



## **Battle of Guilford Courthouse**

### **ESSENTIAL QUESTION**

*What factors lead to victory in war?*

### **Standards**

#### Social Studies

(6-8) I.1.3, I.1.4, I.1.5, I.1.6 (9-12) I.1.3, I.1.4, I.1.5

8.B.1.1, AH.B.1.4

AH.C&G.1, AH.C&G.1.3

AH.E.1.2

8.G.1.2, AH.G.1.1, AH.G.1.2

8.H.1.1, 8.H.2.3, AH.H.1, AH.H.3.1,

#### English Language Arts

RI.6-10.1, RI.6&8-10.2, RI.6-12.4, RI.6-10.5, RI.6-10.6, RI.9-12.9, RI.6-12.10

SL.6-12.1, SL.9-10.3, SL.6-12.4

L.6-12.1, L.6-12.4, L.6-12.6

#### Visual Arts

6-8.CX.1.2, I.CX.1.1, B.CX.1.1, P.CX.1.1, A.CX.2.2

B.V.1.4, I.V.1.4

#### Additional Standards for Extensions

8.B.1.2, 8.H.2.2, 8.H.2.3, AH.H.3.2

L.6-12.2, L.6-8.3, W.6-12.1, W.6-12.2, W.6-12.3, W.6-12.4, W.6-12.5

## Objectives

- Analyze the effects of logistics and composition of military forces on the outcome of the Battle of Guilford Courthouse
- Understand the southern campaign as key to U.S. victory in the Revolutionary War

## Lesson Contents

General Nathanael Greene drew British General Lord Cornwallis into a chase, known as the Race to the Dan, both to exhaust the British army and to distance it from supply sources. Greene crossed back into North Carolina, met by the N.C. and the Virginia militias, and both sides meet at Guilford Courthouse. While the Battle of Guilford Courthouse was not the end of the war, it was a major turning point, and Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown seven months later. Throughout the southern campaign, the soldiers of both armies and the citizens of the Carolinas struggled for supplies and survival.

### Primary Sources

**Letter from John Penn to Alexander Mebane**, Military Collection, War of the Revolution papers, Board of War Correspondence, Sept. 23, 1780, box 1, folder 1, AMREV.1, State Archives of N.C., [digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/board-of-war-correspondence-september-1780/420091?item=420221](https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/board-of-war-correspondence-september-1780/420091?item=420221)

**Letter from John Penn to General John Butler**, Military Collection, War of the Revolution, Board of War Materials, Sept. 23, 1780, [digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/board-of-war-correspondence-september-1780/420091?item=420292](https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/board-of-war-correspondence-september-1780/420091?item=420292).

**Letter from John Taylor to Philip Vass**, October 8, 1780 Military Collection, War of the Revolution papers, Commissary Correspondence, box 1, AMREV.1, State Archives of N.C. [digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/commissary-correspondence-1780/419427?item=419457](https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/commissary-correspondence-1780/419427?item=419457)

**Letter from Joshua Potts to Colonel Thomas Wooten**, March 16, 1781, Military Collection, War of the Revolution, Commissary Correspondence, AMREV.1, State Archives of N.C. [digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/commissary-correspondence-march-1781/419543?item=419554](https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/commissary-correspondence-march-1781/419543?item=419554).

**Letter from Arthur Arrington to Joshua Potts**, Commissary Correspondence, March 21, 1781, AMREV.1, State Archives of N.C., [digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/commissary-correspondence-march-1781/419543?item=419585](https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/commissary-correspondence-march-1781/419543?item=419585)

**Petition of the Inhabitants of Guilford County**, June 28, 1781, General Assembly Session Records, June-July 1781, box 1, State Archives of N.C., [digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/joint-papers-june-july-1781-committee-of-propositions-and-grievances/691807?item=691852](https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/joint-papers-june-july-1781-committee-of-propositions-and-grievances/691807?item=691852)

**“Battle of Guilford”** map, Philadelphia: Hayes & Zell, 1781, MC.175.1781hz, State Archives of N.C., [dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/ncmaps/id/1211/rec/1](https://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/ncmaps/id/1211/rec/1)

**House of Commons Resolve**, General Assembly Session Records, House Joint Resolutions, July 2-7, 1781, box 1, State Archives of N.C., [digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/house-joint-resolutions-july-2-7/833255?item=833315](https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/house-joint-resolutions-july-2-7/833255?item=833315)

**Battle of Guilford Courthouse flag**, N.C. Museum of History collection, H.1914.246.1, [collections.ncdcr.gov/mDetail.aspx?rID=H.1914.246.1&db=objects&dir=COMBINED](https://collections.ncdcr.gov/mDetail.aspx?rID=H.1914.246.1&db=objects&dir=COMBINED)

### Secondary Sources

George C. Rogers, Jr., ed. “Letters of Charles O'Hara to the Duke of Grafton,” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, V. 65, No. 3 (Jul., 1964), pp. 158-180

American Battlefield Trust, [Guilford Courthouse: "We have blundered through"](#)

Helen Barrow, “The Guilford Flag,” [web.archive.org/web/20140413124902/http://www.ncdar.org/MicajahBullockChapter\\_files/html/guildfordflag.html](http://web.archive.org/web/20140413124902/http://www.ncdar.org/MicajahBullockChapter_files/html/guildfordflag.html)

### Folder Contents

- **Background: the Southern Campaign**
- **Background & Activity: N.C. Militia**
- **Selection & Questions: Provision Correspondence**
- **Activity: Battle Flag**
- **Exit Tickets**

## Supplies

- Projector (optional)
- Markers or colored pencils
- Additional art supplies such as craft paper or posterboard (optional)

## Preparation

- There are many options with this lesson. Please read the lesson plan and view the activities and related materials to choose the options that are best suited for you and your students.
- Included in the materials from the Archives is a **Document Analysis Sheet**. This can be a useful tool for your students to practice evaluating and learning about a document before working with it further. Take time to review this tool and choose when and with which documents you want them to use it.
- Print a copy of the **Glossary** pages for each student or group. Consider including some of the words in a vocabulary quiz or other exercise.
- Prepare to present background information about the Southern Campaign and the N.C. Militia or print enough copies of **Background: Southern Campaign** to distribute to each student or small groups.
- Prepare for students to examine the primary source documents in **Selections & Questions: Provision Correspondence**. This can be a jigsawing activity with the class divided to transcribe the original writing. If that aspect works for your students, print double-sided so that each original has a completed transcription on the reverse for students to check their work. (Or, you may choose to skip the transcription exercise and print only the transcribed selection and question sheets. There are 6 documents, ranging in length. Choose how you will group students and plan to assign the documents to group according to their capacity. Make enough copies of each document so that each group has one document and all will be examined and discussed.
- Prepare to present information in **Background & Activity: N.C. Militia** or print double-sided worksheets for students to complete individually or in pairs.
- Prepare to discuss the Battle of Guilford Courthouse flag. Print enough copies of **Activity: Battle Flag** for individuals or small groups. Decide whether to project an alternate early U.S. flag or print a variety of options so that students can choose which to analyze in their comparison charts. Find a variety here, [battlefields.org/learn/articles/short-history-united-states-flag](http://battlefields.org/learn/articles/short-history-united-states-flag).
- If using **Exit Tickets**, choose which to use and print the necessary copies. Eight different tickets are included in this lesson.

## Connecting to Background Knowledge

(5 minutes)

Ask: *To what extent do factors like geography and economics influence everyday life? How do these factors affect military strategy in times of war?*

## Procedure

Pass out **Background: Southern Campaign** worksheet and allow students to complete. Review fact-check answers using key.

(15 minutes)

## Selections & Questions: Provision Correspondence

(30 minutes)

Divide students into groups. Give each group one of the 6 primary documents:

John Penn to Alexander Mebane,  
John Penn to General Butler  
John Taylor to Philip Vass  
Joshua Potts to Colonel Thomas Wooten  
Arthur Arrington to Joshua Potts  
Petition of the Inhabitants of Guilford County

Ask groups to try transcribing their assigned documents. Option: If time allows, distribute document analysis sheets to students or small groups to work through the documents. Students will present the following information to the class: (Another option is to skip the transcription and/or analysis and begin with summaries):

1. summarize the document's meaning
2. Find any locations the document mentions on the 1770 map
3. Share thoughts and conclusions relating to the reflection questions.

If multiple groups examine the same document, they can divide the summary and map tasks. Multiple groups can share reflections before moving to the next document/group.

Facilitate class discussion about conditions for the soldiers.

- *Even when hunting and foraging might yield food, how long might it take to convert that natural resource to an edible meal? How does this then impact the soldiers and their usefulness within the Revolution?*
- *Consider how much you might eat and drink in a day. Multiply that times five hundred. Look outside; how could armies supply that much each day? Now consider how that might change if you were engaged in hard physical activity.*

- *How might a lack of refrigeration and the need for a fire to do any cooking affect supply needs and military movements?*

### **Background & Activity: N.C. Militia**

**(20 minutes)**

1. Guiding Question: *We have read about how the supplies, or lack thereof, were affecting the military up to this point. Do you think this issue influenced the militia's actions? Why?*
2. Distribute worksheets to individuals or pairs. Have them complete the Quick Fact Check and then brainstorm arguments for and against the July 1781 House of Commons Resolve.
3. When students have had sufficient time to complete the worksheet, facilitate a discussion about their arguments. If students need additional prompting, consider asking these questions:
  - *Do you think this bill will be helpful or detrimental for future military campaigns?*
  - *The militia men often had little training and experience. Now they have been moved into the Continental army. Will they be useful here?*
  - *What message is most important to send to the soldiers and to the citizens, and how can that best be done – by voting for or against this bill?*
  - *How might factors like geography and economics influence the political decision?*

### **Activity: Guilford Courthouse Flag**

**(20 minutes)**

Distribute the worksheet to individuals or small groups. Discuss background information with these guiding questions.

- *What kinds of evidence would historians need to confirm whether the Guilford Courthouse flag was actually used in battle?*
- *What challenges do historians face when interpreting incomplete or undocumented artifacts?*
- *If a historical artifact's authenticity is uncertain, does that make it less valuable as a teaching tool? Why or why not?*
- *What does the debate about the Guilford Courthouse flag reveal about how we create historical narratives?*
- *Can a symbol still be meaningful if it's not entirely historically accurate? How?*

Guiding questions for students, use information about color symbolism as a resource, [artyfactory.com/color\\_theory/color\\_theory\\_2.htm](http://artyfactory.com/color_theory/color_theory_2.htm); [janecook.com/the-truth-about-red-white-and-blue/](http://janecook.com/the-truth-about-red-white-and-blue/)

- *Why might the flag have an enlarged white canton? What did the color symbolize at that time?*
- *What might the use of blue 8-pointed stars on a white background suggest? How does the shape of the stars differ from the more common 5-pointed stars, and what symbolic weight might that carry?*
- *What is the effect of alternating red and blue stripes instead of red and white? What did those colors symbolize?*

When students have finished their call-to-action designs, have them share them with the class in discussion or as a display.

### Exit Tickets

(5 minutes)

- *What condition of being a soldier in 1781 would you find most difficult?*
- *Do you think it's likely that the Guilford Battle flag ever flew over the battle? Why?*

### Modifications

- Documents could be shared with students needing to take notes individually, with vision issues, or who have issues focusing.
- Students could be paired with a higher-achieving or differently behaving student for extra support.
- Students could be given extension activities if they finish early or are high-achieving and need more challenging or independent work. These can be done independently or collaboratively.

### Extension Activities

- Imagine you lived in the North Carolina Piedmont during the Southern Campaign and write a letter to someone you know sharing about your wartime experience.
- Use Google My Maps to create an interactive map that follows the Greene's army during the Southern Campaign 1780-1781. Drop pins at each location and add descriptions to share what happened at each one. \*You must have a Google account and be able to sign into it to use Google My Maps.
- Why were both armies constantly on the move in 1780-1781? Watch this short video from the Guilford Courthouse National Military Park on the Race to the Dan and the Battle of

Guilford Courthouse. How did this constant movement solve some problems and cause other problems? Write a 3-paragraph essay to explain.

<https://www.nps.gov/media/video/view.htm?id=EEE1FA9D-4861-44CA-B0F3-1931D5636B47>.

- Why was Penn asking so firmly for supplies for the horses? Read this article to find out more about the needs of military horses, then reflect upon the potential impact the horses had on the Southern Campaign and/or the Race to the Dan. You can find the article here: <https://www.wearethemighty.com/mighty-history/this-is-how-you-would-care-for-your-horse-as-a-cavalryman/#:~:text=In%20a%20day,%20a%20cavalry%20horse>.
- What was being a hungry Revolutionary War soldier really like? Watch this 6-minute video featuring quotes from Joseph Plumb Martin's diary, then write a journal entry with notes on what it took to find or get food in the N.C. Piedmont (considering the seasons) and then prepare it to be eaten. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCsKCbl4Fr8>.
- Ned Griffin and Thomas Stewart served at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse in the Continental Line. What might their experiences have been like? Create a journal entry for the evening of March 15, 1781, after the battle from either's point of view. [Review primary sources from the Griffin-White: Battles for Freedom lesson or Sarah Stewart's widow's pension application from the Gallery Walk lesson.]
- Read about the Quakers involvement in caring for the wounded after the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. [https://www.nps.gov/guco/quakers-at-the-battle-of-guilford-courthouse.htm#\\_ftnref10](https://www.nps.gov/guco/quakers-at-the-battle-of-guilford-courthouse.htm#_ftnref10). Imagine you are a member of the New Garden Quaker meeting in 1781 and write a report to save in the meeting's minutes.

## Field Trip Connection

**Virtual tour of Guilford Courthouse Battlefield** with the American Battlefield Trust, [theasys.io/viewer/RSyQB02OWWnvePZvFULdtB35tG0n8R/](https://theasys.io/viewer/RSyQB02OWWnvePZvFULdtB35tG0n8R/)

Visit the **Guilford National Military Park**, a National Park Service site in Greensboro, [nps.gov/guco/learn/kidsyouth/field-trips.htm](https://nps.gov/guco/learn/kidsyouth/field-trips.htm).



## Recommended Resources

Historical Highway Marker, “Salt Works” near Beaufort, [dncr.nc.gov/blog/2016/04/24/salt-works-established-support-revolutionary-war-effort](https://dncr.nc.gov/blog/2016/04/24/salt-works-established-support-revolutionary-war-effort)

Guilford Courthouse National Military Park, “Patriots at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse,” <https://www.nps.gov/guco/learn/historyculture/patriot-soldiers.htm>

American Battlefield Trust. “The British Supply Chain in the South,” <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/british-supply-chain-south>

American Battlefield Trust, “The Revolutionary War in the South: Animated Battle Map,” 15-minute film, [youtube.com/watch?v=M3jNh3D57gQ](https://youtube.com/watch?v=M3jNh3D57gQ). (Useful overview of action in the South; Greene’s strategy begins at minute 7.)