Choose a Revolutionary War 'player' and write a letter to a family member from their point of view.

B: Faded Jeans

The more times you wash a pair of jeans the more they fade.

Discuss this statement by explaining the relationship between faded jeans and re-telling history.

C: Location, Location, Location.

What is notable about the location of the fighting that took place during the Revolutionary War. Explain your answer.

Resource List:

1. "The Blind Men and the Elephant." This can be found online at <http://www.rec-room.org/Activities/stories/elephant.html>
2. "If You Lived at the Time of the American Revolution" by Kay Moore. ISBN 0-590-67444-7

Read pages 23-26, "Who Were the Loyalists?" and pages 27-29, "Who Were the Patriots?"

3. Under "Female Ancestors," "Letter from Catharine Van Cortlandt, 1777, to her husband Philip Van Cortlandt, dated Hanover, New Jersey, January 20, 1777." This letter can be found at: <http://www.royalprovincial.com/genealogy/fems/femlet2.shtml>

4. "The Fighting Ground" by Avi. Harper Collins ISBN 0397320744
Recommended for Grades 3-5, historical fiction.

The book is divided into sections with times over a twenty-four period as titles.

Read: p.7: '10:15'
p.8: '10:25' (Gets recruited on the spot at the local tavern.)
p.22: '12:30'
p.35: ""They be coming," someone said." '2:30'
p.41: '2:41'
p.48: "Again the Hessian officer shouted..."
p.53: '3:05'
p.58: '3:50' (Eventually comes to a house and finds a cow outside and a small child in the cow shed. He then discovers the boy's dead parents and, in fact, forces a Hessian to help bury them.)
p.100: '8:15' (He doesn't kill the Hessians but instead escapes with the boy.)
p.111: '11:25'
p.120: "Jonathan shook his head." I don't know if I can," he said."
p.121: '11:50'.....Now predict the end.

Attachment A:

Excerpt from a "Letter from Catharine Van Cortlandt, 1777, to her husband Philip Van Cortlandt, dated Hanover, New Jersey, January 20, 1777."

Many of our female neighbours have been here, but I find their visits are only to gratify curiosity and to add insult to our unremitted distress. One of them who lives across the river, whose family we took so much pleasure in relieving when friendless...said that formerly she always respected you and loved the ground over which you walked, but now could with pleasure see your blood run down the road... The pious, devout and Reverend Mr. Green is very industrious in promoting your ruin by declaring you an enemy to their cause. The farmers are forbid to sell me provisions, and the millers to grind our grain. Our woods are cut down for the use of their army, and that which you bought and left corded near the river my servants are forbid to touch, though we are in the greatest distress for the want of it... Our dear children have been six weeks without any other covering to their tender feet but woolen rags sewed around them to keep them from freezing.

Attachment B:

Book Jacket summary of "The Fighting Ground" by Avi.

April 3rd, 1778. America is caught up in the Revolutionary War. On this warm spring morning, not far from Trenton, New Jersey, a 13-year-old boy and his father are quietly tilling the soil on their farm. But the boy can think of only one thing: He wants to fight. He knows how to use a gun – why won't his father let him go?

Unexpectedly, the quiet is cut by the sound of a bell – an alarm ringing from the nearby tavern. Jonathan is sent to find out what the trouble is. What he finds in the next twenty-four hours, when he does fight and is taken prisoner by three Hessian soldiers, changes his understanding of war and life forever. The real war, he discovers, is being fought within himself.

This swiftly paced adventure story of a battle-within-a-battle is told by Avi in stark detail, with vivid historical settings and breath-taking action.

Quote from the author found at: http://www.avi-writer.com/about/books/book_description/fighting_ground.html

One day, while driving to my home -which was then in New Jersey – I noticed a sign by the side of the road. The sign told about a tiny little battle – the sign said "skirmish" – that had taken place right at that spot during our Revolutionary War. Nothing important happened, just a little bit of war.

But I started to think about that little battle, and how, though little, it must have made a major impact on some people. After all, the sign said a few people died. It was thinking about that event that helped me to create this book.

Attachment C:

<http://www.mapquest.com>