

The following lesson utilizes documents that have been edited for readability from a collection of primary sources related to the Battle of Bennington. More original documents may be found by visiting <http://www.nysparks.com/historic-sites/12/details.aspx> and clicking the "Education" tab.

Bennington Battlefield State Historic Site is located on NYS Route 67 in Hoosick, NY. The site is open to the public May 1 through November 11. Staff interpretation for field trips may be requested by contacting the site assistant at 518-279-1155.

Transportation grants are available for K-12 educators in Title 1 schools that reimburses up to \$750 of transportation costs to NYS Parks and Historic Sites. More information may be found by visiting <http://www.nysparks.com/environment/connect-kids/grant-program.aspx>.

Lesson: Teaching with Documents: Case Study: The Battle of Bennington

NYS Grade 7 Social Studies

KEY QUESTIONS:

What caused the American Revolution?

What motivated patriots and loyalists?

What was the turning point of the Revolution?

NYS PRACTICES:

Analyze evidence in terms of historical context, content, authorship, point of view, purpose, and format; identify bias; explain the role of bias and audience in presenting arguments or evidence.

NYS COMMON CORE STANDARDS:

- *Students will compare the proportions of loyalists and patriots in different regions of the New York colony.*
- *Students will explore the different military strategies used by the Americans and their allies, including various Native American groups, during the American Revolution.*
- *Students will examine the strategic importance of the New York colony. Students will examine the American victory at the Battle of Saratoga in terms of its effects on American and British morale and on European views on American prospects for victory in the Revolution.*

MATERIALS:

Outlines, document sheets

ANTICIPATORY SET:

Ask students to imagine that it is 1777. Which side would they choose- the side of the British government or patriot rebels? Have a student tally the vote on the board.

PROCEDURE:

Ask students how they would define patriots and loyalists. Record ideas in pairs and then share with the rest of the class.

Complete guided outline with instructor. Key and handout versions provided.

Break students into groups of no more than 4. Assign each group a person from the primary source packet. Each group will pick a reader, scribe and spokesperson. Analyze the document with the help of the interpretation sheet.

Share group findings. Record conclusions on outline.

CONCLUSION:

Ask students again which side they would choose. Call on students to explain why they would make this decision. Note any changes to the tally from the beginning of class.

EVALUATION:

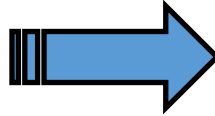
Participation in group activity, checks for understanding in outline, shared responses.

Notes on lesson:

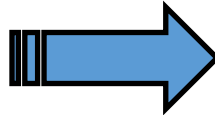
Revolutionary Cause and Effect



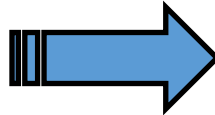
French and Indian War is expensive



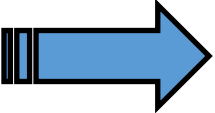
Proclamation of 1763 limits
Settlement of frontier



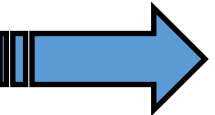
Stamp Act and Townshend Acts seek
to raise revenue



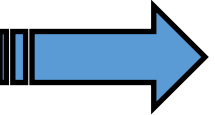
Troops sent to enforce unpopular
Laws and protect British agents



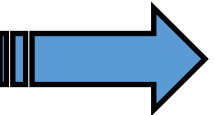
Tea Act



Intolerable Acts passed



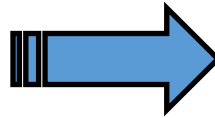
Colonists not represented in
Parliament, Thomas Paine's
"Common sense"



Revolutionary Cause and Effect

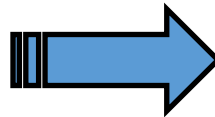


French and Indian War is expensive



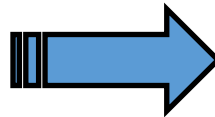
Taxes raised on Colonists

**Proclamation of 1763 limits
Settlement of frontier**



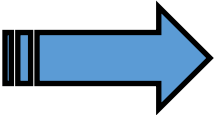
**Resentment by
colonists**

**Stamp Act and Townshend Acts seek
to raise revenue**



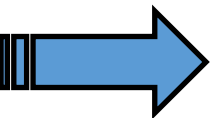
Protests by colonists

**Troops sent to enforce unpopular
Laws and protect British agents**



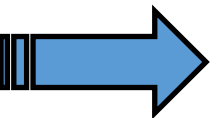
Boston Massacre

Tea Act



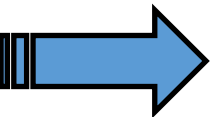
Boston Tea Party

Intolerable Acts passed



**Colonies sympathize
with Boston**

**Colonists not represented in
Parliament, Thomas Paine's
"Common sense"**



**"No taxation without
representation"**

Patriots vs. Loyalists



Patriots

Loyalists

Sided with the King

Fought with the British
army or supported it

Favored reconciliation
with Parliament

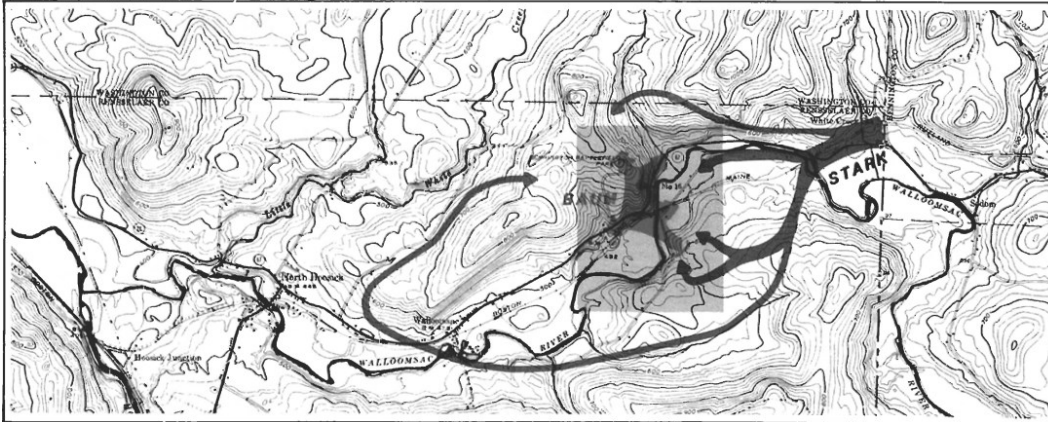
Lost their homes and/
or left America

Patriots vs. Loyalists

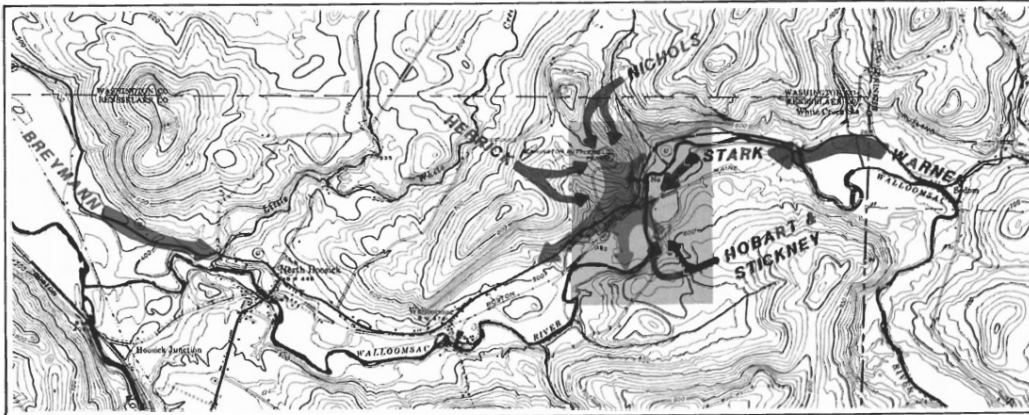


Patriots	Loyalists
Sided with Congress	Sided with the King
Fought in rebel militias and used guerilla tactics	Fought with the British army or supported it
Supported Independence	Favored reconciliation with Parliament
Formed the new government	Lost their homes and/or left America

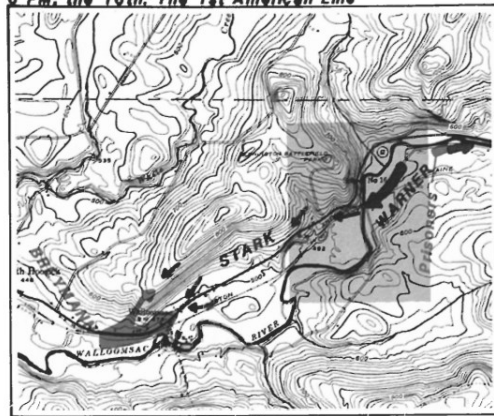
Noon, the 16th: Stark's Encircling Action



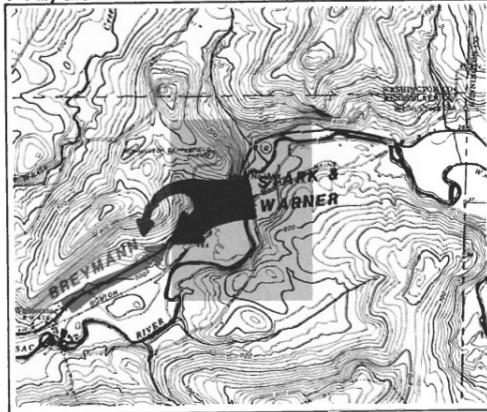
3 PM, the 16th: The American Attack



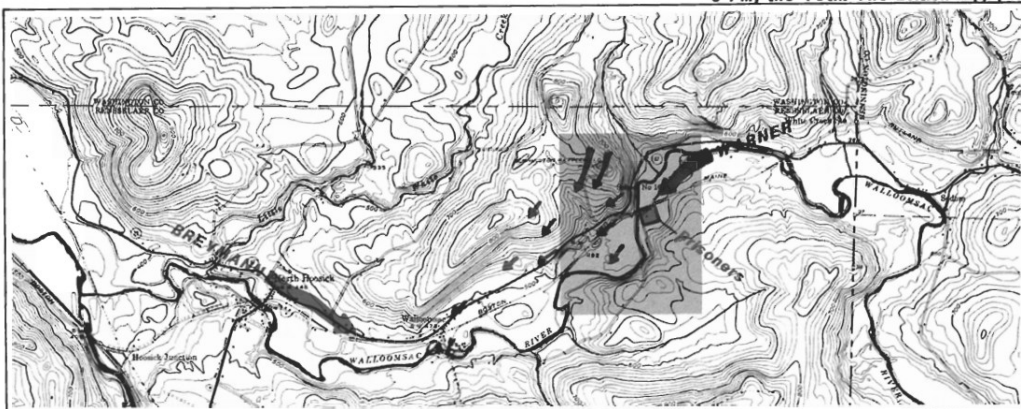
SECOND ENGAGEMENT:
6 PM, the 16th: The 1st American Line



7 PM, the 16th: The 2nd American Line



5 PM, the 16th: The British Retreat



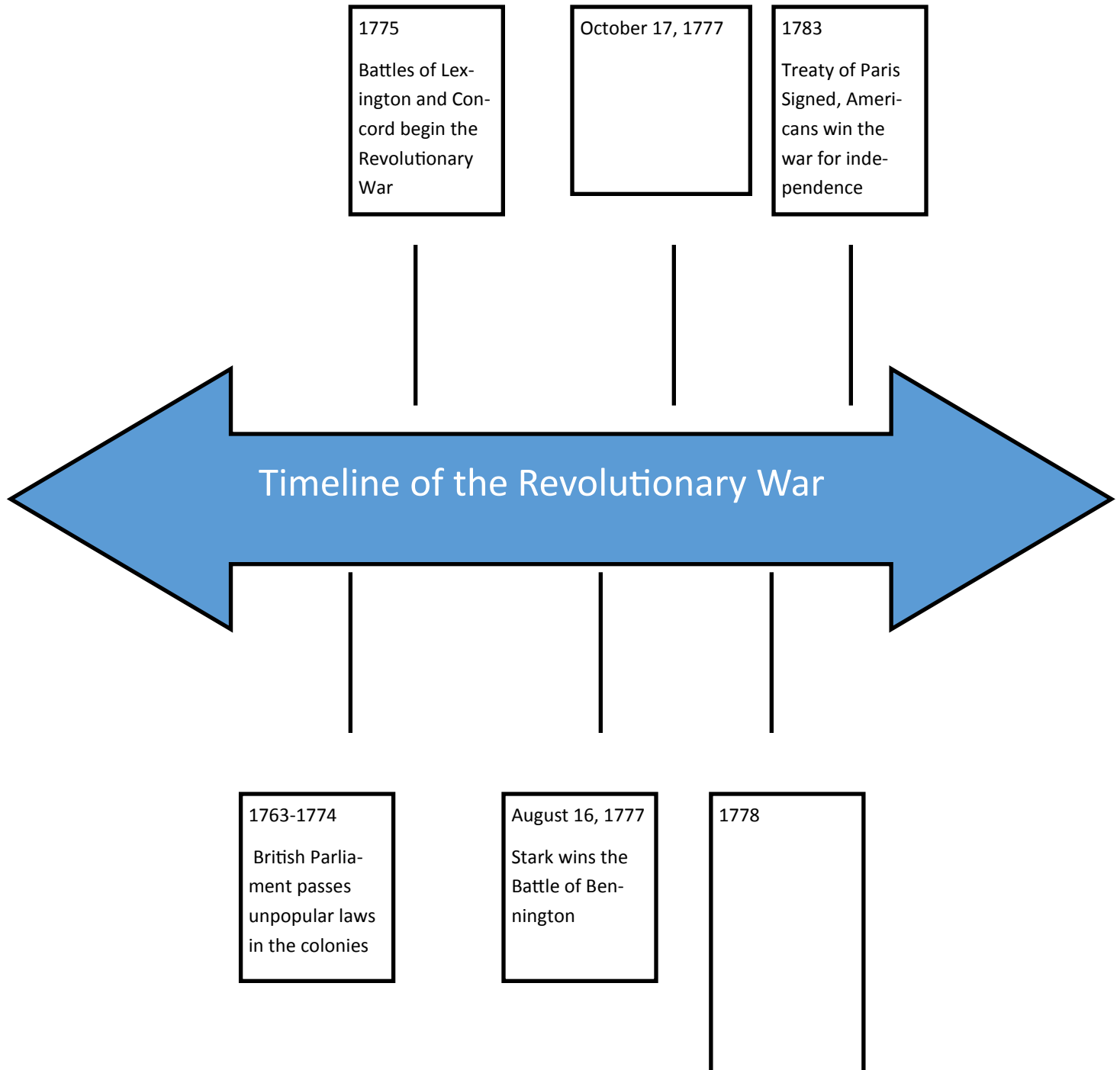
In the Battle of Bennington, Gen. Stark surrounded and beat forces fighting for the British crown. Maps like these show how the battle unfolded over time.

At the Battle of Bennington, about 2,000 American militiamen fought a mix of 1,400 Germans, Loyalists, Canadians, Native Americans and a few British all fighting for the Crown. The American General, John Stark, surrounded them in their strongly defended positions. Reinforcements from the main army of General Burgoyne, in charge of the invading British army, arrived too late to help their friends and were also defeated.

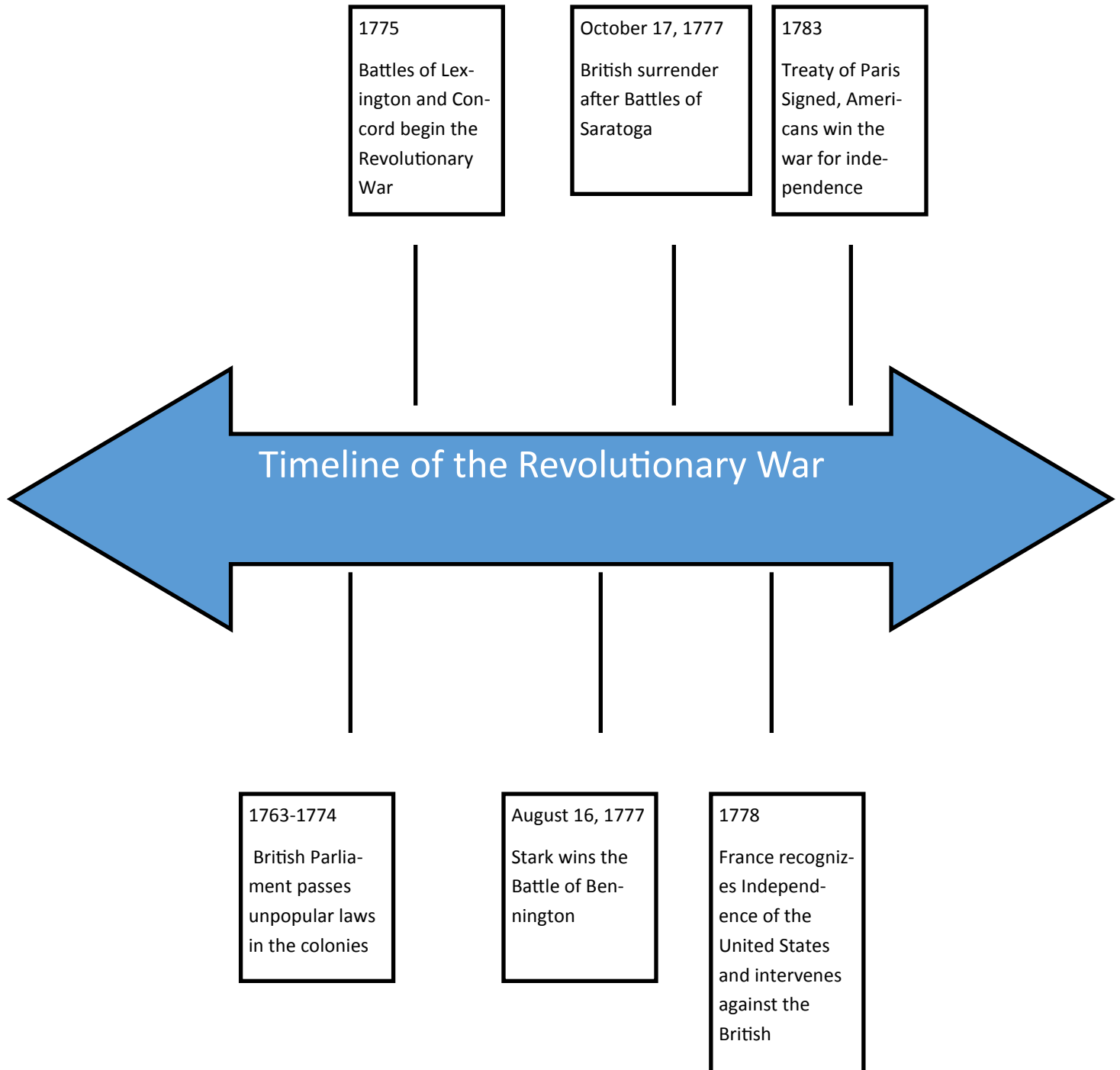
Even though it is called the Battle of Bennington, it was fought in New York State!



Saratoga is the **TURNING POINT**



Saratoga is the **TURNING POINT**



Person	Conclusions
Burgoyne	
Peters	
Anonymous	
Stark	
Griffith	
Holbrook	

Person	Conclusions
Burgoyne	Lack of loyalist support and widespread patriot sympathy in New York was a major problem.
Peters	Loyalists like Peters saw it as their duty to fight for the King.
Anonymous	Loyalists saw patriots as rebels.
Stark	Resistance to tyranny by the King and defense of liberty and American independence guided Stark.
Griffith	Many patriots in New York were brought into the war to defend their homes against an invading army.
Holbrook	American militia fought using guerilla tactics to defeat the professionals of the British Army. Victories like Bennington and Saratoga were important for morale.

This document is about the Battle of Bennington. First, pick one person to read it out loud. Next, everyone will answer the questions you have been given. Pick one person to write down your answers. Have another person to share with the class.

1. Lt. General John Burgoyne

Written to Lord George Germaine

August 20, 1777

The great bulk of the country is undoubtedly [sided] with the Congress. Wherever the King's forces point, militia [gather] in twenty-four hours. They bring with them [everything they need] and [then] they return to their farms. [Vermont] in particular... now [has] the most active and most rebellious [people] of the continent. [It] hangs like a gathering storm upon my left.

Which side is the author of this document on? How do you know?

Is he having an easy or hard time getting loyalist support?

What does General Burgoyne say about how Americans fight?

Why would this be a problem for him?

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2. John Peters, Lieutenant Colonel of the Queen's Loyal Rangers

Written to a friend in London
Late 1780's

August 16th 1777 I commanded the Loyalists at Bennington, where I had 291 Men with me. The fighting started about Nine o'Clock in the Morning, and continued till near four O'Clock Afternoon. A little before the loyalists [lost], the Americans [attacked]... where I commanded. I saw a Man fire at me. "Peters you Damned Tory I have got you," he [shouted and attacked] me with his Bayonet. [It] entered my chest... I saw that it was a Rebel Captain, an old Schoolfellow & Playmate, and a Cousin of my Wife's. Although his Bayonet was in my body, I felt regret at [doing my duty] to destroy him.

Which side is the author of this document on? How do you know?

What does he think about the people he is fighting?

Why is he fighting?

What can we tell about loyalists and patriots from this document? (Did they live separately?)

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3. Anonymous

“Story Told by One Who Was in the Tory Fort”

Written down sometime after the war

Believing that I owed duty to my King, I became a loyalist or, as they called me, a tory.. [I] soon found my situation rather unpleasant. I... [joined] the British... who were coming down with Burgoyne, to restore the country to peace, as I thought. When the [troops] were sent to take the [supplies] at Bennington I went with them... with some of the other Loyalists... We were all ready when we saw the Rebels coming to attack us, and were on such a hill ... that we felt perfectly safe... We did not know that a [gully below us] was long enough and deep enough to [hide] them; but they knew the ground, [and appeared] right under our guns... They all came jumping in upon us [and we got] out of the way of their muskets as fast as possible... We scattered in all directions. I had a Sister living in that [nearby who I stayed with].

Which side is the author of this document on? How do you know?

What does he think about the people he is fighting?

Why is he fighting?

What can we tell about how the Americans fought from this document?

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4. John Stark

A letter to soldiers celebrating the anniversary of the Battle of Bennington
1809

I received your... [letter] of friendship and your very polite invitation to meet with you to celebrate the 16th of August in Bennington.

As you say, I can never forget that I commanded American troops... at Bennington....

[I was and am] the friend of the equal rights of men, of representative democracy, of republicanism, and the declaration of independence... I am the enemy of all foreign influence.... You well know, gentlemen, that at the time of the [battle] there as a powerful British faction in the country (called tories)...we were apprised of the danger [they posed]. The sons of freedom beat the alarm, and, as at Bennington, they came, they saw, they conquered....

PS: I will give you my volunteer toast- "Live free, or die—Death is not the greatest of evils."

Which side is the author of this document on? How do you know?

What are his political beliefs? How do you know?

What would he think about the British and about Tories?

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5. Eli Griffith

Pension Application for fighting in the Revolutionary War
1832

The country [was] filled with... the British troops under General Burgoyne... Eli Griffith took his family and... fled... leaving most of his property behind for which he intended to return but never did and it was destroyed. For in [trying] to return he found that the Americans would not let him pass a line they had formed to stop Burgoyne.

.... About the first of August 1777 he entered the... militia [for] General Stark. In about three weeks General Stark concluded to attack the British... about four miles northwest of Bennington where they lay encamped... General Stark planned his attack for Friday but rain prevented... He hastened the attack because the British expected reinforcements. ... [With reinforcements the British attacked] the Americans... the Firing was Kept up on both sides until dark when the British retreated and went off to their main army. This is called the Bennington Battle.

Which side is the author of this document on? How do you know?

Why do you think he chose the side he did?

What do you think the term militia means in the context of this document?

This document is about the Battle of Bennington. First, pick one person to read it out loud. Next, everyone will answer the questions you have been given. Pick one person to write down your answers. Have another person to share with the class.

6. David Holbrook

Pension Application for fighting in the Revolutionary War
1831

[We] went to Skeensboro VT where [we] were met by a number of [sick and injured] soldiers who had escaped from Ticonderoga which had been attacked by the British army under the Command of Burgoyne and which was Evacuated...

[On] the 16th of August [we]... marched... across the river by a [wide] route of 5 or 6 miles mostly through woods with all possible silence and [stayed in the woods behind the enemy] where a line was formed ... [we] sat in silence until a Signal (the firing of 2 Muskets) was given when the American army upon three sides of the British Encampment [attacked].

The American Army [attacked] the British entrenchments... the battle became... desperate immediately and continued about two hours [in] Close Combat... until the Entrenchments were completely [taken] and those who had not been killed and had not escaped surrendered... [Colonel] Baum being wounded was among the prisoners about the time of the general [defeat] of the British army and some of them were running to Escape...

Which side is the author of this document on? How do you know?

What can we tell about how the Americans fought from this document?

Why was the victory at Bennington important? What had happened before?