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History 575

The Role of Native Americans in the American Revolution

In 5th grade, a major portion of Social Studies is to teach about the Native Americans that lived in the United States before the shift occurs when all the students study is colonists and the American Revolution. It has always bothered me that the Native Americans seemingly disappear from our history except to mention that they were forced further and further west. The goal of this bibliography is to provide sources that help illustrate what role the Native Americans played in the American Revolution. Most sources are to provide teachers with background knowledge because it is not a side of the American Revolution that is discussed often. This is an important topic to discuss, not only with 5th graders, but anytime the American Revolution is discussed because this is not a war that affected only the Patriots and the British; it affected an entire nation of people that were here first and watching a war being fought over land that did not belong to either side fighting for it.

Topic Statement: The resources in this bibliography cover the time period, 1775-1783, in which the American Revolutionary War took place. Geographically, it spans the colonial area, from New England down to Georgia. While it does not go chronologically, it gives resources that show how the Revolutionary War affected different Native American tribes and the roles that different tribes played in the war.

This book, used as a textbook, discusses eight Indian communities and how the American Revolution affected them, how they reacted, and their participation in the war. It doesn’t focus on just what the Indians did in the Revolutionary War, it goes more into the experiences and how it affected them.


A snippet of information is provided in this book, however; it provides a good depth of background knowledge to the teacher. It gives insight as to why the Native Americans disliked the colonists and why the colonists disliked the Native Americans. Compared to the colonists, the British made more promises that they kept and, because the British enlisted more Native American aid, the colonists felt that the British were behind Native American attacks on colonists.


This website specifically mentions 7 different tribes and their participation in the American Revolution. It gives the reasons why certain tribes joined different sides, as well as how the aftermath of the war affected different tribes and the future of Americans vs. Native Americans in this country. While most references mention only tribes, the site also mentions Joseph Brant and his role in getting Native Americans participating in the war.


This book focuses strictly on the Oneida tribe and their role in the war. It discusses how involvement in the war changed the Oneida culture and how their story was seemingly forgotten in history. The Oneida fought alongside the Patriots, just to be pushed aside later. The book also discusses how the tribe tried to adjust to the changes brought on by their contact with the Europeans/Americans.


This book discusses in depth the Iroquois’ role in the American Revolution. It is a great resource to give teachers some background knowledge. The book talks about how the Iroquois really wanted to remain neutral, however, they ended up siding with the British because they trusted the King. There is also discussion of Joseph Brant and his role in getting the Iroquois nation involved in the American Revolution.

On this website, The Oneida Indian Nation gives a summary of different battles and locations and provides information of what veterans of this war would have faced in those situations. One interesting thing to note is that the Oneida tribe signed a treaty with the federal government in 1794 where the government would give cloth to the nation. That treaty is still in existence today and the nation still is sent cloth (as of 2008). It also shares stories of individuals who aided in battle and tells that the government recognized their assistance in 1777.


The Atlas is a great source because it not only provides background information about Native Americans during this time, it also has maps that show what tribes lived where and drawings that help illustrate the landscapes and time periods. It gives the reader a clearer picture of the areas in which these events took place and who lived where at the time.


This is a children’s book with illustrations of every type of soldier in uniform in the American Revolution. It includes the Germans that came over and fought for the British, the French who fought for the Americans, and Native American tribes that fought in the war as well. This would be a good book to use to show students what uniforms were like back then and could even be used as a compare and contrast lesson between or among uniforms.


Another great book that can be used in the classroom that serves two purposes. This book includes primary sources, and some great pictures, that can be used to illustrate this part of history for students. While it serves the purpose of this topic, it also covers the African American slave role in the Revolutionary War as well. Chapter four is exclusively about Native Americans.


I think this would be a good website for students to find information for research projects. It breaks the paragraphs down by tribe which would help make it easier for students to find information. Tribes discussed include: Cherokees, Catawbas, Creeks, Choctaws and Chickasaws. The bottom of the websites list the sources used to collect the information, some of which is included above.


In my research for this bibliography, Joseph Brant was a character that appeared in several sources. In the instance a teacher wants to include biographical information into their lessons, I thought he would be a good person to include. Joseph had a good relationship with British officers before the
Revolutionary War, and that relationship set the stage for his voice for Iroquois involvement, not only in the war, but fighting for the British side.

In conclusion, I feel that I have had my eyes opened to a new topic in United States History. The Native Americans are a forgotten piece to the American Revolution puzzle. It's very disheartening. Here you have a group of people that lived in this land before the English came over, watching a war being fought over their land. I learned that different tribes fought on different sides. Some tribes that fought for the British did so because they were told that they could keep their land if they did. What makes me incredibly sad, not just during the American Revolution, but in the time period we have studied in class, is the European frame of mind over how important land was, and how if you were different from them in any way, then they could take your possessions away from you. What’s frustrating is that what the Patriots were fighting for, and ended up creating, were rights for themselves because they knew what it was like to have a government do whatever it wanted to do. However, they turned around and did the same to the Native Americans, who, I might add, were not even under their government jurisdiction in the first place. In this research process, I learned about Joseph Brant, a man of whom I had never heard. Here is this man, who wasn’t born into a chief’s line, but became a chief, and convinced the Iroquois nation to join the British war efforts in the American Revolution. After the war, he kept his British contacts in hopes that they could help the Native Americans against what the American government was doing, though nothing really came from it. While I wish I would have found more student-friendly resources, I feel that the resources I did find and include will provide teachers with well-rounded background knowledge to teach their students about another group of important people that were involved in the American Revolution.