Day 14 American Revolution
65 Minutes

The British Military and the Hessians

The British Army in North America and Hessian Soldiers

Detailed Lesson Plan with Interactive Module Anchor
Grade Level: 5–8
Time: 60–75 minutes
Unit: The American Revolution

Important Teacher Note on Chronology

This lesson intentionally steps outside the strict chronological sequence of previous lessons. Rather than focusing on a single year or battle, it examines how the British Army was organized, how it operated globally, and how Hessian (German) auxiliary troops fit into Britain's war effort throughout the Revolutionary War. This structural understanding helps students better analyze British strategy and decision-making before studying specific later battles in detail.

Lesson Overview

This lesson explores how the British Army functioned during the American Revolution and why it was considered one of the most powerful military forces in the world at the time. Using an interactive, student-driven module as the instructional anchor, students examine British military hierarchy, professional training, leadership, and global responsibilities.

The lesson also introduces Hessian and other German auxiliary troops, clarifying common misconceptions about "mercenaries" and explaining why Britain relied on foreign soldiers. Students compare the British Army's structure and strengths to the Continental Army and reinforce learning through a scavenger hunt, a differentiated Hessians article, and reading comprehension activities.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:
- Describe the hierarchy and structure of the British Army in North America

- Identify key British military leaders and their roles
- Explain why Britain relied on Hessian (German) auxiliary troops
- Distinguish between the terms *mercenary* and *auxiliary*
- Compare the British Army's organization to the Continental Army
- Explain how Britain's global war affected its ability to defeat the colonies

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Essential Question

Why was Britain's powerful, professional army unable to quickly defeat the American colonies?

Materials

- Interactive module: **British Army in North America & Hessian Forces**
- Integrated online or printable scavenger hunt (within the module)
- Differentiated article on the Hessians
- Hessians reading comprehension exercises

Lesson Sequence

1. Hook and Background Connection (5 minutes)

Begin with the prompt:
If Britain had one of the strongest armies in the world, why didn't it easily win the Revolutionary War?

Briefly review what students already know about the Continental Army's weaknesses early in the war. Then explain that today's lesson focuses on the *other side*—how the British Army worked, why it was so powerful, and why that power did not guarantee victory.

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2. Anchor Instruction: Interactive Module (20 minutes)

https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/revolutionary-war/people-of-the-revolutionary-war/the-british-military-interactive-module-and-exhibit

British Army & Hessians Interactive Module
(Teacher displays module; students follow along on devices if available)

Use the interactive module as the instructional anchor.
Key points to emphasize while navigating the module:

- Britain's professional army and long military tradition
- Clear hierarchy and chain of command

- Roles of generals, officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers
- Famous British officers (Howe, Clinton, Cornwallis, Tarleton)
- Specialty forces such as cavalry, artillery, and engineers
- Britain fighting a **global war**, not just a war in America
- Introduction of Hessian and German auxiliary troops

Teacher emphasis:
Britain's army was powerful and well-organized—but distance, geography, resistance, and global responsibilities made victory far more difficult than expected.

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3. Interactive Exploration and Scavenger Hunt (15 minutes)

Students independently or in pairs explore the interactive module.

Students complete the **integrated printable or online scavenger hunt**, focusing on:
- Responsibilities of different British ranks
- Differences between British and Continental Army structures
- Why Hessians were used
- Where else Britain was fighting during the war

Discussion prompt during the activity:
How might fighting a war on multiple continents affect an army's decisions in America?

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4. Core Reading Activity: The Hessians (15 minutes)

https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/revolutionary-war/people-of-the-revolutionary-war/the-hessians

Students read the **differentiated article on the Hessian soldiers**, selecting an appropriate reading level.

Guided reading focus:
- Who the Hessians were
- Why Americans called them "mercenaries"
- Why historians often use the term "auxiliaries"
- How Hessian troops were used by Britain
- How propaganda shaped colonial views of Hessians

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5. Literacy Reinforcement and Differentiation

Students complete additional Hessians-focused reading comprehension activities as appropriate:
- Hessians Printable Reading Comprehension – Lexile 900
- Hessians Online Reading Comprehension – Lexile 900
- Hessians Printable Reading Comprehension – Lexile 800

These activities may be used for:
- Literacy centers
- Small-group instruction
- Homework
- Independent practice

Closure (5 minutes)

Discussion prompt:
Which British advantage surprised you the most—and why didn't it guarantee victory?

Exit ticket options:
- One strength of the British Army
- One reason Britain relied on Hessian soldiers
- One challenge Britain faced despite its powerful army