



THE MOHICAN PEOPLE
THEIR LIVES AND THEIR LANDS
A CURRICULUM UNIT FOR GRADES FOUR-FIVE

PART 4 THE STOCKBRIDGE MOHICANS AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

TIME ONE CLASS PERIOD

- OBJECTIVES**
1. Students' awareness will be raised regarding the general background of both the American Revolution and the involvement of Native Nations, especially the Mohicans, in it.
 2. Students will hear some truths from the research of competent scholars that dispel several popular myths relating to Native People in the era of the Revolutionary War.
 3. Students will continue the development of the skills they have been using: notebook writing, listening/reading concentration, and sharing information orally.

- MATERIALS**
1. Student Resource Sheet # 3.1: Effects of the Coming of the Europeans (for review)
 2. Teacher Resource Sheet # 4.1: Myths of the American Revolution
 3. Teacher Resource Sheet # 4.2: The Indian Company of 1778
 4. Teacher Resource Sheet # 4.3: Re-examining the Revolution
 5. Activity #4.W: Student, Do You Know?
 6. Student Resource Sheet #4.W: Student, Do You Know?
 7. Student Social Studies/History notebooks

**CONTENT THE MOHICAN PEOPLE, THEIR LIVES AND THEIR LANDS
PART 4 — THE STOCKBRIDGE MOHICANS AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

1. MYTHS OF THE REVOLUTION
 - A. Little or no participation by Native people
 - B. Only (or major) reason was freedom from Mother Country
2. ANSWERING MYTH 1
 - A. History textbooks often leave out Native participation
 - B. Mohican history of military service — for example, Rogers Rangers in French and Indian War
 - C. Indian Company of 1778, massacre in Van Cortlandt Woods
3. ANSWERING MYTH 2
 - A. Equally important reason was to get Indian land beyond the mountains
 - B. Native resistance to western takeover is often left out of books

- PROCEDURE**
1. Whether continuing with this part with fourth grade students or using this part and Part 5 for fifth graders, review again the information from Part 3 on the eight effects on the Mohicans of the coming of the Europeans (see SRS #3.1).





Also note with students that the name Muh-he-con-ne-ok will no longer be used, since we have moved into the period of English colonization. The name the Muh-he-con-ne-ok had given to their village in the Berkshires — Wnahktukuk — was changed by the non-Native inhabitants to Stockbridge in 1749 and the Native inhabitants began to be called Stockbridge Indians or Stockbridge Mohicans. Actually, they also included a number of other Native peoples such as Pequots, Mohegans, Abenaki and others who had fled disease, massacres and other disasters in New England to join the Mohicans living along Housatonic River in western Massachusetts.

2. The Stockbridge warriors fought for the British in several wars of 1700s, including the so-called "French and Indian War." In the latter they joined the militia of Robert Rogers and "played a vital role as scouts and rangers on the frontier between Canada and up-state New York," according to Richard Walling in his book *PATRIOTS' BLOOD*. He goes on to say:

Stockbridge warriors served in most of the campaigns between Lake George and Canada [and] fought alongside their Iroquois neighbors under Sir William Johnson against the French . . . For the young men of the Mohican and allied tribes, serving as soldiers was an expression of their traditional role as warriors for their people. While military service was appealing, its consequences had the accumulative effect of weakening the tribe. Death by bullet was compounded by death by disease, particularly in the cramped, sickly military camps of the 18th century. Smallpox, dysentery, measles, etc., all diminished the strength of the people. With each passing year, the number of Stockbridges gradually declined (p. 16).
3. Have students do Activity #4.W: Student, Do You Know? This activity can also be used as a pre-post activity to help with the next reading.
4. When the activity is finished, have students again refer back to the paragraph on page 2 of Student Resource Sheet #3.1 beginning with "Between 1700 and 1800 . . ." Emphasize several points mentioned in this selection:
 - The Mohicans and other Native people supported the colonists in the Revolutionary War, while many other Native people fought on the British side. In one battle, a number of Stockbridge Mohican warriors fought and died in the Battle of Van Cortlandt's Woods.
 - As hinted at in the closing sentence of the same paragraph, the colonists were determined to acquire more Native lands in the East and much more land in the Midwest beyond the Appalachian Mountains.Now go on to the issue of the two myths of the Revolution to be discussed and responded to.
5. Using Teacher Resource Sheet #4.1, introduce students to the fact that we will look at two myths of the American Revolution — that is, generally held beliefs that are not true. Have them copy the two myths as you write them on the board (see #1 of CONTENT).



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6. Print Answering Myth 1 as a subtitle and continue the discussion, sharing whatever information you like from the texts of Teacher Resource Sheets #4.1 and #4.2, depending on how much detail you would like students to have. Emphasis should be on the assistance given by the Stockbridge Mohicans and in particular on the Indian Company of Abraham Ninham, son of Daniel Ninham, about whom the book *CHIEF NINHAM: FORGOTTEN HERO* is written and which students will read soon.
7. Continue this process with the second part of this section Answering Myth 2, this time using Teacher Resource Sheets #4.1 and #4.3. The focus here is on a seldom discussed, yet major, reason for the colonies' rebellion against the Mother Country of England, that is, their intense hunger for Native lands to the west.





ACTIVITY #4.W STUDENT, DO YOU KNOW?

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Focus Distinguish myth from fact and learn how information may influence a belief/perspective.

Materials Student Resource Sheet #4.W: Student, Do You Know? Student Resource Sheet #3.1 and pencil

Level Grades 4 and 5

Framing

Remind students we are journeying and exploring history in a different way. Tell students that **what we believe to be true may not be true**. As we learn about things, our perspectives and beliefs may change.

Suggested Procedure

1. Explain to students this is an activity and will NOT be graded.
2. Divide students into small groups of 4 or 5.
3. Give each group a copy of Student Resource Sheet #4.W: Student, Do You Know?
4. Ask students to read the questions and decide as a group A, B, C, or D. Remind students to use pencil because they may be changing their answers later.
5. After students have recorded answers, tell students to find answers in their copies of SRS #3.1.
6. Discuss and process answers with students.

Questions for group consensus

What did Europeans bring to the Mohicans that made them very sick?

- A. water
- B. gold
- C. disease
- D. clothes

What were the consequences for the Mohicans, and many other Native People after Europeans brought diseases?

- A. the number of the Mohicans, and Native People in general, increased
- B. mild — not even a hundred died
- C. no deaths
- D. catastrophic — thousands died





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ACTIVITY #4.W: STUDENT, DO YOU KNOW? p. 2.

What role did John Sergeant have when he came to live with the Mohicans in their village of Wnahnktukut in the 1700s?

- A. Medical doctor
- B. Fur Trader
- C. Christian Missionary
- D. Farmer

What was the new name the Europeans gave to the Mohican village in 1749?

- A. Stockbridge
- B. Delaware
- C. Munsee
- D. English

The mission village of Stockbridge originated in what state?

- A. Wisconsin
- B. Massachusetts
- C. Indiana
- D. New York

The French and Indian Wars consisted of conflicts between what two groups of people?

- A. England and France
- B. England and Mohicans
- C. Dutch and England
- D. France and Indians

The French and Indian Wars included conflicts over territories that had been initially inhabited by what people?

- A. French
- B. Native
- C. Dutch
- D. English

What did the Mohicans learn when they returned home after fighting in the Revolutionary War?

- A. Plans had been made to remove them from Stockbridge.
- B. Plans had been made to ensure they could live in Stockbridge.
- C. They would go to court immediately to fight for their homelands.
- D. Nothing changed and there were no new plans.





UNIT THE MOHICAN PEOPLE, THEIR LIVES AND THEIR LANDS
PART 4 ACTIVITY #4.W: STUDENT, DO YOU KNOW? p. 3

What replaced the traditional Mohican life and beliefs?

- A. European Customs
- B. African Customs
- C. Mexican Customs
- D. No traditional beliefs were replaced

Facilitation Note

Encourage students to discuss answers when answering Student Resource Sheet #4.W: Student, Do You Know? Remind students this is an activity, so it will NOT be graded. **Important: Students may need some assistance when trying to agree as a group.**

Sample Processing Questions

- Did you do this differently than the last time (in Part 3)?
- Is the new information hard to believe? Why or why not?
- What did you learn from doing this activity?
- Did it change the way you think about the Mohican People? If so, how?





STUDENT RESOURCE SHEET #4.W
STUDENT, DO YOU KNOW?

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DIRECTIONS As a group, answer the following questions in pencil. Please remember to discuss with your group why you agree/disagree with an answer.

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UNIT THE MOHICAN PEOPLE, THEIR LIVES AND THEIR LANDS
PART 4 STUDENT RESOURCE SHEET #4.W: STUDENT, DO YOU KNOW p. 2

The French and Indian Wars consisted of conflicts between what two groups of people?

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- C. Dutch and England
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- D. Nothing changed and there were no new plans.

What replaced the traditional Mohican life and beliefs?

- A. European Customs
- B. African Customs
- C. Mexican Customs
- D. No traditional beliefs were replaced





TEACHER RESOURCE SHEET #4.1
MYTHS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

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PART 4 THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND THE STOCKBRIDGE MOHICANS

Two myths, usually believed as facts of the American Revolution, are relevant to our study of the Stockbridge Mohicans in the 1770s. This resource sheet is meant to assist you, the teacher, in your discussion of these myths with your students, especially as you attempt to help them think critically about what they read in textbooks and see on the movie or TV screen.

Two pieces of material serve as the basis of this discussion and may be referred to for additional information. The first is an article written by Ray Raphael, a former teacher and a researcher of the period of the American Revolution. Entitled "Re-examining the Revolution" and published in the Winter 2004-2005 issue of *RETHINKING SCHOOLS*, it can be found in its entirety on Teacher Resource Sheet #4.3 if you wish to explore these ideas further. The second is the work of Richard S. Walling, a retired teacher and a scholar who has researched and published several histories of Natives in his home state of New Jersey. His most recently published book, entitled *PATRIOTS' BLOOD: THE INDIAN COMPANY OF 1778 & ITS DESTRUCTION IN THE BRONX*, includes a study of a group of Native warriors from the Northeast who fought for the colonists and many of whom died at hands of the British a couple of months later in the Battle of Van Cortlandt's Woods in the Kingsbridge area of the Bronx. Excerpts from *PATRIOTS' BLOOD* detailing information on the Indian Company can be found on Teacher Resource Sheet #4.2.

Now on to two myths of the Revolution relevant to the Mohican Story:

- MYTH 1 There was little or no military participation of Native Americans in the Revolutionary War era, and what was offered was insignificant.
- MYTH 2 The colonists' major reason for revolution against England was freedom and independence from the Mother Country.

Talk with students about these two myths. Keep in mind that the interface of Native histories with the "American story" makes for complexities that are not easy to untangle. For that reason we are simplifying the stories in this curriculum about the relationship among the Americans and the various Native Nations involved with them so that your students can grasp the significance of the points made.

Answering Myth 1 Because textbooks and other books generally give the impression that the colonists received little or no support from Native people during the war, the support that was given is usually brushed aside as if it never existed. (At this point, if students use or have access to an elementary textbook in American History, they could check to see if/how the text deals with this issue before you go on to the next point.)



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TEACHER RESOURCE SHEET #4.1: MYTHS . . . REVOLUTION, p. 2



In fact, many Native Nations fought in the wars brought to the so-called "New World" by the Europeans, including the Mohicans who had fought on the side of the British in such wars since the 1740s. While most of the nations fought for the British in the Revolutionary War, the Stockbridge Mohicans were joined by warriors from the Wampanoag, Pequot, Mohegan and Naragansett Nations of New England and formed a special "Indian Company" at the request of George Washington himself to fight on the side of the colonists. Early in 1778 Washington wrote to the Army Committee of the American Congress ". . . such a body of indians [sic], joined by some of our Woodsmen, would probably strike no small terror into the British and foreign troops" (Walling, p. 5; more on these words later).

The Indian Company was formed in early August of 1778 under the command of Captain Abraham Ninham (or Nimham). Upon his request, Native men were sent from their various New England regiments to this special company, including his father, Chief Daniel Ninham, and a group of Stockbridge Mohicans who had joined the Americans at White Plains in July. On August 31, these troops, and a force of light infantry of the Americans, were ambushed by the British on horseback in a field in the northern Bronx. After being cut off from the main fighting a distance away, the colonial infantrymen retreated. The surrounded Native warriors bore the brunt of what has been called by some a massacre. By early evening, both Ninhams, a number of the Stockbridge Mohicans and most of the other Native warriors were dead. It was virtually the end of the Indian Company (Walling, pp. 7-14).

Walling concludes this account with the following words:

The story of the Stockbridge Mohicans continued well past the war and extends into the present. The shared kinship and culture were evident in the years just after the Revolution when New England and New York Indians shared in the effort to adapt to the realpolitik world of a culture bent on land acquisition and exploitation of nature. The establishment of New Stockbridge and Brothertown, both on land gifted by the Oneida after the war, is a clear demonstration of the communal bond that, while predating the American Revolution, was fastened forever by the blood shed by Indian men who had fought and died on a hot summer's day in 1778 (p. 14).

You might ask the question: "Why would Native men whose people had already suffered loss of life and lands at the hands of the colonizers want to fight for either side in one of their wars?" This is a good question not easily answered. Some Native men say that it was simply their tradition of being warriors that drew them to battle. Others argue that they probably wanted to be considered friends to those who won the war and possibly get some of their lost lands back.

Patrick Frazier has a list of reasons why Stockbridge were drawn to the colonial side in the Revolution. He cites the following:

- theme of liberty, freedom from an oppressive government, especially its taxation
- the example of earlier colonial resistance in 1774 Stockbridge and the resulting pressure of public opinion against the British that surrounded the Mohicans
- their disillusionment with the British who had not helped the Wappingers with their land claim and the possibility that colonial victors in the war would respect Native land claim rights.





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PART 4 TEACHER RESOURCE SHEET #4.1: MYTHS . . . REVOLUTION, p. 3

Whatever the reasons, the Stockbridge Mohicans chose to accept the April 1, 1775 invitation of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress to join the colonial forces in their revolt against the Mother Country (pp. 194-195).

You might also raise the question: "Why do textbooks leave out the help that Native Nations gave to either the colonists or the British?" All too often, people of color are left out of American History texts until they have become a problem or are "in the way of American progress." Such is often the case with Native Americans. The answer, of course, has to do with the bias of many textbook publishers and the continuation of many stereotypes, shared by many Americans, of seeing "American history" as the history only of the European colonists who dominated the institutions of the colonies, especially their governments.

Perhaps some publishers believe that including the Native contributions to the Revolution would highlight the hypocrisy of an American government that accepted their service and even their deaths only to take their lands away for the non-Indian settlers already moving into them. Keep in mind that George Washington, who wanted to use the Native warriors to "strike no small terror" into the British and foreign troops was himself pursuing "extensive land speculation" west of the mountains at this time (see Teacher Resource Sheet #4.3, p. 1, col. 2 of Ray Raphael's article). We are reminded of the saying: "The victors write the history books."

Meantime, teachers trying to multiculturalize their teaching would likely see it differently. If we wish, we can help students see that the history of a nation needs to include all its peoples' histories, since the histories of people of color are also part of the whole American experience. By learning about many perspectives and with the help of the teacher, students will find a new truth emerge.

Answering Myth 2 One of the most important (some historians would argue the most important) reasons for the revolution was the colonists' hunger for more land. Impress on students that the need to be "free" was to a great extent based on the fact that the new government wanted to have the freedom to enlarge its own territory without having to compete with the Mother Country (or the French or the Spanish). Unfortunately, Native people, such as the Stockbridge Mohicans who trusted the colonists back in Stockbridge, MA, did not catch on to what they were really up against regarding American expansion until it was too late. Recall that sentence from the *BRIEF HISTORY* pointed out on Student Resource Sheet # 3.1: "When the surviving warriors returned home [from the Revolutionary War], they discovered that plans had already been made to remove them from Stockbridge."

It would also be helpful to note that in most textbooks the resistance of Native people to American western expansion is often either left out or trivialized. Students should know that one of the largest collections of Native allies in United States history was formed to resist this western expansion after the revolution. It was a broad coalition of Native peoples in the Midwest whose purpose was to fight for their lands against the intrusions of non-Indian settlers and those American frontiersmen who had been terrorizing the Native people for decades and whom they called the "Long Knives." A "great [unnamed] Delaware chief said in 1781: 'I know the *long knives*; they are not to be trusted.'" (David Wrono and Russell S. Nelson, Jr., p. 68).

Ray Raphael, in his article entitled "Re-examining the Revolution" (see Teacher Resource Sheet #4.3), writes:





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TEACHER RESOURCE SHEET #4.1: MYTHS . . . REVOLUTION, p. 4

The pan-Indian resistance movements of the 1780s — the largest coalitions of Native Americans in our history — are entirely neglected [in textbooks]. With nary a word about the impact on indigenous people, the texts uniformly celebrate the ordinances of 1785 and 1787 — blueprints for westward expansion and death knells for Indian sovereignty" (p. 29).

Raphael goes on to discuss how the emphasis on heroes of the American Revolution — and, we might add, in American history in general — distorts the realities of the times. He cites the "concerted revolutionary activities of people who had learned the power of collaborative effort" (p. 30), especially in Massachusetts where, almost two years before the Declaration of Independence of 1776, a declaration in the town of Worcester proclaimed its independence from the British. He gives example after example of the myths created in later times about individuals we have all heard of and honored, whose actions, if they ever happened at all, were the culmination of months of protests, demonstrations, petitions and other actions of hundreds and often thousands of angry colonists. Ignoring this historical fact, writes Raphael, "turns history on its head. In reality, so-called leaders emerge from the people — they gain influence by expressing views that others espouse. In the telling of history, however, the genesis of leadership is easily forgotten." He closes the article with this warning: "If we teach our students that a few special people forged American freedom, we misrepresent, and even contradict, the spirit of the American Revolution . . . Both real history and the meaning of American democracy are lost in the translation" (p. 32).





TEACHER RESOURCE SHEET #4.2 THE INDIAN COMPANY OF 1778

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Part One: The Indian Company of 1778

Introduction

On a hot day in August, 1778 a fierce contest was fought between Patriot and British forces in the woods, fields and rock ledges of the Bronx, along the Westchester County border. Among the men who fought that day was a group of Native Americans who were formed into a special military unit; a unit that represented both the unique role of Native American warriors who fought in the Continental Army, and of the special bond of shared kinship and culture. This is their story.

Kinship and Culture in the Northeast

Prior to the outbreak of the American Revolution, a well established pattern of kinship and shared culture existed amongst the American Indian tribes in the northeast. For example, as early as the 17th century, New England Algonquian peoples moved into the Hudson River Valley as a result of warfare, notably King Phillip's War of 1675-76, and Euro-American colonial expansion from the eastern seaboard. These refugees mingled with the Mohican and other area tribes.

In the early 18th century, this process accelerated, and was also influenced by the introduction of Christian missionaries such as the Moravians and Presbyterians. Families moved across vast distances with a freedom hard to imagine to people of our day, accustomed to super-highways and airline travel. In practically every village from Rhode Island to western Massachusetts, to Iroquoia to the Ohio, American Indians had family members and friendships along the way.

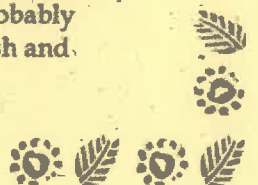
The common kinship and shared cultural experiences amongst the northeastern American Indians were key factors in the creation of the Indian Company of 1778.

Valley Forge to White Plains - 1778

While a number of Native American men living in New England and New York communities served in local, state, and Continental forces, a new initiative was proposed by George Washington in early 1778 focusing on a special corps of Indian troops. It was at this same time, during the depressing months of the Valley Forge encampment, that John Laurens and General Varnum had proposed to Washington the formation of a special corps of black soldiers. It is not coincidental that the Commander in Chief began to voice his ideas of utilizing native warriors at this same time for special duties as part of the American Army.

Washington to the Committee of Congress with the Army Headquarters, January 29, 1778

...I shall now in the last place beg leave to subjoin a few Matters unconnected with the general subject of these remarks....The enemy have set every engine at work, against us, and have actually called savages and even our own slaves to their assistance; would it not be well, to employ two or three hundred Indians against General Howe's army the ensuing campaign? ...Such a body of indians, joined by some of our Woodsmen, would probably strike no small terror into the British and foreign troops....



Congress
March 4, 1778
Charles Thomson, Sec'y

Resolved, That General Washington be empowered, if he thinks it prudent, to employ in the Service of the United States a body of Indians not exceeding four Hundred, & that it be left to him to pursue such measures as he judges best for procuring them, and to employ them, when procured, in such ways as will annoy the Enemy, without suffering them to injure those who are friends to the cause of America.

Native Soldiers in the Army - 1778

Serving in the various regiments in Continental service during the first half of 1778 were probably over two hundred American Indian men. In addition to individuals serving in the different regiments, on the frontier borders of the new country, native men fought in special units composed mostly of warriors from a particular tribe. Instances of these include the Oneida and Tuscarora of upstate New York who had fought at Oriskany and in the Saratoga Campaign of 1777, the various Maine tribes, Delaware's under Captain White Eyes in the Fort Pitt area, and the Catawbas of South Carolina. Additionally, there were also border ranger units with a large percentage of Indian men as in Bedel's Rangers of northern New Hampshire (& Vermont - not yet a state).

Amongst the many New England regiments were dozens of individuals serving from their home communities. Wampanoags from Mashpee, Pequots from Stoningham, Mohegans from Norwich, Narragansetts of Rhode Island and the largest of all contingents, the Stockbridge Mohicans of western New England and New York.

Patrick Frazier's 1992 book, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, provides an in-depth analysis of the role of the Stockbridge men throughout

the war. This paper will not review the entire military history of the Stockbridge men during the war, but will focus on their unique role during 1778.

Indian Company of 1778

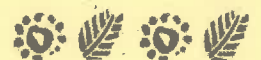
The Stockbridge men had fought as a contingent on several occasions during the first years of the war, from the siege of Boston to Burgoyne's Invasion of 1777. In October of that year, Abraham Nimham, with his company of Indians, made application to Congress, "to be employed in the service of the United States; who, in their proceedings, October 25, 1777, requested that they report themselves to Major General Gates for duty...(DeVoe, p. 189)."

While on duty with the Northern Army under Gates in 1777, the Stockbridge Indian contingent received supplies from the quartermaster. From April 1777 to September 1777, the Stockbridge Indians received forty-five muskets, forty-three powder horns, seven cartridge boxes, 192 flints, thirty-one bullet pouches, twelve tomahawk belts, 1614 musket cartridges, gunpowder, musket balls and buckshot. On September 30, 1777, Captain Jehouakim Mtohksin returned eleven damaged muskets to the quartermaster (National Archives, Military Stores Records collection, Roll 39).

After the winter season of 1777-78, Abraham wrote to General Gates requesting that all of the Stockbridge men from the different regiments be allowed to serve together:

1778

Brothers-I come ask you a question hope you will help us. Now I mention that with which I have been concerned. I had some brothers enlisted into the Continental service in several Regiments. Now Brothers I should be very glad if you will discharge them from their Regiments. We always want to be in one





body..when we are in service..do not think that I want get these Indians away from their soldierings..but we want be together always & we will be always ready to go any where you want us to go long as this war stands &tc.

Abraham Nimham
Captn

To the Most Honorable
Major Genl Gates

While no documentation has been found ordering the establishment of the Indian Corps to act in conjunction with the light infantry, such a special group was formed. Existing regimental muster roles are exact in this matter: In virtually all cases, native men in all of the New England regiments were pulled out of their companies and served "on command with the Indian Company."

Casualties of the Stockbridge Indian Massacre

The terrible and bloody fight on August 31, 1778 is the subject of Part Two of this work. In short, on that day Col. Simcoe of the Queens Rangers led a combined force of more than five hundred Loyalists and Hessians in an ambush targeted at the Indian Company. When the skirmish was over, most of the warriors were dead and the British had dealt the Americans a hard blow. One month later, Baylor's dragoons would suffer a similar fate across the Hudson River.

All the reports associated with this bloody skirmish share the same key elements: Simcoe's ambush, the desperate fight put up by the Indians, and the large number of Indians killed. Simcoe puts the number of Indian dead at "near forty," and a contemporary account in Rivington's Gazette states thirty-seven and another in the same paper stated nineteen Indian dead. Scott reported that as of the evening of the battle, fourteen of the forty Indians had returned, leaving some thirty-seven unaccounted for.

One source which may bear more weight is that of Thomas F. DeVoe, the 19th century historian who wrote the first critical account of the affair in the *Magazine of American History* in 1880. A descendant of the DeVoe Family upon whose farm the battle raged, DeVoe walked the battlefield with his grandmother in the early 19th century. She had been eighteen at the time of the battle and was an eyewitness to the fight and its aftermath. In his 1880 article, DeVoe wrote,

The greatest struggle, was on the second field north of Daniel DeVoe's house, where the bodies of some seventeen Indians lay, cut and hacked to death; besides many others, who were killed and wounded in their attempt to escape in several directions. It was a terrible conflict, or rather a slaughter of about thirty Indians...Many years afterwards, this fight was a frequent subject of conversation by those of the families who had visited the fields immediately after the conflict...

How many men were killed? No one can be certain. Given the fact that Nimham's Indian Company had approximately fifty to sixty men, and most were killed in the struggle, a number approaching forty is not unrealistic.

As DeVoe wrote in 1880, the bodies of men found in the woods after the battle, including Daniel Nimham, were taken to a portion of the field, interred and stones placed on top, "not as a monument, but to protect the bodies from further desecration."

And so came an end to what Washington had planned as the creation of a "Flying Army composed of light Infantry & rifle Men mix[ed with] about 400 Indians with them; being thus incorporated with our own Troops, who are designed to skirmish, act in Detachments & light Parties, as well as lead the Attack..." The anticipation made by Washington in the desperate days of Valley Forge was altered by the events of that year. The Oneida warriors were at home,

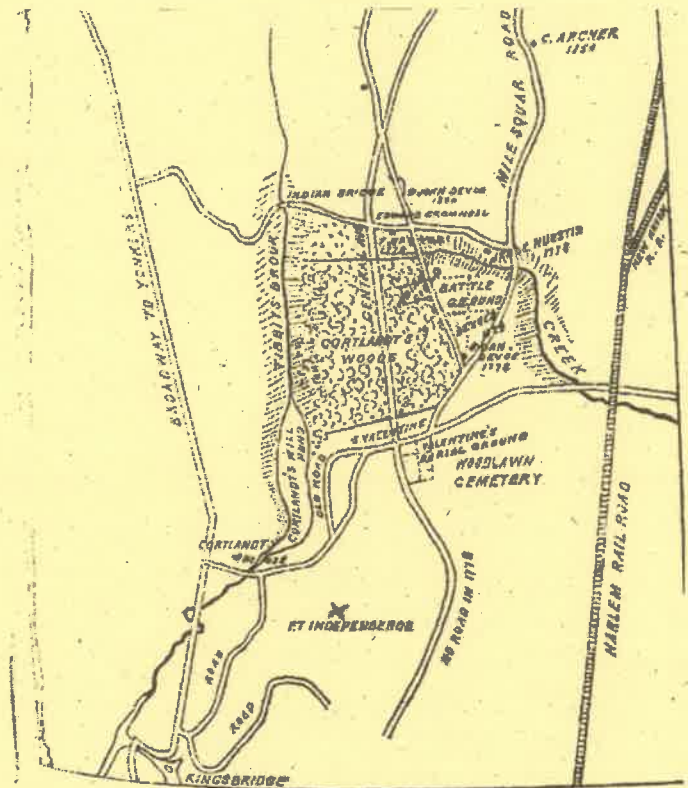




defending their families and property from their pro-British brethren, and the arrival of the French army and navy in July, 1778 lessened the necessity of employing such special forces as the Indian regiment. Finally, with winter approaching and the decimation of the Indian Corps at Kingsbridge on August 31, there was no practical method of rebuilding and sustaining this unique strike force.

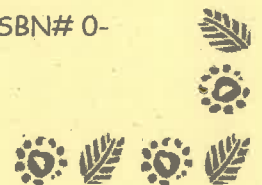
To be sure, the Stockbridge Indians and their fellow Algonquin and Iroquois neighbors and relations continued to play crucial roles in the remaining years of the war. The Oneida and Tuscarora bore the burden of internecine warfare on the border when their villages were burned out in retribution for Sullivan's Expedition in 1779. Later in the war, many of these refugees found comfort with the Stockbridge in Massachusetts. The Delaware Indians tried to remain neutral on the frontier, until Captain White Eyes was murdered, the Americans could not sustain them as allies, and the brutal extermination of nearly one hundred Moravian Delaware & Mohican converts at Gnadenhutten in 1782 by patriot militia.

The story of the Stockbridge Mohicans continued well past the war and extends into the present. The shared kinship and culture were evident in the years just after the Revolution when New England and New York Indians shared in the effort to adapt to the realpolitik world of a culture bent on land acquisition and the exploitation of nature. The establishment of New Stockbridge and Brothertown, all on land gifted by the Oneida after the war, is a clear demonstration of the communal bond that, while predating the American Revolution, was fastened forever by the blood shed by the Indian men who had fought and died together on a hot summer's day in 1778.



Map of the battlefield by Thomas DeVoe, 1880

Text excerpts from pages 3 through 13, map p. 19, of *PATRIOTS' BLOOD: THE INDIAN COMPANY OF 1778 & ITS DESTRUCTION IN THE BRONX* (Richard Walling, 2006, ISBN# 0-9768719-2-0). Reprinted with permission of author.





Re-examining the Revolution

What's the harm in celebrating the myths of our nation's founders?

■ BY RAY RAPHAEL

History, like politics, is based on framing and spin. For two centuries, authors of history texts have used whitewashed tales of our nation's founding to provide young people with a shared view of America, a national self-portrait deemed to be patriotic. The biases in old textbooks are transparent—but have we left mythologizing behind?

Although textbooks in recent years have certainly become more inclusive, giving the nod to multiculturalism is not synonymous with getting the story right. We've come a long way, baby—but we have a long way to go.

In conjunction with my latest book, *Founding Myths: Stories that Hide our Patriotic Past*, I have reviewed 22 current elementary, middle school, and high school texts. Fourteen were displayed at a recent National Council for the Social Studies convention, while eight are approved for use in California, which has among the strictest criteria in the nation. I compared the 13 mythologies of the American Revolution discussed in my book with those perpetuated in these texts, and the results are startling. Although some texts fare better than others, all contain some serious lapses.

Myths That Persist

Most texts do mention African-American participation in the war, but they focus primarily on those who sided with the Americans. In fact, those who sided with the British were far more numerous, but you'd never guess it from reading the texts. When they offer numbers, they typically compare the estimated number of black patriot soldiers during the course of the entire war (5,000) with the number of slaves who sought freedom with the British in a single week (generally cited as 300). The myth of the patriotic slave is not far removed from that of the happy slave.

Current texts do include some mention of the Native-American presence in the Revolutionary War, but their narratives display a serious bias. In fact, white colonists were looking west as well as east before, during, and after the war, but the texts do not discuss their drive to acquire trans-Appalachian lands—a major cause of the Revolution. They do not mention the extensive land speculation of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and other "Founding Fathers." The American Revolution was the largest conflict between Native Americans and European Americans in our nation's history, but students will not learn this by dutifully reading their assignments.

All elementary and middle school texts report the exploits of George

Rogers Clark and his small band of frontiersmen, who supposedly "opened" the West. The authors of Harcourt's *Horizons* write, "George Rogers Clark helped protect the frontier lands claimed by many American settlers." Then, to ensure that students did not miss the message, they ask: "Review: Who defended settlers in the western lands?" In this one question, a war of conquest is turned on its head.

By contrast, not one of the elementary or middle school texts even mentions the genocidal Sullivan campaign, one of the largest military offensives of the war, which burned Iroquois villages and destroyed every orchard and farm in its path to deny food to Indians. Serious treatments of white conquest appear earlier (17th century) and later (19th century) in these texts, but not at the critical point of our nation's founding. Right at the moment of the greatest white incursion onto Native lands in United States history, the Indian presence mysteriously disappears. The pan-Indian resistance movements of the 1780s—the largest coalitions of Native Americans in our history—are entirely neglected. With nary a word about the impact on indigenous people, the texts uniformly celebrate the ordinances of 1785 and 1787—blueprints for westward expansion and death knells for Indian sovereignty.

In their eagerness to find female



heroines of the Revolutionary War, 18 of the 22 texts feature the story of Molly Pitcher. They reify this folkloric legend into a real person, pronouncing unabashedly that she was Mary Hayes. (The legend did not settle on a flesh-and-blood woman until the 1876 Centennial, based only on the word of a local promoter from Carlisle, Pa.) Most texts display one of the 19th century romantic paintings of Molly firing her cannon. The pictures appear old and suitably historic—no matter that these fantasies were painted in the following century.

Our texts are based on warmed-over tales of the 19th century such as Patrick Henry's "Liberty or Death" speech (written by William Wirt in 1817, 42 years after the fact) and "Paul Revere's Ride" (popularized in 1861 by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who distorted every detail of the event to enhance his story). Although many historians know better, these stories work so well that they must still be included, regardless of authenticity or merit.

More of the myths are perpetuated in elementary and middle school texts than in AP high school texts, but this raises a troubling question: Why are textbook authors telling stories that they know to be false? Worse yet: Why do they give these tales their stamp of approval and call them "history"?

Of all the texts, the one that perpetuates the most untruths about the American Revolution—I found a whopping 17—is Joy Hakim's immensely popular *A History of US*. This is no accident. Hakim, who has done so much to make history more inclusive, is a masterful storyteller, and she has based her account on how stories play to young readers, not on whether they are true. She is the only current textbook author to perpetuate the story of Paul Revere waiting to view the signal lanterns ("One if by land, two if by sea"), a Longfellow fabrication. She not only attributes the words of William Wirt to Patrick Henry, she also tells her young readers what gestures Henry made as he uttered each phrase. She takes Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Concord Hymn" and mysteriously places it at Lexington, because it seems to fit the story there.

How do textbook writers deal with advances in modern scholarship that disprove, or at least deconstruct, the myths?

In 1996, David Hackett Fischer published his remarkable deconstruction and reconstruction of Paul Revere's ride. Fischer showed that Revere was not such a solitary hero. Instead, he was part of an intricate web of patriots who rode horses, rang bells, and shot guns to sound the warning. Fischer's book was so popular that textbook writers had to deal with this new information. Revere was not alone, they now admit. William Dawes (and sometimes Samuel Prescott) rode as well. They water down the legend, but they do not embrace the real impact of Fischer's findings: The mobilization of April 18-19, 1775, was a truly collaborative effort involving an entire population.

In 1997, Pauline Maier published *American Scripture*, where she uncovered 90 state and local "declarations of independence" that preceded the U.S. Declaration of Independence. The consequence of this historical tidbit is profound: Jefferson was not a lonely genius conjuring his notions from the ether; he was part of a nationwide political upheaval. Again, textbook writers have watered down the legend while missing the main point. Many now state that Jefferson was part of a five-man congressional committee, but they include no word of those 90 documents produced in less-famous chambers.

Coverup

Some say these myths are harmless—what damage can stories do? Plenty. They change our view of historical and political processes. Myths that celebrate individual achievement mask fundamental truths of great importance. The United States was founded not by isolated acts of heroism but by the concerted revolutionary activities of people who had learned the power of collaborative effort. "Government has now devolved upon the people," wrote one disgruntled Tory in 1774, "and they seem to be for using it." That's the story the myths conceal.

For example, in 1774 common farmers and artisans from throughout Massa-

chusetts rose up by the thousands and overthrew all British authority. In the small town of Worcester (only 300 voters), 4,622 militiamen from 37 surrounding communities lined both sides of Main Street and forced the British-appointed officials to walk the gauntlet, hats in hand, reciting their recantations 30 times each so everyone could hear. There were no famous "leaders" for this event. The people elected representatives who served for one day only, the ultimate in term limits. "The body of the people" made decisions and the people decided that the old regime must fall.

Similar transfers of power were repeated in every county seat outside Boston. By early fall—half a year before Lexington and Concord—British rule had come to an end, both politically and militarily, for 95 percent of the inhabitants of Massachusetts. On October 4, 1774—21 months before Congress would approve the Declaration of Independence—the people of Worcester proclaimed that the old constitution was dissolved and that they should begin to form a new one, "as from the ashes of the Phenix."

This was the most successful popular uprising in our nation's history—so why is it not part of the core narrative of the Revolution? It used to be. Mercy Otis Warren, a patriot who wrote one of the early histories, called the 1774 rebellion "one of the most extraordinary eras in the history of man." Other early historians covered the events in some detail.

But then came the myths. "The shot heard round the world" (Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1836) told us the Revolution started on April 19, 1775, effectively muzzling the one that came before it. The Sam Adams myth (first perpetuated by his Tory opponents, and not adopted by most Americans until the mid-19th century) said that all revolutionary actions in Massachusetts emanated from a single mastermind; since Adams was not present at the rural rebellions, nothing possibly could have happened. *Paul Revere's Ride* (Longfellow, 1861) said that farmers had to be awakened from their slumbers by a man from Boston, even though the farmers themselves had already staged a revolution and spent six months arming themselves to defend it.

The myth that Jefferson was responsible for the ideas in the Declaration of Independence (initiated by his political supporters) hid the fact that people from the hinterlands of Massachusetts were ready to go that route long before. The end result: Not one current textbook chronicles the first overthrow of British rule. How strange that the story of any revolution can be told without at least a mention of the initial overthrow of political and military authority. This is the damage of myth making—real history gets lost, much of it very important.

There is another serious danger: The doctored tales further the same jingoistic interests they were intended to promote when first created in the 19th century. Crucial to the self-image of America is the notion that a handful of dedicated patriots were able to cast off the yoke of the mighty British Empire. "David had licked Goliath," Joy Hakim writes proudly. "A superpower had been defeated by an upstart colony." But our nation was not like David then, nor is it now. David fought alone, while the United States prevailed in the Revolutionary War in large measure because Europe's greatest powers—France, Spain, and the Netherlands, with Russia about to join at war's end—were fighting the British in North America, the West Indies, the North Sea, the English Channel, Gibraltar, the Mediterranean Sea, South Africa, India, and the East Indies. This is why the British decided on a strategic withdrawal. There's not a word of this in our textbooks, nothing more than a little help from the French. Ironically, the historical self-portrait of America as the little guy, together with a myopic denial of international politics, fuels the quest for unbounded global power. We were attacked at Lexington, we like to believe, and we fought them off. We were attacked on 9/11, and we will fight them off. Just us, the victims. We continue to see ourselves as David to prove we are not Goliath, no matter how much we bully others.

A Never-ending Story

The tales linger on not only because they perpetuate American jingoism, but also because they make wonderful stories. As teachers, we all know the power of a good narrative. But this power is easily abused. Like rumors, some tales are too good *not* to be told. Of these especially we must beware. They are carefully crafted to fit a time-tested mold that features heroes or heroines, clear plot lines, and happy endings. Good does battle against evil, David beats Goliath, and wise men prevail over fools. Stories of our nation's founding mesh well with these narrative forms. American revolutionaries, they say, were better and wiser than decadent Europeans. Outnumbered colonists overcame a Goliath, the mightiest empire on earth. Good prevailed over evil, and the war ended happily with the birth of the United States. Even if they don't tell true history, these imaginings work as stories. Much of what we think of as "history" is driven not by facts but by these narrative demands.

Since our stories need protagonists, we marshal forth heroes and heroines to represent the people of the times. Although selected for their uncommon features, these few are made to signify the whole. George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson—we speak of these illustrious individuals as *the* Revolutionaries, and we use them to stand for all the other Revolutionaries, even as we proclaim they are special, not like the others. These people are then called "leaders;" all others become mere followers. A handful of celebrated personalities make things happen, the rest only tag along; a few write the scripts, the rest just deliver their lines. This turns history on its head. In reality, so-called leaders emerge from the people—they gain influence by expressing views that others espouse. In the telling of history, however, the genesis of leadership is easily forgotten.

Textbook authors and popular history writers fail to portray the great mass

of humanity as active players, agents on their own behalf. Supposedly, only leaders function as agents of history. They provide the motive force; without them, nothing would happen. The famous Founders, we are told, *made* the American Revolution. They dreamt up the ideas, spoke and wrote incessantly, and finally convinced others to follow their lead. But in trickle-down history, as in trickle-down economics, the concerns of the people at the bottom are supposed to be addressed by mysterious processes that cannot be delineated. What happens at the top is all that really counts. This distorts the very nature of the historical process, which must, by definition, include masses of people.

It is through the study of history that young people first learn about politics and power. By the time seniors in high school finally get around to studying "politics and government," they have been reading and hearing stories for many years about individuals and social groups who struggled for power. They have already learned and internalized a "grammar" they will use to decipher political events.

So what has their study of history taught them about politics and power? To the extent that their curriculum has been based on stories with traditional narrative structures, students will have developed a political grammar that is individualistic and linear. They will have learned that historical actors function as autonomous bundles of free will, devoid of context. Most standards ask students to study "key individuals" and they learn that those individuals have an impact on events. But U.S. textbooks and many curricula do not teach that events have an impact on individuals. The lines of influence are all in one direction. People magically conjure ideas with little help from their friends, then use these ideas to make history happen.

When political dynamics are personalized and simplified in this manner, students do not learn to understand the real workings of power. They are not encour-





aged to explore some very important questions: How do certain individuals manage to exert control over others? How do people come together to resist domination and stand up for their own interests? History abounds in lessons that would shed light on these matters, but the lessons cannot be learned when the forces that drive politics are kept secret, hidden by tales designed to tout and promote individual achievement.

The way we learn about the birth of our nation is a case in point. If we teach our students that a few special people forged American freedom, we misrepresent, and even contradict, the spirit of the American Revolution. Our country owes its existence to the political activities of groups of dedicated patriots who acted in concert. Throughout the rebellious colonies, citizens organized themselves into an array of local committees, congresses, and militia units that unseated British authority and assumed the reins of government. These revolutionary efforts could serve as models for the collective, political participation of ordinary citizens. Stories that focus on these models would confirm the original meaning of American patriotism: Government must be based on the will of the people. They would also show some of the dangers inherent in majoritarian democracy: the suppression of dissent and the use of jingoism to mobilize support and secure power. They would reflect what really happened, and they would reveal rather than conceal the dynamics of political struggle.

Instead, the democratic nature of our nation's creation is hidden from view by stories fashioned in a different mold. Individual heroics trump collective action; the few take the place of the many. Both real history and the meaning of American democracy are lost in the translation. ■

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Getting Back on Track

How can teachers begin to change the narrative of our nation's founding—indeed, the way in which all history is told? We can't wait for textbooks to catch on and catch up. Here are some tips we can use right now.

- Watch your language. In class lessons and discussions, try to wean yourself from the default grammar that portrays all historical action as individualistic.
- Don't eliminate the Founders and other "important" individuals, but keep their biographies from subsuming the main story. The lives of these folks, like those of shoemakers and farmwives and slaves, can add flavor and color and make history seem more alive—but they belong in the sidebars, not in the central narrative thread.
- In lessons and discussions, every time the Big Boys seem to drown out the rest, ask the class: Were these people typical of the times? Were they making these decisions all on their own, with everyone else following along like sheep? How would this story look if we take different people as our protagonists?
- Use simulations that address the political decisionmaking of common people. Students will take on various roles, such as that of slaves deciding whether or not to escape. As students evaluate the alternatives by weighing the dangers against the possible gains, they will be treating slaves as political actors, not simply objects of pity.
- Use simulations that specifically address common distortions in the language of historical narration. Have the class, or groups within the class, perform some group effort. After the job is done, attribute the results of this effort to a single individual. In the debriefing, students will see how group processes are routinely degraded to tales of individual achievement.
- In your choice of what to tell and what not to tell, don't marginalize people just because they have not been included in the gatekeepers' version of the core narrative. If we marginalize common people of the past, we learn how to marginalize common people in the present.
- Above all, teach students to be aware of the storytelling process. No text should ever be accepted as the single "authority" on anything. Whoever controls the narrative controls history—this is a powerful message. Those who ignore it will remain blind to the manipulation of others, but those who get it, like the people of the American Revolution, will be able to challenge abusive authority and take control of their destinies.

—RAY RAPHAEL

Ray Raphael (raphael@asis.com), who taught for 17 years in a one-room public high school in Northern California, has published three books on the American Revolution: A People's History of the American Revolution (the first volume of Howard Zinn's "People's History" series), The First American Revolution: Before Lexington and Concord, and most recently, Founding Myths: Stories That Hide Our Patriotic Past. His website (rayraphael.com) contains numerous teaching tools for these books and simulations for "bottom-up" history. It also contains a page-by-page critique of the texts discussed in this article, showing exactly where each one perpetuates the 13 mythologies of the Revolution discussed in Founding Myths.

