



Name: _____ ANSWER KEY

Date: _____ Class: _____

BACKGROUND: North Carolina Militia

Look closely at the detail from the 1781 map, "Battle of Guilford" to find blue lines marking the first and second positions of Americans soldiers in the fight. N.C. militia formed the front line, Virginia militia the second line, and the Continental troops behind. Militia men were part-time soldiers, often



"Battle of Guilford" (Philadelphia: Hayes & Zell, 1781) MC.175.1781hz,
State Archives of N.C.

serving 3-month terms and fought battles regionally, while Continental Line soldiers signed up for longer terms (9 months to 3 years), had more formal training, and traveled throughout the states and even to Canada to fight. If militia men deserted, they were drafted into Continental Line service.

Greene commanded the county militias to be on the front line, fire two rounds, and then fall back. Militia troops did not have bayonets, and to avoid hand-to-hand combat with British bayonets, some fell back after the first round, seeing there was not time to re-load. Greene reported disappointment in the militia's performance.



British musket and bayonet, 1762, Smithsonian Museum of American History collection, 1980.0399.0881.

ACTIVITY: North Carolina Militia

Quick Fact Check

Name a difference between soldiers of the militia and the Continental line.

Shorter terms, less experience, fought within region, not well supplied with arms and ammo

What was the N.C. militia's position at the Battle of Guilford?

Front line

What arms were the militia unlikely to have?

Bayonets

What does the map of the Battle tell us about the landscape (look closely at the symbols)?

Thick woods, except around the road—area of initial fighting; British lined up at a creek

In the H. of Commons 4 July 1781

M. Speaker & Gentlemen

We send for your concurrence a Resolve Recommending to Major General Green to discharge those persons who fled from the action at Guilford Court House & who ^{were} turned over into the Continental ^{Service} so soon as the Situation of affairs will admit Of such an act of Benevolence

Tho^s Benbury SC [Speaker, House of Commons]

By order of J Hunt ChC [Clerk, House of Commons]

House of Commons Resolve, General Assembly Session Records, House Joint Resolutions, July 2-7, 1781, box 1, State Archives of N.C.

Read the above resolution from the House of Commons. *Imagine* you are a member of the Senate. Would you support it?

Argue in support of this resolve.

Student answers will vary but could include:

- The gov't should be lenient on local men needed for both the war effort & to support the new government.
- The militia had little training and few armaments; they could not stay the course after initial shots fired and time needed to reload.
- They could not be expected to face the British bayonets.
- In summertime, they are needed at home to harvest crops important for civilian and troop supplies.
- Some were at the end of their enlistments & faced with battle, simply chose to leave.
- Sending them home until needed means that they don't have to be fed by the government.
- Punishing them harshly might turn others from away from service.

Argue in opposition of this resolve.

Student answers will vary but could include:

- They should not have abandoned their posts.
- Their actions could have cost the Americans the battle – they should be punished.
- They caused a setback in the war and should face the consequences.
- They should stay and receive more training, not be sent home.
- It's summer and provisions are more plentiful – this is a good time to train.
- It's summer and thus a good time to engage the enemy – we need the numbers these men provide.
- The militia needs to learn to take authority seriously, whether from their officers or the new government.