

## Lesson 6: The War in the North

### Big Ideas of the Lesson

- George Washington and the Continental Army lost many battles at the beginning of the war. Most of these were fought in New England and the Middle Colonies.
- An important turning point in the war was the Battle of Saratoga which was won by the Americans.<sup>1</sup>
- As a result of the American victory at Saratoga, the French sent money, supplies, and soldiers to help the fight against the British.
- After the Battle of Saratoga, Washington, and his army spent a harsh winter camped at Valley Forge.

### Lesson Abstract:

In this lesson, students explore the American Revolution from the time independence was declared through the winter at Valley Forge. Students use a variety of primary source documents including paintings and diaries to develop an understanding of battles such as Trenton and Saratoga, as well as the challenges facing the Continental Army. In addition, students analyze the impact of aid from the French and assistance from various European officers.

### 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.
- 5 – U3.2.2: Describe the importance of Valley Forge, Battle of Saratoga, and Battle of Yorktown in the American Revolution.
- 5 – U3.2.3: Compare the role of women, African Americans, American Indians, and France in helping shape the outcome of the war.

### 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.

---

<sup>1</sup> Teacher note: The phrase “an important turning point” should be distinguished from the phrase “**the** important turning point”. The war lasted eight years, during which these were several points that can be considered important turning points. Saratoga is an example of one of them.

### Key Concepts

military advantages and disadvantages  
Patriot / Loyalist  
turning point

### Instructional Resources

#### Equipment/Manipulative

Overhead projector or document camera/projector

#### Student Resource

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 173-179.

#### Teacher Resource

*Crossing the Delaware*. National Archives. 29 February 2012

<<http://www.archives.gov/research/military/american-revolution/pictures/images/revolutionary-war-031.jpg>>.

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

*From the Diary of Albigeance Waldo. Surgeon at Valley Forge, 1777*. From Revolution to Reconstruction. 29 February 2012 <<http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/D/1776-1800/war/waldo.htm>>.

*Letters from Valley Forge*. American Revolution.Org. 29 February 2012  
<<http://www.americanrevolution.org/vlyfrgeltrs.html>>.

*Maps of the Battle of Saratoga*. The American Revolution. 29 February 2012  
<<http://www.saratoga.org/battle1777/history.html>>.

*The Military Journal of George Ewing*. Ewing Family History Pages. 29 February 2012  
<<http://www.sandcastles.net/journal2.htm>>.

*Saratoga: The Tide Turns on the Frontier*. National Park Service. Teaching with Historic Places Lesson Plans. 29 February 2012  
<<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nR/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/93saratoga/93saratoga.htm>>.

*The Surrender of General Burgoyne*. 29 February 2012  
<[http://www.aoc.gov/cc/art/rotunda/surrender\\_burgoyne.cfm](http://www.aoc.gov/cc/art/rotunda/surrender_burgoyne.cfm)>.

*What Made George Washington a Good Military Leader*. EdSiteMent. National Endowment for the Humanities. 29 February 2012 <[http://edsitement.neh.gov/view\\_lesson\\_plan.asp?id=527](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=527)>.

*Winter at Valley Forge*. National Archives. 29 February 2012  
<<http://archives.gov/education/lessons/revolution-images/images/valley-forge.gif>>.

### Lesson Sequence

1. As a way to assess prior knowledge as well as provide a “pre-reading” strategy for students, have students engage in a Word Splash. Begin by dividing students into pairs and giving each pair a copy of “Word Splash” and “World Splash Pairs” located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 6)*. Explain that these are important words and phrases for this lesson. Have students work with a partner to categorize the words into pairs by finding two people or phrases that they think belong together. Have them write their pairs on the chart. Provide time for students to work and then have them share their charts in the whole class. Discuss differences and similarities between their ideas. Collect the charts. They will be used again at the end of the lesson.
2. Briefly review the early events of the American Revolution that were covered in previous lessons including the Battle of Bunker Hill, the *Declaration of Independence*, and Britain’s evacuation of Boston. As a group, make a quick list of advantages and disadvantages for both the American and British forces on the board.
3. Explain that following the issuance of the *Declaration of Independence*, things did not go very well for Washington and the Continental Army. Share the following information regarding this:
  - The Battle of Long Island took place in August of 1776. Washington had 10,000 soldiers who were mainly militia and new recruits. He faced General Howe and about 22,000 professional British soldiers. Washington’s inexperienced men broke and ran. As a result, Britain drove the Americans from Brooklyn and forced them to evacuate New York City.
  - In October of 1776, the Continental Army under Washington suffered heavy casualties in the Battle of White Plains. The army retreated westward.
  - In November of 1776, there were more victories for the British. General Howe took Fort Mifflin. The Continental Army was forced to move further westward toward the Delaware River with the British not far behind them.
4. Ask students the following question: “How do you think the British victories affected the Continental Army?” Discuss student responses. Possible answers include that morale would become low, that some Continental soldiers may have wanted to leave and go home, and that Washington would be desperate to win a major battle.
5. Display “Illustration #1” located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 6)*. Ask students to analyze the illustration carefully and then write a short description of what is happening in the illustration in their social studies journal. Give students time to write and then have them share ideas with a partner.
6. Discuss the illustration using the following questions:
  - What appears to be happening in the picture?
  - What time of year is it?
  - Who are the people in the picture?
  - Where are they going? Why?
  - Who do you think made the picture?
  - What might have been their motives?

7. Have students read the section of their textbook that describes the crossing of the Delaware River and the Battle of Trenton. Display “Illustration 1” again and discuss the illustration in light of what students have just read. Share the following information:
- In late 1776, Washington’s troops had lost one battle after another. His soldiers were tired and supplies were short. Many did not have winter clothes or tents.
  - There was talk in the Congress of replacing Washington.
  - At this time, Washington himself was very discouraged and wrote to his brother: “I am wearied to death. I think the game is pretty near up.”
  - On December 25, 1776, Washington and his troops were camped nine miles from Trenton on the banks of the Delaware River.<sup>2</sup>
  - They crossed the icy river and then marched to Trenton in the early morning of December 26. It was snowing and icy and some of the soldiers even lacked shoes.
  - They made a surprise attack on the Hessian soldiers in Trenton and the Hessian regiment surrendered to Washington.
8. Discuss the impact of the victory at Trenton with students. Explain that battles continued in New England and the middle states. Explain that by June of 1777, the British had developed a new strategy for winning the war. Their plan was to try and cut off New England from the rest of the states. Ask students why they think the British wanted to do this. Discuss student responses. Then, share the following information regarding the British plan:
- On June 17, 1777, British General Burgoyne invaded the U.S. from Canada. He sailed down Lake Champlain toward Albany, New York. He planned to link up there with General Howe who would come from New York City and meet him in Albany. Having a huge force of soldiers in Albany would cut off New England.
  - On July 6, 1777, General Burgoyne’s troops captured Fort Ticonderoga and supplies there that were badly needed by Washington. The Americans retreated from the fort, but blocked roads and destroyed bridges in order to slow down the advance of Burgoyne’s troops.
  - On July 23, 1777, General Howe and 15,000 soldiers left New York but instead of going north to meet up with Burgoyne, they went to capture Philadelphia instead.
  - On September 26, 1777, General Howe took over Philadelphia and the Continental Congress had to relocate to York, Pennsylvania.
9. Ask students what impact General Howe’s decision to go to Philadelphia instead of Albany was likely to have. Discuss student responses. Guide students to the idea that as a result of Howe’s decision, the British plan to cut off New England was spoiled. It also contributed to a major defeat of the British in New York.
10. Explain that before General Burgoyne got to Albany, he was met by a large Continental force near Saratoga, New York. Explain that the battle that took place there became one of the most important battles of the American Revolution. Display “Maps of the Battle of Saratoga” and “Illustration #2”, located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 6)*. Ask students to analyze the maps and the illustration and draw an inference about the Battle of Saratoga based

---

<sup>2</sup> The Battle of Trenton took place on December 26, not the 25th, as some sources claim.

on their analysis. Guide students in understanding that the British suffered a major defeat at Saratoga.

11. Share the following information about the Battle of Saratoga:
  - General Burgoyne's British troops numbered about 10,000. They were met by about 15,000 Continental soldiers under the command of General Gates.
  - Battles took place on Sept 19 and Oct 7 of 1777.
  - The Americans defeated the British and Burgoyne's troops surrendered. The surrender is depicted in Illustration #2.
12. Have students read the section of their textbook that describes the Battle of Saratoga in order to add to their knowledge of this important event. Then, ask students to predict effects of the American victory. Discuss student responses and then share these effects:
  - The American victory ended the British threat to New England.
  - It also boosted American spirits and determination.
  - It convinced France to become an ally of the United States.
13. Using Word Card #25, explain that many historians believe the Battle of Saratoga was a major turning point in the Revolution. Ask students what they think this means. Discuss student responses and guide them to the idea that a turning point is often thought of as a single event that causes important and dramatic change. Historians believe that the Battle of Saratoga marked the time when the Revolution turned in favor of the Americans.
14. Note that the following website has a series of inquiry-based lessons on the Battle of Saratoga: <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nR/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/93saratoga/93saratoga.htm>. These are part of the "Teaching with Historic Places" website.
15. Display "Illustration #3", located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 6)*. Ask students to analyze the illustration carefully and then write a short description of what is happening in the illustration in their social studies journal. Give students time to write and then have them share ideas with a partner.
16. Discuss the illustration using the following questions:
  - What appears to be happening in the picture?
  - What time of year is it?
  - Who are the people in the picture?
  - Who do you think made the picture? Why?

Explain that the Illustration #3 depicts Washington's troops in their winter quarters at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania beginning in December of 1777. Explain that as the picture shows it was a cold winter and the troops were faced with many problems.

17. Divide students into pairs and give each pair a copy of "Valley Forge Primary Sources" and the "Valley Forge Primary Sources Chart", located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 6)*. Explain that pairs should read through the primary sources and jot down a few things on the chart that can be learned about the winter at Valley Forge from each source. Provide students

time to complete the activity and then lead a discussion about Valley Forge by having students share their charts. Make sure to compare and contrast the various diaries. Note that a chart showing sample answers has also been included in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 6)* for use as a reference.

18. Explain that despite the awful conditions at Valley Forge, some good things took place. For example in February of 1778, Baron von Steuben of Prussia arrived at Valley Forge. He began to drill and train the troops. As a result, when spring came Washington's army was much more disciplined and unified.
19. Explain that another significant event happened in February of 1778. Using Word Card #26, explain that the Americans and French signed two treaties in Paris. Share the following information regarding this:
  - Ben Franklin had been in France trying to gain French support. The French had initially held back. However, after the American victory at Saratoga, they decided to join the U.S. in the fight against Britain.
  - Two treaties were signed. One recognized the U.S. as an independent nation and promoted trade between France and the U.S.
  - The other treaty made the U.S. and France allies against Britain. This led to the French providing military supplies, loans, about 12,000 soldiers, and about 32,000 sailors to the Revolution efforts. One of these soldiers, Marquis de Lafayette, became an important officer and friend to George Washington.
  - In July of 1778, France officially declared war on Britain.
20. Ask students why they think France was willing to help the U.S. against Britain. Discuss student responses and guide them to the idea that, as students have learned in previous lessons, France and Britain had been long-time enemies. Guide students in connecting back to what they learned about the French and Indian War as an example of this idea.
21. Hand out the Word Splash charts you collected after Step 1. Have students meet with their partner again to re-evaluate their pairings. Then, have students independently complete the "Word Splash Assessment" located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 6)*. Explain that to do this they should again place the Word Splash words in pairs, but this time explain why the two people or phrases belong together. Note that a chart showing sample answers has also been included in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 6)* for you to use for reference in evaluating student work.

### Assessment

The Valley Forge Primary Source activity and the final Word Splash activity can all be used for assessment. For a more formal assessment, give each student a copy of "Events Cards", located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 6)*. Explain that they should cut the cards out and place them in chronological order. Note that the correct sequence is as follows:

- The Colonies declared independence from Britain.
- Washington and his army retreated west from the New York City area.
- Washington and his troops crossed the Delaware River at night and made a surprise attack in the Battle of Trenton.

- The British decided to try and cut off New England from the rest of the U.S.
- The Americans had an important victory at the Battle of Saratoga.
- Washington and his troops began a harsh winter at Valley Forge.
- The U.S. and France signed two treaties.
- France declared war on Britain.