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Webisode 5

Camp Followers

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Authored by Joseph "Joe" Refinski

With special thanks to the following sponsors for their generous support of this education project that enables teachers and the general public to learn more about the formative years of the American Revolution:

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EAGLEVISION PRODUCTIONS, INC. PRESENTS TEACHER'S GUIDES FOR TEN EDUCATIONAL WEBISODES

INTRODUCTION TO TEN EDUCATIONAL WEBISODES

Welcome to the formative years of the American Revolution 1775 – 1777. Based on the documentary ***Road to Liberty Through Their Eyes***, the producers have developed Ten (10) Educational Webisodes with a Teacher's Guide for teachers to use in their History and Social Studies lesson plans designed to be **rigorous, adaptable, and fun!** Each of the webisodes has its own specific activities tied to the theme of the five to eight-minute webisodes and cover a variety of topics, including how the American Revolution impacted the lives of Colonists, enslaved and free Blacks, and Indigenous Peoples.

CURRICULUM WRITER: JOSEPH "JOE" REFINSKI

Now retired, Joe served as a history teacher for 48 years. During his tenure, Joe won numerous teaching awards, recognitions and Fellowships, as well as several Teacher of the Year Awards, including the 2023 Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, and he was named the 2025 NJ Council for the Social Studies Lifetime Educator Award for contributions to the study of history, civics and professional development. Joe has participated in several Teaching American History Grants. He is a Case Method Instructor (Harvard Business School) and is listed in the *Who's Who In Education*.

WEBISODE TITLES

Webisode 1 – Integrated Continental Army

Webisode 2 – Fortifications + Addendum

Webisode 3 – Divided Country + Addendum

Webisode 4 – Militias vs Standing Army

Webisode 5 – Camp Followers

Webisode 6 – Impact of War

Webisode 7 – Spies and Informants

Webisode 8 – Washington Crossing Logistics + Addendum

Webisode 9 – Winter Encampment/Forage Wars

Webisode 10 – Living History/Reenactments + Addendum

EAGLEVISION PRODUCTIONS, INC. PRESENTS
WEBISODE 5 – CAMP FOLLOWERS TEACHER’S GUIDE

NATIONAL HISTORY AND SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

Webisode 5 fulfills several National History Standards and Social Studies Themes including: NCSS Themes 2: Time, Continuity, and Change; 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions; 7: Production, Distribution, and Consumption; and 10: Civic Ideals and Practices; United States History Content Standards for Grades 5 -12 – Era 3 – Standard 2: The impact of the American Revolution on politics, economy, and society; and The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies for Grades 6-8, 9-10, and 11-12.

WEBISODE 5 SUMMARY: *CAMP FOLLOWERS*

During the American Revolution, camp followers marched with both the Continental Army and the Crown’s Ministerial Army to support military encampments. They included women and children of soldiers looking for protection who could earn a meager income by washing and repairing soldiers’ clothing. They were also required by the army to care for the sick and injured in exchange for rations. Then there were skilled craftsmen, known as artificers, including blacksmiths, gunsmiths, wheelwrights, and waggoners. Other civilians included men and women traders called sutlers who required a license from the army to sell their wares to the soldiers, as well as a variety of retainers, including men who didn’t enlist as a common soldier, but fought alongside them as volunteers in order for the Generals to consider them for officer commissions. Also, many officers brought their free and enslaved Black servants with them. Additionally, Native American tribes were camp followers. The Stockbridge Mohican community already served in some New England militias and were joined by the Oneida and Tuscarora tribes who broke away from the Iroquois Confederacy. Most of the Iroquois tribes, along with the Cherokee Nation, chose to follow the British in an effort to protect their lands from western expansion. Washington considered camp followers, especially women and children, a burden and drain on army resources. In the 1775 and 1776 Articles of War, camp followers who were disruptive, disobeyed orders, or incited desertions would be immediately banished from the camp to fend for themselves.

HOW TO USE EACH WEBISODE AND TEACHER’S GUIDE

Webisode 5 would be useful for middle school and high school students (K6-12) studying United States History, Military History, European History, and Colonial History. Teachers may want to use all or some of the webisodes in the series over several days of history and/or social study classes to introduce their students to a variety of topics experienced during the formative years of the American Revolution. Each webisode has an individual Teacher’s Guide that provides a lesson plan with suggested classroom activities and/or applicable homework assignments. Alternatively, teachers may choose an individual webisode from this series as an overview to highlight a particular topic that occurred in the Revolutionary era for one lesson plan as outlined in that webisode’s Teacher’s Guide.

LESSON PLAN FOR WEBISODE 5 – *CAMP FOLLOWERS*

(Total Lesson Plan Times – combine Webisode with #1 + #2 = 58:30 or #1 + #3 = 57:30.)

(5 minutes) Screen Webisode Students are introduced to the topic by posing the following questions to the class and asking them to take notes that address these questions as they watch Webisode 5 – *Camp Followers* **(Running Time: 6:30):**

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS TO COMPREHEND

- How did the needs of the Continental Army intersect with the lives of women, children, skilled artisans, sutlers, and retainers during the American Revolution?
- What are some of the reasons women chose to become camp followers?
- As part of the Continental Army community, what services did women and their children provide the soldiers in return for meager wages and rations?
- General Washington was frustrated with the number of women and children who followed the army, which caused him many times throughout the war to order his officers to reduce their numbers. What were the reasons behind his orders?
- What was the "cost" of survival for camp followers in terms of resources, safety, health, and reputation?

SUGGESTED STUDENT ACTIVITIES

1. (10 minutes) Discussion Following the screening of the webisode, the teacher explains that most of the people who follow the army are referred to as retainers of the army and must comply with orders and military discipline or risk being expelled and not allowed to provide services to the army. Students are called upon to refer to their notes and name the various types of “camp followers ” and what they learned about them concerning what services these specific “camp followers” provided the army, which were often overlooked as a vital and necessary element, that supported a well-run and healthy army.

2. a) (15 minutes) Defining Roles and Duties of Camp Followers Class is divided into six small groups (3-4 students) and assigned one of the following specific roles to research, discuss, take notes on their responsibilities to the army, and cite resources used:

- Wife/Mother:** Tends to her family, works to earn a meager income and rations, and when the army is on the move, is responsible for carrying all her possessions.
- Child:** Helps mother by taking on a variety of chores in camp. Some older children may enlist with the army as musicians in a regiment’s fife and drum corps.
- Artificers:** Providing a variety of services, like blacksmiths, tailors, gunsmiths etc.

- iv. **Sutlers:** (spelled “suttlers” in colonial documents) who sell goods to the soldiers.
- v. **Volunteer Soldiers:** These are men who are willing to fight alongside enlisted soldiers to show they have leadership skills and petition for officer commissions.
- vi. **Free and Enslaved Black Servants:** Officers in the army often travel with their free and enslaved Black servants who are considered retainers as they are entitled to army rations for their services. Some free Blacks are enlisted soldiers in the army.

Students will use the online resources and books made available to them to discover what tasks the group’s specific person is responsible for as a camp follower and what hardships they have to endure to survive. Students are encouraged to seek their group members’ help first if they have a question about the task or research before asking the teacher.

b) (10 minutes) Writing Exercise Upon completion of this part of the lesson, student groups are asked to use the information they’ve garnered from their research and readings and draft a one-page "day in the life" diary entry detailing all the tasks their specific camp follower is responsible for and the hardships and privations they have to endure.

c) (12 minutes) Diary Readings The groups select a student to come to the front of the room and read each of their diary entries to the class. To conclude the lesson, students are asked to briefly discuss the reasons why General Washington was frustrated with camp followers, especially the women and children. (Note: Washington was frustrated because the women and children put a strain on food rations and slowed the army down. He strictly regulated their numbers and movement in order to maintain military efficiency.)

3. a) (15 minutes) Washington’s Dilemma – Camp Followers (1775 - 1777) Students are provided with Handout A: Excerpts from the 1775 and 1776 Articles of War (See Online Resources below). Students take turns to read the excerpts aloud. A discussion with the students follows about what stood out to them in these excerpts that all camp followers were required to adhere to. They may point out that the Articles of War provided rules subjecting sutlers and all retainers to military discipline. Students are then provided with Handout B: Primary Source Quotes from 1776 – 1777. Students again take turns reading the quotes aloud, and then they are asked to consider why General George Washington wanted to drastically reduce the number of women and children as camp followers even though they provided essential services as laundresses and nurses.

b) (15 minutes) Discussion Before opening this question up for discussion, students are provided with Handout C: An excerpt from *Belonging to the Army* by Holly A. Mayer, PhD. (See Online Resources below). Students are asked to go around the room and read a sentence or two out loud to the class. Based on all the readings, the students address the following questions and share their thoughts on: “Was General George Washington justified in trying to limit the number of women and children because they put a strain on rations and slowed down marches?” and “Were women indispensable to the logistical operation of the army because they served as laundresses and nurses that helped keep diseases under control?”

c) (6 minutes) Homework Assignment and Assessment To conclude this lesson, the teacher provides the students with Handout D: Perspective T-Chart:

Camp Follower Needs	Army (Command) Needs
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.

As a homework assignment, students are asked to complete Handout D: Perspective T-chart graphic organizer by listing the Camp Followers basic needs vs the Army's needs in order to survive. Based on their T-Chart listings, students weigh the competing pressures as if they were General Washington and draft a "Compromise Order" consisting of two or three ideas that may resolve this issue Washington has with the women and children. The teacher concludes the lesson with one more question to address in their homework assignment – "Despite General Washington's continued complaints about women and children, why didn't he simply ban them all?" (Note: If the students have done their research, the answer is: His officers told him they were essential to the cleanliness, health, and well-being of their soldiers and would risk soldiers deserting to be with their families.) Comparing the student's T-chart and "Compromise Order" homework assignment with what Washington actually did – "He allowed them to stay but strictly regulated their movement to maintain military efficiency" – the teacher will provide an assessment of each student's comprehension of the lesson.

NATIONAL CURRICULUM STANDARDS LINKS

[National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: Introduction | Social Studies](#)

[United States History Content Standards | Public History Initiative](#)

[English Language Arts Standards | Common Core State Standards Initiative](#) Click on History/Social Studies for the drop down menu. Then click on the Grade levels.

ONLINE RESOURCES FOR *CAMP FOLLOWERS*

[Eyewitness Sketch of the North Carolina Brigade - Museum of the American Revolution](#)

[Camp Followers - Museum of the American Revolution](#)

[General Orders, 4 August 1777](#) General Washington expresses his frustration with women and children following the army and asks officers to get rid of those that are not essential.

[General Orders, 13 September 1777](#) General Washington demands that women must march with the baggage train, not with the army.

[Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789](#) Volume II 1775 p.116-117 Art. XXXII; p. 119 Art. XLVIII; and p.121 Art. LXIV regarding rules and regulations “Suttlers” (colonial spelling) licensed to sell goods to the soldiers that are not supplied by the army, as well as others serving the Continental Army, but not enlisted as soldiers, including women and children, are subject to the army’s orders and military discipline.

[Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789](#) Volume V 1776 p.794 Section VIII Art. 1 and Art. 2; and p. 800 Section XIII Art. 23 regarding rules and regulations that require “Suttlers” and others, which are similar to the 1775 Articles of War.

[Belonging to the Army - Museum of the American Revolution](#) Excellent resource with excerpts from *Belonging to the Army* by Holly A. Mayer, PhD that describes the many roles that make up the Continental Army community. **Use for Activity 3 b) Handout C.**

[Laundry: The Primary Occupation of Followers | Washington Crossing Historic Park](#)

[The orderly book of that portion of the American army stationed at or near Williamsburg, Va., under the command of General Andrew Lewis, from March 18th, 1776, to August 28th, 1776 : United States. Continental Army. Virginia Infantry Regiment, 6th : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#) p. 59 July 8, 1776 Company Officers to list women’s names, numbers, and single or married in order to have them examined.

<https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/camp-followers> Excellent background on the demographics and daily lives of camp followers.

revwar75.com/library/rees/wnumb1.htm Renowned Historian John U. Rees’s extensive, hyper-specific list of articles focused on the role of women and daily camp life.

SUGGESTED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR CAMP FOLLOWERS

Mayer, Holly A. ***Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and Community during the American Revolution*** (University of South Carolina Press, 1996). The foundational text on the subject. It defines the Continental Army as a social community, detailing how the military assimilated the essential civilians it initially tried to exclude.

Blumenthal, Walter Hart ***Women Camp Followers of the American Revolution*** (Arno Press, 1974). A classic, albeit older, study detailing the vital daily services (laundry and nursing) these women provided for the army, and cooking and caring for their families.