

The American Revolution in the Elementary Classroom

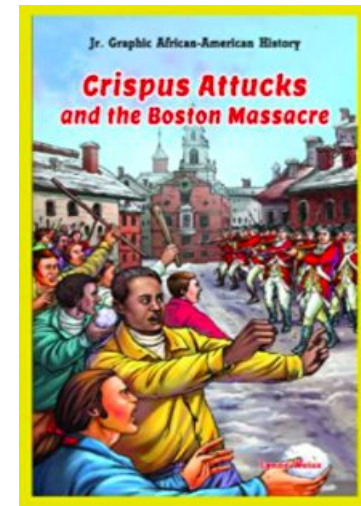
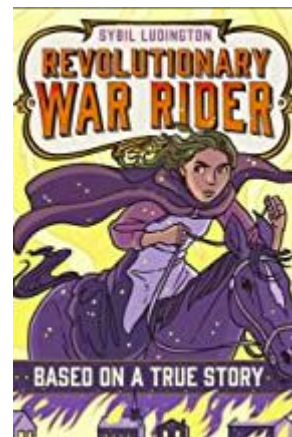
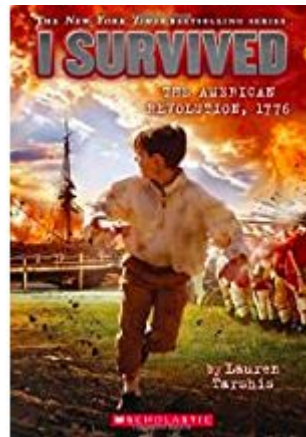
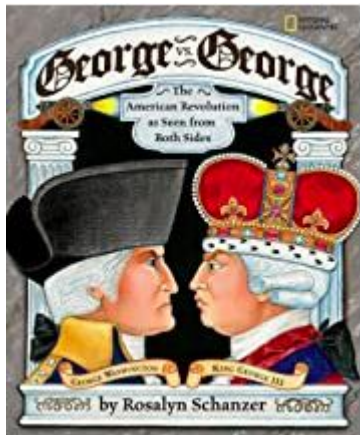


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How might an elementary unit on the American Revolution show best social studies instructional practice?

At the elementary level, students are learning the *foundational skills* they will need to engage in social studies instruction at the middle and high school levels.

- How to engage in an inquiry process
- **READING:**
 - How to read to learn
 - How to read to different genres of literature (historical fiction, biographies, informational)
 - How to analyze structures of texts (4.R.6)
 - How to make sense of different perspectives (4.R.6)
 - How to summarize (4.RL.2)
 - How to effectively discuss what you are reading with a group, state your beliefs clearly and effectively while building on the ideas of others (4.SL.1)
 - Increase content area vocabulary



Vocabulary that's Revolutionary!

American Revolution

Rebel

Redcoats

Revolt

Yankees

Tories

Spy

Minutemen

colonists

Patriots

Militia

Continental Army

Commander

Allegiance

Traitor

Independence

Protest

surrender

Musket

Bayonet

Taxation

Representation

Hessians

liberty



*Why is this important? Imagine trying to understand the Revolutionary War without knowing the meaning of any of these terms.

Ideas for vocabulary instruction (**low tech**):

- Puzzles
- Word Searches
- Crosswords
- Word Hunts

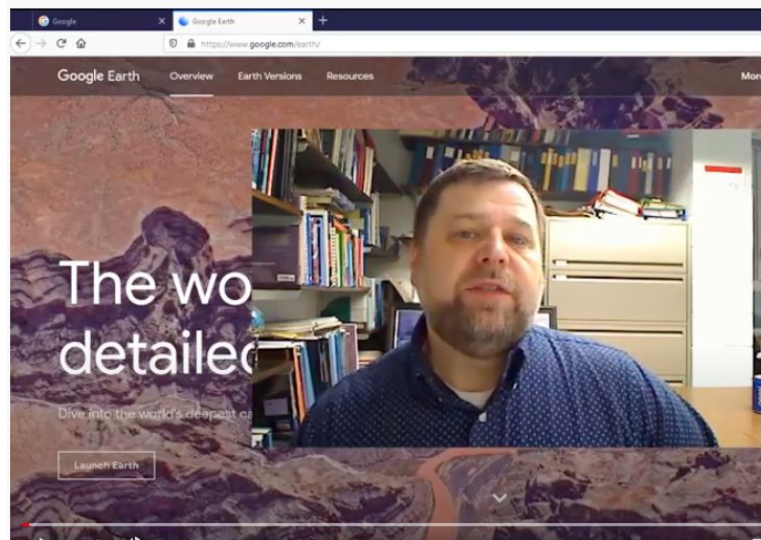
Ideas for vocabulary instruction (**high tech**):

- Kahoot
- Quizziz
- PearDeck
- NearPod
- Google Forms/Escape Room

Building more background knowledge with Google Earth!

Use Google Earth to create virtual tours of historic sites. (One thing to remember is that Google Earth works differently on a chromebook or laptop than it does on an iPad.)

Here's an example:



Google Earth Basics tutorial video

- **WRITING**

- 4th grade Lucy Calkins Writing Units of Study: Bringing History to Life (informational)
- Moving beyond Opinion Writing (4.W.1)
- Moving toward Thesis Writing-developing a position or claim and defending it
- Adding evidence from the text to support your position
- Adding quotes
- Adding mini-stories
- Citing your evidence
- Organizing writing (4.W.4)
- Adding appropriate punctuation to quotations
- Making connections to new learning
- Learning research methods
- Follow the steps in the writing process: plan, draft, revise, and edit (4.W.5)

This is the disciplinary literacy that middle and high school students will need to respond effectively in Social Studies. When they pick a topic that interests them, research it, and write what they think and learn, students grow.



Social Studies Standards:

They differ slightly according to grade level but are meant to spiral as students go through school.

- History
- Geography
- Personal Finance and Economics
- Civics and Government

Start with Inquiry!



Ask an open-ended question! It can vary depending on your grade level and your learning objectives. Here's one to consider.

Was the Revolution inevitable?

You could guide the inquiry by asking:

- *Why is it important to take notes on our reading?*
- *Why are stories told from different perspectives?*
- *Why do we compare and contrast texts?*
- *What is a productive, collaborative discussion?*

Interactive Bulletin Boards

13. Use QR codes to spark curiosity.



A physical alternative to a Padlet; similar to a Wonder Wall.

11. Practice compare and contrast concepts.



What a great take on the classic Venn Diagram!

12. Try a thinking tug-of-war.

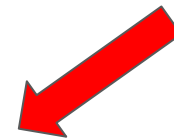


This is a great bulletin board to consider both sides of an issue, but it could be tailored to be a timeline. *math tie-in here*

Check out more great Bulletin Boards here!

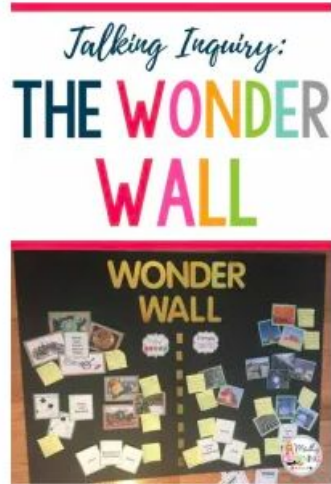
Bulletin Boards retrieved from

<https://www.weareteachers.com/interactive-bulletin-boards/>



Wonder Walls

Wonder walls are another great bulletin board idea, but these can be portable on cardboard trifold. They can be used for artifacts or a source of inquiry.



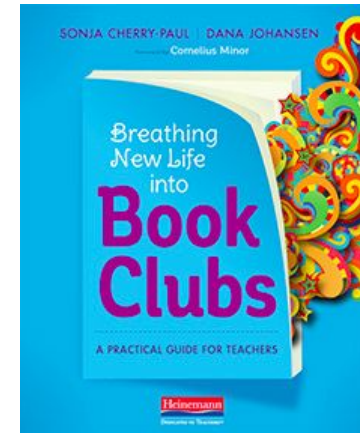
Here are some great resources to check out for more information:

<https://artsintegration.com/2018/09/01/a-low-prep-strategy-to-cultivate-inquiry-voice-and-choice/>

<https://www.madlylearning.com/wonderwall/>

Reading is always better when you do it with friends

- Try a Book Club with historical fiction
 - Check out the podcast about the book *Breathing New Life into Book Clubs* from Heineman Publishers
- Literature Circles
 - Lit Circles are similar to student led book clubs but students have roles
 - Check out this [post from the Literacy Learner blog](#)



When students have voice and choice about what they want to discuss when it comes to reading, it sparks curiosity, improves comprehension, and increases student engagement.



Do you want to play a game?

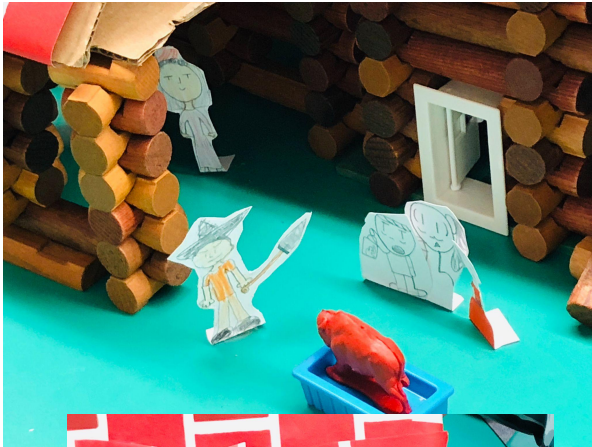
Students love playing AND making games. Creating their own board games that sequence events gives students a chance to be creative and share their learning with friends and family.

Spaces will be filled in with Events from the Early Revolution



Design Challenge

How about a challenge? Challenge students to construct a site from a battle or famous landmark. In this super fun example, students loved the story of Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys taking Fort Ticonderoga. They recreated it using Lincoln Logs, wooden blocks and cardboard covered with paper. They worked in groups, set goals, made a deadline, then wrote a script and led tour groups of other classes to see their project and hear about the story.





Books and Resources

<https://blog.socialstudies.com/adapting-social-studies-best-practices-to-distance-learning>

Primary source letters from Maine Revolutionary War soldier to his mother

Sophia's War by Avi (reading level 50) This is a longer book, but the hero is a girl.

The Fighting Ground by Avi (reading level 50) This is a shorter book with a male hero.

Spies of the American Revolution by Elizabeth Raum (an interactive book)

Sybill Ludington Revolutionary War Rider by E.F. Abbott (based on a true story)

Dear America-The Winter of the Red Snow (reading level 34) The Revolutionary War Diary of Abigail Jane Stewart

Susanna's Midnight Ride by Libby Carty McNamee. This is a great book, but it's set in the south and talks about slavery. The dialogue is pretty authentic sounding so it may be challenge for readers who don't understand it.

George Washington's Spy by Elvira Woodruff (reading level 38) sequel to George Washington's socks. This time the kids time travel to Boston in 1776.

Give Me Liberty by LM Elliott This is a longer book about a 13 boy who becomes an indentured servant in the Williamsburg, Va area during the Revolution.

Tolliver's Secret by Esther Wood Brady. (maybe a reading level 40?) This is older, but it's a really good book about a girl who is timid and goes on a mission for her Patriotic grandfather to deliver a message baked into a loaf of bread. Ellen changes throughout the book and the adventures are pretty exciting for kids.

Books and Resources

A True Patriot The Journal of William Thomas Emerson by Barry Deneberg. (reading level maybe a 40?) The main character is an orphaned teenage boy who lives in Boston and works in a tavern. He hears the Patriots talk about revolution and he has to pick a side.

There are some other choose your own stories about the Revolutionary War and the Boston Massacre along with Nathaniel Hale's Hazardous Tales about Patrick Henry (the last one is a really popular graphic novel).

Five Smooth Stones, Hope's Diary from Scholastic

Nathan Hale's Hazardous Tales-Lafayette by Hale (another graphic novel)

Phoebe the Spy by Judith Berry Griffin (level R) about an African American girl who helps her father (who owns a tavern) spy on a British General. It's a really good book and not a hard read.

Ranger in Time, Night of Soldiers and Spies by Kate Messner. New from Scholastic (level 34) A dog, Ranger, goes back in time and helps a boy named Isaac spy for George Washington at the Battle of Trenton.

The Secret Soldier the Story of Deborah Sampson by Ann McGovern. (level 40) Biographical story of Deborah Sampson's time fighting for the Continental army.

Magic Tree House (Revolutionary War on Wednesday and a new one To the Future, Ben Franklin) In To the Future Ben Franklin, readers learn more about Ben Franklin and his contribution as a Founding Father.

Guts and Glory the American Revolution by Ben Thompson