



Day 32: American Revolution

Monmouth Courthouse and Molly Pitcher

The Battle of Monmouth Courthouse: Practice, Leadership, and Legend

Time: 60–70 minutes

Grade Range: Upper elementary–middle school

Unit: American Revolution

Lesson Overview

This lesson examines the Battle of Monmouth Courthouse as a critical moment when the Continental Army proved that training and discipline could transform performance on the battlefield. Using a teacher-led PowerPoint as the anchor, students analyze leadership, preparation, and perseverance, and then explore the legend and mystery of Molly Pitcher through an interactive historical investigation.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Explain how training at Valley Forge improved the Continental Army
 - Describe the key events and outcome of the Battle of Monmouth Courthouse
 - Analyze the role of leadership during crisis
 - Distinguish between historical fact and legend using evidence
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Materials

- **PowerPoint: Battle of Monmouth Courthouse & Molly Pitcher** (anchor)
 - Article: **Battle of Monmouth Courthouse**
 - **Molly Pitcher Interactive Module**
 - Activity: *Molly Pitcher — What We Know vs. What We Don't Know*
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Hook: Practice Makes Perfect (10 minutes)

Begin with a discussion students can immediately relate to.

Teacher Prompts:

- Have you ever practiced something for a long time and noticed real improvement?
- Can practice turn someone who struggles into someone who succeeds?
- Does practice always show results right away?

Explain that after the terrible winter at Valley Forge, the Continental Army had **practiced relentlessly**. The Battle of Monmouth Courthouse would be the first real test to see if that practice made a difference.

Anchor Activity

PowerPoint Presentation: Battle of Monmouth Courthouse & Molly Pitcher

https://learnaboutamerica.com/revwar/monmouth_courthouse.pptx

Time: 30–35 minutes

Below is a **highly elaborative slide-by-slide teacher script**.

Slide 1 – Battle of Monmouth Courthouse (1778)

Teacher Script:

“This battle mattered because it showed whether the Continental Army had truly improved. After months of training, this was the moment to see if practice really made perfect.”

Slide 2 – After Valley Forge

Teacher Script:

“At Valley Forge, soldiers didn’t just survive—they trained. Under Baron von Steuben, they learned how to march, fire efficiently, and fight as a unified force. Monmouth would test those lessons.”

Slide 3 – British Evacuate Philadelphia

Teacher Script:

“The British left Philadelphia because they feared a French naval blockade. Their long march back to New York created a rare opportunity for attack.”

Slide 4 – Washington Sees an Opportunity

Teacher Script:

George Washington recognized that a marching army is vulnerable. He knew this was the best chance to strike the British in open combat.”

Slide 5 – The Attack Begins

Teacher Script:

“Washington ordered 5,000 troops to attack the British rear guard. The goal wasn’t to win immediately, but to slow the British until the main army arrived.”

Slide 6 – General Charles Lee’s Failure

Teacher Script:

“General Charles Lee hesitated and gave confusing orders. His attack collapsed into a retreat, threatening to undo all the army’s hard work.”

Slide 7 – Washington Takes Command

Teacher Script:

“When Washington encountered the retreating troops, he took control immediately. His leadership calmed the soldiers and restored order in the chaos.”

Slide 8 – A Brutal Day of Fighting

Teacher Script:

“The battle was fought on one of the hottest days of the war. Soldiers collapsed from heat exhaustion, and many died without ever firing a shot.”

Slide 9 – Molly Pitcher

Teacher Script:

“The legend of **Molly Pitcher** emerged here. She carried water to soldiers and, according to tradition, took over a cannon when her husband fell.”

Slide 10 – An Encouraging Draw

Teacher Script:

“Although neither side won decisively, the Patriots proved they could hold their ground against British regulars—something that had not happened before.”

Slide 11 – Why Monmouth Mattered

Teacher Script:

“This battle wasn’t about territory—it was about confidence. The Continental Army proved that training and discipline could match British strength.”

Slide 12 – Aftermath and Legacy

Teacher Script:

“Monmouth was the last major battle in the North. From this point on, the British shifted their focus south, while Americans believed in themselves more than ever.”

Guided Reading: Battle of Monmouth Courthouse (10–15 minutes)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/revolutionary-war/battles-of-the-revolutionary-war/battle-of-monmouth-courthouse>

Students read the **Battle of Monmouth Courthouse article** (independent or paired).

Focus Questions:

- How was this battle different from earlier American defeats?
 - Why is Monmouth considered a success despite being a draw?
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Interactive Investigation: Molly Pitcher (15–20 minutes)

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

Students explore the **Molly Pitcher Interactive Module** and complete the activity:

Molly Pitcher: What We Know vs. What We Don't Know

Student Task:

- Identify facts supported by historical evidence
- Identify parts of the story that are legend or uncertain
- Decide why stories like Molly Pitcher's matter even when details are unclear

Encourage discussion about **how historians separate fact from tradition**.

Closure (5 minutes)

Return to the hook:

- Did practice really make a difference at Monmouth?
- Why is Monmouth remembered as a turning point for the army?

Reinforce the idea that **training, leadership, and perseverance** can transform failure into confidence.

Optional Reading Comprehension Activities

- [Battle of Monmouth Courthouse Printable Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 1200
- [Battle of Monmouth Courthouse Printable Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 800
- [Battle of Monmouth Courthouse Online Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 1200
- [Molly Pitcher Printable Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 1000
- [Molly Pitcher Printable Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 800
- [Molly Pitcher Online Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 1000