

**A Lesson. Plan for 4th grade students
Based on “The Black Regiment of the American Revolution”
Focusing on learning to use primary sources**

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Introduction

This workshop was created to introduce elementary students to the Battle of Rhode Island in a way that would get them personally involved in the raw materials of history - primary sources. It is designed to meet the Rhode Island Social Studies curriculum standard of "Thinking Like An Historian."

Primary sources are materials created at the time - diaries, maps, drawings, objects, documents. Secondary sources are where most historical study begins and they can be a good start. Where secondary sources are a retelling or interpretation with the distance of time, primary sources give us personal contact with things created at the time we are studying. There is nothing between the information and the researcher. Working with primary sources is good practice in improving their critical thinking and skills at analysis.

Analyzing primary sources prompts students to ask questions, evaluate information, make inferences and draw some conclusions based on the information.

This workshop lesson plan is aimed at 4th grade students, but it could be adjusted for other grades. The activities are based on a non-fiction juvenile book written by Linda Crotta Brennan and illustrated by Cheryl Kirk Nolls: *The Black Regiment of the American Revolution*, Rockport, Maine, 2004. Ideally the students would have the opportunity to read or listen to the book before we begin.

HP 1: History is an account of human activities that is interpretive in nature.

HP 1 (3-4) –1 Students act as historians, using a variety of tools (e.g., artifacts and primary and secondary sources) by...

- a. describing the difference between primary and secondary sources and interpreting information from each (e.g., asking and answering questions, making predictions.
- b. classifying objects, artifacts, and symbols from long ago and today and describing how they add to our understanding of the past.
- c. organizing information obtained to answer historical questions

Essential questions:

- a. How can historical tools help us understand the past?
- b. What is a primary source?
- c. How do we differentiate between things from long ago and today?
- d. How does the information gathered enhance our understanding of the past? •

Potential Topics:

Related CCSS: Reading: Informational Text Reading: Range of Reading

Reading: Key Ideas and Details

Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge

Sequence

1. Reading (Listening to) Black Regiment Book
2. Power-point introduction to Primary and Secondary Sources
3. Workshop style interaction where students can work in small groups with the primary sources. Students will have a guided prompt to work from. The information gathered from primary sources is like pieces of a jigsaw. You have a fuller picture of the event when you put the pieces together.
4. Responding to the Primary Sources

One response students might be is to have students organize a display with the primary sources as the exhibits. Students can write labels for each of the sources. Museum labels are simple with title, who created it, and what important information the source gives us.



Soldiers at the siege of Yorktown, including 1st Rhode Island Regiment soldier (left), 1781

Illustration by Jean-Baptiste-Antoine DeVerger

Practice getting information from artwork.

Title: Soldiers in Uniform - It is owned by Brown University

Year drawn: 1781

Art material: Watercolor

Artist: Jean de Verger. He was a soldier in a French regiment and he kept a journal of his war experiences. He drew pictures to illustrate his journal.

What did he draw? This drawing shows us the variety of soldiers fighting for American Independence. From left to right - a black soldier of the First Rhode Island Regiment (the Black Regiment), a New England militiaman, a frontier rifleman, and a French officer.

What information does this drawing give us about the First Rhode Island Regiment?

1. Describe the uniform of the soldier from the Rhode Island Regiment? This drawing helped illustrator Cheryl Kirk Nolls.

2. What can we tell about how well the Black Regiment soldier is trained? Compare him with the frontier rifleman. How can you tell who is better trained?

Studying a Primary Source

This is the battle flag of the 1st Rhode Island Regiment - the Black Regiment. It would have been used during the Battle of Rhode Island.

Use your "Primary Source Planner" to answer some questions about the flag.

Observe: Take a few minutes to look at this flag. Look it over carefully.

What colors and symbols do you see? Symbols are images that represent something else.

Reflect: Why do you think these symbols colors were chosen for the flag?

Questions: As you look at the flag, what questions do you have about it?





This is the battle flag of the 2nd Rhode Island Regiment. It would have been used during the Battle of Rhode Island. Later the the 1st and 2nd Regiments came together and this was the flag used for the Rhode Island Regiment. Rhode Island used this flag as our state flag many years later.

Use your “Primary Source Planner” to answer some questions about the flag.

Observe: Take a few minutes to look at this flag. Look it over carefully.

What colors and symbols do you see? Symbols are images that represent something else.

Reflect: Why do you think these symbols colors were chosen for the flag?

Question: As you look at the flag, what questions do you have about it?

This is Rhode Island’s flag today. Compare the Rhode Island Regiment flag and today’s state flag.

What is alike in both flags? What is different?



Studying a Primary Source

Gathering more information from secondary sources. Primary and secondary sources can both help us understand.

The anchor design is an ancient emblem in Rhode Island.

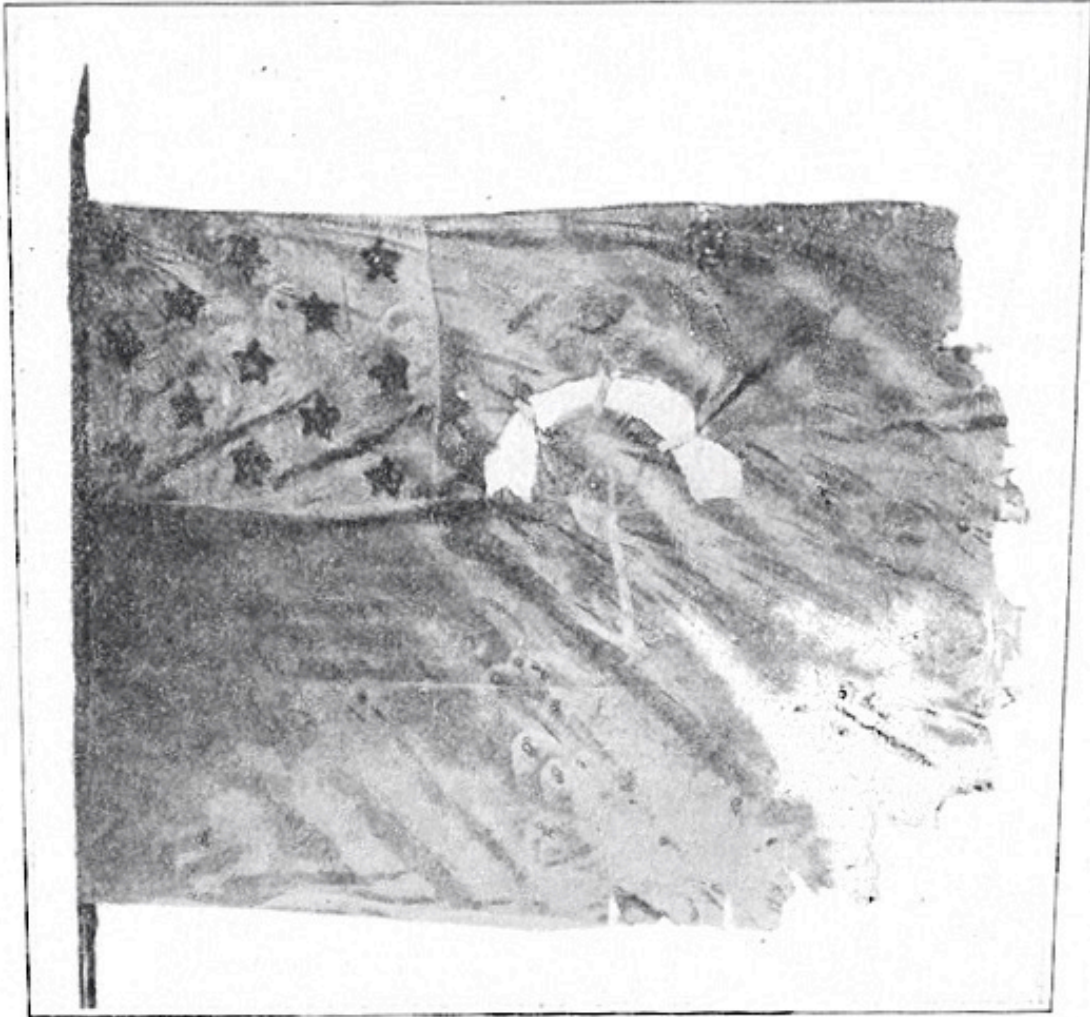
Rhode Island was a seafaring colony.

The seal of the colony drawn by William Dyer in 1647 has an anchor.

The “foul anchor” described is the ropes wrapped around the the anchor.

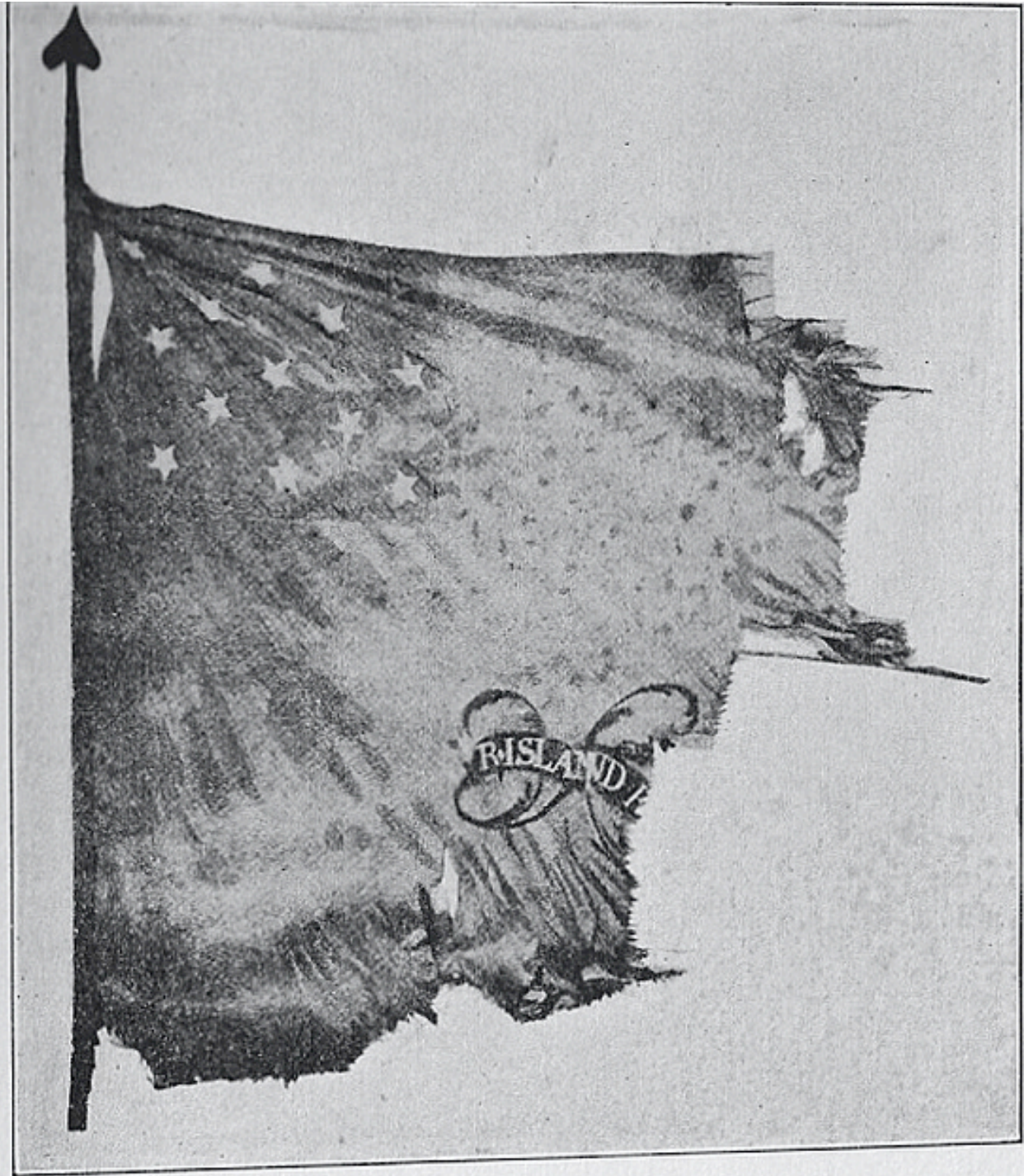
One description notes that the white is the color of their uniforms.

Information comes from a book on Rhode Island Flags and Symbols by Chapin.



FLAG CARRIED BY RHODE ISLAND TROOPS DURING THE REVOLUTION.

At the State House.



FLAG CARRIED BY RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS DURING THE REVOLUTION.
At the State House.

Working with a Diary

A diary is a book or log of events and experiences that is written by someone almost daily. Diaries try to capture events, thoughts, feelings, or a person's actions close to the time which they occurred. A diary is considered a primary source and it gives a personal view of events.

August 29, 1778

When during the early morning, we began to fire our cannon at the enemy, there was no answer in return. Therefore, two thousand men from the army, including our two regiments, were ordered to search out and pursue the retreating enemy. They marched for about three English miles, where they caught up with the enemy, who opposed us as much as possible and, grouped together in order to frustrate our attack, amounted to about ten thousand men. Finally, when the cannon began firing at them, they took flight. They were pursued, and the firing from both sides lasted throughout the day. In our advance we had to climb over many stone walls, five to six feet high, which served as fences around the fields. The enemy often took post behind these and fired through the openings where stones had been removed. Despite this difficulty, we chased them back into their fortifications, of which one, called "Windmill Hill," had many heavy cannon. Since a farther advance was not advisable, we stood still until the cannon arrived; from which time, throughout the day, each side fired against the other.

Steps in working with a diary

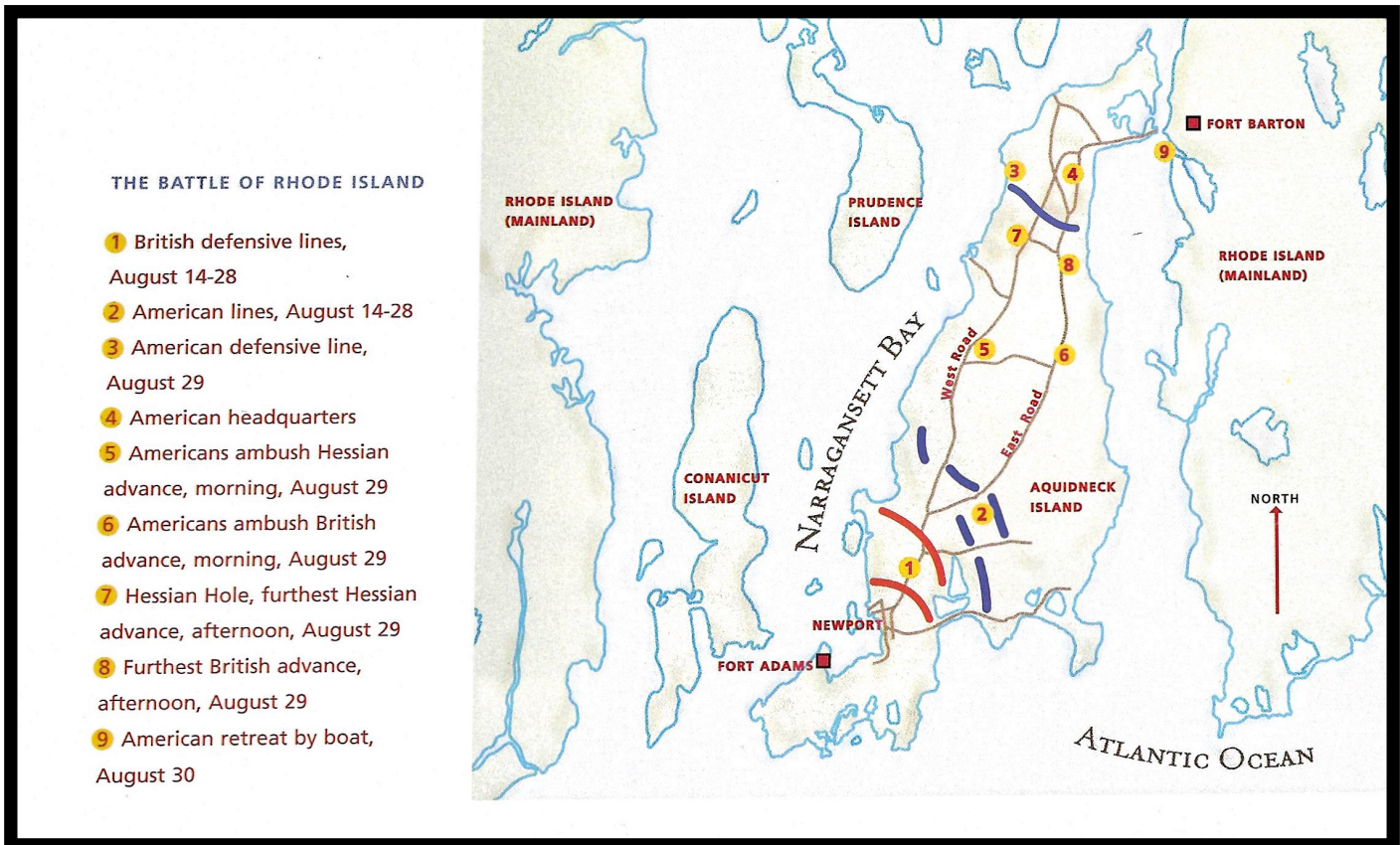
1. Find out some **information on the person** who wrote the diary. This is part of the diary of Johann Dohla, a private (or lower level soldier) of the Hessian (German) troops whose services were sold to George III to fight against the Rebels in the American Revolution. He arrived in America in 1777. Dohla's Hessian soldiers were the enemy fighting the Black Regiment.



2. Search **look up the words** you don't know.

regiment
retreating
our advance
took post
Windmill Hill (Butts Hill)

3. **Write down important information.** There are many diary accounts of the Battle of Rhode Island, but Dohla adds a detail that would be very typical of Portsmouth. What does he say about how the **stone wall were important** in the battle?



Working with Maps

This map was made especially for the book **The Black Regiment of the American Revolution**. The map maker took information from maps made at the time of the battle and he made a simple map to help the readers understand where the action took place.

Locating the parts of a map - Compass, Title, Legend

1. Where is the North arrow on this map? _____

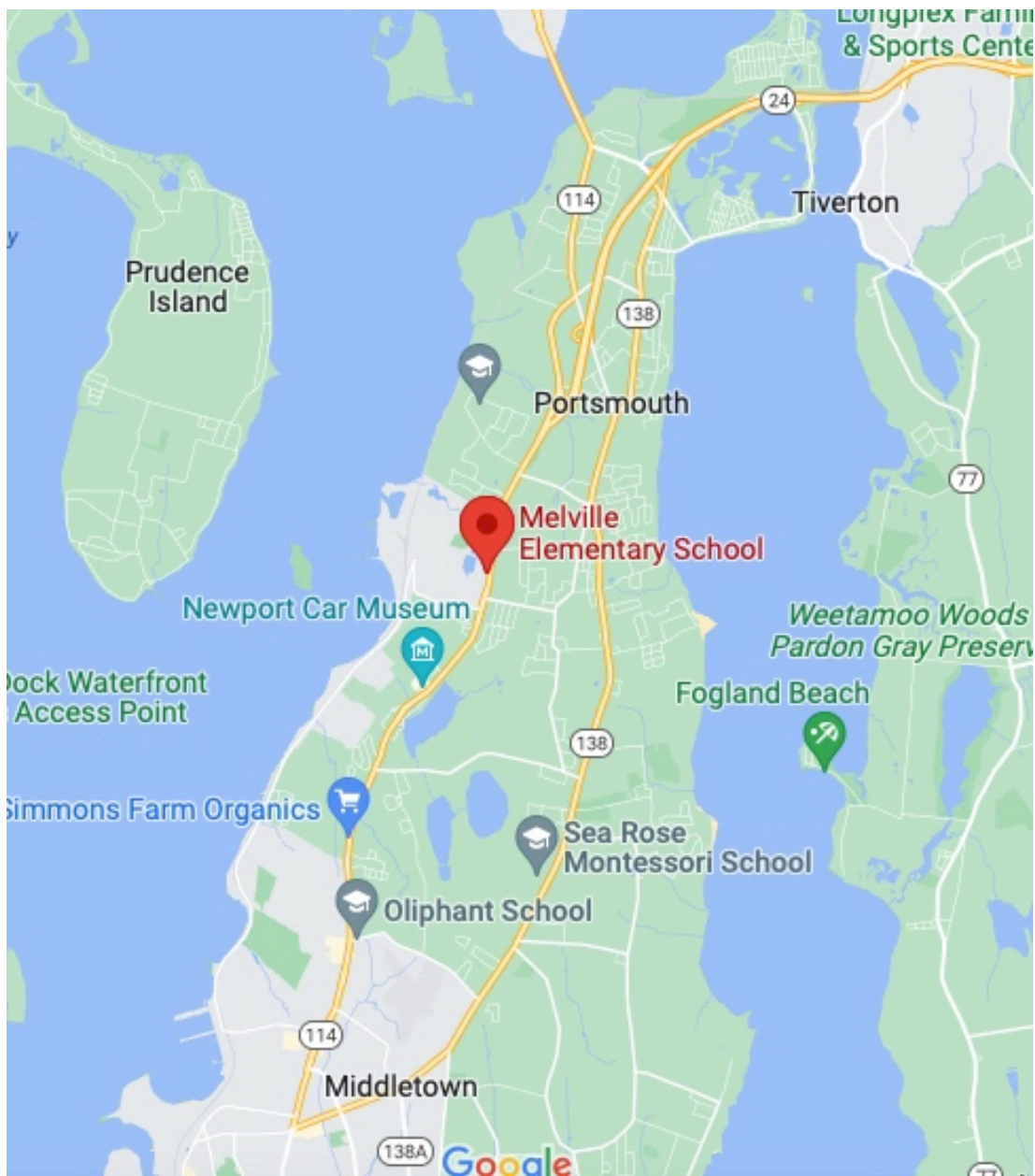
Knowing what direction is north helps us with “orientation” - which way is north, south, east and west like with a **compass**.

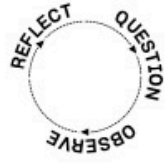
2. Find the title of the map. The **title** helps you understand what the map is about.

What is the title of this map? _____

3. Did you notice the numbers on the left side of the map? This area is called the **“legend.”** It tells you what the symbols on the map are about. In this legend the mapmaker is showing you where the action in battle took place. This legend gives good information about what happened on each day so you can follow the British and American soldiers as the action moved.

Which color represents the American Soldiers? _____





NAME:

PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS TOOL

OBSERVE

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REFLECT

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QUESTION

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FURTHER INVESTIGATION:

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OBSERVE

Have students identify and note details.

Sample Questions:

What do you notice first? · Find something small but interesting. · What do you notice that you didn't expect? · What do you notice that you can't explain? · What do you notice now that you didn't earlier?

REFLECT

Encourage students to generate and test hypotheses about the source.

Where do you think this came from? · Why do you think somebody made this? · What do you think was happening when this was made? · Who do you think was the audience for this item? · What tool was used to create this? · Why do you think this item is important? · If someone made this today, what would be different? · What can you learn from examining this?

QUESTION

Have students ask questions to lead to more observations and reflections.

What do you wonder about...
who? · what? · when? · where? · why? · how?

FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Help students to identify questions appropriate for further investigation, and to develop a research strategy for finding answers.

Sample Question: What more do you want to know, and how can you find out?

A few follow-up activity ideas:

Beginning

Have students compare two related primary source items.

Intermediate

Have students expand or alter textbook explanations of history based on primary sources they study.

Advanced

Ask students to consider how a series of primary sources support or challenge information and understanding on a particular topic. Have students refine or revise conclusions based on their study of each subsequent primary source.

For more tips on using primary sources, go to

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers>