



**THE HISTORY CHANNEL® PRESENTS:  
The Revolution: *A Hornet's Nest*  
Part 9 of a 13 part original series**

The American Revolution laid the foundation for the success of the United States, yet the viability of the nation was not always imminent and the quest for liberty was no simple endeavor. As the Colonists found themselves becoming increasingly independent, the fiercest and most powerful army in the world stood between them and a free, independent, sovereign America. Small skirmishes between colonists and representatives of the British throne escalated in 1775. In order to pacify what he viewed as a small rebellion, the King sent a contingent of Red Coats from the seemingly omnipotent British Army across the Atlantic Ocean. However, as the days and months progressed, the Red Coats, their military leaders and King George III himself eventually realized the ferocity, courage and collective will of the colonists they faced. A Revolution was underway.

*The Revolution: A Hornet's Nest* takes place in the aftermath of the Continental Army's defeat at Charleston, and chronicles the War of Independence as it moves into its fourth year. In the North, where the Revolution began, there is deadlock; in the South, the action is only just beginning. As the fighting moves deeper into the South, the cause of independence blurs as personal grievances and pre-revolutionary resentments arise among troops and civilians. When the Patriots are defeated at Waxhaws and at Camden, it seems that the South will shortly be lost to the Loyalists. Major General Nathanael Greene steps in to command a Continental Army that is hungry, wounded and poorly equipped for battle. Luckily, good fortune arrives in the form of Colonel Daniel Morgan, whose reputation alone increases morale. It falls upon Morgan, with an innovative battle strategy, to lead the patriots to a timely victory at Cowpens – a victory which will only serve to whet the British appetite for revenge.

## **Curriculum Links**

*The Revolution: A Hornet's Nest* would be useful for high school and middle school classes on United States History, Military History, European History, and Colonial History. Teachers may want to use clips from this documentary to supplement their lesson plans related to the American Revolution, or show one episode in this series in its entirety in order to highlight one phase in the Revolutionary era. This documentary fulfills several National Standards guidelines as outlined by the National Council for History Education including: (1) Values, Beliefs, Political Ideas and Institutions, (2) Conflict and Cooperation, (3) Patterns of Social and Political Interaction and (4) Comparative History of Major Developments.

## **Vocabulary**

Using the dictionary at [www.merriamwebster.com](http://www.merriamwebster.com), an internet resource such as [www.history.com](http://www.history.com), or an encyclopedia, students should define or explain the significance of the following terms:

alleviate  
audacity  
debacle  
forsake

infamous  
insurmountable  
meritocracy  
nemesis

retribution  
subordinate  
ultimatum  
vengeance

## **Comprehension Questions**

1. Why were the Southern colonies so desirable for the British? Why do you think maintaining British authority might have been an attractive choice for American Loyalists?
2. How does Tarleton's behavior transgress an unwritten code of honor? How would you describe this code of honor, and who do you think determines its boundaries?
3. Do you think the Waxhaws Massacre represented a complete defeat for the Patriots? Why or why not?
4. What is the ultimatum that Sir Henry Clinton issues? Why is it a mistake?
5. Describe the differences that General Charles Cornwallis might have noticed between war in the North and war in the South.
6. How does David Fanning exemplify the sentiments of those in the South? What affect do such preoccupations have upon the outcome of the Revolution? Do you think revenge can become self-provoked?
7. How does Cornwallis's self-assurance influence his tactics? What is the reasoning behind his change of campaign?
8. Why does General George Washington consider General Horatio Gates unsuitable to head up the Southern campaign? How do Gates' personal concerns command his actions?

9. How do the British line up their units? What are the reasons for this? What are the consequences for Gates' militia?
10. What is Greene's unconventional approach to the battle and why does it have the potential to be successful?
11. Compare the role of the French Navy from an American and a French perspective. Which is the more accurate?
12. Describe Daniel Morgan's tactics at Cowpens. Why are they necessary?

## **Extended Activities**

### **Character Sketch**

The main leaders who appear in *A Hornet's Nest* possess distinct characteristics which directly affect the way they lead their subordinates. Write a short character sketch of each of them: Tarleton, Greene, Morgan and Cornwallis. What are the positive and negative qualities that they possess? How do these impose upon the decisions they make as leaders? Are there some qualities which are unsuitable for leadership yet would be valuable traits on a purely personal level?

### **Debate: Old vs. New**

Consider Daniel Morgan as representative of the increasing meritocracy, a system where social status is secondary to skill. Write a short paragraph arguing the benefits of a meritocracy over a hereditary system of hierarchy, where preference is given to those of noble birth. Then try and do the reverse: write a paragraph arguing that a hereditary system of leadership is more beneficial than a meritorious one.

### **Propaganda and Rhetoric**

Despite their defeat at the Battle of the Waxhaws, the Patriots use the incident to depict the British as dishonorable and uncouth. Consider each defeat that is depicted in *A Hornet's Nest*. In each instance, how might the losing side manipulate their defeat as a means of propaganda? Write a short speech, as leader of losing side, attempting to do this. Think not just about what you are saying, but chose carefully the language you may want to adopt, in order to present a particular perspective and galvanize the troops.

## **Resources for Additional Information and Research**

### **General Resources**

The complete history of the American Revolution and the Revolutionary War:

[www.americanrevolution.com/Links.htm](http://www.americanrevolution.com/Links.htm)

Emory University's website with primary sources including documents, paintings and speeches regarding the American Revolution:

<http://www.law.emory.edu/FEDERAL/conpict.html#const>

Maps from the Revolutionary War era:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/armhtml/armhome.html>

Military Resources on the American Revolution including digitized photographs of original paintings and drawings of battles:

<http://www.archives.gov/research/american-revolution/pictures/index.html>

### **Online Resources for *A Hornet's Nest***

An extensive biography of Banastre Tarleton by historian John Robertson:

<http://jrshelby.com/kimocowp/tarlton.htm>

A thorough biography of Daniel Morgan by historian John Robertson:

<http://jrshelby.com/kimocowp/morgan.htm>

The National Park Foundation's website on Cowpens National Battlefield:

<http://www.nationalparks.org/PlanYourParkTrip/ParkProfile.asp?partnerid=1170>

The 64th Regiment of Foot during the American Revolution: an 18th century history of one of the finest regiments in the British Army:

<http://www.lxiv.org/>

A postage stamp depicting the Battle of Cowpens, 17<sup>th</sup> January, 1781:

[http://web.archive.org/web/19990418014500/http://www.slsabyrd.com/\\_borders/Ball\\_W.JPG](http://web.archive.org/web/19990418014500/http://www.slsabyrd.com/_borders/Ball_W.JPG)

A portrait of Tarleton painted by the renowned artist Joshua Reynolds:

<http://www.sai.msu.su/cjackson/reynolds/p-reynold8.htm>

### **Books for *A Hornet's Nest***

Babits, Lawrence E. *A Devil of a Whipping: The Battle of Cowpens*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

Buchanan, John. *The Road to Guilford Courthouse: The American Revolution in the Carolinas*. Wiley, 1999.

Chadwick, Bruce. *George Washington's War: The Forging of a Man, a Presidency and a Nation*. Sourcebooks, 2004.

Commager, Henry Steele and Richard B. Morris. *The Spirit of Seventy-Six: The Story of the American Revolution As Told by Participants*. Book Sales, 2002.

Cornwallis, Franklin B. *Cornwallis: the American Adventure*. Houghton Mifflin, 1970.

Edgar, Walter B. *Partisans and Redcoats: The Southern Conflict That Turned the Tide of the American Revolution*. Harper Perennial, 2003.

Golway, Terry. *Washington's General: Nathanael Greene and the Triumph of the American Revolution*. Henry Holt and Co., 2004.

Pancake, John S. *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas, 1780-1782*. Fire Ant Books, 1985.