



Battle of Guilford Courthouse

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

How do basic needs like food affect war?

Standards

Social Studies

I.1.1, I.1.3, I.1.4, I.1.5, I.1.6, I.1.7, I.1.8, I.1.9, I.1.10
3&5.B.1.1, 3-5.B.1.2
3-5.C&G.1.1, 3.C&G.1.2, 3.C&G.1.3
4.E.1.1, 5.E.1.2
3&5.G.1.1, 3-5.G.1.2, 3.G.1-3
3-5.H.1.1, 3-5.H.1.2, 3-5.H.1.3, 4-5.H.1.4, 3-5.H.1.5, 3-5.H.1.6

English Language Arts

RI.3-5.1, RI.3-5.2, RI.3-5.3, RI.3-5.4, RI.3-5.5, RI.3-5.10
RF.3-5.2, RF.3-5.4, RF.3-5.5
W.3-5.1, W.3-5.2
SL.3-5.1, SL.3-5.2
L.3-5.1, L.3-5.2, L.3-5.3, L.3-5.4, L.3-5.6

Visual Arts

4-5.V.2.2, 3-4.V.2.3, 3-4.V.3.1, 5.V.3.2
3-5.CX.1.1, 3.CX.1.2, 4-5.CX.1.5, 3-4.CX.2.2

Health

3.NPA.2.1, 4.NPA.2.2, 4.NPA.3.1

Objectives

- Describe the impact of basic needs like food on the lives of soldiers and citizens in North Carolina during the Revolutionary War
- Design a class flag or other object as a meaningful way to unify people towards a common goal or cause

Lesson Contents

The British turned their attention to the South in 1778, after little success in the mid-Atlantic and New England colonies, for two reasons.

1. South Carolina was the wealthiest colony and a priority for England to keep.
2. The British believed many loyalists in the region would join to fight the Continental army.

After patriot defeats in South Carolina and Georgia, Washington urged Congress to appoint Nathanael Greene as commander of the Southern Army in 1780. Greene's strategy was to lure the British Army, led by Lord Charles Cornwallis, into a chase from the S.C. border through the N.C. Piedmont, to the Dan River in Virginia. With many loyalists exiled after the 1776 Battle of Moores Creek Bridge, there was little support for British troops under Lord Cornwallis five years later. Both armies, especially the British, struggled to supply troops with food, leather for shoes, and ammunition. After two months of marching, Greene turned south again, and the two armies engaged in battle at Guilford Courthouse on March 15, 1781. Officials reported the number of dead as 93 British and 79 Continental soldiers, with hundreds more wounded.

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

Letter from John Penn to General 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.

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

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.

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

“Battle of Guilford” map, Philadelphia: Hayes & Zell, 1781, MC.175.1781hz, State Archives of N.C., <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

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

Folder Contents

- **Glossary**
- **Rations - Teacher’s Guide**
- **Activity: What Did Soldiers Eat?**
- **Activity: Provision Correspondence**
- **Activity: Guilford Petition**
- **Activity: Supplies Word Problem**
- **Activity: Battle Flag**
- **Exit Ticket**

Materials

- Projector (optional)
- Art supplies, such as markers, colored pencils, craft paper or board (optional)

Preparation

There are many options with this lesson. Please review primary sources and related materials to choose the options that are best suited for you and your students.

- Print copies of the **Glossary** to distribute to students for their reference as they work through the documents. Consider including some of the more relevant words in a vocabulary quiz or other exercise.
- Preview [Foraging: Feeding Soldiers in the Revolution - YouTube](#) to be sure that this is appropriate for your students.
- Print **Activity: What Did Soldiers Eat?** as a double-sided worksheet for each student. Familiarize yourself with the information on **Teachers' Guide: Rations**. Decide whether you'll lead a class discussion, project images of the foods, and/or have students search for images of the types of food themselves and make a display.
- Print necessary copies for **Activity: Provision Correspondence**. This includes transcription from 4 original documents (found in the primary sources folder) and a set of questions. [Note: spelling has been corrected for legibility.]

John Penn to Alexander Mebane,

John Penn to General Butler

John Taylor to Philip Vass

Nicholas Long to Colonel Thomas Wooten

Choose how you will group your students to read together and answer the questions for a jigsawing discussion.

- Print copies for each student or pairs:

Activity: Guilford Petition

Activity: Document Explorer, found in the **Cross-Lesson** folder [Note: this may also be used with the Provision Correspondence documents.]

Activity: Battle Flag

- If using **Exit Tickets**, print and cut into quarters, e.g. 7 copies for 28 tickets.

Connecting to Background Knowledge

(5 minutes)

Ask, *What are your basic needs?* Answers will vary but should include water, food, shelter, clothing. *How do you think the basic needs of soldiers were met during the Revolutionary War?*

Procedure

If desired, introduce this lesson with the 2-minute film, “**Guilford Courthouse: Defeat for Both Sides?**” [youtube.com/watch?v=sqRJGappZWY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqRJGappZWY). Note: the video explains the Southern Campaign. Clarify for students that both armies went all the way from Cowpens, SC to Virginia in a “Race to the Dan,” and then south towards Guilford.

Activity 1: Wartime Supplies

(40 - 50 minutes)

Ask students, *What do you eat in a day?* Summarize their answers into categories like meals (breakfast, lunch, supper, snacks) and then into food groups (meat, vegetables, bread/grains).

- Distribute **Activity: What Did Soldiers Eat?**. Ask students to read the items, one at a time. Briefly discuss what each is and what it does for the body. Give students a few minutes to read and answer the questions about the rations and the nutritional information on the back. Then discuss how this compares to what they eat.
- Share: *This is what Congress wanted to give soldiers, but getting supplies didn’t always go according to plan. Look for what the people in charge were doing to try to get supplies and how much they were trying to get.*
 - Divide students into pairs or small groups. Distribute **Activity: Provision Correspondence** so that 4 documents are being examined and each group has one document. Multiple groups may review the same document. These include: **John Penn to Alexander Mebane; John Penn to General Butler; John Taylor to Philip Vass; Joshua Potts to Colonel Thomas Wooten**; Give students time to read, analyze their document, and answer the questions. If desired, pair the document-question sheets with **Activity: Document Explorer**.
 - Then lead a jigsawing discussion with each group presenting the piece of provision correspondence they examined and their ideas about answers. Ask groups to find the locations mentioned in their documents on the 1770 “Compleat” map. If students need prompting, consider the following questions:
Why were these supplies needed? Why were supplies difficult to get? Where did these types of supplies come from? Who was paying for these supplies? Where did that money come from? What happened if supplies could not be found? What could this mean for the soldiers? For the war? How were they moving these supplies?
- Distribute **Activity: Guilford Petition** and **Activity: Document Explorer**. As a class, read the petition aloud and then give students time to write answers to the worksheet questions. Then discuss as a class with the following possible guiding questions: *Who is expected to solve this problem? If farmers aren’t able to plant their crops, where will the needed food*

come from? If the government doesn't have the resources to feed the army, how can they help the citizens? Should they?

- Show the 2-minute video, “**Foraging: Feeding Soldiers in the Revolution**” found here: [youtube.com/watch?v=ePKIQ_ZhwiA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePKIQ_ZhwiA). Discuss what foraging meant for the soldiers, for their leaders, and for the farmers whose supplies were being taken.
- Distribute **Activity: Supplies Word Problem**. Discuss what it must have looked and sounded like for these supply trains to move on rough roads in all kinds of weather in an attempt to supply the army.

Activity 2: The Guilford Battle Flag

(20 minutes)

Distribute **Activity: Battle Flag** and art supplies. Discuss student comparisons to today's American flag, state flag, or other flag from the Revolutionary period. When students have finished with their designs, allow time for them to share their ideas with the class with discussion or display (if desired).

Exit Ticket

(5 minutes)

What condition of being a soldier in 1781 would you find most difficult?

Modifications

- Documents could be shared individually with students needing to take notes, with vision issues, or those 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 need more challenging or independent work. These can be done independently or collaboratively.
- If students are struggling with the concept of foraging, take them on a walk outside. Visit your school's playground or field/open space. Tell the students that it's time to find lunch. Remind them that for much of the American army's journeys, it was winter (when plants aren't growing) and that the countryside may have looked like this: open spaces, forests, fields, etc. What food do they see? Discuss what it means to find and prepare food without grocery stores, refrigeration, or modern means of cooking (no microwaves, stoves, or air fryers). *Where does it come from? How do you get it? How long does it take to find? To grow? To process? To cook?*

Extension Activities

- Look at the ingredients that were available to the soldiers as rations during the Revolutionary War. Create a recipe that could have been cooked using only those ingredients plus anything that could be foraged in the period from January-March.
- What did war look like for the common soldier? How did they handle being hungry? Watch this video that features quotes from the journal of Joseph Plumb Martin and then imagine you are a soldier in the Southern campaign and write a journal entry.
[youtube.com/watch?v=eCsKCbl4Fr8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCsKCbl4Fr8).
- Thomas Stewart (introduced in the **Individual Stories Gallery** lesson) served at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse in the Continental Line. What might his experiences have been like? Imagine that you are Stewart and create a journal entry for the evening of March 15, 1781, after the battle.

Field Trip Connection

Virtual tour of Guilford Courthouse Battlefield with the American Battlefield Trust,
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.

Recommended Resources

Marko Zlatich, “You asked, we answered: What did soldiers eat during the Revolutionary War?”, National Museum of American History, americanhistory.si.edu/explore/stories/you-asked-we-answered-what-did-soldiers-eat-during-revolutionary-war

Historical Highway Marker, “Salt Works” near Beaufort, dn-cr.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,” nps.gov/guco/learn/historyculture/patriot-soldiers.htm.

American Battlefield Trust, “The British Supply Chain in the South,” battlefields.org/learn/articles/british-supply-chain-south; “The Revolutionary War in the South: Animated Battle Map,” 15-minute film, [youtube.com/watch?v=M3jNh3D57gQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3jNh3D57gQ). (Useful overview of action in the South; Greene’s strategy begins at minute 7.)