

# *Early American History*

A LITERATURE APPROACH FOR 7<sup>TH</sup>-9<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

SAMPLE

SAMPLE



*Early American History, A Literature Approach for 7th - 9th Grade*  
by Rebecca Manor © 2021

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## *How to Use This Guide*

Welcome to the fascinating world of American history. Covering over a thousand years, this study encompasses Native cultures, the Age of Discovery, colonial settlements, revolution, slavery, the Trail of Tears, and much more. It may seem daunting to cover all this history in a year, but this guide is your tool, designed to educate and delight your student.

**Grade Level and Overview:** This is a one-year study appropriate for 7th through 9th grade, inspired by the Charlotte Mason method of education: reading, reasoning, relating, and recording. The heart of this study is the great literature selections. Exploring the world through story is often one of the most cherished experiences shared by homeschooling families. The development of critical reasoning and research skills begins to be very important at this age. Students are at a developmental stage that allows them to see events from more than one perspective. Cultivating this skill encourages deeper thinking, empathy, and curiosity.

**Content:** Livy, the ancient Roman historian, said:

*“What makes the study of history so valuable, is the fact that you can behold, displayed as on a monument, every kind of conduct. Thence you may select for yourself and your country, that which you may imitate, thence note what is shameful in the undertaking, and shameful in the result, which you may avoid.”*

As Livy notes so well, there are triumphal and disappointing events in history. While this study covers hard topics, it does so with age-appropriate detail, recognizing that as students mature there will be ample opportunity for expanding their knowledge. This gives you, the teacher, the option to choose when that time comes. Topics like slavery and the mistreatment of Native Peoples are covered both for historical accuracy and to help cultivate compassion and empathy. The resources in Rabbit Trails offer curated selections to expand on these topics. When the readings include especially detailed depictions of violence or offensive terms, those have been noted in the lessons.

Many assignments include research on a variety of perspectives and viewpoints. This may expose students to new ideas that they will need to grapple with in order to reach their own conclusions. Encourage your student to discuss their findings, how their perspectives are being shaped. Push them to seek out reputable sources as they research and to resist easy explanations.

Historical perceptions of unknown or unfamiliar cultures and people change over time as knowledge and respect overcome ignorance and prejudice. This process repeats itself throughout history and is preserved in historical documents and texts. Rewriting and erasing this evidence to suit modern taste does not provide the opportunities for correction and instruction we believe to be such a valuable aspect of learning history. Recognizing human brokenness and seeing the failings of the past is part of the reason we study history, and we see the hard parts of it as inescapable and valuable in the lessons they teach. As you read through the literature included in this study you will encounter a few instances where these historical attitudes and descriptions will be offensive. We have provided discussion questions to help you navigate these topics as well as content warnings on specific lessons.

**Pace:** This study contains 82 lessons; if you are planning on the standard 180-day school year, complete two lessons each week. If you are teaching younger students or using it across a range of ages, work at your own pace. There is no pre-set schedule. When life gets busy or the holidays are approaching, slow down. If your students are intrigued by a certain subject, follow those rabbit trails. Our guides are designed to support your teaching style, not dictate it. One of the greatest gifts of homeschooling is the flexibility and freedom that is built into setting your own schedule. This teacher guide is designed to be a tool, not a taskmaster.

**Activities:** This guide includes some recommended hands-on activities. We also link to websites that have further activities. None of these are required. Do what adds enjoyment to your study.

**Student Portfolio:** Each student should have a notebook or portfolio that they are comfortable working with. This may be a simple notebook. It could also be a blog or an art folder. All written work, drawings, reports, and mapping activities are to be added to this portfolio.

**Narration and Discussion Prompts:** As you read through the literature with your students, use the questions to help spur conversation and verbal processing, unless you are following a strict Charlotte Mason narration model. The discussion questions are designed for conversation and to encourage critical thinking and reasoning skills. These are not comprehension questions and therefore answer keys are not provided. If you are unable to read along with your student, these questions will allow you to discuss the topics and ideas your student encounters in the reading. Feel free to ask clarifying questions of your student. The included questions are simply a starting point. Let conversation and processing proceed naturally and encourage it by asking your own questions.

**Websites:** Throughout the study, you will find a curated selection of websites. These specific website pages have all been viewed and deemed appropriate and accurate at the time of printing. Potentially objectionable material has been noted. The recommendation of one page on a website is not an endorsement of the entire contents of that website. Always use the internet with care and under adult supervision. Type in the address as it appears to find the correct information. If a web link is no longer working, don't give up. Simply use the words in the web address to guide your search. You may also check for updated links for this guide here: [www.bfbooks.com/Teacher-Guide-Website-Links](http://www.bfbooks.com/Teacher-Guide-Website-Links)

**Rabbit Trails:** At the beginning of each section, you will find a list of additional recommended books to check out from your local library. None of these titles are required. We provide these lists in order to help you sift through the hundreds of books available on the many topics covered in this study. However, if you have a voracious reader or if a certain topic proves especially interesting, these curated selections will give your student the opportunity to choose titles for themselves. This empowers them to develop agency in their own education.

**Creative Writing Prompt:** Each section includes a creative writing prompt inspired by one of the literature selections. Use these for students who want to develop their storytelling or creative writing skills. These are not required and are simply provided for fun.

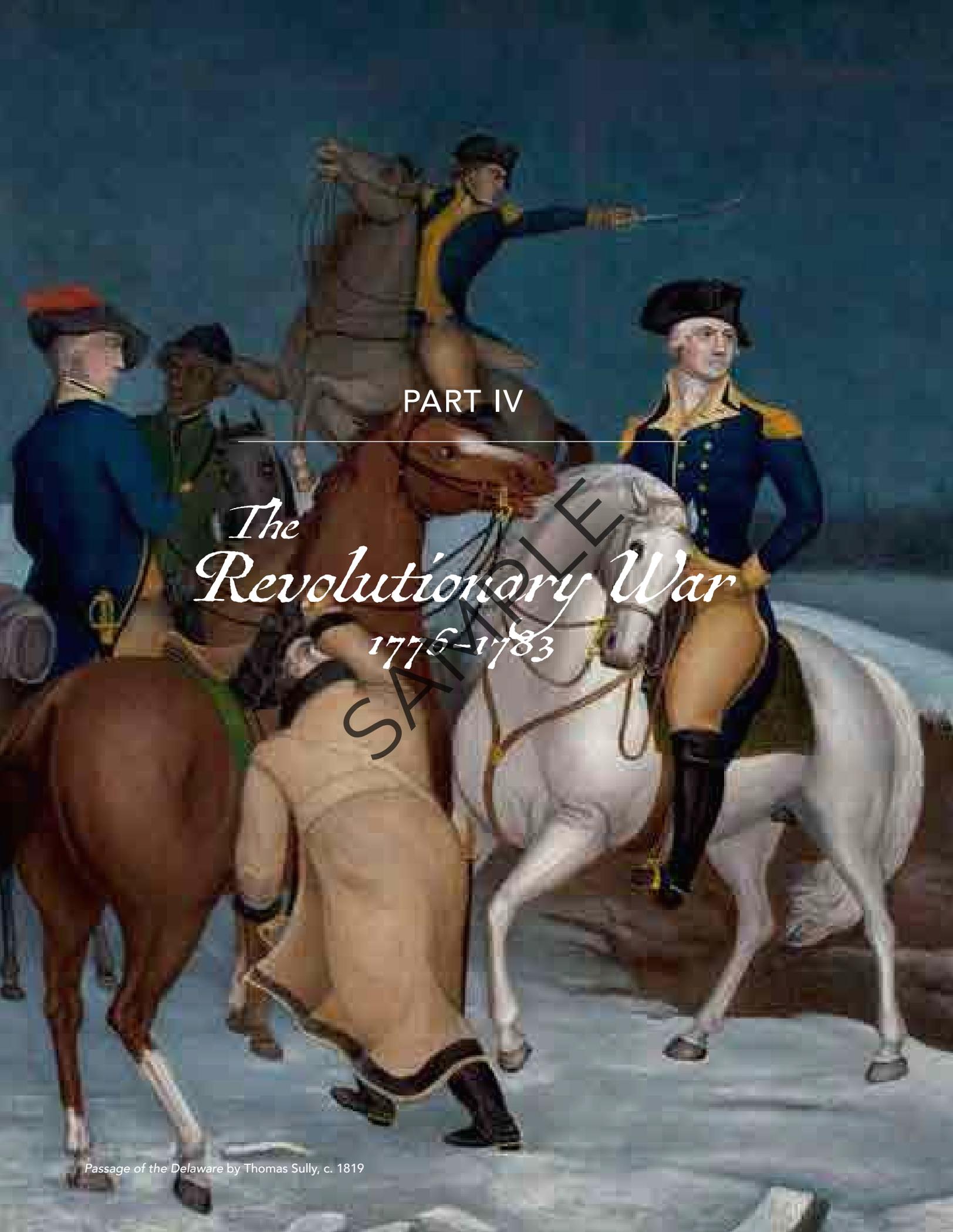
**Research Topics:** There are research topics in each section. Students should choose one in each section and write a research paper. You may download a free grading rubric from [www.bfbooks.com/Info-FAQ/Free-Downloads](http://www.bfbooks.com/Info-FAQ/Free-Downloads). These topics can also be used for discussions, presentations, debates, etc.

**World History:** The emphasis of this study is on North American history, concentrating on the United States. If you would like to add a world history overview, we have included tables at the back of this manual to facilitate using Genevieve Foster's "World" titles to do so.

**Map:** A large, durable, outline map of North America is required for this course. Your student may draw his or her own map on heavy-weight cardstock, download a template online, or purchase the map available here: [www.bfbooks.com/USA-Colonies-Map](http://www.bfbooks.com/USA-Colonies-Map)

**Do I Have to Do Everything in Every Lesson?** No! Again, this is a tool, not a taskmaster. Everything in this guide is provided to make your job easier and save you time. Every lesson, assignment, and activity is here to help you expand the literature, pull out historical content, and provide structure and guidance, but feel free to skip steps when it suits your family.

Lastly, share your work on social media and tag us at [#beautifulfootbooks](https://twitter.com/beautifulfootbooks). We love seeing your creativity.



PART IV

*The  
Revolutionary War  
1776-1783*

The background image shows a historical scene with a wooden cart in the foreground, partially obscured by a white cloth. In the background, several people are visible, some wearing period clothing. The scene is set outdoors, possibly on a dirt road or a field. The overall tone is historical and somewhat somber.

**B**y early 1776, many colonists had reached a breaking point. What had begun as murmurs of discontent and whisperings of frustration bloomed into outright rebellion as the colonists resisted the heavy thumb of Parliament and King George. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* gave words to the frustrations and injustices felt by the Americans. Mercantilism continued to transfer wealth from America to England, and the colonies had no representation in Parliament. English warships had shut down ports and harbors, creating hardships and effectively strangling commerce. Virginians, Rhode Islanders, Bostonians, and New Yorkers began to feel more connected with the cities and states they had helped build than the distant land of their ancestors.

It is important to remember that, in spite of growing anger, no more than 35 percent of colonists actively participated in the rebellion at any one time. Many colonists still felt deeply connected with England. Twenty percent remained Loyalists throughout the war, and a plurality were undecided. The Patriots slowly attracted more of these fence-sitters as their cause gained momentum. Still, the Revolutionary War set neighbor against neighbor and divided families even more than the Civil War. Benjamin Franklin's own son was a Loyalist. Both sides were guilty of abuses and war crimes, but the opportunity to create an entirely new nation arose out of this deadly chaos.

The signing of the Declaration of Independence remains a landmark moment in human history, declaring for all to see that legitimate government derives its power from the consent of the governed. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" set a precedent for all free governments to follow and remains an ideal toward which nations strive. All that being said, the Declaration is not, and never was, a governing document. It expressed unique ideals and opened the door to a bloody eight years of war that would test the Patriots' commitment to these principles. Next came years of argument, debate, and compromise as the 13 colonies formed an entirely new and unprecedented nation.

## *Rabbit Trails //*

**Answering the Cry for Freedom: Stories of African Americans and the American Revolution**

by Gretchen Woelfle, illustrated by R. Gregory Christie

Even as American Patriots fought for independence from British rule during the Revolutionary War, oppressive conditions remained for the thousands of enslaved and free African Americans living in this country. But African Americans took up their own fight for freedom by joining the British and American armies, preaching, speaking out, and writing about the evils of slavery, and establishing settlements in Nova Scotia and Africa.

**Benjamin Banneker: Brilliant Surveyor, Mathematician, and Astronomer** by Erika Wittekind

A brief but detailed biography of the great self-taught mathematician and astronomer will help students learn more about this remarkable man and his mission to fight for equality.

**Come All You Brave Soldiers: Blacks in the Revolutionary War** by Clinton Cox

In the Revolutionary War of the United States, black soldiers fought bravely for the freedom of a country that enslaved and oppressed them. Their story of courage and sacrifice is finally told.

**The Great Little Madison** by Jean Fritz

This life story of the father of the Constitution is a must for those doing constitutional studies. James Madison used his quiet eloquence, intelligence, and passion for colonial unification to help shape the Constitution.

**Johnny Tremain: A Story of Boston in Revolt** by Esther Forbes

This classic Newbery Medal winner takes readers into the heart of Boston during the Revolutionary War. In this engaging, fast-paced, and well-researched book, readers will meet Johnny, a young apprentice silversmith who jumps at the chance to participate with John Hancock and John and Samuel Adams in the exciting events that led to the Boston Tea Party and the Battle of Lexington.

**Never Caught, the Story of Ona Judge, Young Readers Edition** by Erica Armstrong Dunbar and Kathleen Van Cleve

Born into a life of slavery, Ona Judge grew up in the shadows, both at the Washingtons' residence and in the first few decades of our new country. But times were changing. Although George Washington held incredibly conflicted views on the institution of slavery, more and more citizens and political figures were becoming vocal opponents of slavery. Follow Ona's journey as she escaped to freedom and fought the Washingtons' continued efforts to capture her. **Parental Warning:** There is one subtle reference to rape on page 11.

**The Age of Phillis** by Honorée Fanonne Jeffers

Phillis Wheatley Peters was born free in West Africa but then captured, enslaved, and brought to Massachusetts as a young child. Yet, by the end of her life, she is again a free woman and the first female African American poet to have her works published. Readers will be drawn into this story as Jeffers uses her own poetry, excerpts of Wheatley's works, and quotes from primary sources to explore Phillis's life, private feelings, hopes, and dreams.

## *Character Connection //*

**SELF-GOVERNMENT:** Martin Luther wrote in *On Christian Freedom*, "A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to every one." This seeming paradox is at the heart of the idea of Christian self-government. A free society established on the rule of law, such as we enjoy in the United States, requires self-government. For Christians, spiritual freedom, like that described by Luther, allows us to serve others, contribute to the common good, and exercise self-government to love our neighbors. It can even mean giving up our "rights" for the good of others.

Self-government, or self-control, begins at home, but the consequences are widespread. Consider the child who faithfully does his chores and completes his schoolwork without being told to do so. He experiences freedom from being told what to do, nagging, and punishment. If his parents are aware of and recognize his self-government, they will probably grant him additional rights and privileges within the home. The child who fights against every chore, argues with every suggestion, and bullies his way out of obligations will generally find that his rights and privileges become more and more limited. This happens on the city, state, and national levels as well. Outside of the inevitable injustices of living in a fallen world, a self-governed and generous population will enjoy more peace, freedom, and safety than a society made up of selfish, indulgent, and contentious individuals.

Read through the following verses as you move through this section and discuss them in light of examples of self-government and self-control that you encounter in the literature.

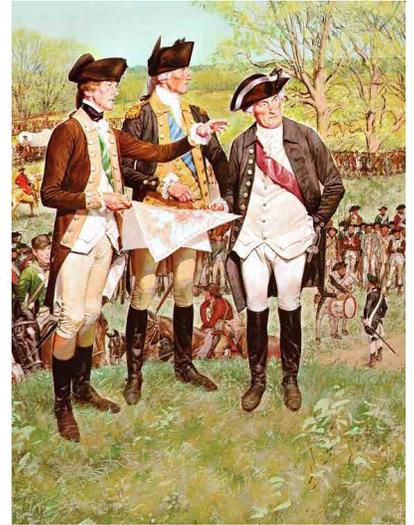
Proverbs 25:28  
2 Timothy 1:7  
2 Peter 1:5-7  
James 1:19  
Titus 2:11-12

*The Poems of Phillis Wheatley: With Letters and a Memoir* by Phillis Wheatley

This reprint of Wheatley's memoir and poetry marks a pivotal moment in American literature. This is essential reading for any student of American literature.

*What Are You Figuring Now?: A Story about Benjamin Banneker* by Jeri Ferris

In 1791, plans for the new capital city, Washington, D.C., were in the works, but who would survey the new and unique city? Thomas Jefferson recommended Benjamin Banneker for the job. Banneker was a free black man who lived when black Americans had few, if any, rights. Yet he was an accomplished farmer, mathematician, astronomer, and surveyor.



*The American Soldiers* by H. Charles McBarron, Jr

*Online Resources //*

**BENJAMIN FRANKLIN DOCUMENTARY**

Access at "Benjamin Franklin: Author of the Declaration of Independence | Full Documentary | Biography" on the Biography YouTube channel.

**JOHN ADAMS MINISERIES**

Featuring Paul Giamatti and Laura Linney as John and Abigail Adams, *John Adams* is an excellent miniseries based on David McCullough's biography of the founding father. Students who watch this series will come to understand the incredible sacrifices made by the Adams family as well as gain an appreciation for the broken humanity of the brilliant Adams. **Parental Warning:** As always, preview for appropriateness. Available online or on DVD from many libraries.

**MOUNT VERNON**

This excellent website is a wealth of information on our first president, U.S. history, and more. [www.mountvernon.org/](http://www.mountvernon.org/)

**REVOLUTIONARY FOOD**

Ever wonder what people ate during the Revolutionary War? Check out "What Foods Did Americans Eat During The Revolutionary War?" on the Weird History YouTube channel.

**SLAVERY & THE PRESIDENTS**

The following website, maintained by the White House Historical Association, offers a detailed interactive timeline showing the relationship between U.S. presidents and slavery. Read about the people enslaved in the households of eight U.S. presidents, as well as interesting tidbits like how hard it was for Abigail Adams to find a sober cook! [www.whitehousehistory.org/spn/timeline](http://www.whitehousehistory.org/spn/timeline)

## Activities & Handicraft //

### WAX SEAL:

Sealing letters and important documents with wax helped keep things private for centuries! Make your own here:  
<https://mypoppet.com.au/makes/diy-wax-seal-household-items/>

### PUNCHED TIN LANTERN:

Tin lanterns were essential for life in the Revolutionary War period. Use the following instructions to make one: [www.amrevmuseum.org/shine-your-light-with-our-punched-tin-craft](http://www.amrevmuseum.org/shine-your-light-with-our-punched-tin-craft)

### BULLET JOURNALING WITH GEORGE WASHINGTON:

George Washington kept meticulous journals throughout his life. Use the following activity from Mount Vernon to learn about bullet journaling and Washington's method of record keeping:  
[www.mountvernon.org/education/lesson-plans/lesson/bullet-journaling-with-washington-2/](http://www.mountvernon.org/education/lesson-plans/lesson/bullet-journaling-with-washington-2/)

## Creative Writing Prompt //

Create a discussion between two friends who find themselves on opposite sides during the Revolutionary War. This can be in the form of a play or conversation. Keep it civil and friendly!

## Research Essays & Projects //

### FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

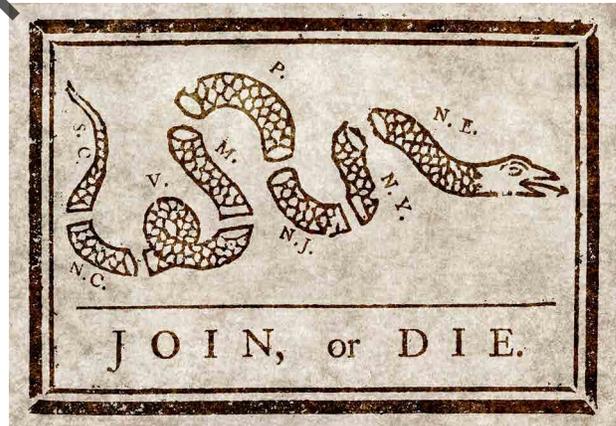
The tension between the states and the federal government has plagued the nation from its very first days. There are benefits to this tension (the states help limit the power and reach of the federal government) as well as drawbacks. Research a current event that has set a state or group of states in opposition to the federal government. How would you resolve this issue?

### FREEDOM

What does freedom mean to you? Choose a historical figure from your readings in this section and research their views on freedom and civic responsibility. As you research, consider your own understanding of freedom. Write an essay comparing and contrasting your view with that of the historical figure you chose. Record essay in the portfolio.

### BREAK UP WITH BRITAIN

Write a "Dear John" or breakup letter from the American colonies to England explaining why you think this relationship is no longer working. Use the historical facts you have been learning but make it funny!



*Join, or Die* by Benjamin Franklin

## LESSON 37

1. Introduce *Black Heroes of the American Revolution* by Burke Davis. Read pages vii-12. These pages introduce some of the enslaved and free Black men who took up arms in the Americans' fight for freedom. We will be learning more about these heroes as we move through this section. Discussion prompt:

Many of the soldiers you read about never received payment or recognition for their service to the Revolutionary cause. Why do you think this was the case?

2. Read pages 181-194 of *George Washington's World*.

3. Which side would you have chosen during the Revolutionary War? The passage of time has diminished how fraught this situation was for most colonists. Explore the following links to understand a bit more about the weight of this decision and then discuss the benefits and drawbacks of each position.

[www.ncpedia.org/anchor/which-side-take](http://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/which-side-take)

"Would You Have Joined the American Revolution?" on the Origin of Everything YouTube channel

If you would like to dig deeper, gather some friends and family members and set up a friendly debate with talking points provided in this handout from the National Parks Service:

[www.nps.gov/mocr/learn/education/upload/Lesson-1.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/mocr/learn/education/upload/Lesson-1.pdf)

## LESSON 38

1. Read pages 110-123 of *Poor Richard*. Discussion prompt:

Benjamin Franklin lived many of the ideals that came to be central to American identity: freedom-loving, hard-working, community-minded, and curious. Discuss how that American identity has remained the same and how it has changed. What do you think Benjamin Franklin would think of American politics today?

2. Read pages 198-204 of *George Washington's World*.

3. Choose a project from the Activities & Handicraft section, to the left, and begin working on it.

## LESSON 39

1. Finish reading *Poor Richard*. This reading takes us forward in time, but we will be circling back to finish our study of the Revolutionary War.

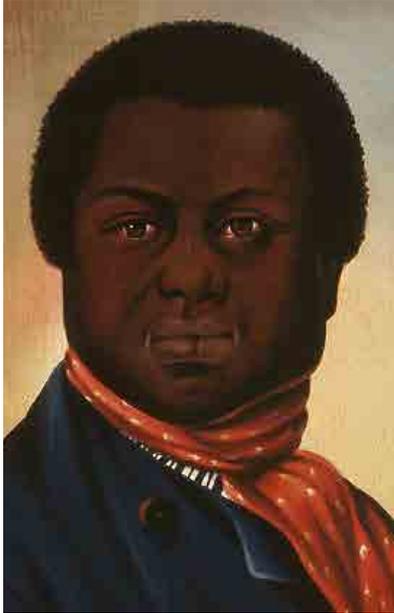
2. To this point, we have read about battles, political maneuvering, and other aspects of the American Revolution. Our next book will help us understand what it was like to live during the war, right at the epicenter of British power in the colonies: New York City. Introduce *Sophia's War: A Tale of the Revolution* by Avi. Begin by reading the note on page 1 and Chapters 1-5. Discussion and narration prompts:

To learn more about Nathan Hale, watch "Nathan Hale: Who's Who in the American Revolution | AF-178" on the Ancestral Findings YouTube channel

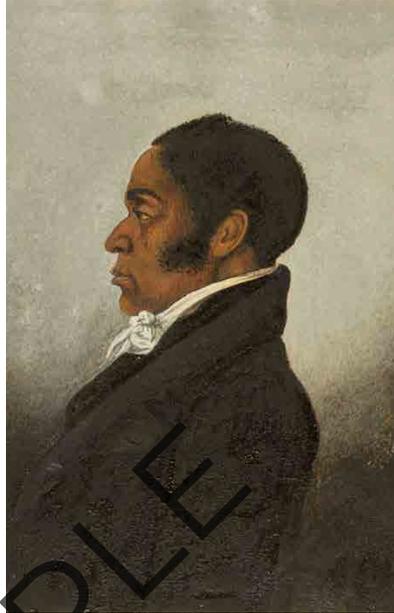
Sophia refers to Thomas Paine as a "radical." Discuss her use of this term. Do you agree? Does your context influence your opinion? How would you describe a "radical" today?

3. Create a new section in the portfolio titled "Sophia's War." Copy the maps at the beginning of *Sophia's War* and paste them into the portfolio.

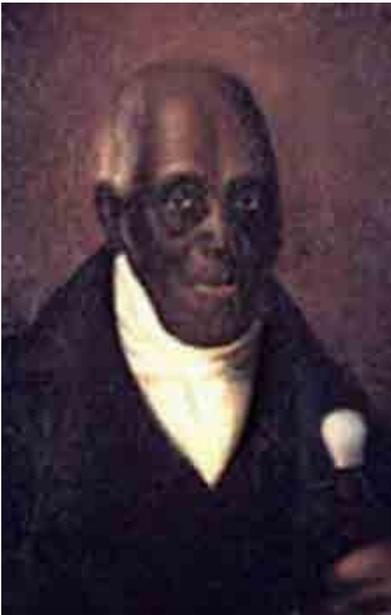
*Black Revolutionaries*



*Caesar Tarrant*



*James Forten*



*Agrippa Hull*



*Lemuel Haynes*



*Peter Salem*

## LESSON 40

1. Read Chapters 6-10 of *Sophia's War*. Discussion prompt:

Forced quartering of English soldiers was one of the colonists' many complaints against England. What did this practice reveal about the English government's opinion of its colonists' rights to private property, freedom of movement, and privacy? What do you think it would feel like to have unwanted guests forced upon you, whether you supported their mission or not?

2. Read Chapter 2 of *Black Heroes of the American Revolution*. **Parental Warning:** This chapter references a historical quote with a racial slur on page 18.
3. Read pages 205-214 of *George Washington's World*.

## LESSON 41

1. Read Chapters 11-16 of *Sophia's War*. Discussion and narration prompts:

Describe John André. What do you think of him? Contrast him with Sophia's brother, William.

On page 68, André states that Sophia should put her mind to "making yourself as agreeable to me as possible." How does this demand strike you? Does it also reflect what the British monarchy and Parliament thought was the proper role of the colonies to their imperial master? How does this attitude violate Sophia's dignity and worth?

Times of war have consistently expanded opportunities for women. Discuss why this is and what changes it led to for Sophia. How is this new world imagined by Thomas Paine as "a blank sheet" that provides Sophia ways to be something more than "agreeable"?

2. Mark the following on the map in the portfolio.

New York City

Hudson River

West Point, NY

3. Finish writing your research paper and add it to the portfolio.
4. Read pages 215-224 of *George Washington's World*.

## LESSON 42

1. Read Chapter 3 of *Black Heroes of the American Revolution*.

2. The British prison ships were horrific. Over 11,000 Patriots died aboard these vessels during the Revolutionary War, more than the total land battle fatalities. Learn more about the *Jersey*, where James Forten was held for months, as well as other prison ships and the brave men and boys who were kept aboard them. There is also an incredible story of a woman who tried to help prisoners escape!

- "Prisoners Of War | American Revolution" on the Quest T.V. YouTube channel
- [www.history.com/news/british-prison-ships-american-revolution-hms-jersey](http://www.history.com/news/british-prison-ships-american-revolution-hms-jersey)
- <https://nylandmarks.org/explore-ny/the-prison-ship-martyrs-monument/>

3. The trial of the British soldiers following the Boston Massacre is a fascinating legal moment in American history. Check out [www.masshist.org/features/massacre/trials](http://www.masshist.org/features/massacre/trials).
4. Read Chapters 17-22 of *Sophia's War*.

# Checks and Balances



*Executive*

> Can impeach & remove the President from office  
> Can override presidential veto  
> Declare war, ratify treaties, control appropriations

Recommend legislation <  
Veto bills <  
Call special session of Congress <

> Nominates judges to fill vacancies  
> Grants reprieves and pardons

Judges appointed by the President serve for life <  
Declare presidential acts unconstitutional <



*Legislative*

Interprets law and may declare laws unconstitutional <

> Can impeach Judges  
> Can refuse judicial appointments  
> Can propose constitutional amendments to overrule Supreme Court decisions



*Judicial*

SAMPLE