

# **SSUSH4: ANALYZE THE IDEOLOGICAL, MILITARY, SOCIAL, AND DIPLOMATIC ASPECTS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**



***ELEMENT E: Examine the roles of women, American Indians, and enslaved and free blacks in supporting the war effort.***

# Overview

- Women, American Indians, and enslaved and free Blacks all played a role in supporting the American Revolutionary War effort.
  - In addition to the efforts of the Daughters of Liberty to find alternative goods to feed and clothe families during the pre-Revolutionary War boycotts, women in America often traveled with the soldiers and sometimes served as spies during the war.
  - Although many American Indians sided with the British in the Revolutionary War, some in New England supported the Patriots.
  - Enslaved and free Blacks also participated in the war, often on the side of the Patriots by enlisting in militia groups. They believed that the fight for American freedom would secure rights for themselves as well.

# Role of Women

- ❑ Military encampments often included large numbers of women. They were known as “camp followers” and would wash, sew, cook, and nurse the wounded and sick in camp.



- The women followed the soldiers because they were often afraid, hungry, and looking for work.
- Officers wives also would be camped with the soldiers from time to time.
  - According to Mount Vernon records, Martha Washington spent 52 of the approximately 103 months of the war with or near George Washington.
- The number of women travelling with the American soldiers varied depending on the location and whether or not the military was engaged in an active campaign.
- There is even evidence that a few women, such as Deborah Samson, disguised themselves as men to participate in the fighting.
  - As the questionable legend of “Molly Pitcher” portrays, she had been giving water to the soldiers when her husband collapsed and she picked up his spot in firing the cannon. “Molly Pitcher” may be a characterization of the combined realities of some women in the Revolutionary War including a woman named Margaret Corbin. Samson and Corbin are the only two women to later receive federal pensions for their Revolutionary War service.
- Other women served as spies for the Continental Army.
  - The British Army frequently hired local women to clean, cook, and sew for them.
  - This arrangement allowed great access to the British commanders and for eavesdropping on their plans. Some female spies reported directly to Patriot commanders and others sent messages stitched inside button covers or the hems of clothing. Their ability to inconspicuously gather information made them quite valuable to the Patriot cause. There were also Loyalist women who acted as spies among the Patriots and reported back to the British.



# Role of American Indians

- ❑ American Indians found themselves in a difficult position as the colonists were fighting the British over control of North American lands.
  - Most of the western American Indians sided with the British in an effort to try to prevent further settlement in the region by American colonists- as was the policy of the British Proclamation of 1763.
  - Other American Indian groups in the east were divided over which side to support.
    - The six tribes of the longstanding Iroquois League were divided. Two tribes, the Oneidas and the Tuscaroras, supported the Patriots in the Revolutionary War. The other four tribes- the Mohawks, Seneca, Cayuga, and Onondaga- sided with the British.
    - The Cherokee tribe in the South also split its loyalty between the Patriot cause and the British.
- ❑ The allegiance of the small numbers of American Indians to the colonists had minimal impact on the outcome of the war.
  - Those who did help to fight on the side of the victorious Americans were dismayed when the negotiations for the Treaty of Paris did not include American Indian representatives and their lands were not protected from colonial settlement.





# Role of Enslaved and Free Blacks



- ❑ Enslaved and free Blacks, in many cases, viewed the American Revolution as an opportunity for expanding their own rights with the basis for revolution being a call to protect natural rights.
  - Crispus Attucks, a Black man living in Boston, was one of the Americans killed by the British at the Boston Massacre. He was supporting the Patriots in their efforts to challenge the increased British presence and control over the colonial city.
  - Estimates suggest at least 5,000 enslaved and free Blacks fought with the Patriots.
    - However, those who fought with the Continental Army and with the colonial militia groups did not receive their freedom following the conclusion of the Revolutionary War.



## **Significance of the Role of Women, American Indians, & Enslaved/ Freed Blacks**

- ❑ Women, American Indians, and enslaved and free Blacks all contributed to the Patriot cause through volunteering to fight and through support of the military forces.
  - Their sacrifices however were not rewarded or recognized in the war's 1783 Treaty of Paris settlement.
  - The groups were also not extended rights by the new government of the United States even though natural rights were a primary focus of the Patriot's Declaration of Independence.
  - While the cause for independence captured the loyalty of many societal groups, not all groups reaped the rewards of victory.