



A Day in the Life of a Revolutionary Soldier

Standards Addressed:

Social Studies

- 4-3.6:** Compare the daily life and roles of diverse groups of Americans during and after the Revolutionary War, including roles taken by women and African Americans such as Martha Washington, Mary Ludwig Hays McCauley (Molly Pitcher), Abigail Adams, Crispus Attucks, and Peter Salem.

English Language Arts

- 4-5.1:** Create informational pieces such as postcards, flyers, letters, and e-mails that use language appropriate for the specific audience.

Objective:

1. Students will write a journal entry as if they were a soldier in the Revolutionary War. Students should discuss the importance of the soldier's equipment in relationship to daily life.

Materials:

- *Paul Revere's Midnight Ride*, by Steven Krensky
- "Revolutionary Soldier Equipment Fact Sheet"
- "Excerpts from Joseph Plumb Martin's Journal"
- "Fictional Account of a Revolutionary War Soldier's Day"
- "Journal"

Procedures:

1. Introduce the students to the lesson.
 - Open with the following question: Can anyone tell me what they think it would be like to be a soldier? This will get the students to start thinking about what it would be like to be a soldier.
 - Read *Paul Revere's Midnight Ride*; discuss the book with the students. Answer the questions: What war was this story about? Who was fighting the war? Why, do you think, they were fighting? What equipment do you think a soldier needs in order to do his job? Why are these items important?
2. Distribute the "Revolutionary Soldier Equipment Fact Sheet," and ask the following question: What are some jobs that require you to have certain equipment to do the job?
 - Discuss the terms provided on the Revolutionary Soldier Equipment Fact Sheet.

- Ask the students which item from the Revolutionary Soldier Equipment Fact Sheet they feel is the most important and why?
3. Read “Fictional Account of a Revolutionary War Soldier’s Day.” Discuss what life was like for the soldier. Answer these questions: How do you think the soldier was feeling? Do you think his life was easy or hard? Did you recognize any of the equipment he was using? Name some of the equipment and how it was used.
 4. Have students read Joseph Plumb Martin’s real-life account as a Revolutionary War soldier; have students write questions they have about the journal entries. Use the student’s questions to emphasize the hardships endured by a Revolutionary War soldier.

Assessment:


- Students will write a historically accurate journal entry as James Southerland on the following day (April 2, 1774). Be sure to include at least three equipment terms from the Revolutionary Soldier Equipment Fact Sheet.

Extension Activities:

1. Math Activity- Students will create a bar graph in class based on their opinion of the most important piece of equipment of a Revolutionary War soldier.
2. Language Arts Activity- Students will write a letter to a soldier in Iraq to find out what daily life is like for him/her. Please visit www.amillionthanks.org for guidelines.

Revolutionary Soldier's Equipment Fact Sheet



	
	Haversack – a single strapped bag worn over one shoulder used to carry food and personal belongings
	Canteen – a round container fastened with a shoulder strap used to hold water
	Musket – the gun used by a revolutionary soldier
Bayonet – knife or dagger shaped weapon designed to fit on or over the musket	
Knapsack – a bag similar to a backpack used to carry a soldier's bedding and clothing	



Excerpts from Joseph Plumb Martin's Journal (Private Yankee Doodle)

1777, Somewhere Near Germantown, Pennsylvania

I had now to travel the rest of the day, after marching all the day and night before and fighting all the morning. I had eaten nothing since the noon of the preceding day, nor did I eat a morsel til the forenoon of the next day, and I needed rest as much as victuals.

After the army had collected again and recovered from their panic, we were kept marching and countermarching, starving and freezing, nothing else happening, although that was enough, until we camped at a place called the White Marsh, about twelve miles to the northward of Philadelphia.

1777, The Gulf

The army was now not only starved but naked. The greatest part was not only being shirtless and barefoot, but destitute of all other clothing, especially blankets. I procured a small piece of raw cowhide and made myself a pair of moccasins, which kept my feet (while they lasted) from the frozen ground, although, as I well remember, the hard edges so galled my ankles, while on a march, that it was with much difficulty and pain that I could wear them afterwards. The only alternative I had was to endure this inconvenience or to go barefoot, as hundreds of my companions had to.



James Southerland: A Fictional Account of a Revolutionary War Soldier's Day



Monday, April 1, 1774

Today I woke up to rain softly sprinkling on my face. I was not happy about this, for it had been raining a lot during the past few days, and I was tired of being wet and cold. I quickly rolled up my blanket and put it into my knapsack, which held my spare clothing. I opened my canteen and took a swig of water. I am careful not to use too much of my water, because lately it has been hard to find good water. The water near our camp is muddy, nasty, and full of frogs. I opened my haversack and pulled out my ration of bread. The bread was hard enough to break the teeth of a rat...

In the morning the scout signaled our troops to march. The British were near! We marched until afternoon bearing the heavy weight of our gear. Somehow we mustered on. Then we ran into the British. We drove them back at first. Later though, the British received more regulars to help them and they drove us back. Several of us were wounded, but none have been killed. This was my first battle. I am tired and very scared. I think I need more practice with my musket. I do not know if my shots did any damage.

We set up camp for the night. Several of the soldiers gathered wood for the fire, and stacked it into a pile. Once there was a sufficient pile, William pulled out a flint and a striker and started a fire. The food here is not like the food at home. It is plain awful! The meat is burned on the outside and almost raw on the inside. The bread is just flour and water mixed together and tastes like the stone it was baked on. But some soldiers had to forge for their vittles, so I am grateful for mine. After supper, we tended to our muskets. We cleaned them and got them ready for tomorrow. I shudder as I look at the bayonet. I am scared of the day I will actually have to use it. I also made my cartridges. Preparation of cartridges for the muskets is a very important camp duty. We have to make the lead balls and roll them in with the gunpowder, into cartridges.

Sometimes to wind down after a long day we pull our cards and dice out of our haversacks and enjoy a few games before bed. I was so anxious about today, it was difficult for me to lie down and fall asleep, so I searched out one of my friends to play a card game with. Really I just wanted to talk about the day.

It is time for bed now. I should not stay up too late, for tomorrow we are supposed to attack a major British supply line. Once again I roll out my blanket on the cold ground, and pray that it will not rain tonight.



James Southerland

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