



## Teaching Guide

### SEGMENT 1, WEBISODE 2

Please note: Each segment in this Webisode has its own Teaching Guide



#### Segment Overview

The Declaration of Independence created a sense of national and historical purpose, elevating the revolutionary struggle to a profound world event and further unifying colonial sentiment. A government derives its “just powers from the consent of the governed,” and its purpose is to secure the “inalienable rights” of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” The revolution opened a door for debate about the rights not only of colonists but also of women and African Americans. As Abigail Adams and others pressed for greater legal rights, women manned the home front, aided the war effort, and even shouldered arms in some instances. African Americans, though initially scorned for service, enlisted and served alongside their white counterparts, and their distinguished service further undermined the injustice of slavery. The declaration forced many colonists to recognize the inconsistency of slaveholders demanding the rights they denied to others, and some colonial leaders denounced slavery and the slave trade. The revolution became not only a war for the people but a war of the people, drawing from the strengths of young and old, black and white, men, women, and children.

#### Teacher Directions

1. Students, in small teams, discuss the following questions.
  - Why was the American Revolution a “people’s war”?
  - Why might African Americans have fought for a nation that allowed enslavement of their race?
2. Make sure students understand the following points in discussing the questions.

Ordinary people fought the American Revolution for the rights of ordinary people. The first soldiers—the minutemen—were farmers, craftsmen, and others who took up arms in defense of their rights. Men of every age wore the Continental blue uniform, and black men fought alongside white men. Women shouldered great responsibilities when their husbands, sons, and brothers went off to war, and some intrepid women followed the army to care for the men or disguised themselves as men to fight.

Many black men—both free and enslaved—fought for the patriot cause. African Americans hoped that the liberty promised by the Declaration of Independence would extend to all members of their race. While their offers to enlist were initially rejected, free men were accepted into the army and



#### Let's Discuss

served in both integrated and segregated regiments. By 1779, African Americans comprised about fifteen percent of the Continental army.

### Teacher Directions

1. Distribute the Student Sheets: *Joseph Plumb Martin: Boy Soldier*, *Sarah Osborn: A Camp Follower Provides for Soldiers*, and *Deborah Sampson: Female Soldier* to each small team of students.
2. Working with their teams, the students read the information on the sheets, deciding how each person participated in the cause. Each team creates a poster, pamphlet, poem, or diorama illustrating the story of one or more of the individuals.
3. As students work, visit each team to help students read the information on the sheets and complete the activity. After students have finished the activity, allow teams to share their findings.
4. To close this activity, students reflect on the following questions.
  - How did the Revolutionary War change the lives of women and children?
  - If you could meet one of the people profiled on the sheets, which one would you want to meet? Why?
  - What questions would you ask him or her?

### Teacher Directions

1. Distribute the Student Sheets: *Joseph Plumb Martin: Boy Soldier*, *Sarah Osborn: A Camp Follower Provides for Soldiers*, and *Deborah Sampson: Female Soldier* to each small team of students.
2. Each student chooses Joseph Plumb Martin, Sarah Osborn, or Deborah Sampson, reads the account, and answers the following questions.
  - What do you find inspiring about this person's life?
  - What difficulties did he or she face?
  - Would you have responded differently? Explain.



History Sleuth



What do you  
Think?



## Teacher Directions

1. Share the following information with students for their discussion.
2. In their teams students discuss the following.

- How did each of these individuals advance the cause of freedom?

James Otis was one of the earliest patriot writers to link the struggle for black freedom with the struggle for colonial freedom in his *Rights of the British Colonies*. He wrote, "...The colonists, black and white, born here, are free born British subjects, and entitled to all the essential civil rights of such...."

Abigail Adams, in 1774, criticized colonial slaveholding in a letter to her husband: "It always appeared a most iniquitous scheme to me to fight ourselves for what we are daily robbing and plundering from those who have as good a right to freedom as we have."

James Forten, while serving in the American Revolution, was captured by the British and held on a British prison ship. After the war, he took up sailmaking and became a prosperous businessman, abolitionist, and leading citizen of Philadelphia. His friend Paul Cuffee was a leader in the American Colonization Society, an organization that sought to send free African Americans to colonize Africa. Cuffee asked Forten to help raise interest among Philadelphia's free African population in efforts to colonize Sierra Leone.

On January 15, 1817, Forten and other African American leaders held a historic meeting at Bethel Church in Philadelphia to discuss colonization. After three prominent black ministers, Richard Allen, Absalom Jones and John Gloucester, spoke in favor of immigrating to Africa, Forten called the assembled 3,000 black men to vote. Not a single man voted for colonization. Forten later wrote Cuffee that, "there was not one sole (*sic*) that was in favor of going to Africa." The men understood that many leaders of the all-white American Colonization Society sought not the good of the free African American population but to protect.

American Colonization Society leaders believed it impossible for the two races to live together in harmony and that the presence of free Africans undermined slavery. Furthermore; removing free blacks, they believed, would eliminate troublesome black abolitionists. The men assembled at Bethel passed a unanimous resolution: "Whereas our ancestors (not of choice) were the first cultivators of the wilds of America, we their descendents feel ourselves entitled to participate in the blessings of her luxuriant soil...Resolved, that we never will separate ourselves voluntarily from the slave population in this country; they are our brethren by the ties of consanguinity, of suffering, and of wrongs..." Forten chaired the committee to oppose the American Colonization Society.



## Connections

### Teacher Directions

Use the following activities with your students.

**Music** — Students listen to and compare two soldier songs popular during the Revolution. “Johnny Has Gone for a Soldier” (found on many period recordings or on the website <http://members.home.net/gronj/johnny.htm>) was probably adapted from an Irish song and dates back to the seventeenth century. “Soldier, Soldier Won’t You Marry Me?” is a light-hearted ditty students will enjoy. It can be found on the web site [www.howardchan.com/database/songs/english/pages/wumarry](http://www.howardchan.com/database/songs/english/pages/wumarry) or on many period recordings.

**Art** — Students examine illustrations or photographs of period costumes for women and soldiers during the Revolutionary War. (*The Revolutionary Soldier 1775-1783* by C. Keith Wilbur is one excellent source.) Students draw their own illustration of a Revolutionary War person.

**Language Arts** — Students write a poem about James Forten’s adventures during the Revolutionary War. The teacher may want students to experiment with various forms, such as the couplet, quatrain, or free verse.

**Art** — Students draw a political cartoon to illustrate the following quote from Thomas Jefferson on the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

*May it be to the world, what I believe it will be...the signal of arousing men to...assume the blessings of self government...All eyes are open, or opening to the rights of man....the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God...let the annual return of this day, forever refresh our recollections of these rights and an undiminished devotion to them.*

## Joseph Plumb Martin: Boy Soldier

Although he struggled with fear for his safety, Martin enlisted before his sixteenth birthday. He re-enlisted several times, serving through the entire war. He faced starvation and danger, and served in the most important engagements of the war: in the defense of New York City in 1776; at the Battle of Germantown in 1777, at Valley Forge in the winter of 1777-78; at the Battle of Monmouth in 1778; and at the siege of Yorktown in 1781. As an old man he published his recollections.



Several months after enlisting, Martin's regiment was ordered to fight the British, who had landed on Long Island.

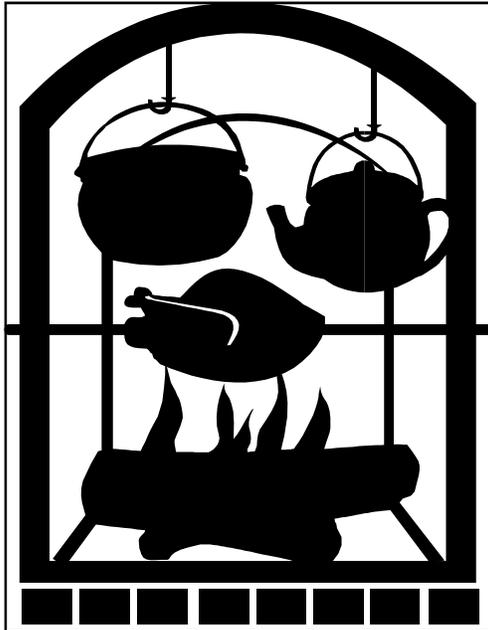
Although this was not unexpected to me, yet it gave me rather a disagreeable feeling, as I was pretty well assured I should have to sniff a little gunpowder...I then went to the top of the house where I had a full view of that part of the Island; I distinctly saw the smoke of the field artillery.... The horrors of battle then presented themselves to my mind in all their hideousness; I must come to it now, thought I. Well, I will endeavor to do my duty as well as I am able and leave the event with Providence....

They land on Long Island. We now began to meet the wounded men, another sight I was unacquainted with, some with broken arms, some with broken legs, and some with broken heads. The sight of these a little daunted me, and made me think of home.... One of the soldiers complaining of thirst (said) to his officer, "Look at that man," said he, pointing to me, "he is not thirsty, I will warrant it." I felt a little elevated to be styled a man.

...Starvation seemed to be entailed upon the army and every animal connected with it. The oxen...all died, and the southern horses fared no better...we crossed the Schuylkill (river) on a cold, rainy, and snowy night...we at last settled down at a place called "the Gulf...and here we encamped some time, and here we had liked to have encamped forever—for starvation here *rioted* in its glory....

While we lay here, there was a Continental thanksgiving ordered by Congress...we were ordered to participate in it. We had nothing to eat for two or three days previous, except what the trees of the fields and forests afforded us. But we must now have what congress said—a sumptuous thanksgiving to close the year of high living we had now nearly seen brought to a close...our country, ever mindful of its suffering army, opened her sympathizing heart so wide upon this occasion as to give us something to make the world stare. And what do you think it was, reader? Guess....I will tell you: It gave each and every man *half a gill* of rice and a *tablespoonful* of vinegar!!

## Sarah Osborn: A Camp Follower Provides for Soldiers



*Sarah Osborn was one of the thousands of “camp followers,” women who followed the army to cook and clean for the soldiers. Her husband, who had enlisted, insisted that she join him. After the war, to qualify for his pension, she told government officials of her experiences at Yorktown.*

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We marched immediately for a place called Williamsburg...myself alternately on horseback and on foot. There arrived, we remained two days till the army all came in by land and then marched for Yorktown...The (New) York troops

were posted at the right, the Connecticut troops next, and the French to the left. In about one day or less than a day, we reached the place of encampment about one mile from Yorktown...

My attention was arrested by the appearance of a large plain between us and Yorktown and an entrenchment thrown up. I also saw a number of dead Negroes lying round their encampment, whom I understood the British had driven out of the town and left to starve, or were first starved and then thrown out. I took my stand just back of the American tents, say about a mile from the town, and busied myself washing, mending, and cooking for the soldiers, in which I was assisted by the other females. Some men washed their own clothing. I heard the roar of the artillery for a number of days, and the last night the Americans threw up entrenchments; it was a misty, foggy night, rather wet but not rainy...I cooked and carried in beef, bread, and coffee (in a gallon pot) to the soldiers in the entrenchment.

On one occasion when I was thus employed carrying in provisions, I met General Washington, who asked me if I “was not afraid of the cannonballs?”

I replied...“It would not do for the men to fight and starve too.”

## Deborah Sampson: Female Soldier

**D**eborah Sampson disguised herself as a man, walked to a nearby town, and enlisted in the Continental army in 1781 as Robert Shurtleff. Tall and strong from years of farm work, Deborah served for a year and a half, earning a reputation as a brave and loyal soldier. She suffered a sword wound to her forehead and a musket ball pierced her thigh—but she dug it out herself rather than have a doctor discover her secret! During a later hospitalization for a fever, however, a physician discovered her secret. Deborah was honorably discharged from the army. She later married, bore three children, and received a pension for her military service. Deborah traveled throughout New England lecturing about her experiences in the military.



Deborah Sampson

*A writer, Herman Mann, published an inflated account of her military adventures several years after the war. An article in a New York newspaper praised her exploits.*

“An extraordinary instance of virtue in a female soldier has occurred lately in the American army in the Massachusetts line:...a lively, comely young nymph, 19 years of age, dressed in man’s apparel, has been discovered, and...has served in the character of a soldier for nearly three years undiscovered. During this time, she displayed much alertness, chastity, and valor: having been in several engagements and received two wounds, a small shot remaining in her to this day. She was a remarkable, vigilant soldier on her post, always gained the applause of her officers, was never found in liquor, and always kept company with the most temperate and upright soldiers.... A violent illness, when the troops were at Philadelphia, led to the discovery of her sex. She has since been honorably discharged from the army, with a reward...”

“The cause of her personating a man, it is said, proceeded from the rigor of her parents, who exerted their prerogative to induce her marriage with a young gentleman against whom she had conceived a great antipathy, together with her being a remarkable heroine and warmly attached to the cause of her country; in the service of which it must be acknowledged, she gained reputation, and, no doubt, will be noticed in the history of our grand revolution....”