

George Washington Creates the Purple Heart

Lesson Plan

Grade Level: 6-8

Curriculum Focus: U.S. History

Lesson Duration: One class period

Student Objectives

- Consider the valor of American soldiers and the creation of the medal now known as the “Purple Heart.”
- Look at when and how the Purple Heart is awarded.

Materials

- Discovery School video on *unitedstreaming: Revolutionary War-The South Regained*. Search for this video by using the video title (or a portion of it) as the keyword.

Selected clips that support this lesson plan:

- The End of War: Treaty of Paris, Loyalist Exiles, and Tearful Farewells
 - Life Goes on for Those Who Played a Role in the Revolutionary War
 - George Washington's Legacy
- Computer with Internet access

Procedures

1. Ask students to share what they know about the medal known as the Purple Heart. Tell students that this tradition goes back to the Revolutionary War. Since the siege of Yorktown at the end of the war, Americans wounded in action have received the Purple Heart. Explain that this project will help students appreciate the award and those who have received it.
2. Point students toward the following two Web sites to learn more about the Purple Heart:
 - The Military Order of the Purple Heart
<http://www.purpleheart.org/history.htm>
 - Purple Heart
<http://www.americal.org/awards/ph.htm>
3. Tell students that they are to use the information at those sites – or other sources – to answer the following questions:
 - Who created the Purple Heart award? (*George Washington*)

- What was the original name of the Purple Heart? (*the Badge of Military Merit*)
 - Who were the first recipients of the Purple Heart, and when did they receive their awards? (*Sgts. Elijah Churchill and William Brown received their awards on May 3, 1783. Sgt. Daniel Bissell Jr. received his award on June 10, 1783.*)
 - Who awards the Purple Heart, and who is eligible to receive it? (*The Purple Heart is awarded in the name of the president of the United States to anyone who has been wounded or killed while serving in any capacity with one of the U.S. armed services.*)
 - How does the Purple Heart differ from all other military decorations? (*It differs from all other decorations in that an individual is not "recommended" for the Purple Heart. A person is entitled to receive it upon meeting specific criteria.*)
 - What is the difference between the original design of the Purple Heart and the current award? (*The current medal, designed by Elizabeth Will, has a profile of George Washington where a sprig had appeared on the original.*)
 - The original award was established on August 7, 1782. What words accompanied the event, and what do they mean? (*George Washington wrote in his orderly book on August 7, 1782, "The road to glory in a patriot army and a free country is thus open to all. This order is also to have retrospect to the earliest stages of the war, and to be considered a permanent one." These words may suggest that a wound is a badge of honor and must be recognized as such.*)
4. Give students an opportunity to relate personal stories of friends or family members who have received one or more Purple Hearts. If possible, have students find out and report to the class how those people felt upon receiving the Purple Heart. What have the recipients done with the medal itself? What other questions do students in the class have for recipients of the Purple Heart?
 5. Encourage students to design their own awards for other forms of meritorious military service. Remind them to name their awards, to draw detailed medal designs, and to compose the words that establish the criterion for receiving each award.
 6. Let students arrange the text and visuals for their award proposals on a bulletin board.

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Student's written response includes complete and accurate answers to the seven questions; major contribution to the discussion about friends and relatives; detailed drawing and well-worded citation.
- 2 points: Student's written response includes complete and mostly accurate answers to the seven questions; minor contribution to the discussion about friends and relatives; acceptable drawing and citation.
- 1 point: Student's written response includes incomplete and inaccurate answers to the seven questions; no contribution to the discussion about friends and relatives; inadequate drawing and citation.

Vocabulary

Continental

Definition: An American soldier of the Revolution in the Continental army.

Context: The Continentals, who comprised Washington's regular army, fought side by side with the militia.

loyalist

Definition: One who is or remains loyal especially to a political cause, party, government, or sovereign.

Context: The loyalists, or those Americans who had remained faithful to England, were eventually exiled following the end of the American Revolution.

militia

Definition: A body of citizens organized for military service.

Context: Although not part of Washington's regular army, the militia, composed of able-bodied males, had been called to serve during this time of crisis.

mutiny

Definition: Concerted revolt against discipline or a superior officer.

Context: As night fell in Morristown, New Jersey, 1500 soldiers began the mutiny by leaving camp against orders.

redoubt

Definition: A small, usually temporary, enclosed defensive work.

Context: Washington stormed the protected positions known as redoubts nine and ten during the night, which set the stage for Cornwallis' ultimate surrender at Yorktown.

siege

Definition: A military blockade of a city or fortified place to compel it to surrender.

Context: The battle at Yorktown was the largest siege that had ever occurred on American soil at the time, and the persistent attack waged there made victory possible.

strategy

Definition: The science and art of military command exercised to meet the enemy in combat under advantageous conditions.

Context: As Nathanael Greene and Daniel Morgan planned their battles and troop movements, they used some unusual strategy.

treason

Definition: The offense of attempting to overthrow the government of the state to which the offender owes allegiance or to kill or personally injure the sovereign or the sovereign's family.

Context: Benedict Arnold, by helping England in the war and then eventually changing sides, was guilty of treason against the United States.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- U.S. History – Revolution and the New Nation: Understands the causes of the American Revolution, the ideas and interests involved in shaping the revolutionary movement, and reasons for the American victory.
- Civics – What are the Basic Values and Principals of American Democracy: Understands the character of American political and social conflict and factors that tend to prevent or lower its intensity.
- Geography – Environment and Society: Understands how geography is used to interpret the past.
- Geography – The World in Spatial Terms: Knows the location of places, geographic features, and patterns of the environment.
- Historical Understanding: Understands the historical perspective.

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching social studies. To view the standards online, go to

<http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Time, Continuity, and Change

Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the Discoveryschool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>

