

Title: Fighting for Someone Else's Freedom: What was the Role of Slaves in the American Revolution?

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Key Words: American Revolution, slavery, Patriots, Loyalists, emancipation

Grade Level: 11

Time Allotted: 2 blocks or 180 minutes

Lesson Overview	The role of African Americans and slaves in the American Revolution is an understudied aspect of American history. This lesson will introduce students to slaveholders' competing interests of needing the manpower of slaves in their ranks while simultaneously trying to keep their property under control. Students will address the paradox of slaves fighting in a war for someone's freedom other than their own. Students will use a wikisite to read and analyze primary source documents about the policies adopted by the British and Americans to prohibit and then encourage slaves to fight on their side. Students will also use the wikisite to learn about an African American individual who fought and contributed to the American Revolution. Finally, students will write a letter to their textbook editor advocating for the inclusion of their individual in the text.
Guiding Question(s)	• How do textbook editors decide what to include your textbook? • How did slaves participate in the American Revolution? • What motivated slaves to participate in a war for someone else's freedom?

Learning Objectives:

- Students will know that African Americans served in the Revolutionary War for both the Patriots and the Loyalists.
- Students will identify the text (or lack thereof) in their history textbooks that address the role of slaves in the American Revolution. [Assessed: Do Now: Think/Pair/Share]
- Students will discuss why textbook editors have to make choices about what to include in the text. [Assessed: Exit Slip/Concluding Discussion]
- Students will write a letter to a textbook editor advocating for the inclusion of information of a slave who fought in the American Revolution. [Assessed: Letter to the Editor]
- Students will analyze various primary sources related the enlistment of African Americans in the Revolutionary War. [Assessed: Primary Source Analysis on Web Guide]
- Students will identify the contributions of an African American soldier in the American Revolution. [Assessed: Individual Analysis on Web Guide]
- Students will recognize that the promise of emancipation for service was not always kept. [Assessed: Alternate Endings]

Standards of Learning & Essential Historical Skills Taught:

- VUS.1 The student will demonstrate skills for historical analysis, including the ability to:
- a) identify, analyze, and interpret primary and secondary source documents, records, and data, including artifacts, diaries, letters, photographs, journals, newspapers, historical accounts, and art, to increase understanding of events and life in the United States;
 - e) communicate findings orally
 - f) develop skills in discussion and persuasive writing
- VUS.4 The student will demonstrate knowledge of events and issues of the Revolutionary Period.

OAH Historical Inquiry Skills –

- Historical Issues Analysis and Decision Making: Students will identify the key issues/problems encountered by slaves fighting in the American Revolution. The incentives for enlisting, experiences, and outcomes of those involved will be reflected in a final piece of writing. The writing will take the form of a letter to the editor where students will advocate for the inclusion of their individual in their history textbook.

Assessment Tool(s)

- Students will complete a website-guide as they navigate through the wikisite. The guide includes reading and listening comprehension questions to aid students as they read and listen to primary source documents.
- Students will complete a “letter to the editor” advocating for the inclusion of their African American individual in their history textbook.
- Students will answer questions investigating the alternate endings to the war experienced by freed slaves.
- Students will participate in class discussion.

Materials/Resources

- **James O. Horton *Slavery in the Founding Era*** – this video (4:21) from the Gilder Lehrman Institute is a discussion of the paradox between the Founding Fathers embarking on the journey for freedom while simultaneously holding slaves. Horton addresses the differences between the North and South at the time of the Revolution.
[http://www.gilderlehrman.org/institute/era_slaveryabolition.php]
- **Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation** – this document, issued by the Governor of Virginia on November 7, 1775, called for the slaves of Patriot owners to join the Royal Army in exchange for emancipation. Dunmore’s forces were depleted and he hoped to reinforce his numbers while also creating chaos for the colonists with this proclamation. It is estimated that thousands of slaves escaped their masters to join his army. [<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-revolution/4238>]
- **Resolution passed by the Massachusetts Committee of Safety, May 1775** – This resolution, passed just prior to Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation, stated that only freemen would be admitted in the Patriot Army of Massachusetts. No slaves were to be admitted, “upon any consideration whatsoever.” [<http://slavesamerrev.wikispaces.com/MA>]

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- **Excerpts from an Act of the Rhode Island legislature, February 1778** – This act, passed in the years following Dunmore’s Proclamation and the inclusion of slaves as soldiers in the British Army, changed colonial policy in Rhode Island to allow for the enlistment of every, “able-bodied negro, mulatto, or Indian man-slave” in the state. Furthermore, this act emancipated any slave who fought. [<http://www.americanrevolution.org/firstri.html>]
- **William Flora** – William “Billy” Flora was a black man born to free black parents. He is known for fighting for the Patriots in the Revolutionary War. Flora is credited with halting the British attack at the Battle of Great Bridge by firing on the Loyalist troops while other soldiers were fleeing and also dismantling the bridge, making it impossible for the British to cross. [<http://www.libarts.uco.edu/history/faculty/roberson/course/4753/Biographies/1/4753WilliamFloraperiodI.htm>]
- **Colonel Tye** – Colonel Tye was a slave who escaped his Quaker master to serve for the British. He escaped his master in response to Dunmore’s Proclamation and is known for leading the guerrilla groups of the Ethiopian Regiment and the Black Brigade. [<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2p52.html>]
- **James Armistead Lafayette** – Lafayette was a slave who fought for the French who were allied with the colonists. Lafayette served with the consent of his owner and is remembered as an adept spy who was able to infiltrate the British side. [<http://www.blackpast.org/?q=aah/lafayette-james-armistead-1760-1832>]
- **Quarles, Benjamin** – *The Negro in the American Revolution* - This text is seen as the preeminent source in the field of African American service in the Revolutionary War. It is a relatively easy read and if a teacher or student were to read one text on the subject, this should be it! [<http://www.amazon.com/Negro-American-Revolution-Chapel-Books/dp/0807846031>]
- **Heinemann** – *A Song Full of Hope (1770-1830)* – This sourcebook is an excellent resource on the subject of African Americans in United States history. This book has lesson plans about slaves in the Revolutionary War and comes with a CD loaded with documents, photos, and other primary sources. [http://www.amazon.com/Song-Full-Hope-1770-1830-Sourcebook/dp/0325005168/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1291568476&sr=1-1]
- Laptops with Internet Access
 - Slaves in the American Revolution website: <http://slavesamerrev.wikispaces.com/>
- Student handouts:
 - ***Slaves in the American Revolution Web Guide*** – this handout will serve as a guide for students as they work through the website. Students will record responses to written prompts and will analyze their assigned individual and primary source documents.
 - ***Jigsaw Handout*** – students will record notes from their expert groups on their assigned individual and then take notes from each of the other groups to ensure that each student is knowledgeable about each African American soldier.
 - ***Letter to the Editor Rubric*** – students will use this rubric to assess their performance on their written assignment.

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- ***Alternate Endings*** – students will use this handout to guide their analysis of the varying outcomes for slaves who fought in the American Revolution.
- ***Exit Pass*** – Students will answer summary questions at the end of the lesson.
- **Slavery in the American Revolution PowerPoint** – This PowerPoint includes the guiding questions of the lesson and should be projected throughout the two lessons. Students can refer to this PPT as they work to maintain a focus on the overarching themes of the lesson.
 - How do textbook editors decide what to include your textbook?
 - How did slaves participate in the American Revolution?
 - What motivated slaves to participate in a war for someone else's freedom?

Modifications

- An easy modification would be to allow students to work in pairs or small groups to research their individual.
- This lesson addresses the contributions of three African Americans in the American Revolution. If time and resources were available, students could investigate additional individuals (Crispus Attucks, Prince Whipple, etc). Students could also examine the role of African American women in the Revolutionary War.
- If a student is working with a textbook that *does* cover the contributions of African Americans in sufficient detail, students could tailor their letter to the editor to commend the text for its inclusion of the topic and explain why it is important to keep those sections in the book.
- Invite an editor in to the classroom to discuss the process by which textbooks are written and edited. Have students present the information they studied that is not included in the textbook. If an editor is unable to visit in person, consider using technology like [Skype](#).

Instructional Procedures/Process (How will you guide your students through this activity)

Prior to commencing activity, instructor should distribute *Slaves in the American Revolution Web-Guide*. Additionally, students will have access to computers with Internet access and will be on the website: www.slavesamerrev.wikispaces.com

DAY 1 (90-minutes)

- I. Do Now/Think-Pair-Share (~15 minutes) – Students should complete the “Do Now” on the web-guide. Students will work individually to identify any text or pictures in their textbook that address the role of African Americans in the Revolutionary War. Students will answer the first two questions on the web-guide. Once students have completed individual work, ask them to pair with the student sitting to him/her to compare responses. Finally, ask student-pairs to share out to the class what they found. Please see *Slavery in the American Revolution Web Guide KEY* for sample student responses.
- II. Project *Slavery in the American Revolution* PowerPoint
- III. Students will log on to computers and access the website:
<http://www.slavesamerrev.wikispaces.com>. ***NOTE: At this point of the lesson, students***

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may begin working through the website and accompanying activities individually at their own pace.

- a. 3 Important Quotes (~5 minutes) – students should read the three quotes at the top of the wikisite and answer the accompanying question on the web-guide: “What paradox do the two speakers reference?”
- b. James O. Horton video (~5-10 minutes) – students will watch the video and answer the viewing questions on the web-guide
- c. Primary Source Documents (~30 minutes) – Students will read the following documents: Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation, Resolution passed by the Massachusetts Committee of Safety, May 1775, and Excerpts from an Act of the Rhode Island legislature, February 1778 while completing the primary source analysis on the web-guide.
- d. Individual Analysis (~30 minutes) – students will read the biographical material provided for one of the three individuals (William Flora, Colonel Tye, & James Armistead Lafayette). Students will answer the questions on the web-guide.

DAY 2 (90-minutes)

- I. Letter to the Editor (~30 minutes) – Students will complete the Letter to the Editor assignment to submit for a summative grade. Students should refer to the Letter to the Editor website while completing this assignment to make sure they address all necessary components.
- II. Jigsaw (~30 minutes) - Students who wrote about the same individual experience will gather together to compare letters. These expert groups will identify the most complete letter in the group or revise individual letters with information that peers included that they may have omitted. One person from each expert group will then gather with an expert from each of the other two groups to create groups of 3 (1 student from each of the 3 expert groups). In these mixed groups students will share out about their individual while completing the organizer. At the end of this rotation students will be knowledgeable about each of the three individuals.
- III. Alternate Endings (~20 minutes) – After completing the Letter to the Editor, students will examine the different experiences of slaves who were able to escape the colonies at the end of the war. Students should complete the *Alternate Experience* handout.

Closure (Activity/Procedure that brings the lesson back to the guiding question)
(~10 minutes)

- The instructor will bring this lesson to closure by holding a discussion and asking students to complete an exit pass. See the *Exit Pass/Concluding Discussion Key* for suggested questions and possible answers.
 - Does your textbook offer a complete picture of the Revolutionary War?
 - Does it matter that certain topics are left out?
 - How do you think the decision is made about what is included/left out of textbooks?
 - What was the original paradox identified at the beginning of this lesson?
 - Have we solved the paradox through our research?