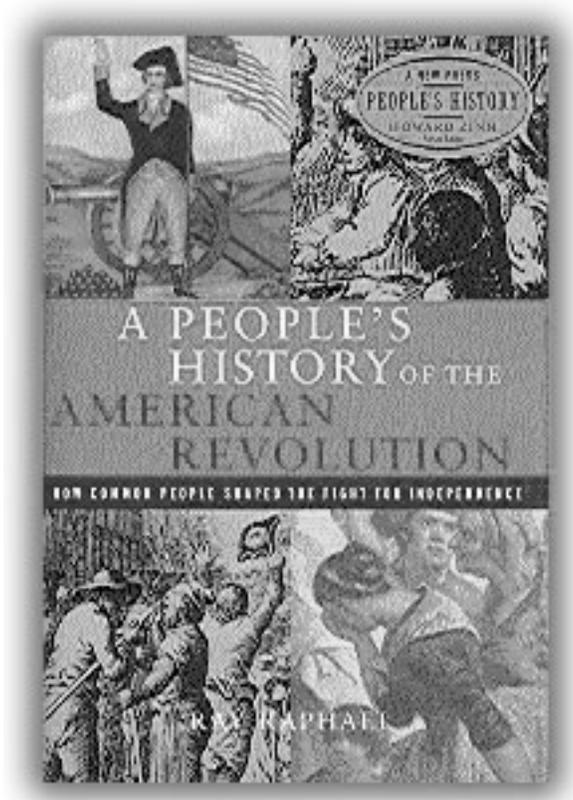


## **A People's History of the American Revolution:**



## **A Guide for Teaching and Readers' Groups**

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## CHAPTER 2: FIGHTING MEN AND BOYS

### THE SPIRIT OF '75

#### *Review:*

1. Describe the response to the "Powder Alarm" by the people of Longmeadow.
2. Tell what happened at Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775.
3. (a) What was the response by other New Englanders upon hearing the news?  
(b) In particular, what was the response of Joseph Plumb Martin and Joseph Hodgkins?
4. When Ebenezer Fox headed from Roxbury (near Boston) to Providence, why did he see so many men on the road?
5. (a) In April of 1775, how old were each of the four soldiers-to-be featured in this section? (b) How did the circumstances of Joseph Hodgkins differ from those of Joseph Plumb Martin, Jeremiah Greenman, and Ebenezer Fox?

#### *Historical Reasoning/ Discussion:*

1. Is it really predictable, as Raphael suggests, that marching with "staves and musick" leads to warfare?
2. British sources claim there were hundreds of farmers on the Lexington Green; American sources say there were far fewer (see footnote #7). How might political motivations help explain these differences in "eyewitness" accounts?
3. (a) Who do *you* think fired the first shot at Lexington? (b) If you were able to give an answer to (a), do you think your own political views affected your response?
4. (a) Imagine that you are a teenage male living in New England in April of 1775. How do you think you would respond to the military mobilization by the patriots? (b) Imagine that you are married and the father of a new-born son, yet you have just signed on as a Minuteman. How do you think you would respond to military mobilization?

### AN AMERICAN CRUSADE

#### *Review:*

1. Where was the Battle of Bunker Hill fought?
2. What was the most serious danger faced by the soldiers during the siege of Boston?
3. In the fall of 1775, why were so many soldiers "Bewicht about getting home"?
4. List the various factors contributing to the Canadian campaign.
5. When their provisions ran out, what did the soldiers of the Canadian expedition eat?
6. Describe the Battle of Quebec, as seen by Jeremiah Greenman.
7. What was the end result of the Canadian offensive?

#### *Historical Reasoning/ Discussion:*

1. In what ways did the siege of Boston impact everyday life in the rest of New England?
2. Discuss the dilemma faced by Joseph Hodgkins in the fall of 1775.

3. On October 24, after five weeks of travel through the Maine woods, three companies, including many men who were sick, turned back. How do you think those who continued felt about those who returned? (If you want to know the how they really did feel, consult the journals of Isaac Senter, Henry Dearborn, and Simeon Thayer in Kenneth Roberts, ed., *March to Quebec: Journals of the Members of Arnold's Expedition.*)

4. How did the Canadian offensive relate to the struggle against British tyranny in the thirteen colonies?

### FORGING AN ARMY

#### **Review:**

1. Who were the "shirtmen"?
2. When Congress put out a call for soldiers at the end of 1775, what was the response?
3. (a) Whom did recruiting officers target in their drive to enlist soldiers? (b) What means did they use to entice these prospects?
4. What payments were offered at various times to new recruits?
5. How did Ebenezer Fox finally become a soldier?
6. John Adams and Isaiah Thomas, influential patriots, did not always practice what they preached. Explain.

#### **Historical Reasoning/ Discussion:**

1. Discuss the differing concepts of military service held by common folk and the gentry of Virginia.
2. How did the change from volunteers to hired soldiers mesh with patriot ideology?
3. According to John Shy, "The men who shouldered the heaviest military burden were something *less* than average colonial Americans. As a group, they were poorer, more marginal, less well anchored in society." Theodore Crackel, on the other hand, concludes that veterans were "quite representative of the whole adult male population." (a) After examining footnote #50, decide: which view is better supported by the existing evidence? (b) Do you think this evidence is conclusive? (c) If not, what kinds of additional information might lead to more definitive results? (d) What difficulties might you encounter in trying to find that information?
4. Can you think of any war that has been fought without involuntary conscription? If so, what were the circumstances? If not, what does this say about how wars are waged?

### IN THE FACE OF THE ENEMY

#### **Review:**

1. What was the objective of the largest military force assembled in the 18th century?
2. Describe Joseph Plumb Martin's feelings on the eve of his first active combat.

3. (a) What happened to the American forces when they tried to defend Long Island? (b) What happened to the American forces when the British landed at Kip's Bay on Manhattan?

4. Compare the views of a rout as seen from the "outside" by the Reverend Robert Cooper and from the "inside" by Garrett Watts and Otho Williams.

5. (a) What was the estimated death toll for American soldiers during the Revolutionary War? (b) List the causes in order of magnitude.

***Historical Reasoning/Discussion:***

1. Some soldiers, in anticipation of battle, did not hold up too well. Joseph Martin himself struggled as he readied himself to fight. Imagine yourself a 15-year-old male in 1776. How do you think you might have fared?

2. Consider the ideal of "courage" vs. the reality of being routed. What might be the effect of a rout on individual psyches? In particular, take some account of the few words which Joseph Hodgkins and Joseph Plumb Martin had to say about being routed at New York.

3. "The documentary record of history is skewed in favor of the survivors, those who lived to tell the tale." Discuss the implications of this truism for the interpretation of historical events.

4. In the telling of military history, the loss of human life is turned into numbers; often, the totals are very large. How does the reduction of human life into numbers effect the way we look at war? To what extent does it alter our sensitivities?

## CANNONS ROARING MUSKETS CRACKING

***Review:***

1. Who took care of Joseph Plumb Martin when he was sick?

2. How did the Christmas holiday contribute to the first American victory?

3. Describe the fighting at (a) Brandywine, (b) Germantown, and (c) Fort Mifflin.

4. What were the results of the three battles mentioned above?

5. Our usual image of the American Revolution includes soldiers facing off against each other in direct, personal combat. (a) What evidence does Raphael put forth to challenge that image? (b) Is that evidence from primary or secondary sources?

6. Describe the aftermath of the battles fought near Bemis's tavern and Freeman's farm.

7. What were the strategic and diplomatic implications of the British surrender at Saratoga?

8. (a) Describe the fighting at Monmouth. (b) What was the result?

9. How did the positions of the American and British armies in the fall of 1778 compare with the positions in the fall of 1776?

***Historical Reasoning/Discussion:***

1. (a) Why did Joseph Plumb Martin leave the army at the end of 1776? (b) Why do you think he re-enlisted the following spring?

2. Joseph Hodgkins, following "the way of our duty," chose to re-enlist despite his wife's objections (see chapter 3, "What Was Done, Was Done by Myself," for

Sarah's feelings on the matter). Discuss his possible motivations, and compare them with those of Martin.

3. Jeremiah Greenman re-enlisted as well, although he had been freed from prison in Quebec upon promising he would never fight again. Did he act ethically?

4. Here are two descriptions of the fighting between Bemis's tavern and Freeman's farm. Evaluate the central thesis of this section with respect to these new pieces of evidence.

(a) "For a few seconds the scene which ensued defies all power of language to describe. The bayonet, the butt of the rifle, the sabre, the pike, were in full play, and men fell, as they rarely fall in modern war, under the direct blows of their enemies."

(b) "Such an explosion of fire I never had any idea of before, and the heavy artillery joining in concert like great peals of thunder, assisted by the echoes of the woods, almost deafened us with the noise... The crash of cannon and musketry never ceased till darkness parted us... During the night we remained in our ranks, and tho we heard the groans of our wounded and dying at a small distance, yet could not assist them till morning, not knowing the position of the enemy." [Hugh F. Rankin, *The American Revolution*, 138, 141; Henry S. Commager and Richard B. Morris, *The Spirit of 'Seventy-Six: The Story of the American Revolution as Told by the Participants*, 575-6, 580.]

5. "The American Revolution, which both sides had expected to win in a moment, had turned into a war of attrition. This was a conflict that would be lost, not won." What other war(s) might fit this description?

### **Death or Victory**

#### ***Review:***

1. Why did the British expect to fare better in the South than in the North?
2. (a) Who won the Battle of Charleston in 1776? (b) Who won the Battle of Charleston in 1780? (c) How can you account for the different outcomes?
3. Summarize the fighting at King's Mountain, as reported by James Collins.
4. What part did militiamen like James Collins play in Morgan's strategy at Cowpens?
5. (a) Who "won" the battles at Guilford Court House and Eutaw Springs? (b) Why is the term "won" placed in quotation marks?
6. Cornwallis was besieged at Yorktown because he made a false assumption. (a) What was that assumption? (b) How did it prove false?

#### ***Historical Reasoning/Discussion:***

1. Discuss the irony of the expression "Tarleton's quarter."
2. James Collins, though victorious, shed tears for the enemy at King's Mountain. (a) Discuss the full range of his feelings, as revealed in his narrative. (b) How could Collins (or any soldier) reconcile such contradictory emotions?
3. (a) Can one side "win" a battle in which it suffers greater casualties than the other? (b) Discuss the use of the terms "winning" and "losing" in two contexts: sports and military conflict.

4. Did Daniel Morgan violate any ethical standards by placing untrained militiamen on the front line to take the brunt of the British charge?

5. Are there any ethical standards in warfare? If you think there are, try to formulate some; if you think there are not, explain your reasoning.

### **Beasts of Prey**

#### ***Review:***

1. Describe briefly the nature of the Revolutionary War in the South.
2. (a) How did Moses Hall react when his fellow soldiers “hewed to pieces” some prisoners in their charge? (b) How did he react when he met the boy who had been run through with a bayonet by the enemy? (c) How did he then deal with his emotions?
3. (a) During the war, did Joseph Plumb Martin try to kill the enemy? (b) After the war, did he hope his shots had met their mark?
4. What was the “temptation” which James Collins escaped?
5. (a) How did James Collins go about “ferreting out the Tories”? (b) Why didn't he feel any guilt or remorse for these activities?
6. Why didn't the fallen soldiers from Pennsylvania and New Jersey receive proper burials?

#### ***Historical Reasoning/ Discussion:***

1. The British and the Americans each blamed the other for initiating the brutalities of the war in the South. Can we say who really started it? (Consult chapter 4, “The Dogs of Civil War,” for further information.)
2. What is the strange “logic” of war, as evidenced by Moses Hall and William Gipson?
3. After the war both Martin and Collins appeared reluctant to admit they had been killers. Compare their responses to those of Vietnam veterans.
4. “I fired without thinking,” said Garret Watts, “except that I might prevent the man opposite from killing me.” Discuss the implications of this statement.

### **WINTER SOLDIERS**

#### ***Review:***

1. (a) What, and how much, did soldiers eat? (b) What did soldiers wear in good times? (c) What did they wear in bad times? (d) What did soldiers do for shelter?
2. How did inflation impact soldiers in the Continental Army?
3. How did ordinary farmers benefit from the war?
4. Early on, war profiteers were tarred and feathered; later, they were not. Why the change?

#### ***Historical Reasoning/ Discussion:***

1. Why do wars so often produce inflation?
2. (a) How did Ebenezer Fox's maneuvers during his first tour of duty affect relations between soldiers and civilians? (b) How did the building of the garrison at

Morristown affect relations between soldiers and civilians? (c) How did the soldiers' pay schedule affect relations between soldiers and civilians?

3. The relationship between professional soldiers and civilians worsened as the understandable responses by each party — plundering and hoarding — only made matters worse. (a) Can you think of any policies that might have halted or reversed this cycle? (b) Why do you think these policies weren't implemented?

4. A different cycle was discussed in the preceding section, "Beasts of Prey." How are these two cycles similar? Can cycles like these ever be broken?

## SUMMER SOLDIERS

### *Review:*

1. Why could militiamen be classified as "summer soldiers"?
2. How did upper level officers feel about the "leveling spirit" of many common soldiers?
3. Why didn't non-commissioned officers come down hard on their subordinates?
4. (a) How did the militias further the war effort militarily? (b) How did the militias further the war effort politically?
5. Draw up a "party platform" listing the demands of the Philadelphia militia.
6. (a) What happened at the Battle of Fort Wilson? (b) How did it differ from other Revolutionary War battles?

### *Historical Reasoning/ Discussion:*

1. Compare and contrast the attitudes of Joseph Plumb Martin and George Washington towards militiamen. How can you account for both the similarities and the differences?
2. "Most deserters did not sneak away stealthily in the dead of night; they packed up and went home by broad daylight." Was this true in any other war in United States history? Discuss the implications of your answer.
3. Did the militias really constitute an army? Give arguments on both sides, then draw your conclusion.
4. List the provisions of the 1776 Pennsylvania Constitution cited in the text, then explain how each one can be considered more "democratic" than governmental forms which followed (including the state governments of today).
5. Carl Becker, the Progressive historian, said the American Revolution was fought not just over the "question of home rule" — it also addressed the "question of who should rule at home." (a) Discuss the experiences of the Philadelphia militia with respect to Becker's statement. (b) Consider the actions and attitudes of other militiamen discussed in this section. How do they relate to the "question of who should rule at home"? (c) How far can you generalize from the experiences of the militiamen discussed in this section? (d) What other paths of inquiry might you pursue to investigate the thesis that the American Revolution involved not just a fight against British rule but a struggle for power among different classes of Americans?

## GITING THAIR RIGHTS

### *Review:*

1. What led soldiers to mutiny towards the end of the war?
2. (a) What was the outcome of the 1781 mutiny in the Pennsylvania line? (b) What was the outcome of the mutiny in the New Jersey line shortly thereafter? (c) What was the outcome of the 1783 mutiny in the Pennsylvania line?
3. (a) What did veterans receive for compensation at the end of the war? (b) Most often, what became of this compensation?
4. Joseph Hodgkins was the only one of our five featured soldiers to resign from military service before his term had ended. How did his circumstances differ from those of the other four?
5. What happened to each of the others after the war was over? Did the wartime experiences of each one lead to further opportunities?

### *Historical Reasoning/ Discussion:*

1. Why do you think Jeremiah Greenman and Joseph Plumb Martin responded so differently to mutinies?
2. Joseph Martin wrote: “[A]fter such extreme hardships to give up all was too much, but to starve to death was too much also. What was to be done?” Imagine you are a Continental soldier in Martin’s company. What stance might you take?
3. Officers like Anthony Wayne forced peers of the mutineers to act as executioners. Why did he choose not to have officers, or men from other units, perform the executions?
4. (a) Trace the change in Joseph Hodgkin’s attitude from the beginning of the war to the end of his service, and try to account for that change. (You might want to consult chapter 3, “What Was Done, Was Done by Myself.”) (b) Trace the change in Joseph Plumb Martin’s attitude from the beginning of the war to the end, and try to account for that change.
5. (a) How were Revolutionary War veterans received by civilian society after the war? Include in your response specific references to our featured soldiers. (b) Compare this reception to that given to veterans of World War II and Vietnam.

## CLASS ACTIVITIES FOR CHAPTER 2: FIGHTING MEN AND BOYS

1. Stage a simulation of a mutiny. Start with the soldiers trying to decide whether of not to do it. What are the grievances? What are the demands? Are they met? Characters include: soldiers who want to protest, others who are hesitant, officers who want to suppress it or talk the soldiers out of it, perhaps a “stool pigeon” (informant). De-brief: how did it feel for the mutineers to place their lives on the line — but not in battle with the enemy? How did it feel for the officers to turn against their fellow patriots?
2. Conduct a court-martial of one or more of the mutineers. What is the verdict? The punishment? De-brief: do the defendants feel that justice was done? Do the officers trying the court-martial feel that justice was done?
3. Write a dramatic script of the Canadian expedition, then perform it as “readers’ theater.”

4. Cover the siege of Fort Mifflin (or any other battle) for the TV news. Be sure to interview common soldiers, not just officers.
5. Simulate a radio talk show. The topic: either the “powder alarm,” the drawbridge incident at Salem, or the battles of Lexington and Concord. Listeners call in with their views of this incident, the Redcoats, the patriots, etc. Repeat this show more than once, using different hosts who evidence differing perspectives.
6. Prepare two newspapers of the times, one with a radical perspective and the other more conservative. Have each paper cover the actions of the Philadelphia militiamen. (You can include several events, even though they didn't actually occur on the same date.)
7. Prepare a petition from privates in the Continental Army demanding to be paid.
8. Create a character who is a private in the Continental Army. Be specific as to age, marital status, location, class, prior occupation, etc. Then write a diary/journal in which your character records his participation in the war.
9. Conduct an in-depth interview with one of the soldiers appearing in this chapter. Establish your circumstances before you start; you need a clear idea of where and when you are staging the interview.
10. Find pictures of the “uniforms” of Continental soldiers and militiamen. (Often, as with the “shirtmen” of Virginia, these were not very elaborate.) Find pictures of the uniforms of British regulars. Create a visual display, using your own drawings if you like, which reveals some of the differences between the British and American armies as revealed through their uniforms.
11. Prepare a diorama depicting the battle of King's Mountain.
12. Draw a political cartoon depicting a veteran at the close of the war.
13. Draw a poster encouraging young men to enlist in the Continental Army.
14. Find a military map of the Revolutionary War in another text. Note the names of generals next to the arrows indicating the various campaigns. Make a similar map to demonstrate the military actions of the five common soldiers featured in this chapter.
15. Draft a chapter for a 5th grade textbook featuring the participation of common soldiers in the Revolutionary War. Make your text understandable for elementary students, but try to give enough sense of the complexities so as not to constitute an oversimplification of history.

## **UNIT PROJECTS FOR CHAPTER 2: FIGHTING MEN AND BOYS**

1. Often, writers use a commanding officer's name to denote the movements of hundreds or thousands of soldiers. (Washington, they say, marched towards Yorktown, although he actually rode a horse while the privates did the marching.) Why do they do this? Evaluate and weigh the following possible explanations, and generate more if you can: (a) The commanding officers issue the orders. In the chess game of war, the commander is the real player and the rest merely pieces, mostly pawns. (b) People relate more to specific names than anonymous numbers; this is a writer's way of personifying the stories. (c) Tales of heroism (a large part of what war is all about) require individual personalities. (d) There is no special import to this convention; it simply facilitates the telling of the story.

2. In this text the author has consciously endeavored not to use a general's name when referring to movements of soldiers; after all, this is a book about common people. (a) Can you find places in which the author has succumbed to tradition? (b) Try to re-write those passages in a way that does not use the commander's name to denote all the soldiers under him. (c) Evaluate the ease or difficulty of this task.

3. Read footnote #177 concerning the "patriotism" of prisoners. (a) Consult the texts of Fox and Greenman (citations in footnotes) for more complete descriptions of their time in prison and the British offers of freedom for changing sides. Then decide for yourself: Was Fox unpatriotic? What about Greenman's peers who were freed from jail to fight for the British? (b) What about the patriotism of our other featured soldiers? Read the full texts, then decide: Was Martin unpatriotic for siding with the mutineers? Was Hodgkins unpatriotic for finally abandoning the fight for "this glorious cause"? Was Collins unpatriotic for sympathizing with fallen British soldiers? (c) Under what circumstances can civilians evaluate the patriotism of soldiers? (d) Under what circumstances can historians evaluate the patriotism of soldiers?

4. Compare the narratives of Revolutionary veterans with those of World War II veterans (see Studs Terkel, *The Good War*) and Vietnam veterans (there are several good collections, including Harry Maurer, *Strange Ground*, and Wallace Terry, *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans*). Are there any themes which run through narratives of different generations in different wars?

5. The narratives in this text vary in genre: three memoirs, one journal, one collection of letters. What are some advantages of each of these forms? What special sorts of information can you learn from each one? And what are their respective limitations?