

Lesson 4: Comparing Armies

Big Ideas of the Lesson

- Advantages of the British army included their wealth, their experienced army, and their excellent navy.
- Advantages of the American, or Continental, army included having George Washington as the leader, help from countries like France, and the fact that Americans were fighting for freedom on their own land.
- Disadvantages of the British included having to fight far from Britain, having to fight over a large area, and having to adjust to new ways of fighting.
- Disadvantages of the Americans included inexperienced soldiers, lack of supplies, and a small navy.

Lesson Abstract:

In this lesson, students look at advantages and disadvantages facing both the Americans and British during the American Revolutionary War. They begin by using prior knowledge to make predictions. Next, they explore the role of George Washington as Commander-in-Chief and his impact on the Revolutionary War. Finally, they explore how military leadership, geography, types of resources, incentives, and other factors influenced the two sides in the conflict.

Content Expectations

- 5 – U3.1.6: Identify the role that key individuals played in leading the colonists to revolution, including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams, John Adams, and Thomas Paine.
- 5 – U3.2.1: Describe the advantages and disadvantages of each side during the American Revolution with respect to military leadership, geography, types of resources, and incentives.

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects:

- RI.5.6: Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.

Key Concepts

military advantages and disadvantages
revolution

Instructional Resources

Equipment/Manipulative

Overhead projector or document camera/projector

Student Resource

Bial, Raymond. *Where Washington Walked*. NY: Walker and Company, 2005. (optional)

Bower, Burt, et al. *America's Past*, Social Studies Alive Program. Palo Alto, CA: Teacher's Curriculum Institute, 2010 or a similar fifth grade social studies textbook. Pp. 173-177.

Chandra, Deborah. *George Washington's Teeth*. NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003. (optional)

Fritz, Jean. *George Washington's Breakfast*. NY: Putnam Juvenile, 1998. (optional)

Teacher Resource

Egbo, Carol. *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 4)*. Teacher-made material. Michigan Citizenship Collaborative, 2012.

Lesson Sequence

1. Briefly lead a class discussion comparing and contrasting Britain and the newly formed United States just after the Declaration of Independence. Your discussion should revolve around the following information:
 - Britain was one of the most powerful countries in the world. It had a well-established government and a lot of resources.
 - The new country of the United States was a loose group of former colonies who often disagreed. It had no real government.
2. Using Word Cards #20 and #21, explain that the British and the Americans both had advantages and disadvantages as they began to battle each other during the Revolutionary War. Place students in pairs and give each pair a copy of "Predictions," located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 4)*. Display a copy of the sheet and explain that students should use their prior knowledge to describe examples of advantages and disadvantages each side had. Provide the pairs time to work and then have them share their ideas in the large group. Note that if you are tight on time skip the pair activity in favor of the activity with the entire group. Note that a sheet showing sample answers has been included in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 4)* for reference.
3. Briefly review the decision by the Continental Congress to form an army and place George Washington as commander-in-chief. Explain that the group of soldiers he met in Boston had never really fought as an army before. Most were very inexperienced. Washington quickly instituted rules and training for them. Explain that George Washington turned out to be one of the greatest advantages the Continental Army had.
4. Provide each student with a copy the chart, "George Washington" located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 4)*. After reviewing the directions on the handout, provide time for students to find information about George Washington in their textbooks and summarize it on the charts. Note that common text features included in textbook with references to Washington include portraits, objects owned by him, etc.

5. Have students share their results of the work from Step 4 in small groups of three students each. Encourage students to add information to their charts based on what other group members found.
6. As a way of adding to students' information about George Washington, read one or more of the following books to them. Note that because these books are quite different in approach, this activity makes a very good one for a language arts activity on comparing texts.
 - *George Washington's Teeth* by Deborah Chandra: A humorous story of Washington told in verse, presents a very clever approach to history as well as including lots of historical information.
 - *George Washington's Breakfast* by Jean Fritz: An engaging book about a little boy who shares Washington's name and knows many facts about him. He decides he wants to learn more and a learning adventure begins. Good not only for Washington information but also discusses different ways to search for information and includes lots of fun facts.
 - *Where Washington Walked* by Raymond Bial: Chronicles Washington through photographs and clear, engaging text – offers a fresh, new look at Washington.
9. As an optional home project, have students create one of the following summarizing what they have learned about George Washington: a resume, a poster, a mobile, or a PowerPoint presentation.
10. Display the two charts "Comparing the British and Americans", located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 4)*. Lead a class discussion of the disadvantages and advantages of each side based on the information, as well as what may be found in students' textbooks. Guide students in categorizing various characteristics on the chart. Examples include:
 - **Geography:** the distance between Britain and North America which affected transportation and communication, the vast territory the fighting took place in, Americans knowledge of the geography, the varied landscape which included swamps and forests, etc.
 - **Economics:** the lack of money for the Continental Army, British wealth, etc.
 - **Supplies:** the lack of American supplies, the difficulty in getting supplies to British troops from Britain, etc.
 - **Military:** the British navy, the inexperience of American soldiers, etc.
11. Display the following question:

"Based on the disadvantages and advantages we just discussed, which side do you think **should** have won the Revolutionary War? Why? (include at least two reasons why)."

Provide students time to write. Then, take a quick vote as you how many students chose the British and how many chose the Americans. Give each side a chance to share their reasons.

12. Explain to the class that there were other factors that influenced the outcome of the Revolutionary War besides those discussed so far. One important factor had to do with attitudes towards the war and how American soldiers and British soldiers viewed the war. Give

each student a copy of the “Perspectives and Perspectives Chart”, located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 4)*. Explain that students should read the perspectives of the four different soldiers and summarize their feelings and attitudes on the chart. Give students time to complete the activity and then lead a discussion based on how these different perspectives may have affected each side. Note that a chart showing sample answers has also been included in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 4)* for reference.

Assessment

An assessment has been included in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 4)*, in which students describe advantages and disadvantages of the Americans and the British during the American Revolution. Note that the lesson graphic organizer can be used to evaluate student’s responses.