

Revolutionary WOMEN

KIDS
DISCOVER

(IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE)

**TINKERS,
TAILORS,
SOLDIERS,
SPIES**



**LOYAL
PATRIOTS
PATRIOTIC
LOYALISTS**



**GALS
DISGUISED
AS GUYS**



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
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Ready for Revolution

In 1775, Britain ruled 13 colonies on North America's eastern coast, from Massachusetts (which included what is now Maine) to Georgia. Many colonists were tired of British rule. They had argued with Britain for years about taxes and laws they thought were unfair. In April 1775, fighting broke out between the colonists and the British army. The American Revolution had begun.

At the time of the Revolution, a woman's role in society was limited. Most women were expected to spend their lives taking care of their home and family. Women prepared meals over an open fire, milked the cows, and fed the chickens. They churned butter and made candles and soap. Most of them also made their family's clothing. Poor women and enslaved African women did all this while also working for other people. Women were not expected to take part in politics or business. The world of politics was for white male property owners. Still, many women became involved in events leading up to the Revolution and in the Revolution itself. Some were Patriots, who believed in independence for the colonies. Others were Loyalists, who supported Britain's king. All were very brave to step outside of their traditional roles.



▲ **COLONISTS WANTED** to protest a British tax on tea. On the night of December 16, 1773, some men boarded ships and threw all of their cargo of tea

into Boston Harbor. The event is now called the Boston Tea Party. Sarah Fulton helped the men disguise themselves as Mohawk warriors.

Afterward, she heated water in her kitchen so they could wash off the disguises. That's why she is called the Mother of the Boston Tea Party.



▲ **IN 1774, IN** Edenton, North Carolina, 51 women signed a petition. It said they would boycott (not buy) British goods. It was unheard

of for women to take such a public stand. This British cartoon pokes fun at the women of Edenton for "unladylike" behavior.



▲ **MERCY OTIS** Warren was the sister and the wife of well-known Patriots. She received her education by listening in on her brothers' lessons. She wrote plays that made fun of British rulers. Back then, plays usually were not staged in New England. But they were printed in newspapers. That's where people read Warren's plays.

◀ **FOR THE FIRST** few years of the Revolution, most of the fighting was in the North. Then the British attacked the South. The last major battle was fought in Yorktown, Virginia, in 1781, but some smaller fights took place after that.

▼ **LOYALIST WOMEN** also made their opinions known. Many took pride in serving imported tea. Anne and Elizabeth (Betsy) Cummings kept selling British goods in their

Boston shop. Local Patriots wanted them to stop. Betsy told the Patriots that they were hurting "two industrious girls who [were trying] in an honest way to [get their] bread."*



*Elizabeth Cummings. From *Those Remarkable Women of the American Revolution* by Karen Zeinert. The Millbrook Press, 1996.



Serving the Cause

Women were not allowed to serve in George Washington's Continental Army. But evidence shows that at least four women became part of the fighting force. Boys as young as 14 joined the army. So a woman could wear loose clothing and pretend she was a boy. One woman from Maine joined up with her brother in 1775. She served until the war ended in 1781. In 1776, an unidentified Cherokee woman was found dead on a battlefield. She wore face paint like male Cherokee warriors did, and she had a bow and arrows.



◀ **SALLY ST. CLAIR** was part French and part African. Some say she joined the army in disguise to be near her boyfriend. Her identity was not discovered until she died at the British siege of Savannah, Georgia, in 1778.



▲ **IN THE SUMMER** of 1781, the commander of the Continental Army in South Carolina was camped near the home of 16-year-old Emily Geiger. He needed more troops, but the nearest ones were far away. The countryside was full of Loyalists. Emily

volunteered to carry a message, knowing that a woman wouldn't attract as much attention as a man. But just to be safe, she memorized the message before she hid it in her clothing. Sure enough, British soldiers stopped her. When they went to get a woman to search Emily, she ripped up the message and swallowed the pieces. The British soon let her go, and she delivered the message aloud.



▲ **DEBORAH SAMPSON** was a Massachusetts farmworker and schoolteacher who loved adventure. In 1782, after the last battle of the war but while there was still some fighting, she joined the

Continental Army as Robert Shurtliff. She served for a year and a half. One story says she was hit by a musket ball and cut the ball out of her own leg to avoid being looked at by a doctor. Later, a doctor discovered her secret while treating her for a fever. The army gave Sampson an honorable discharge in October 1783.

➤ **MILITIAS WERE** local fighting units. Some operated in backwoods areas away from large towns. Women who lived in these places were used to firing weapons to defend against Native American attacks. Some put these skills to use against the enemy. Nancy Morgan Hart of Wilkes County, Georgia, took on



five or six Loyalists who attacked her home while her husband was away. She shot two and captured the rest.



▲ **ANOTHER BRAVE** Patriot messenger was also a teenage girl. Sybil Ludington, 16, was the daughter of a New York militia commander. One rainy night in

1777, he asked her to get on a horse and call out his militiamen. They were needed to defend against a British attack near Danbury, Connecticut. Sybil rode her horse about 40 miles to remote farmhouses to alert her father's men that night.

ANN BAILEY'S military career did not go as well as Deborah Sampson's. In 1777, Bailey enlisted in the army as Samuel Gay. Within three weeks she was promoted to corporal, but soon her disguise was discovered and she ran away. A few months later, Bailey was captured and tried in court. She was fined, sentenced to two months in jail, and discharged from the army.





THINK PIECE!



It required great courage for a woman to take an active part in the Patriot cause. What do you think made the women described on these pages so daring? What was more important to them than the dangers they faced?

Camp Followers

Thousands of women followed their husbands to battle. They were known as camp followers. Some were looking for adventure, and others wanted to be with their loved ones. But most became camp followers because they needed to survive. They were poor women who feared that they and their children would starve while their husbands were at war. Camp followers were paid for their services as laundresses and nurses. They also were fed. But women got only half a soldier's portion of food – or half rations – and children got only quarter rations.



▲ **SOME CAMP** followers worked as nurses in field hospitals. They were paid, but not much. In those days, nursing was not a skilled or respected job. Nurses emptied chamber pots, bathed and fed sick soldiers, and tried to keep hospital wards clean by sprinkling vinegar around many times

each day. Very little was known about preventing disease at that time. Nurses risked catching any diseases the soldiers had.

▼ **LIFE WAS HARD** for camp followers. Diseases spread quickly through the crowded camps. Lice, fleas, bedbugs, and other pests were a constant problem. Food was scarce (hard to come by). Like men, women could be whipped or

thrown out of camp for offenses like petty (minor) theft. Women sometimes did dangerous jobs. Sarah Osborn carried food to men at the front during the Siege of Yorktown. When George Washington asked if she was afraid of the cannonballs, Osborn replied, "It would not do for the men to fight and starve, too."*

*Sarah Osborn. From *American Lives: An Anthology of Autobiographical Writing*, edited by Robert F. Sayre. University of Wisconsin Press, 1994.





▲ **GEORGE WASHINGTON** was an upper-class gentleman. He was used to women with good manners who dressed in fine clothing. He thought the camp followers made his army look sloppy. When the Continental Army

marched through Philadelphia in August 1777, he ordered the camp followers to use the backstreets. He didn't want them to be seen with the soldiers. But he believed that having wives in camp kept some men from deserting.

▼ **OFFICERS' WIVES** usually came to visit their husbands only during winter camp, when the army stayed in one place. They knitted socks and sewed for the soldiers. But their main task was to keep up their husbands' spirits. They did

this by organizing dances and card parties. Even Martha Washington (below) joined her husband in winter quarters. On her first visit, to Boston, she brought George's favorite jams and relishes and several cured hams.



▲ **BRITISH TROOPS** also had their camp followers. Many had sailed to America with their husbands. They were ragged and often hungry, and Loyalists accused them of stealing

food. They were allowed to stay in America only as long as their husbands could fight. The first widows and orphans sailed back to England in the summer of 1775.



▲ **A FEW CAMP** followers served on the battlefield. Some of them carried cold water for cooling down the cannons. Two famous water carriers were Margaret Corbin and Mary Hays, known as

Molly Pitcher. Corbin took over her husband's cannon when he died in battle. She fired it until her arm was nearly torn off by grapeshot (small iron balls shot from a cannon). Hays also took over from her husband, when he collapsed from the heat. One soldier's journal claims a British cannonball blew off the lower part of her petticoat, but she kept on firing.

Spies and Saboteurs

In wartime, it helps to know the enemy's plans. A spy's job is to find out enemy secrets. Women made good spies during the Revolution because many people thought they were not clever enough or brave enough to do the job. Several women became saboteurs (sa-buh-TERS). Saboteurs commit acts of sabotage, meaning that they destroy things the enemy could use.



▲ **PATIENCE LOVELL** Wright was an artist who made wax figures of famous people. In 1772, she moved to England. She met

many important people there. When the Revolution started, Wright began to spy for the Patriots. She passed along information she heard from her famous friends. People say she hid important messages inside wax sculptures that were shipped to the colonies for display.



▲ **LOYALIST WOMEN** also spied for their side. Ann Bates was a Pennsylvania schoolteacher. She disguised herself

as a peddler and traveled from one Patriot camp to another, selling sewing needles, combs, and other



▲ **LYDIA DARRAGH** was a midwife, nurse, and undertaker. She was a Quaker, so she did not believe in war. But she supported the ideals of the Revolution. When British officers took over rooms in her Philadelphia home for meetings, Darragh listened to their conversations at a keyhole. Her

son then carried the information to Washington's troops outside the city. Once, when Darragh thought the danger was too great for her son, she walked six miles to meet one of Washington's scouts. Her information helped Washington prepare for a British attack.



▲ **LAODICEA "DICEY"** Langston was 15 years old when Loyalist troops camped near her family's South Carolina farm. She watched the Loyalists for months and passed on information to local Patriot mili-

tias. One night she traveled 20 miles to warn her brother's militia about a planned Loyalist attack. Langston defended her father against British soldiers (above), who were impressed by her bravery.

small items. She was able to pick up important information, such as the number of troops and the kinds of weapons they had. She relayed that information to Loyalist leaders. Bates was never caught.



▼ **PATRIOT WOMEN** usually gave the troops tips they had simply overheard. But Sally Townsend was part of a professional spy ring. When the British took over New York City, some of them made the Townsend home their headquarters. Sally gathered informa-

tion there. Thanks to a tip from her, Patriot forces captured Major John André. He was an important British spy. The papers he carried proved that Patriot traitor Benedict Arnold was about to turn over the fort at West Point to the British.



▲ **IN 1780**, Martha Bratton's husband left her guarding a warehouse full of gunpowder in South Carolina. Bratton learned

that Loyalists planned to raid the warehouse. So she set it on fire. All the ammunition was destroyed, but this kept it from falling into Loyalist hands.

▼ **MANY PATRIOT** prisoners of war were kept on British prison ships in

New York Harbor. Conditions on these ships were horrible. Elizabeth Burgin was a widow and a mother. She often took food and supplies to the prisoners. In 1779, she helped more than 200 men escape by giving them the details of a Patriot plan to get them off the ships.

SOME PATRIOT

women burned their own property to keep it out of Loyalist hands. In upstate New York, Catherine Schuyler set fire to her family's wheat fields. That kept British troops from using the crops. In revenge, the British burned down Schuyler's house.

THINK PIECE!

Finding out important information can change the way battles are planned and fought. During the American Revolution, some women served as spies, learning information and passing it on. How easy or hard do you think it was to learn enemy secrets when Patriots and Loyalists lived side by side? What would you have done to learn helpful information for the Patriots?





Family in Wartime

“My father was in the army during the whole eight years of the Revolutionary War. . . . My mother had the sole charge of four little ones. . . . When my father was permitted to come home, his pay was short, and he had not much to leave us. . . . Yet when he went, my mother ever bade him farewell with a cheerful face, and told him not to be anxious about his children, for she would watch over them night and day. . . . Sometimes we wondered that she did not mention the cold weather, or our short meals, or her hard work. . . . But she would not weaken his hands or sadden his heart, for she said a soldier’s life was harder than all.” *

*From *Women on the American Frontier* by William W. Fowler. SS. Scanton & Co., 1881.

WOMEN WHO LIVED

near the fighting were sometimes forced to house British soldiers. That created extra work and put a strain on food supplies. Some Patriot women feared their daughters would fall in love with British officers. For two years, British officers lived in Rebecca Motte's home in Charleston, South Carolina. She went to great lengths to keep her daughters hidden from view. After British troops took over her house and made her family leave, Motte helped set the place on fire.



On the Home Front

Life on the home front was not easy. With men away at war, women had to protect their families, earn a living, and defend the family's property. This was in addition to all the hard work they usually did to run the household in peacetime.

**▲ WOMEN ON FARMS**

were not used to being in charge of planting and harvesting crops. They had to take on these jobs as

well as their other full-time chores. However, many took to the work quickly. Letters to husbands show that at the start of the

Revolution, women usually wrote about "your farm." But by the end of the war, more women were calling it "our farm."

► ABIGAIL ADAMS

was one of the most famous women on the home front. For most of the war, her husband, John, was away on official business. So Abigail took charge of the family farm in Braintree, Massachusetts. She had to deal with a shortage of farmhands, rising prices, and a lack of wool and cotton for clothing. But she kept the farm going. She also kept the family out of debt. John wrote that their friend James Warren told him "that my Farm never looked better,



than when he last saw it, and that Mrs. [Adams] was like to outshine all the Farmers."* Abigail Adams became First Lady when her husband was elected the second president of the United States.

She was also the mother of John Quincy Adams, the sixth American president.

*From *Letters of John Adams Addressed to His Wife* by Charles Francis Adams. Freeman and Boles, 1841.



▲ **LOYALIST WOMEN** faced many of the same struggles as Patriot women. Plus, Loyalists who lived behind enemy lines feared violence against their families and property. Many left their homes, becoming refugees, and moved

to Loyalist-held areas. Conditions in refugee camps were harsh. By the end of 1782, in a camp near Charleston, about 200 Loyalists died each day of hunger and exhaustion. More than half were children.

► **MANY NATIVE**

American nations sided with the British, hoping the British would keep settlers from taking more land. Seneca chief Red Jacket is shown, wearing British red. Patriot forces attacked Indian villages. Mary Jemison, a white woman who had lived among the Seneca since age 15 or 16, reported that Patriot militias burned crops, destroyed houses, and killed cattle and horses. In 1781, Nancy Ward, a Cherokee married to a white trader, tried to work out a peace agreement between her people and American officials.



▲ **IT WAS HARD** for southern women to run plantations while their husbands were at war. For one thing, they could no longer sell goods, such as cotton, to Britain, which had been their main buyer. For another, they depended on enslaved people

to do the work on their plantations. The British encouraged enslaved people to escape. Southern women feared that enslaved people who didn't escape would revolt. In South Carolina, 60 percent of the population was enslaved Africans.



▲ **FROM THE START** of the war, the British promised to free enslaved Africans who left their owners. Thousands of enslaved people escaped. They traveled with the British army. Old Ross was a 56-year-old African woman who helped a group of fellow enslaved people, including three of her children, escape from a plantation in South Carolina.

D BALTIMORE

DURING THE WAR, six women published newspapers. Mary Katherine Goddard took over the *Maryland Journal* and the *Baltimore Advertiser* from her brother in 1774. Paper was hard to find. But Goddard kept publishing through the end of the war. She helped Patriot readers stay up to date with facts when rumors were running wild. She was so good at her work that she was asked, in 1777, to print the first copies of the Declaration of Independence with the names of all the signers.



► PHILLIS WHEATLEY

was brought to Boston in 1761 from Senegal, in West Africa, on a slave ship. The family that bought her taught her to read and gave her time to write poetry. Wheatley supported the Revolution. In 1775, she wrote a poem about

George Washington and sent it to him. He invited her to visit his camp near Boston. Wheatley was given her freedom when her owner died in 1778. But she died in poverty in 1784, just a few days before her poem celebrating the end of the war was printed.



▲ ESTHER DE BERDT

Reed was the wife of Pennsylvania's governor. She wrote *The Sentiments of an American Woman*. It called on women to actively support the Revolution. Reed and other women formed the Ladies Association of Philadelphia to raise funds

for soldiers. It was unheard of for women to do fund-raising. But these women went from door to door asking for money. They collected \$300,000 in paper money (worth about \$7,500 in gold) from 1,645 people – from free African American women to the very

rich. Reed wanted to give a small cash amount to each soldier. But Washington feared the soldiers would waste the money rather than spend it on supplies. He convinced the women to use the money to buy fabric and sew shirts for the soldiers.



Aiding the Cause

Besides keeping the home fires burning, many women took on other work to help the war effort. Some collected metal candlesticks, kettles, and plates. These were melted down and then made into bullets and cannonballs. Groups of women who called themselves Daughters of Liberty got together to knit socks, weave cloth, or sew shirts for the soldiers.

▼ NATIVE AMERICAN

women often had great influence among their people. Mary Brant was a Mohawk woman. The Mohawk were part of the Iroquois Confederacy in western New York.

At first, the Iroquois stayed out of the war between Britain and its colonies. But Brant was the widow of a British official. She convinced the entire Iroquois nation to side with the British.



◀ LOYALIST WOMEN

were not as organized as Patriot women. Loyalists were sometimes harassed (attacked) and driven out of Patriot areas. One Loyalist woman ran a newspaper. Margaret Draper inherited (received from her husband when he died) the *Boston News-Letter*. She published it from

1774 to 1776, when British troops occupied Boston. Patriot newspapers attacked her. They accused her of telling lies and betraying her country. When British troops left Boston on March 17, 1776, Draper went to Canada. Here (left), Loyalists draw lots for land after arriving in Canada.

After the War

After the Siege of Yorktown, Virginia, in 1781, Britain knew it could no longer hold on to its American colonies. Fighting continued in some areas, but the war was over. Soldiers returned to their farms and businesses. Women went back to their traditional roles. Women's daily lives had not changed much. But the war had given many women different views of their abilities. Their new confidence laid the groundwork for the equal rights fight that would take place many years in the future.



▲ **MOST NATIVE** Americans had supported the British, so many went to Canada. But more and more settlers were moving west. Even the Native Americans who had backed the Patriots lost

much of their land after the war. Within 50 years of the Revolution, the U.S. government began moving all Native Americans in the East to lands west of the Mississippi River. During the winter

of 1838–1839, 16,000 Cherokee men, women, and children were forced to travel the “Trail of Tears.” It took them from their eastern homes to Indian Territory in what is now Oklahoma.

► **IN THE NEW** United States, the Declaration of Independence was an inspiration to many enslaved people. Some went to court to get their freedom. The best-known person to do this was Mum Bett, later called Elizabeth Freeman. She was granted freedom by a Massachusetts



court order in 1781. Two years later, Massachusetts outlawed slavery.

By 1804, most northern states had taken steps to free the enslaved.



◀ **MANY MALE** soldiers were given a pension (regular payment) for their war service. In 1792, Deborah Sampson asked the state of Massachusetts for a pension. It was finally granted in 1804. In the meantime, she and her husband struggled to pay their bills. To earn money, Sampson gave speeches about her war experiences. At the end of each

speech, she dressed in her old uniform, marched around the stage, and fired her musket. She told audiences: “My achievements are a breach [break in custom] in the decorum [behavior] of my sex. . . . I must frankly confess I recollect them with a kind of satisfaction.”*

*Deborah Sampson. From *The American Counterrevolution: A Retreat from Liberty, 1783–1800* by Larry E. Tise. Stackpole Books, 1998.



▲ **By 1785, some** 100,000 Loyalists had left the U.S. Some of them went to Britain, where people called them quitters. Others took their enslaved people with them and went to the British West Indies

in the Caribbean. However, most Loyalists moved to eastern Canada, where their lives were not always easy, especially at the beginning. Some families lived in tents until they could build a

home. Still, most were proud of their Loyalist heritage. Eventually, they made this known by writing U.E.L. (United Empire Loyalist) after their names. Some of their descendants still do this.



▲ **DURING THE** Revolution, New Jersey gave women who owned property the right to vote. It was assumed that married women,

who had no property in their own names, would be represented by their husband's vote. So only single women could vote

in New Jersey. But the New Jersey legislature took away this right in 1807. U.S. women would not get the right to vote until 1920.

THE NEW NATION understood that women had an important role to play in raising good citizens. To do this, women needed education. After the Revolution, teaching girls became more important. A 1789

Massachusetts law said every town had to provide public education for boys and girls. But the law was mostly ignored. In all the states, private academies offered teenage girls from wealthy families a second-

ary (high-school) education. This emphasis on education contributed to the women's rights movement. This movement officially began with a convention in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. It is still going on.



Activities

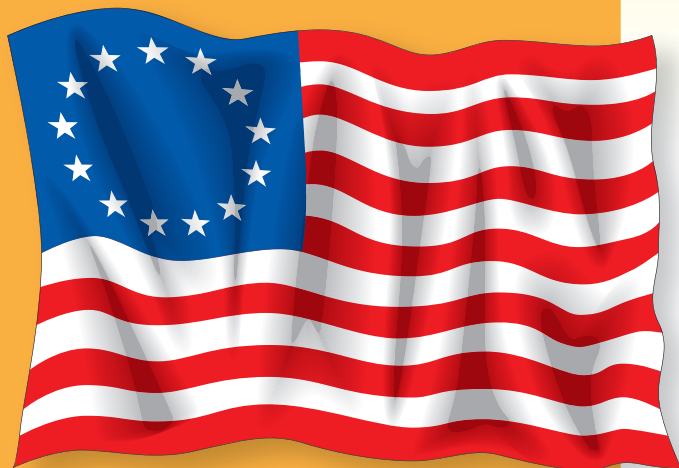
WRITE A LETTER

Imagine you are a soldier away from home fighting in the Revolutionary War. Your family is worried and eager to receive a letter from you. They might be Patriots or Loyalists, but some of the dangers and hardships you face are the same. Write a letter to your family. Describe the dangers and hardships you have experienced. Before writing the letter, review the information in this magazine so you can include details and facts your family will want to know.



DESIGN A FLAG

Take sides in the Revolutionary War. Imagine you are either a Patriot or a Loyalist. Then imagine you've been asked to design a flag to show support for your side. What message should the flag send? What images would you include? Draw a sketch of the flag. Then draw the final design. Below the design, write a paragraph explaining the design and images you've selected and the message they convey.



MAKE CONNECTIONS WITH THESE RELATED TITLES



American Revolution

“No taxation without representation!” That was the response of many colonists to Britain’s taxation of the colonies. From the Boston Massacre to the Boston Tea Party, explore the events that propelled the colonies into war with Britain. Learn about the battles, key figures, and outcomes that gave birth to America’s independence.



Declaration of Independence

It’s hard to believe that just over a thousand words could change world history, but one document – only 1,337 words long – did just that. This document’s ideas shook up the mighty British Empire. It launched a new nation. And it is still greatly admired today. What is this document? It’s the Declaration of Independence.

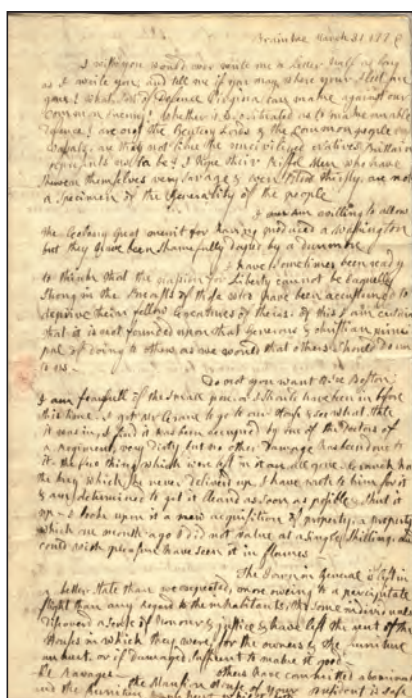


George Washington

A humble, modest, and kind man, George Washington probably didn’t strike many as a great military hero. But his successes on the battlefield were just as pivotal to the birth of our nation as the years he served as our first president. Learn about the heroic and patriotic man who was America’s first commander in chief.

LEARN MORE ONLINE!

- On March 31, 1776, Abigail Adams wrote a letter to her husband, John Adams, who was part of the Continental Congress. John and his fellow congressmen were busy writing up their reasons for wanting independence from Great Britain. “Remember the ladies,” Abigail urged him in her letter. Learn what else she said in her letter, online!



CALIFORNIA STANDARDS

HSS 5.6 Students understand the course and consequences of the American Revolution.

5.6.1 Identify and map the major military battles, campaigns, and turning points of the Revolutionary War, the roles of the American and British leaders, and the Indian leaders’ alliances on both sides.

5.6.3 Identify the different roles women played during the Revolution (e.g., Abigail Adams, Martha Washington, Molly Pitcher, Phillis Wheatley, Mercy Otis Warren). **5.6.4** Understand the personal impact and economic hardship of the war on families, problems of financing the war, wartime inflation, and laws against hoarding goods and materials and profiteering. **5.6.7** Understand how the ideals set forth in the Declaration of Independence changed the way people viewed slavery.

Historical and Social Sciences Analysis Skills:

Historical Interpretation

1. Students summarize the key events of the era they are studying and explain the historical contexts of those events.

Research, Evidence, and Point of View

2. Students pose relevant questions about events they encounter in historical documents, eyewitness accounts, oral histories, letters, diaries, artifacts, photographs, maps, artworks, and architecture.



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Early Settlements	Pioneers
13 Colonies	Immigration
Declaration of Independence	Industrial Revolution in America
American Revolution	Civil Rights

Revolutionary Women

ON THE COVER: Revolutionary woman loading a rifle. **Getty Images:** Bettmann.

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