



Day 13 American Revolution  
65 Minutes

Continental Army

# The Continental Army

**Detailed Lesson Plan with PowerPoint Anchor**

**Grade Level:** 5–8

**Time:** 60–75 minutes

**Unit:** The American Revolution

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## Important Teacher Note on Chronology

This lesson intentionally **steps outside the chronological sequence** of previous lessons. Rather than stopping in 1775, it explains **how the Continental Army evolved, fought, and improved over the course of the war**, including events and battles that occur later than the current point in the unit timeline. This approach helps students understand *how* the army functioned and survived before examining those later battles in detail.

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## Lesson Overview

This lesson explores the formation, challenges, and development of the Continental Army. Using a teacher-led PowerPoint presentation as the anchor, students examine why local militias were not enough, how the Continental Army was created, and the difficulties faced by soldiers during the war. The lesson also highlights leadership, training, and organization, showing how the army evolved into an effective fighting force.

Students deepen understanding through a differentiated article, an interactive module on military ranks, and multiple reading comprehension activities.

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## Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Explain why colonial militias could not defeat Britain alone
- Describe how and why the Continental Army was created
- Identify major challenges faced by the army
- Explain how leadership and training improved the army
- Understand the structure and ranks within the Continental Army

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## Essential Question

How did the Continental Army survive long enough to defeat the British Empire?

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## Materials

- PowerPoint presentation: *The Continental Army*
- Differentiated article on the Continental Army
- Online interactive module on Continental Army ranks
- Integrated printable or online scavenger hunt
- Reading comprehension exercises

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## Lesson Sequence

### 1. Hook and Background Connection (5 minutes)

Begin with the prompt:

Why would a group of farmers and laborers believe they could defeat one of the strongest armies in the world?

Briefly review earlier lessons on militias and early battles, then explain that this lesson focuses on **how the army functioned and improved over time**, even before students study those later battles in depth.

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## 2. PowerPoint Anchor Instruction (20 minutes)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/revwar/army.pptx>

Use the PowerPoint presentation as the instructional anchor.

Key points to emphasize during the presentation:

- The role of militias before the Revolution
- Why a permanent army became necessary
- The creation of the Continental Army in 1775
- Appointment of George Washington as Commander-in-Chief
- Supply shortages, desertion, disease, and morale problems
- Winter suffering at Morristown and Valley Forge
- Training and discipline under Baron von Steuben
- The army's improved performance in later battles

Teacher emphasis:

The Continental Army was not strong at the beginning; it became strong through persistence, leadership, and organization.

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## 3. Core Reading Activity (15 minutes)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/revolutionary-war/people-of-the-revolutionary-war/the-continental-army>

Students read the **differentiated article on the Continental Army**, selecting an appropriate reading level.

Guided reading focus:

- Why militias were not enough
- Challenges faced by soldiers
- How training and leadership changed the army

Students complete selected reading comprehension exercises during or after the reading.

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## 4. Interactive Module: Ranks of the Continental Army (15 minutes)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/revolutionary-war/people-of-the-revolutionary-war/the-continental-army> (scroll to the end of the page)

Students explore the **online interactive module explaining ranks within the Continental Army**.

Students complete the **integrated printable or online scavenger hunt**, focusing on:

- Differences between officers and enlisted soldiers
- Responsibilities of various ranks
- Why organization mattered in wartime

Discussion prompt during the activity:

Why would a clear chain of command matter in battle?

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## 5. Literacy Reinforcement and Differentiation

Students complete additional **reading comprehension exercises**:

- [Continental Army Printable Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 800
- [Continental Army Online Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 1100
- [Continental Army Printable Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 1100

These activities may be used for centers, homework, or independent practice.

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## Closure (5 minutes)

Discussion prompt:

Which challenge do you think was hardest for the Continental Army to overcome, and why?

Exit ticket options:

- One reason the Continental Army struggled early
- One way the army improved over time