



# The *American Revolution* for Kids



A History with  
21 Activities

JANIS HERBERT



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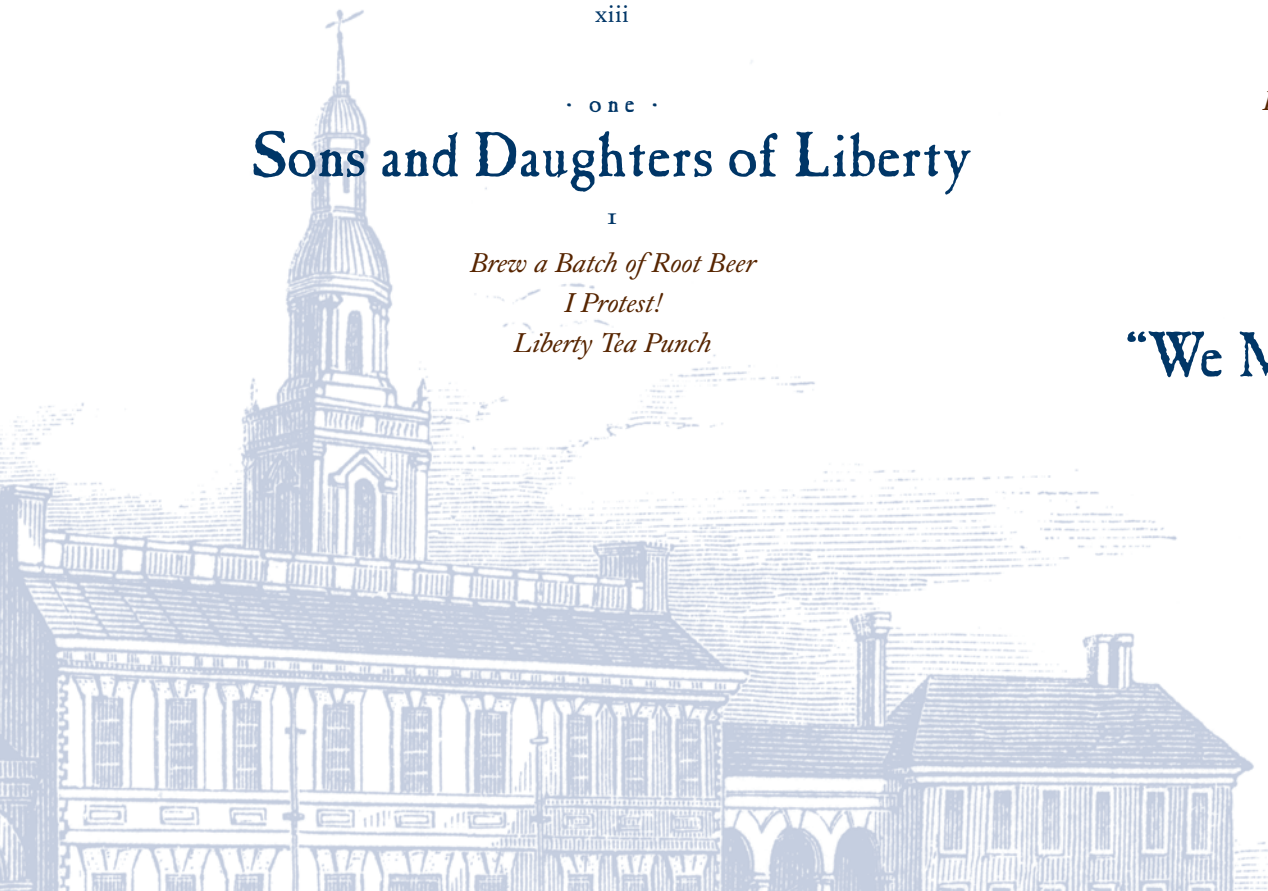
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# TIME LINE

1754-60	French and Indian War	1774	Coercive ("Intolerable") Acts and Quebec Act passed First Continental Congress meets
1760	George III becomes king of England	1775	Battles of Lexington and Concord (April 19) Second Continental Congress meets Washington appointed commander of Continental Army Battle of Bunker Hill (June 17) Defeat at Quebec (December 30)
1765	Stamp Act and Quartering Act passed Stamp Act Congress meets		
1766	Stamp Act repealed		
1767	Parliament passes Townshend Acts	1776	Thomas Paine writes <i>Common Sense</i> Siege of Boston ends Declaration of Independence signed (July 4) New York falls Battle of Trenton (December 25)
1768	British troops in Boston	1777	Battle of Princeton (January 3) Fort Ticonderoga falls (July 6) Battle of Bennington (August 16) Battle of Brandywine (September 11) Philadelphia falls (September 26) Battle of Germantown (October 6)
1770	Boston Massacre (March 5)		
1773	Parliament passes the Tea Act Boston Tea Party (December 16)		

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	<p>Battle of Saratoga (October 7)</p> <p>Burgoyne surrenders (October 17)</p> <p>Congress passes Articles of Confederation (November 15)</p> <p>Winter at Valley Forge</p>	1783	<p>Treaty of Paris signed (September 3)</p> <p>Continental Army disbanded; Washington retires</p>
1778	<p>France declares war</p> <p>Battle of Monmouth Courthouse (June 28)</p> <p>Savannah captured (December 29)</p>	1786	<p>Annapolis Convention</p> <p>Shays's Rebellion</p>
1779	<p>George Rogers Clark captures Vincennes (February 25)</p> <p><i>Bonhomme Richard</i> vs. the <i>Serapis</i> (September 29)</p> <p>Winter at Morristown, New Jersey</p>	1787	<p>Congress passes Northwest Ordinance</p> <p>Constitutional Convention meets</p> <p>Constitution signed (September 17)</p>
1780	<p>Charleston falls (May 12)</p> <p>Battle of Camden (August 16)</p> <p>Battle of Kings Mountain (October 7)</p>	1788	<p>Constitution is ratified</p>
1781	<p>Battle of Cowpens (January 17)</p> <p>Articles of Confederation adopted by states (March 1)</p> <p>Battle of Guilford Courthouse (March 15)</p> <p>Battle of Eutaw Springs (September 8)</p> <p>Cornwallis surrenders at Yorktown (October 19)</p>	1789	<p>First meeting of Congress</p> <p>George Washington sworn in as president,</p> <p>John Adams as vice president</p>
		1791	<p>Congress adopts the Bill of Rights</p>





Preface

# “War’s Begun”



**I**T SEEMED LIKE ANY OTHER DAY in the country schoolhouse on the outskirts of Boston. The youngest children pored over their primers, while older students recited Latin phrases. The schoolmaster looked sternly at those who wiggled or talked out of turn. Suddenly, a distant “tramp tramp tramp” broke the spring morning’s stillness, and the students looked up from their books. The sound grew louder. Soon, to their amazement, hundreds of British soldiers marched past their school. The soldiers, dressed in crimson coats and tall red and gold hats, marched in step as their officers, mounted on magnificent horses, urged them forward. “Lay down your books,” said the schoolmaster. “War’s begun and school is done.”

The British soldiers were marching against musket-toting American militiamen. The Americans, once loyal to the Crown, were preparing

to fight for freedom from British rule. Over time, many of the colonists in British North America had become unhappy under Great Britain. They had raged against “Intolerable Acts” passed by Parliament and the royal proclamations that restricted their freedom. England’s answer was to send troops and tighten its hold on the colonies. After years of protests and riots, the colonists and their mother country were at war.

At one time, such a war seemed impossible. The people living in the 13 colonies along the Atlantic coastline had long been loyal subjects of the English king. From the time of the earliest settlements in North America, they had considered themselves to be English and looked to their home country for guidance and support.

Only recently, the colonists and British soldiers had fought side by side against France and its Indian allies over France’s North American



## ✧ Thirteen Colonies at a Glance ✧

**The colonies** Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Virginia

### Milestones:

**1585** Sir Walter Raleigh colonizes Roanoke Island (the settlers disappear without a trace)

**1587** First English baby, Virginia Dare, born in North America

**1607** London Company colonists and Captain John Smith found Jamestown, Virginia

**1619** First representative assembly in America meets in Jamestown; slaves brought to Virginia

**1620** Pilgrims land at Plymouth Rock to build a community based on their Mayflower Compact

**1626** New Amsterdam (Manhattan) bought from Indians by Dutch West India Company for 24 dollars' worth of beads

**1634** Catholics find a welcome home in Lord Baltimore's Maryland colony

**1636** Providence (Rhode Island), founded by Roger Williams, becomes known for religious tolerance

**1638** Swedish settlements built along the Delaware River



**1639** "Fundamental Orders" (an early constitution) written by settlers of Connecticut

**1663** Royal charter granted to colonize the Carolinas (North and South Carolina officially separate in 1729)

**1664** The Dutch surrender New Netherland colony to the English (it is divided into New York and New Jersey)

**1679** New Hampshire, once part of Massachusetts, becomes a colony



**1682** Quaker William Penn founds the city of Philadelphia (Pennsylvania colony)

**1733** The last colony, Georgia, becomes home to English debtors and dissenters

**Population in 1770** Over two million

**Biggest city in 1770** Philadelphia, population about 34,000

**Ethnicity** African, Dutch, English, French, German, Irish, Scandinavian, and Scottish. Most were English; Africans, brought to the colonies as slaves, were the second-largest group.

**Occupations and industry** Southerners raised rice, sugar, tobacco, and indigo on large plantations. The New England economy was based on fishing and shipbuilding. In the prosperous middle colonies farmers raised wheat, vegetables, and fruit, while craftsmen made furniture, shoes, and glass.

**Religions** Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Congregationalist, Jewish, Lutheran, and Quaker. Many came to the colonies seeking religious freedom.

**Government** Under British rule. Most colonies had a royal governor appointed by the king. Local governing bodies, such as Virginia's House of Burgesses, were based on Britain's Parliament. Half of their members were appointed by the king and half elected by colonial land-owners. The king regarded the laws they passed to be subject to his will and to Parliament.

**Favorite beverage** Tea!

claims. (Indian warriors preferred the French, who bought their furs, to the English colonists, who settled on their land.) Fierce battles raged in the western forests and mountains, and north into Canada. The British were victorious against their longtime French enemies, and France was driven off the continent.

The colonists celebrated that victory with bonfires and parades. With the French gone, they saw their future in the lands to the west. They began to make plans for new settlements. Their British ruler wasn't so sure. It would be a lot of trouble to hold those lands against the Indians who lived there. When the Ottawa Indian chief Pontiac led his warriors against English forts in the west, the

king threw up his hands. It wasn't worth sending more soldiers across the ocean to fight for those lands. He set a boundary at the Appalachian Mountains, where the colonies should end. The colonists were disappointed that they wouldn't be able to expand to new settlements and wondered why they had bothered to help fight the French at all.

This was not ancient history to the schoolchildren. Their fathers had fought in the French and Indian War. They knew, too, that the war had created problems between Great Britain and its American colonies. The British government was deeply in debt from the French and Indian War. The colonists, Parliament had decided, would have to pay.

· three ·

## “We Must All Hang Together”

### Fall, 1774: A Meeting in Philadelphia

Patrick Henry summed up the new feeling in the colonies. “The distinctions between Virginians, Pennsylvanians, New Yorkers, and New Englanders are no more,” he declared. “I am not a Virginian, but an American!” The delegates at the First Continental Congress murmured their agreement. These 56 men, representing all the colonies except Georgia, had made their way on horseback and in coaches to Philadelphia. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Patrick Henry were among the delegates from Virginia. Samuel Adams’s neighbors had presented him with a new suit of clothes so he could represent them in style. John Adams brought his diary to write about his experiences.

The delegates called themselves the “Continental Congress.” They met at Philadelphia’s State House (today called “Independence Hall”). They chose a leader to run the meeting (Peyton Randolph, a cousin of Jefferson’s) and gave him the title of “president.” They agreed that each colony would have an equal vote on their decisions, no matter how large or small its population, and they set to work planning a response to the Coercive Acts. Great Britain, in trying to crush the uprising in Massachusetts, had caused all of the colonies to join together. “It was like thirteen clocks striking as one,” said John Adams.

Though the delegates meant business, most didn’t intend to break away entirely from their mother country. Their hope was for a say in their government. They talked and talked (for everyone had a different opinion) about the best way to reach their goal, then agreed on the “Suffolk





**Patrick Henry**  
(1736–1799)

**P**atrick Henry had a way with words. Many of his rang out during the years of the American Revolution when he was a lawyer, a member of Virginia's House of Burgesses, and a Continental Congress delegate. Some people said Henry's speeches made their hair stand on end and their blood run cold. He gave one of his most famous speeches right before the war. "We have done everything that could be done to avert the storm!" he exclaimed. "Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? I know not what course others may take but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

Resolves." This document was written by Dr. Joseph Warren in Massachusetts and brought to Philadelphia—at a gallop—by Paul Revere. It rejected the Coercive Acts and the Quebec Act. It urged the people in the colonies to collect their own taxes and ban all trade with Great Britain until things got straightened out. And though they didn't want war, the members of the Congress thought the colonists should arm themselves. With the British holding Boston under military rule, who knew what would happen next? They passed a resolution that the colonies should form militias (groups of citizen-soldiers).

Next, the Congress sent a petition to King George and the people of Great Britain demanding that, as loyal subjects, they be granted the same rights as Englishmen. Then they adjourned, agreeing to gather the next spring if necessary. By the time they met again, the first shots of a long war had been fired.

## April 19, 1775: "The Shot Heard 'Round the World"

Back in Boston, British general Thomas Gage prepared for the worst. His spies warned him that the colonists were stashing arms, gunpowder, and shot. It was no secret that men were drilling in villages throughout Massachusetts. When these men heard their signal (a drumbeat or church

bell), they left their plows and forges, grabbed their weapons, and ran to their assigned meeting place. Because they trained to be ready for action at a moment's notice, they were called "minute-men." When Gage heard about all this activity, he ordered his soldiers to fortify the outskirts of Boston and sent to London for more troops. "If you think ten thousand men sufficient, send twenty," he wrote.

When King George heard that the colonists were arming themselves, he felt betrayed. Parliament declared Massachusetts to be in a state of rebellion and ordered General Gage to bring the disloyal colony to its knees.

Gage learned that the colonists had stockpiled a large store of military supplies in Concord (about 20 miles from Boston). He readied his soldiers to march there to destroy the arms, gunpowder, candles, and medicines. Concord was also the meeting place of the rebellious leaders of Massachusetts. Gage had special orders to arrest the biggest troublemakers, Samuel Adams and John Hancock.

Seven hundred British troops left Boston on this mission. Under the cover of darkest night, with oars muffled, they paddled across the town's Charles River. But their mission was no secret—the patriots had learned about General Gage's plan. (Some say they found out from the general's American wife!) By a prearranged signal, silversmith and patriot Paul Revere let watchful friends know about the British troop movement. Two lanterns hung from a church steeple told friends across the river that the British were com-

*The die is now cast, the Colonies must either submit or triumph.*

—KING GEORGE III

ing by sea. If the soldiers had marched out of Boston by land, one lantern would have been hung. Then Revere set out on horseback to nearby Lexington, where Adams and Hancock were staying, to warn them. He shouted the news of the British march to people in villages along the way.

The red-coated soldiers marched in step through the night. As the sun rose, they were near Lexington. Here the advance troops were faced with minutemen—teenagers and grandfathers, fathers and sons—lined up along the village green. “Disperse, ye Rebels! Lay down your arms and

## ACTIVITY

### *Get Ready in a Minute*

In one short minute, the Massachusetts minutemen dropped everything and gathered at the village commons. Can you get ready in a minute?

*What you need*

2 or more friends

Minuteman clothes and equipment (see Chapters 3 and 6 for instructions on making a three-cornered hat, a fringed hunting shirt, and a powder horn and pouch; use a stick as a pretend rifle)

A bell or whistle

Stopwatch or watch with second hand

Pick an outside meeting place where you will all gather after hearing the signal. Choose one person to be a timekeeper. Lay your minuteman clothes and equipment out in your room, ready to go. Then go outside and pretend it’s the 18th century. Pretend to plow, feed the animals, or chop wood.

The British are coming! The timekeeper blows the whistle or rings the bell and starts keeping time with the watch. The race begins! Run to your room, change your clothes, and pick up your equipment. Run out to the assigned meeting place. Did you make it in a minute? The timekeeper salutes the first person to arrive, and then lets him or her take over as timekeeper. Play until everyone makes it in a minute.



## Midnight Riders

Listen my children, and you shall hear  
Of the midnight ride of... William Dawes?

A poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow tells of the famous ride of Paul Revere. Revere rode many times and many miles as an express rider for the patriots, but on this night he was not the only rider. William Dawes, Dr. Samuel Prescott, and others also galloped through villages to spread the word. Church bells rang and drummers beat signals. Women reached for their children and minutemen for their muskets. In Lexington, Revere found the home where Adams and Hancock were sleeping. A guard at the door hushed him, saying he was making too much noise. "Noise!" Revere replied, "You'll have noise enough before long!" He shouted to Adams and Hancock that they were in danger. The two escaped before the redcoats arrived.

Dawes, Prescott, and Revere left Lexington together and galloped furiously for Concord. They were ambushed by patrolling British officers. Dawes and Prescott escaped; Dr. Prescott made it to Concord to warn the villagers. When the British officers learned that the countryside was alarmed and preparing for attack, they let Revere go and raced for their units.



*Paul Revere's Ride*





### *Battle of Lexington*

disperse!” shouted British major John Pitcairn. The Americans, greatly outnumbered, began to break rank and walk away, though few laid down their arms. At that moment, a shot went off. No one knows who fired it; it may have been an accident. But when the British soldiers heard it, they began firing at will. Eight Americans were killed.

The British troops marched on to Concord to search for the stashed arms and military sup-

plies. The villagers, forewarned, hid many of the supplies. What the redcoats found, they burned. After a brief and sharp scuffle with gathering minutemen and militia, the British troops fell back and began a withdrawal to Boston.

By that time, news of the events at Lexington had spread throughout the countryside. As the British troops marched, men from nearby villages shot at them from behind trees and rocks. The exhausted British soldiers were very relieved



when reinforcements arrived from Boston. With this help, they retreated to safety. The first shots had been fired; war had begun.

Over the next days, Dr. Warren treated the American wounded and organized the volunteers who showed up to fight for the patriot cause. Soon more than 10,000 gathered outside Boston, ready and eager to fight. Artemus Ward, who had fought in the French and Indian War, took command of this ragtag army. He set them to work digging fortifications and standing guard.

General Gage kept his 5,000 British soldiers inside Boston. Help was on the way. King George was sending warships, troops, and three generals—John Burgoyne, Henry Clinton, and William Howe—to America. One of the generals, Sir Henry Clinton, had grown up in the colonies. His father had been royal governor of New York. Sir William Howe had fought alongside colonists in the French and Indian War. As a member of Parliament, he had sworn that he would never carry arms against the colonists; now he had to take back that promise. John Burgoyne was a great favorite among the British soldiers, who called him “Gentleman Johnny.” He was a successful playwright and quite a dandy. When he heard that British soldiers in Boston were surrounded by angry Americans, John Burgoyne said, “The King’s troops shut up? Well, let us get in and we’ll soon find elbow room!”

The Americans had fighting spirit but not much in the way of supplies. The volunteers brought muskets, if they had them, or showed up armed with sickles and scythes (both curved

metal blades). One of their leaders, Benedict Arnold, knew they would never be able to stand up to the British without cannons. He offered to lead an expedition against British-held Forts Ticonderoga and Crown Point on Lake Champlain. He thought he could easily capture the forts and their big guns.

Arnold set off to find that someone else had the same good idea. Ethan Allen, the leader of a rough and ready group called the “Green Mountain Boys,” was also planning an attack against Fort Ticonderoga. Together, they led the Green Mountain Boys in a surprise attack. Giant Ethan Allen waved his sword and, with a roar, demanded surrender “in the name of the Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress!” The surprised commander surrendered the fort, along with its precious guns, boats, and supplies.

On the same day that Fort Ticonderoga fell, the Continental Congress gathered in Philadelphia. So much had changed since their last meeting. Some delegates still hoped for peace under Britain’s rule. Others wanted to break from their mother country. Benjamin Franklin called for liberty. George Washington showed up in the blue and white military uniform he’d worn in the French and Indian War. Philadelphians went wild with excitement when Samuel Adams and John Hancock arrived (Hancock loved the attention—he rode through town accompanied by clattering horsemen with their sabers drawn). Hancock was elected president of this Congress. John Adams was everywhere, convincing all the delegates that they should work together. He







*Capture of Fort Ticonderoga*



## ✦ George Washington ✦

(1732 – 1799)

**F**orget the wooden teeth and the cherry tree—they're both myths. But George Washington did have false teeth (several sets, of ivory and cow's teeth) and telling lies wasn't his style. George's father, a Vir-



ginia planter, died when he was a boy. As a teenager, George worked as a surveyor, then inherited his brother's estate, Mount Vernon. At 19, he was an officer in Virginia's militia. He fought side by side with the British in the French and Indian War, then came home to marry Martha Custis, a widow with two children. His hopes for a quiet life changed when he went to Philadelphia as a Continental Congress delegate and was elected commander of the new army.

Washington was tall (6 feet, 4 inches—at that time, a giant) and fair skinned. His face was marked with smallpox scars. He was athletic, loved to ride horses and hunt, and had spent years roughing it in the western wilds. According to Thomas Jefferson, he was the best dancer in Virginia. He was also shy, serious, generous, and brave and worked hard to control his hot temper. As a young man, Washington was determined to improve himself through reading and study. He copied down "Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior" and followed them unfailingly. (The rules ranged from the sensible to the silly, from "respect your elders," "listen when others speak," and "don't point or roll your eyes" to "cleanse not your teeth with the tablecloth but if others do so let it be done without a peep to them.") His soldiers adored him and so did the American people. When the war was over, they elected him as their first president.





## Dance a Minuet

George Washington loved to dance, and his favorite dance was the minuet. There were many versions of the minuet, all of them elegant and graceful. Put on your finest clothes and your finest airs and dance like General Washington!

*What you need*

A partner

Start in the center of the dance floor with your partner and first acknowledge the audience. The gentleman bows from the waist and the lady curtsies. Then bow and curtsy to each other.

Turn with your partner toward one corner of the dance floor. Stand side by side, with the lady to the gentleman's right. The lady crooks her elbow and holds her left hand so that the palm faces the gentleman; he places his right hand on her raised left hand. Move toward the corner, taking small steps, starting with the right foot. Right, left, right, then point your left toe out and

tap it on the floor three times. Now move forward again, this time starting with the left foot. Left, right, left, then point your right toe out and tap it on the floor three times. Continue until you reach the corner of the floor.

When you get near the corner, slowly lower the hands that were touching and, while turning toward each other, raise the opposite hands. By the time you are facing all the way around toward the opposite corner, the lady's right hand should be touching the gentleman's left. Begin dancing toward the other corner of the room. When you reach that corner, turn again and dance to the center of the room. Release hands, back slightly away from each other, and bow and curtsy.

Don't forget that the minuet is executed with the utmost grace and style. Every step should be dignified and elegant. Keep your back straight, your chin up, eyebrows raised, and only the slightest smile on your face.

proposed that the armed men outside Boston be recognized as America's "Continental Army" and that they be led by George Washington.

Washington, when he heard his name, blushed and left the room. A unanimous vote made Washington commander in chief of the American army.

## June 17, 1775: The Battle of Bunker Hill

By the time Washington reached his army, they had already been in battle. Inside Boston, British general Gage had welcomed reinforcements and the three new generals from England. The Americans outside the town heard that the British planned to seize the high ground around their camp and destroy them. They decided to make their move before the redcoats had a chance. They moved to a hill across the river from Boston, overlooking the town of Charlestown. From this position on Breed's Hill (later renamed for nearby Bunker's Hill), they threatened British ships and troops in Boston. The British replied to this insolence with artillery fire from their ships, which set Charlestown on fire. General Gage ordered British general William Howe to send soldiers across the river and up the hill against the Americans.

This order was a terrible mistake on Gage's part. Though his troops were organized, brave, and well trained, they were no match for the Americans' position. The redcoats advanced uphill, carrying heavy packs and weapons, while the Americans waited behind bales of hay and earthen walls they'd built the night before. American commanders William Prescott and Israel Putnam ordered their men to hold their fire until the enemy was near—"close enough to see the whites of their eyes." They had very little ammunition and every shot would count.

For hours, the British troops tried to take the hill. Again and again, the redcoats marched up the slopes, only to fall when they came within range of American fire. They retreated, regathered, and attacked again until nearly half their number were killed or wounded. Beneath them, Charlestown's buildings burned and crashed to the ground. Cannons roared from the British ships, and army musicians tried to inspire the troops with fife and drum music. The townspeople of Boston gathered in every high place, from church steeples and rooftops to the masts of ships in the wharves, to watch the fight. Abigail Adams took her young son, John Quincy Adams, to the top of a hill and together they watched this first battle between British and American soldiers.

When the Americans ran out of ammunition, they retreated. The British won the heights but at a huge cost in lives. Because of the losses, General Gage was soon removed as top commander and General William Howe put in his place.

The American losses were not as great, but they mourned for one in particular. Dr. Joseph Warren had come to fight on the hill despite a premonition that he would meet his death there. He stayed to the end to help others retreat, then was killed by a musket ball.

George Washington was relieved to hear his men would stand and fight. But when he arrived and looked his army up and down, he knew he had a lot of work to do to make them into real soldiers. They were dressed in the clothes they



*Attack on Bunker Hill and the  
Burning of Charlestown*

wore from home and sleeping in makeshift tents of blankets and sailcloth. Some had muskets or hunting rifles, but their powder horns and ammunition pouches were nearly empty. Others had no weapons at all. Washington shuddered to think what would happen if the British knew about their predicament. It was a great day

when a resourceful book peddler, Henry Knox, brought 59 cannons captured from Fort Ticonderoga to the Continental Army camp. Knox had brought the guns 300 miles down rivers and over snowy terrain. Washington made the book peddler his captain of artillery and, later, a general.



## Putnam's Prank

Israel Putnam fought in the French and Indian War, was captured by Indians, and, as a white-haired old man, led the fight at Bunker Hill. Once, he'd been challenged to a duel by a British officer. Putnam was allowed to choose the weapons and picked two kegs of gunpowder. He and his opponent each sat on a keg while their long fuses were lit. As the fuses burned down, Putnam's challenger lost his nerve, jumped up, and ran away. Putnam sat on his keg and laughed. The kegs weren't really filled with gunpowder. His opponent had run away from a barrel of onions.



## ACTIVITY

### *Make a Tricorn Hat*

The soldiers didn't have uniforms, but many of them wore black, three-cornered hats in the hottest 18th-century style. Top yourself off with a tricorn hat!

#### *What you need*

Long piece of paper

Tape

Chalk

18 by 18-inch square piece of heavy cardboard (recycle a box)

Ruler

Scissors

18 by 18-inch square piece of black felt

Pins

Needle

Black thread

Circle your head with the long piece of paper, just above your ears, and tape it (as shown).

Draw a dot with the chalk in the center of the heavy cardboard. Center the circle of paper

around that dot and trace its outline onto the cardboard. Pretending the outline you traced is a clock, draw dots at 12:00, 4:00, and 8:00 on the outline. Using the ruler, draw a straight line from the dot in the center through the 12:00 dot to a point 3 inches beyond it. Do the same at 4:00 and 8:00. Connect the three outside dots to make a triangle. (See illustration.) Cut out the triangle. Cut out the circle in the center.

With the chalk, draw a circle 18 inches in diameter on the felt. Cut out the circle. Cover your head with the circle of felt. Place the triangular piece over it and push down until it fits snugly. Carefully pull it off your head, keeping the felt crown (top) of the hat stable. Pin the outside edge of the felt, in the middle of each side of the triangle, to the three sides of the crown.

With needle and thread, stitch the felt to the crown where you pinned it. Remove the pins. At each side of the triangle, flip the fabric over the cardboard and sew it to the crown.



The men didn't act like an army either; they wandered about as they pleased and left for home whenever they felt like it. They didn't much like taking orders. Some of them didn't like each other. Washington had to get off his horse and personally break up a snowball fight that turned into a big brawl between Virginia and Massachusetts soldiers. But in a short time, he organized the men into regiments and imposed rules and discipline. He set them to work gathering food and firewood, digging earthworks, and standing guard. If he could only keep them from leaving when their short enlistments were up, they might actually be able to stand up against the British.

## 1775–1776: Boston and Quebec Under Siege

After the Battle of Bunker Hill, Boston's patriots hastily fled the town. Loyalists (colonists loyal to the crown) moved into Boston to be under the protection of the British army. The redcoats drilled and prepared for the next battle. Every day, General Washington expected they would come out of the town and overrun his vulnerable army. If they knew, Washington fretted, that his Continental Army only had 32 barrels of powder, then the war would soon be lost.

While Washington's soldiers waited outside Boston, others made their way north. Two Amer-

ican forces marched to Canada on a secret mission, hoping to take the territory away from the British. Benedict Arnold led one of the forces north on a brutal march through uncharted forests in cruel weather. Hundreds of his men died from disease and starvation along the way. American Richard Montgomery successfully brought his force against Montreal, then joined Arnold to storm the stronghold of Quebec. After a long winter siege outside its gates, they threw themselves against Quebec in a surprise midnight attack. In the brutal hand-to-hand fighting, many were killed (including Montgomery) or taken prisoner.

British ships attacked places up and down the coast in an attempt to lure Washington away from Boston. They burned Falmouth (now Portland), Maine. They shelled Norfolk, Virginia, and burned it down. Washington's home at nearby Mount Vernon and his wife, Martha, were in danger; she left to join her husband at his army camp.

Farther south, North Carolina militiamen gathered to thwart loyalist forces organized by the royal governor. While some people chose to fight for the patriot cause, others sided with the king. Here, former Scottish Highlanders joined the British cause. Dressed in kilts and armed with broadswords, they were marching to Wilmington, North Carolina, to join British troops when the patriots ambushed them. While bagpipes played, the Highlanders charged, crying, "King George and the Broadwords!" Their swords were no match for patriot guns, and their march ended at Widow Moore's Creek. The patriot

## The Coat Roll

Supplies were scarce in the Continental Army. Congress asked the women of the colonies to help. Patriotic women busied themselves at spinning wheels and looms to make warm woolen coats for the soldiers. Inside each coat, the women sewed their own names and that of their hometown. Each soldier who volunteered for an eight-month stint at this time received one of these coats of homespun wool. The list of these soldiers was known as the "Coat Roll." The coats were prized by men who would otherwise have suffered in the bitter cold, and they provided the English with a nickname for the Continental Army—the "Homespun."





victory inspired North Carolinians to adopt the “Halifax Resolves,” a demand for independence from Great Britain.

On the outskirts of Boston, Washington grew tired of waiting. He came up with a plan to drive the redcoats out of town. One dark night, he moved his men onto a hill and ordered them to quickly build fortifications. When General Howe scanned the horizon the next morning, he was shocked to see American guns pointing down at him. His attempts to drive Washington’s men from the hill were foiled by a huge storm. By the time the storm passed and the British were ready to attack again, the Americans had built another fort, this one even closer. Howe sent up a white flag of truce. Within days, 12,000 British soldiers and thousands of their loyalist followers sailed out of Boston’s harbor. Boston was freed. General Washington moved his army to New York, where he expected the British to attack next.

## July 4, 1776: The First Fourth

Congress tried one last time to make things right with England. Delegate John Dickinson drafted an “Olive Branch” Petition (the olive branch is an emblem of peace) and sent it to King George. The king felt that the colonies were declaring war and trying to make peace at the same time. He wouldn’t even read the

petition. The next document they sent got his attention.

Virginia delegate Richard Henry Lee stood up in Congress one day and proposed that the connection between the colonies and Great Britain be dissolved. Thomas Jefferson was chosen to write the document that declared the colonies free from Great Britain’s rule. (Jefferson thought Adams should write it. Adams declined. “I’m unpopular,” he said, “and you write ten times better than me.”) After many late nights in his rented room, Jefferson finished his “Declaration of Independence.” It outlined the grievances against King George and stated that the “United Colonies are and ought to be free and independent States.”

In words that changed the path of history, Jefferson stated the noble principles that “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” The role of government was to secure these rights, Jefferson stated. Since Great Britain was not doing so, the American people were claiming their right to break away. With this Declaration, the rebellion of the colonies changed from an argument about taxes to a first step toward creating a new kind of government, one based on principles of equality and human rights.

On the 4th of July, 1776, the delegates gathered to sign Jefferson’s document. John Hancock was the first to put his quill to the parchment. He signed with a flourish, large enough “for King



*Reading of the  
Declaration of Independence*

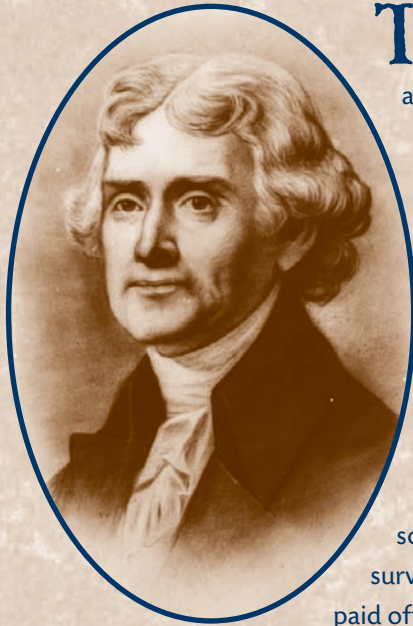


*Signing the Declaration of Independence*



## ✧ Thomas Jefferson ✧

(1743–1826)



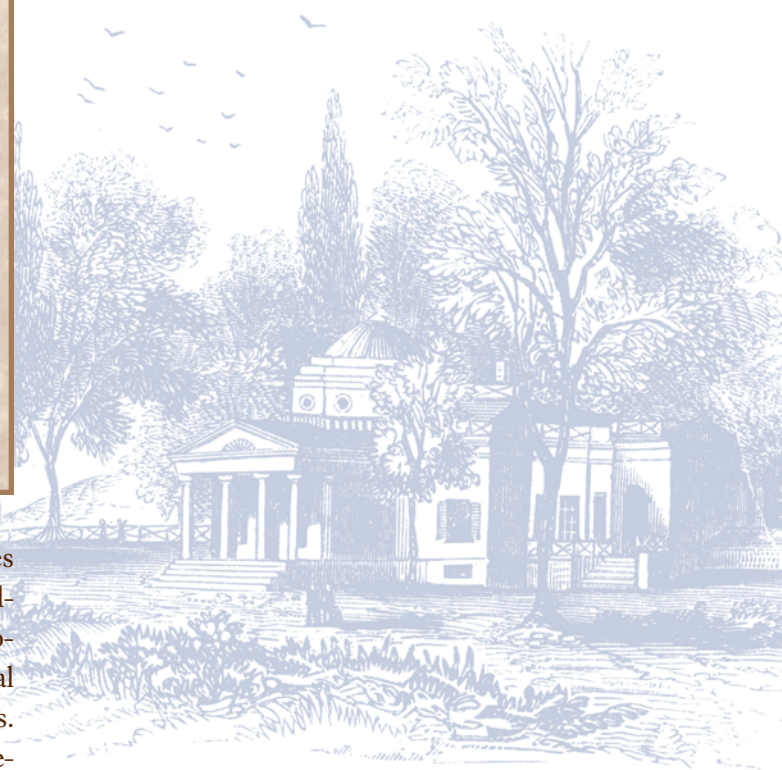
Tall and bony, red-haired, shy among strangers and lively with friends, Thomas Jefferson was the eldest son of a Virginia planter and surveyor. He liked to swim, play violin, and ride horses, but most of all he was driven to learn. Jefferson studied 15 hours a day! In the mornings, he studied science, religion, and law. Every afternoon, he read about politics and history. He saved evenings for languages and literature.

At the time of the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson was 32 years old and one of the youngest delegates. He had been a lawyer and member of Virginia's House of Burgesses and had married a young widow named Martha. He would later become minister to France, George Washington's secretary of state, and the third president of the United States. Jefferson was also an architect, gardener, inventor, musician, naturalist, surveyor, and founder of the University of Virginia. (All that studying paid off!)

George to read without spectacles." Hancock turned to Benjamin Franklin and said, "We must be unanimous. There must be no pulling different ways. We must all hang together." Franklin knew that signing the document was treason and could mean death for all the signers, but he could never resist making a joke. "Yes," he agreed. "We must indeed all hang together or most assuredly we shall all hang separately."

Carrying copies of the radical document, couriers rode furiously to towns across the land.

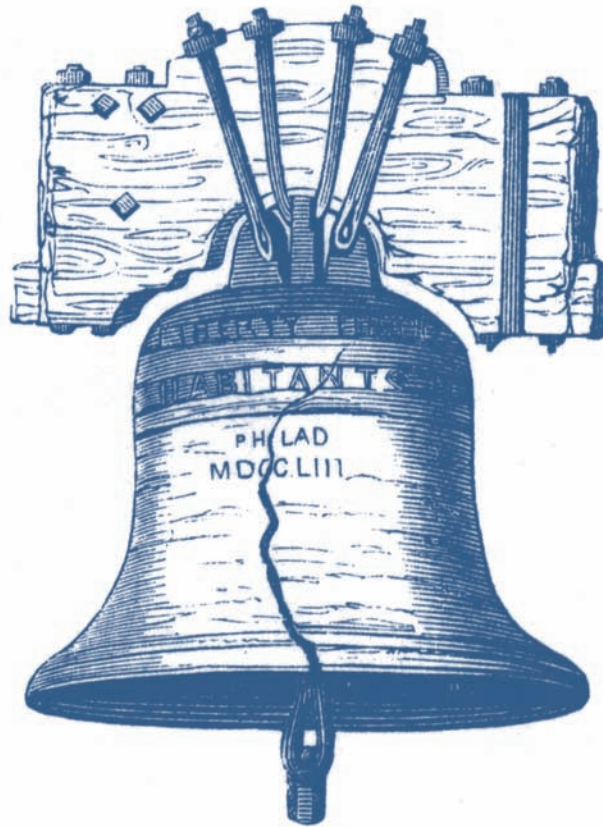
They posted the Declaration on liberty trees and read it aloud on street corners. In Philadelphia, the State House bell (now called the "Liberty Bell") rang loudly. In New York, General Washington read the Declaration to his soldiers. John Adams, in a letter to his wife, Abigail, predicted that America's independence would be celebrated for generations to come with parades and "illuminations" (fireworks). That year, Americans across the land celebrated with bells and bonfires.





## Well, I Declare!

**P**rinter John Dunlap made around 200 copies of the Declaration of Independence. Only 25 still exist. One was recently discovered in a four-dollar frame purchased at a flea market. It sold at auction for \$8.1 million!



Even as Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, a fleet of British ships under Admiral Sir Peter Parker sailed toward Charleston, South Carolina. Colonel William Moultrie and his patriot forces got ready for them. They melted down church windows to make lead for their musket balls and built a fort of logs and dirt on Sullivan's Island. They withstood a nine-hour bombardment and repelled the British fleet.

## The Liberty Bell

**S**hortly after it arrived from London in 1752, the Philadelphia State House bell developed a crack. Was it an omen of future relations between England and its colonies? Foundrymen re-cast it. More than 20 years later, on July 8, 1776, its ring drew people to the first reading of the Declaration of Independence. It cracked again on another July 8, in 1835, while ringing for the funeral of John Marshall, chief justice of the Supreme Court.







*Battle of Long Island*

## August 27, 1776: The Battle of Long Island

In New York, shocked patriots watched as hundreds of British ships approached their town. There were so many, one onlooker wrote, that their masts looked like a forest of bare trees. Two of the ships sailed up the Hudson River and fired their guns. As cannonballs fell in the streets, families ran from their homes.

The fleet of ships carried 30,000 experienced and professional soldiers. Eight thousand were German soldiers who had been “rented” to the British king for seven pounds each. Because many of these soldiers came from a region called Hesse-Cassel, the Americans called them all “Hessians.” Ten thousand sailors were under the command of Admiral Lord Richard Howe (brother to British commander in chief General Sir William Howe). The Continental Army, a mix of youngsters, old men, backwoodsmen, and inexperienced townsmen, was outnumbered almost two to one.

The mismatched forces met on Long Island. The Americans built fortifications on high ground but British general Sir Henry Clinton spotted the weak point in their lines. He moved some men to this unguarded side and other men behind and in front of the Americans. The British attacked from three directions, and the Americans collapsed. Those who could escape ran in the one direction left open—marshy ground that slowed their every desperate step. That

night, as they huddled around their small campfires, the bright promise of independence seemed dim. They were cornered, with their backs to the East River, and would surely be captured.

Their general was not one to give up so easily. Late that night, when a helpful fog rolled in, Washington ordered his men to gather in absolute silence. He placed them, with all their baggage and artillery, aboard small boats and ferried them across the river to Manhattan. They left their fires lit so watching British sentries (guards) would think they were still in camp. When the British broke into the camp at daybreak, the last boat, carrying Washington, was just pulling away.

Washington stationed his men at different points around Manhattan Island but knew it would be impossible to hold it. His army was badly outnumbered, and, with Manhattan surrounded by water, the British could land anywhere.

His worst fears came true when British and Hessian troops landed on Manhattan’s east side. Washington rode forward to see his panicked men dropping their muskets and packs and racing away. He planted his horse across their path and lashed out with his riding whip, but the men couldn’t be stopped. As the redcoats marched forward, Washington sat on his horse and scowled at them, too, angry enough to attack by himself. Finally, his aide came forward and pulled Washington’s horse away. When his men were safely north of town at Harlem Heights, Washington looked them over and wondered how these

### Famous Last Words

American captain Nathan Hale was a schoolmaster posing as a spy for General Washington. One day he was captured by the British and allowed one last chance to speak before he was hung. “I only regret,” said Nathan Hale, “that I have but one life to lose for my country.”





troops could possibly win a war against the finest army in the world.

The following day, in the Battle of Harlem Heights, Washington's soldiers showed more courage and gave as good as they got. Still, the British held Manhattan and continued on the attack. Day after day, the Americans fell back. A sharp fight at White Plains raised hopes, but when the British captured Forts Washington and Mifflin on the Hudson River, Washington lost heart. Three thousand of his men were taken prisoner and precious supplies seized.

With the enemy close on their heels, Washington led his discouraged troops across New Jersey. As they approached the Delaware River, British general Cornwallis's troops closed in behind them. Quickly, the Americans seized every boat for 75 miles up and down the river, paddled across the Delaware, and left the British standing on the opposite shore. Cornwallis had no way to follow. He stationed Hessian troops along the Delaware River and returned to British headquarters in Philadelphia.

With winter's onset, the British retired from battle. In those days, armies rarely fought in the wintertime. It was hard to get food for the men and fodder for the horses and cattle. Rain and snow turned roads to mud, and no one could march anywhere.

Winter—and Benedict Arnold—stopped a British invasion from Canada that year. When British forces sailed down Lake Champlain to retake Fort Ticonderoga, patriots under Arnold's command met them in hastily made galleys (large

rowboats). Their battle lasted for days. The men labored at their long oars, maneuvering the boats into position. Crashing volleys of gunfire crossed the waters. Though the British fleet gained the victory, it was useless to them. It was too late in the year to advance any farther. The British returned north to settle in for the winter, leaving Lake Champlain and Fort Ticonderoga to the Americans.

In Washington's camp, things looked very bleak. The British held Manhattan and New Jersey and were threatening Pennsylvania. The Continental Army was reduced to only 3,000 men. Thousands had been taken prisoner (including Washington's most senior general, Charles Lee—captured in his nightshirt while drinking his morning coffee). Others had fallen in battle. Some went home when their enlistments were up. Still more would leave on December 31 when their one-year period of enlistment ended. How could Washington convince them to stay when things seemed so hopeless?

## Christmastime, 1776: The Battles of Trenton and Princeton

"The game is pretty near up," Washington wrote to his brother. Yet he couldn't bring himself to surrender all hope. His army built a makeshift camp in the winter chill. Soldiers from scattered



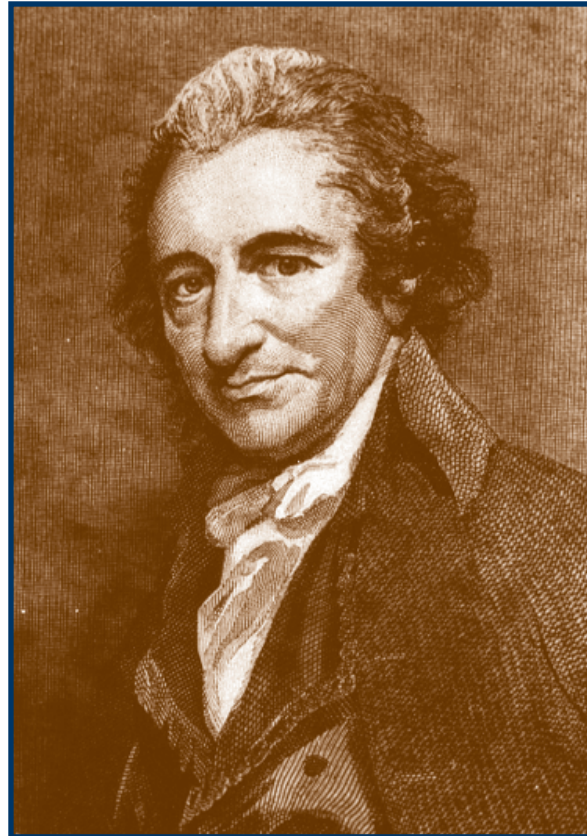
*They cannot conquer an idea with an army.*

—THOMAS PAINE

units trickled in. The general knew he was about to lose this army. They had fought and lost and were ready to go home when their enlistments expired at year's end. Washington had to do something now or all would be lost.

On Christmas, Washington took his chance. He marched his men, under cover of night, to the Delaware River to make a dangerous crossing. The soldiers poled their boats across the swift river in a blizzard of sleet and snow. They fought against the bitter wind and strained their eyes looking for ice floes that could capsize their small boats. After four perilous hours, Washington had a small army of men, horses, and cannons across the Delaware River. They made ready to attack the Hessians who were quartered at Trenton, eight miles away. The risk was great. If the attack failed, Washington's small force would be trapped, their backs to the river.

The men marched in darkness across the ice and snow. Many had no shoes and had wrapped their feet in rags. These left bloody footprints in the snow as they marched. They were freezing and tired and the weather was getting worse by the hour. Their general rode up and down their lines to encourage them. When they saw him in the torchlight and heard his quiet, "Press on, boys," they took heart.



*Thomas Paine*

In Trenton, the Hessians weren't thinking much about fighting. The Americans were weak, and no one fought in the wintertime anyway. The Hessian colonel carelessly posted few pickets (soldiers assigned to guard the camp) while

## Common Sense

"These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country, but... he whose heart is firm... will pursue his principles unto death."

Patriot Thomas Paine wrote these words in the flickering light of a campfire, using a drum-head for a desk. He was the author of *Common Sense*, a 50-page pamphlet that roused the colonists to revolt. "We have in our power to begin the world anew," he wrote. This book "is working a powerful change in the minds of many men," said George Washington to a friend. Many who were not sure they wanted to rebel against Great Britain changed their minds after reading *Common Sense*.







*Washington at Princeton*

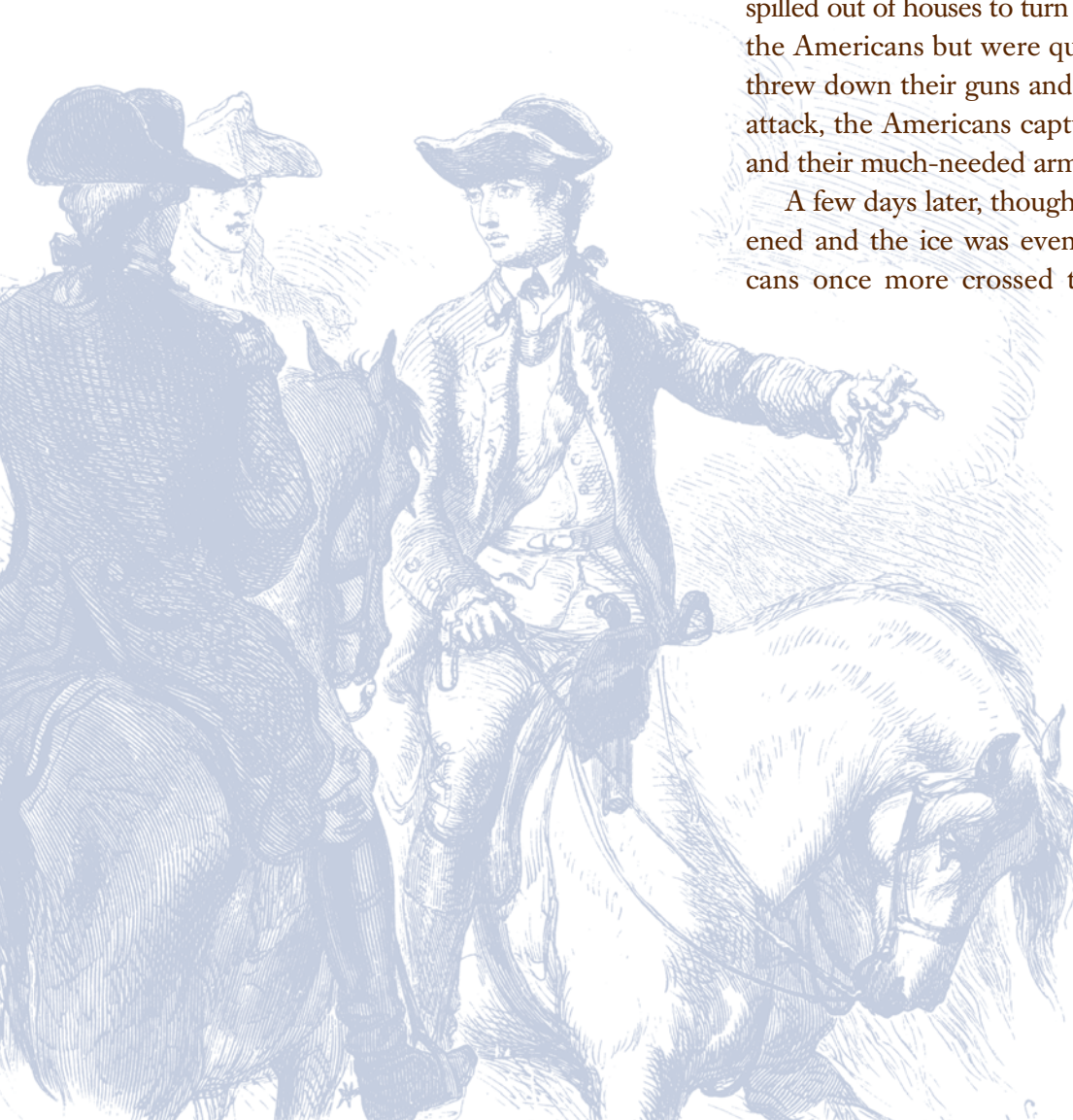
he and his men celebrated Christmas. That evening, a loyalist citizen came to warn him that Washington was on the march. The colonel refused to admit the stranger. The loyalist scribbled a warning on a note, but when it was delivered, the colonel put it in his pocket unread.

Their footsteps silenced by new-fallen snow, the Americans were able to catch the Hessians completely off guard. The surprised Hessians spilled out of houses to turn their cannons against the Americans but were quickly overrun. They threw down their guns and flags. In the surprise attack, the Americans captured 1,000 prisoners and their much-needed arms.

A few days later, though the snow had deepened and the ice was even thicker, the Americans once more crossed the Delaware River.

British general Cornwallis had been about to go to England for the winter when he heard about Washington's surprise attack. He gathered his troops and prepared for a fight.

It was the 30th of December, and many American soldiers had reached the end of their enlistment period. Washington stood before them and made his plea. "You have worn yourselves out with fatigues and hardships but we know not how to spare you," he told them. He offered each a 10-dollar bounty from his own pocket. He convinced many to stay. They fought valiantly against Cornwallis's men near Trenton, then, in a surprise move, slipped around Cornwallis to capture British stores and their guard at Princeton. Despair began to turn to hope. Perhaps all was not yet lost.





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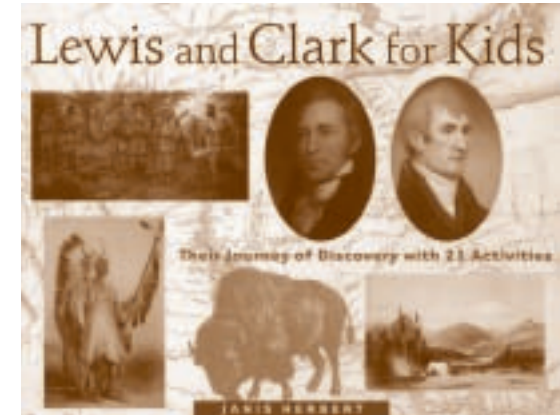
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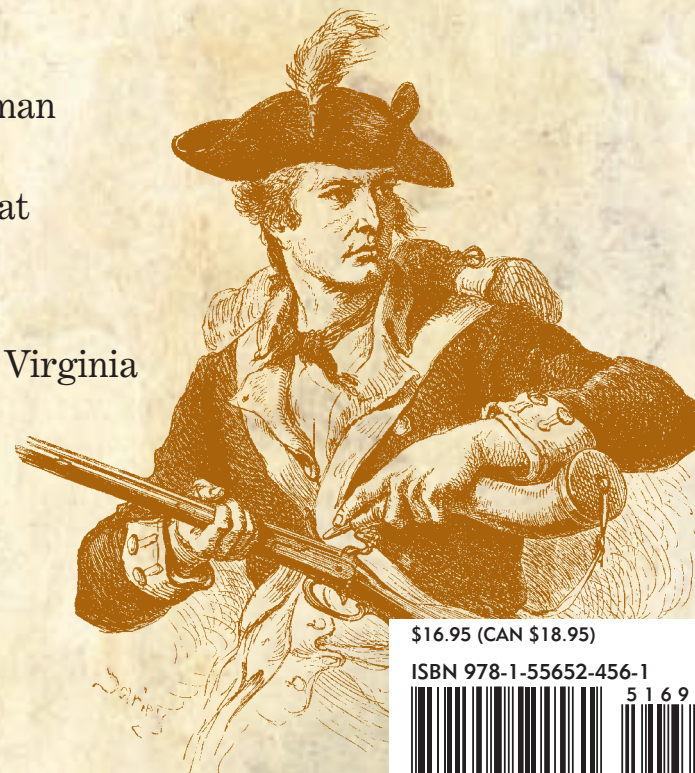
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