

Greg Morse  
TAH 1 Lesson for Ray Raphael  
*Founding Myths: Stories that Hide our Patriotic Past*  
**Happy Endings: The Final Battle**  
**A Fifth Grade Lesson**

**Topic:** The glories and the stories of war.

**Theme:** The battle of Yorktown is surrounded in more mythology than reality.

**California Standards:**

**5.3** Students describe the cooperation and conflict that existed among the American Indians and between the Indian nations and the new settlers.

**1.** Describe the competition among English, French, Spanish, Dutch, and the Indian nations for control of North America.

**2.** Describe the cooperation that existed between the colonists and Indians during the 1600s and 1700s (e.g. in agriculture, the fur trade, military alliances, treaties, cultural exchanges).

*Rationale: The Revolutionary War and the Battle of Yorktown can be linked back to Standard 5.3.1 because by 1778-1780 through the involvement of the French, Spanish, Dutch and the League of the Armed Neutrality, almost all of Europe was involved in the war. Standard 5.3 and 5.3.2 are relevant because, in the words of Ray Raphael, "the Revolutionary War was the largest Native American war in U.S. history."*

**5.6** Students understand the course and consequences of the American Revolution

**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.

**2.** Describe the contributions of France and the other nations and of individuals to the outcome of the Revolution (e.g. Benjamin Franklin's negotiations with the French navy, the Treaty of Paris, The Netherlands, Russia, the Marquis Marie Joseph de Lafayette, Tadeusz Ko'sciuszko, Baron Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben).

*Rationale: Standard 5.6.1: An understanding of the major campaigns and turning points of the Revolutionary War as well as the critical role of American, British, and French leadership (or the lack thereof) is central to the story of the war. Teaching the story of Yorktown can completely satisfy Standard 5.6.2*

**National Standards:**

**5<sup>th</sup> Grade Standards:** Historical Thinking Standards 2 & 3, Historical Comprehension and Historical Analysis and Interpretation.

*Rationale: These standards address the students' ability to see history through the eyes, minds and emotions of those involved at the time. In doing so, the students will realize the multi-faceted nature of the historical events and people involved and draw conclusions which are also multi-faceted, rather than those which are just neat, tidy and over-simplistic.*

**Timeline:** This is a one day lesson of 50-60 minutes. There is an informal assessment included at the end of the lesson.

**Prior Content Knowledge and Skills:** The students will have already studied early European colonization of eastern North America by this time, including exploration during the 11<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, with special emphasis on the English settlement along the eastern seaboard in founding the original 13 Colonies in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the period leading up to the American Revolution, including the French and Indian War and the major conflicts between England and the Colonies prior to and following the Declaration of Independence. The students will have studied the severe challenges facing the Colonies in carrying out a war against the greatest military power of the day and the events leading to the confrontation at Yorktown.

**Introductory Hook:** Ask the students what they already know about the “Final Battle and Surrender at Yorktown.” Quote from: *The American People, Creating a Nation and a Society* (Nash, Jeffrey, Howe, Frederick, Davis, and Winkler):

*Learning the news in London a month later, Lord North, the king's chief minister, exclaimed: “Oh, God! It is all over.” On February 27, 1782, the House of Commons cut off further support of the war. North resigned the following month. In Philadelphia, citizens poured into the streets to celebrate while the Congress held a solemn ceremony of thanksgiving. Though the preliminary articles of peace were not signed until November 1782, everyone knew after Yorktown that the Americans had won their independence.*

Tell the students that this quote is typical of many (if not most) history books. Ask them what they would think if you told them that the books are wrong. Note: In my experience with teaching this lesson, this really got the students' attention. They said that I must be wrong for saying that the books are wrong!

Read one quote to the class by George Washington:

(<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/timeline/amrev/peace/nelson.html>)

This quote shows George Washington's “business as usual” attitude in conducting the continuance of the war. Ask the students why they suppose that the General would be speaking in such language.

**Lesson Content:** (<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/timeline/amrev/amrev.html>)

This is a good source for primary documents and maps used in the lesson. A good online source for an overview of George Washington's preparedness for continued fighting after the Surrender at Yorktown is:

<http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/articles/cincinnati/> Pages 4-5 of this 12 page article are particularly useful.

Using the introductory hook, students will see and hear that things are not as they seem and as they have been neatly taught. Put students in groups of four or five to group read a number of primary documents to find bits of evidence that the Revolutionary War did indeed continue after October 19, 1781 (allow 15 minutes max.).

These documents can be found at the following web address:

<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/timeline/amrev/peace/peace.html>. This address has all of the documents necessary (both primary documents and secondary narration) to thoroughly build the case for the lesson that the Surrender at Yorktown did not end the war. The primary source documents are letters from George Washington related to the continuation of the war after Yorktown, involving movement of forces into other strategic locations, requests to Congress for pay and supplies for the soldiers, etc. I have also included a narration of the Battle of Blue Licks Kentucky as an example of the bloody continuation of the war ten months after Yorktown.

<http://earlyamerica.com/review/winter2000/bluelick.html>

Use five to ten minutes to discuss the international nature of the war. Talk about the different perspectives on the war by the four major powers involved: The Patriots and the French, the British and Germans—there are other players (Dutch, Russians, Spanish), but there is little time in this lesson to do much more than mention them within the global nature of the conflict and global British Imperialism. The important factor in the global nature of the Revolutionary War is that the far-flung British Empire had bigger fish to worry about than some upstart colonies across the Atlantic, and as the global superpower, England had conflicts and enemies to contend with worldwide.

The key points of the lesson are included in the evaluation below. These points are written in condensed form on the board during the lesson and the students copy them onto papers of their own. These papers are picked up at the end of the lesson, the key points are removed from the board and the students are asked to write them from memory on a new paper as an informal assessment—see **Evaluation**

Next phase and the **conclusion** of the lesson is a discussion with the students about when the war truly ended. Why do they think that the Surrender at Yorktown is taught as the end of the American War for Independence? Does this spark any interest to find out if other things in the history books might be oversimplified or simply wrong? Do you agree or disagree—based on what you learned today—that there is more mythology about the Final Battle at Yorktown than reality?

**Evaluation:**

Students write a brief summary of what they learned in this lesson, trying to include three of the four key points:

1. The Surrender at Yorktown was a limited surrender not an official end to the war; fighting continued for two years beyond the surrender.
2. George Washington never considered the surrender to be the end of the war.
3. The final conclusion to the war came with the signing of the Treaty of Paris in September of 1783.
4. The American Revolution was a global war which both strengthened the American effort and weakened the British effort.