

The Battle for the Revolution

The American Revolution was the defining event in our history, and what we teach students about it shapes their understanding of everything that has happened for the last 250 years. Those who argue that the United States was conceived in tyranny and oppression want students to learn that the Revolution was led by villains and the ordinary people were—and remain—their victims. We want students to learn the truth: that the Revolution was a complex event that secured the independence of the United States, created the first republic of modern times, established our national identity, and committed us to ideals of liberty, equality, natural and civil rights, and responsible citizenship that have defined our history and reshaped our world. The work of fulfilling its bright ambitions has been, and remains, the work that has defined our history. That work should shape our future. Never before has the contrast between visions of our Revolution been so stark or the stakes so high. We will continue to expose the errors on the other side and advocate for the memory of the Revolution as a constructive moment in history and the foundation of free society.



Read "The Fatal Flaw of the 1619 Project Curriculum"

Our Growing Classroom

Exposing the errors on the other side is not enough. We need to offer teachers and students constructive alternatives. This year we will welcome thousands of students into the Institute's virtual classroom. With many schools adopting some form of remote learning, the Institute is launching six new collections of online lessons about the American Revolution aimed at middle and high school classrooms. Revolutionary Conversations invites students to assess passages from the work of great historians on the American Revolution. Revolution on Paper challenges students to analyze important documents of the Revolution, from the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom and the Pennsylvania Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery to the private diary of a Connecticut captain. Objects of Revolution teaches students to interpret artifacts of the Revolution. Revolutionary Characters challenges students to use original documents to interpret the ideas of participants in the Revolution. The Why America is Free lessons teach students to interpret critical events discussed in our book, Why America is Free. And The Revolutionary World presents lessons placing the American Revolution in global context. These new lesson collections join our growing collection of lessons focusing on the visual record, Imagining the Revolution.



Ten Great Revolutionary War Artifacts

To attract attention to our Objects of Revolution lesson collection, we have assembled a list of ten great artifacts of the Revolutionary War on public view in institutions across the country and around the world. Choosing just ten great artifacts of the Revolutionary War was a challenge—and can be the source of endless debate. The ten we feature range from the iconic to the largely unknown. Some are beautifully crafted. Others are simple, sturdy, and practical. Each is tied to some great moment or essential aspect of the Revolutionary War.



Read the List

The Original Pledge of Allegiance

On February 3, 1778, Congress adopted a resolution requiring every officer of the Continental Army and Navy as well as "all persons holding any civil office of trust or profit under the Congress of these United States" to subscribe to an oath acknowledging the independence and sovereignty of the United States and renouncing allegiance to King George III. Army officers were to sign the oath in the presence of a general, who would witness his signature. Washington deferred administering the oath until May, when he received five hundred printed copies from Henry Laurens, the president of Congress. On May 7 he announced that the forms would be distributed to the general officers "to accomplish this very interesting & essential work." The oath was not optional.



The form included two copies of the oath. Each officer signed twice and kept one copy. The other was sent to Congress. Benedict Arnold signed the oath, which he would betray two years later, in the presence of Henry Knox at Valley Forge on May 30. Scores of signed oaths survive, but unused copies of the printed form are very rare. The Institute recently acquired one thanks to the generosity of a private foundation. It's now part of our Digital Library of the American Revolution and will be featured in a new online lesson about independence.

Read the Oath of Allegiance

Who we are, What we do

Evan Phifer is the Institute's history and education associate. He received his undergraduate education at Bucknell University and earned a master's degree in public history at American University. Evan grew up in the Washington area and visits to the region's museums and great historic places stirred his interest both in history and sharing it with the public. Evan joined our education team in 2018. He has a particular affinity for hands-on history—and believes students are inspired by encountering authentic artifacts and documents and by handling reproductions of the weapons, tools, and uniforms of the Revolutionary War. He is currently creating an online version of the Institute's popular traveling trunk program. Evan explains: "A crucial element of the traveling trunks is allowing students to interact with reproduction items used by Revolutionary War soldiers. With many schools continuing virtual instruction this fall, our challenge is to create digital resources for students to enrich their understanding and appreciation of the war."



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The American Revolution secured our independence, created our republic, established our national identity, and expressed ideals of liberty, equality, natural and civil rights, and responsible citizenship that have defined our history and will define our future. The American Revolution Institute of the Society of the Cincinnati promotes knowledge and appreciation of those achievements, fulfilling the aim of the Continental Army officers who founded the Society of the Cincinnati in 1783 to perpetuate the memory of that vast event. The Institute supports advanced study, presents exhibitions and other public programs, advocates effective classroom instruction, and provides resources to teachers and students to enrich understanding of the American Revolution and the principles of the men and women who secured the liberty of the American people.

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