



American Revolution/Geography

I. SYNOPSIS

George Washington and his army came to Morristown twice during the Revolutionary War: first in January 1777, after he crossed the Delaware River and defeated the British at the battles of Trenton and Princeton, and second in December 1779.

During the second encampment, Washington and his staff stayed in Morristown at a large house owned by Mrs. Theodosia Ford, a widow. General Washington, his wife Martha, and his staff lived in the main part of the house, which they made into their headquarters. Other officers lived closer to the troops in modest farmhouses like that of Henry Wick. The ordinary soldiers lived in log huts in Jockey Hollow. Many of these soldiers were farmers and workers who owned little or no land; some were African-Americans; and many were substitutes hired to serve in the army for other people.

Park Ranger Ted Edger explains that during winter encampments soldiers drilled and trained. Ranger Edger recruits several students and inducts them into the Continental Army. He shows them how to march and use their muskets. He then asks them if they are ready to fight the British army.

The winter of 1779-1780 was one of the worst of the century. Many soldiers got sick, there was little food, and the Continental Congress failed to pay them. Some of the soldiers refused to obey their officers. A full-fledged mutiny almost occurred, but Washington managed to quiet their complaints by obtaining more supplies and money from the Continental Congress.

The army eventually won the war, the United States gained its independence from England, and Washington emerged from the war as a national hero.

II. KEY WORDS

Colony - a new territory settled by people from another country who maintain economic and political ties to the country from which they came.

Continental Congress - the political body, meeting in Philadelphia, to which the colonies sent representatives, which protested English colonial policies and eventually declared independence from England.

Revolution -- the overthrow of one government or ruler and its replacement by another, usually resulting in fundamental changes in society.

Continental Army - the army established by the Continental Congress, under the command of *General George Washington*, to fight the British during the War of Independence.

Mutiny - a revolt of soldiers or sailors against their superior officers.

III. SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

A. GEOGRAPHY

1. Objective

The students will locate key places on a map and analyze the factors that resulted in Washington's decision to locate two winter encampments at Morristown during the War for Independence.

2. Before Viewing the Program

Write the following places on the board: Morristown, the Great Swamp, the Watchung Mountains, New York City, Trenton, and Princeton. Distribute the blank maps of New Jersey to the class. Tell the students to pay special attention while watching the program to the locations written on the board and the reasons Washington brought his army to Morristown.

3. After Viewing the Program

Ask the students to draw and label on the maps the locations listed on the board. Then ask them to list the reasons why Morristown was a good location to use as a winter encampment for the Continental Army.

B. THE CONTINENTAL ARMY

1. Objective

Students will describe life in the *Continental Army* during the winter encampments at Morristown.

2. Before Viewing the Program

Tell the class that one of the themes in the program they are about to watch is what life was like in the *Continental Army* during the winter encampments at Morristown. Ask them to pay special attention to this theme, because they will be asked to describe life in the army in their own words.

3. After Viewing the Program

Ask the students to pretend that they are soldiers in the *Continental Army*. Tell them to write an imaginary letter home, in which they describe life in the army during the winter encampment. Suggest that they include such topics as the weather, lodgings, pay or lack of pay, activities during the day, attitudes towards the officers, and whether they would consider re-enlisting for another three years. Ask for volunteers to read their letters to the entire class.

C. MUTINY AT MORRISTOWN

1. Objective

Students will be able to interpret two primary historical documents about the same event.

2. After viewing the Program

Download, reproduce and distribute the excerpts from Private Joseph Plumb Martin's journal and George Washington's letter to the Continental Congress describing the mutiny at Morristown in May 1780. Ask the class to discuss the following questions based on these documents: What were the complaints of the

soldiers? What was the soldiers' attitude toward their country? What was their attitude towards their fellow countrymen? What was Washington's attitude toward the mutinying soldiers? Did he view their complaints as valid? Were the soldiers justified in disobeying their officers?

IV. SUGGESTED READINGS

Lender, Mark E. *The New Jersey Soldier. New Jersey's Revolutionary Experience*, no. 3. Trenton: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1975.

http://www.njstatelib.org/NJ_Information/Digital_Collections/Revolution/Soldier.pdf

Martin, Joseph Plumb. *Yankee Doodle Boy; a Young Soldier's Adventures in the American Revolution, Told by Himself*. New York, W.R. Scott, 1964.

Stewart, Bruce W. *Morristown: A Crucible of the American Revolution. New Jersey's Revolutionary Experience*, no. 5. Trenton: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1975.

http://www.njstatelib.org/NJ_Information/Digital_Collections/Revolution/Morristown.pdf