

## LESSON H

### I SPY

**Standards:** History Standard Two: Students will gather, examine, and analyze historical data.

History Standard Three: Students will interpret historical data.

- Objectives:**
- 1) The students will examine a letter written by an Army officer from Delaware to the President (Governor) of Delaware during the American Revolution.
  - 2) The students will compare the British and American Armies using the Howard Pyle paintings "Attack Upon the Chew House" and "The Battle of Bunker Hill."
  - 3) The students will write a persuasive letter to the school principal or the classroom teacher requesting something that is desperately needed at the school or in the classroom.

- Materials:**
- 1) *Lesson H, Delaware Public Archives, Delaware Archives Volume 1*
  - 2) *Lesson H, The Battle of Bunker Hill, Delaware Art Museum, Howard Pyle Collection (Image Gallery)*
  - 3) *Lesson H, Attack Upon the Chew House, Delaware Art Museum, Howard Pyle Collection (Image Gallery)*
  - 4) One 3 x 5 index card per student
  - 5) Venn diagram – 1 per student

**Procedures:** 1) To begin the lesson, hand each student a 3 x 5 index card. On the lined side of the card, have students make a list of all the supplies one would expect a Continental soldier to have. On the blank side of the card, have students draw a sketch of a soldier with all the necessary equipment. Have them label their drawing "Continental Soldier". When students have finished, ask a few students to share their ideas. Then, discuss the background of the American Revolution and how the American Army had to deal with many hardships including a lack of supplies and clothing. Discuss the contrast between the American Army and the well- equipped, well-clothed British. (See background information.) After this discussion, have students cross out the word "Continental" on their drawing and replace it with the word "British."

- 2) Pass out copies of the original letter to groups of two students.
- 3) Read the letter aloud to the class.
- 4) Project both "Attack Upon the Chew House" and "The Battle of Bunker Hill."
- 5) Give the students several minutes to study each image. What are the similarities? What are the differences?  
Hand each student a Venn diagram and have them label one side "American Army" and the other side "British Army". Give students several minutes to record their observations. Discuss.  
"Attack Upon the Chew House" - (American Army) Note the absence of footwear, the tattered clothing and the lack of uniformity in dress.  
  
"The Battle of Bunker Hill" - (British Army) Note the well supplied and well clothed British soldiers. Ask the students what they believe the young soldier in the middle of the painting is thinking as he turns his head to look at a wounded comrade.
- 6) Reread the parts of the letter that concern clothing (highlighted section).  
Have students turn to a partner and ask: Do you think Captain McKenna was exaggerating the truth about the Delaware soldiers situation? Why or why not? Do you think the letter would have been more effective if it was written differently? If so, how?
- 7) Have students put themselves in the shoes of Captain McKenna. Ask students to think about something that is desperately needed either in the classroom or in the school. Have them write a letter to the classroom teacher or the school principal persuading him/her to purchase the desperately needed supplies.
- 8) To conclude the lesson, review the hardships faced by the American Army. Ask: Why do you think the Americans won the war when they were faced with such overwhelming odds? What was the reputation of the Delaware troops during the war? (The best troops in the American army)

**EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:**

- 1) In a brief paragraph, the students will describe the letter including the date and place of writing as well as the significance of the Battle of Yorktown in the American Revolution.
- 2) The students will write a biographical essay about Howard Pyle - the artist and Delaware resident who produced the two illustrations used in this lesson.

### **TRANSCRIPTION OF LETTER**

Camp near York October 26, 1781

Sir,

Inclosed I transmit your Excellency a Return of the Detachment of the Regiment, under my Command, which (although Small) have had an Active share in reducing the two Ports of York, and Gloucester, being detach'd to the Artillery, and having done duty with them during the Operations here.

In my last to the President of the State, which I sent from Baltimore, was inclosed a Return of the Clothing wanting for the Detachment - Having received no answer, I am obliged to repeat my Requests, the men being entirely naked - In my whole Command I have not one Waistcoat, One good shirt, or One pair of good Overalls, and am also in great want of about Fifty Blankets, and Fifteen Coats - for Want of Body shirts, they have been obliged to wear their Hunting Shirts, these, with the others are also wore out, and now they have no alternative but nakedness - Their Overalls being also worn out, makes their nakedness the more general - I have not more than twenty men who can do duty - The sick absent, and present, are rendered unable for Duty, for the above want, and I expect, at least Two Thirds of them, will be obliged to go to the Hospital, with Sickness, occasioned by their ragged situation. - In my last I mentioned the impossibility of procuring a supply from the Continental Store, and urged, in the most pressing terms) the Articles mentioned in my Return, being procured, and forwarded on immediately, by one of the Subaltern Officers in the State; I should wish this mode still to be pursued, as on the March to Carolina almost all my Men will be left in Hospitals which when relieved by warm clothing, will be able to pursue their march - The Collection of them, would also be a necessary Duty for an Officer, and its out of my own Power to leave one on that Duty - I should send a Return of what Articles are wanting, but a Return of their numbers will serve the same purpose, as One Waistcoat woolen, Two Good Shirts, One Pair of Woolen Overalls, one pair of Socks, and one pair of Shoes, are wanting for each man - besides the blankets and coats mentioned before -

The weather being tolerably warm, since our arrival in this State, has favor'd the Men much, but the cold season has now come on, and I much dread the Consequences of it -

I hope the Finances of the State, will admit the purchasing a Relief, for which, I'm convinced it cant be better Apply'd, or do more Service - the men look up to the State, in their Distressed Situation, for Relief, I hope they may

not be disappointed - They are good Men, and will make, with kind treatment, good Soldiers - but in their present State, little can be expected, from Men, who are naked, and full of Vermin, and have not an immediate prospect of a Relief -

It would have given me great pleasure could I have assured your Excellency, that the Command was hearty, and well clothed, and am truly sorry their Condition wont admit of it -

As we will move very shortly for Carolina, I must press (in the most earnest terms) an ? officer being sent out, with the Within Mentioned Supply, who may Clothe the men on his Way, and Conduct them to the Regiment -

I have the Honor  
to be, Sir  
Your Most Humb Servt  
WM. MCKENNAN, Captn Comg Dett D. R.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

During the American Revolution, the Continental Army continually dealt with a lack of men, supplies, weapons, uniforms, and food. Each former colony was required to raise a set number of troops. To induce men to enlist, 100 acres of land was offered to each man who served for the length of the war. The recruits were furnished with weapons, wages and uniforms by their respective states. Most states were unable to meet their quota of soldiers or the material needs of the soldiers that did serve. The letter and overhead of the American soldiers used in this lesson are evidence of this problem. In contrast to the Continental Army, the British troops were well supplied with uniforms, supplies, and weapons.

### **DOCUMENT BACKGROUND**

This letter is part of Delaware Archives (Volume I, page 126) - a collection of military papers that start in the mid-18th century and continue through the conclusion of the War of 1812. William McKennan, the author of the letter, was commissioned as a Lieutenant in the American Army in 1776. Wounded at the Battle of Germantown, McKennan was promoted to Captain in 1779. The letter, written on October 26, 1781, was composed in the American camp near Yorktown, Virginia. The British Army under General Cornwallis had surrendered at Yorktown on October 19 - effectively ending the fighting of the American Revolution.

### **GENERAL BACKGROUND ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS**

Both illustrations were part of a series of twelve paintings completed by Howard Pyle in 1897 and 1898 to accompany Henry Cabot Lodge's "The Story of the American Revolution". *Scribner's Magazine* published Lodge's work in monthly installments accompanied by Pyle's illustrations of the conflict. Both paintings are owned by the Delaware Art Museum in Wilmington, Delaware. The Delaware Public Archives would like to thank the Delaware Art Museum for the use of these two paintings.

## **THE BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL**

After the disastrous retreat from Concord in April 1775, the British Army occupied the city of Boston for several months. Although they had a firm grip on Boston, the British military leaders saw the need to seize the Charlestown Peninsula and Dorchester Heights. With this in mind, the British made preparations to occupy these areas. Upon learning of these plans, the American Army, located nearby, quietly moved troops to the Charlestown Peninsula on the night of June 16, 1775. Although the supposed orders were to fortify Bunker Hill, these troops spent the night building fortifications on a lower rise known as Breed's Hill. When the British awoke in the morning they were astonished to see the Americans entrenched on the hill. The British warships immediately opened fire on the fortifications. Beginning at two o'clock in the afternoon, the British started a series of infantry attacks to capture the position. After two frontal assaults failed, a third attack succeeded and the Americans fled the area. The "victory" costs the British Army 1,054 casualties - dead, wounded, or missing. The American Army lost 441 men - most during the retreat from the area. The battle, in proving to many Americans that the British Army was not invincible, became a source of pride for the American cause. The painting depicts the second British assault.

## **THE ATTACK UPON THE CHEW HOUSE**

Throughout the fall of 1777, the American and British Armies faced each other in a series of battles near Philadelphia. The main body of the British Army was stationed at Germantown, Pennsylvania. Under General George Washington's instructions, the American Army prepared to attack the British there with a four-pronged, perfectly timed assault. When the Americans attacked on October 4, the British initially fell back. However, 120 British soldiers barricaded themselves in Clivedon, the summer home of Benjamin Chew - a Chief Justice in the Pennsylvania Court System and a former Delawarean. Although the Americans tried to take the house by force, they were unable to oust the British. In the end, the American Army was unsuccessful and forced to retreat.

## **EXTENSION POSSIBLE ANSWERS**

1. The letter was written in the American Army Camp near York (Yorktown) Virginia. The army had just completed the siege of Yorktown that culminated in the surrender of the British Army on October 19, 1781. The Battle of Yorktown was the last major battle of the American Revolution.

### **2. Howard Pyle**

- Born in Wilmington, Delaware in 1853
- Illustrator, writer
- Illustrations featured in numerous magazines including *Harper's Weekly* and *Scribner's Magazine*
- Well respected teacher whose students included Stanley Arthurs and Frank Schoonover
- Established the Howard Pyle School of Art in Wilmington, Delaware
- Many of Pyle's illustrations deal with American history and medieval folklore

- Known for the realism he portrays in his work
- Died in 1911

### **THE DELAWARE ART MUSEUM**

The Delaware Art Museum is an excellent resource for educators. Guided theme tours focus on the Museum's permanent collection, offering a variety of possible themes for distinct educational levels. Educators also have the option to customize a tour to meet the needs and interests of their class. To find out more about the Delaware Art Museum and its educational programs contact:

Education Department

Delaware Art Museum

2301 Kentmere Parkway

Wilmington, Delaware 19806

(302) 571-9590

Group Tours: Cynthia Smith at (302) 571-9590, ext 514

Groups may register for tours online at [www.delart.org](http://www.delart.org)

E-mail – [tours@delart.org](mailto:tours@delart.org)