

WEEK 5

Alabama and
the Revolution

Alabama Studies Weekly

GRADE
4

THE SHOT HEARD ROUND THE WORLD

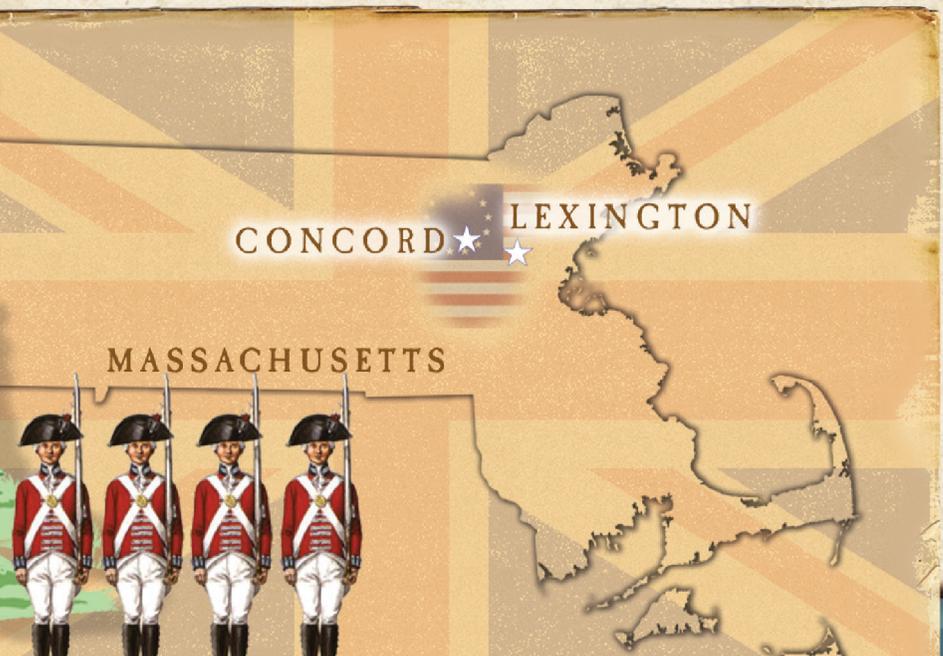
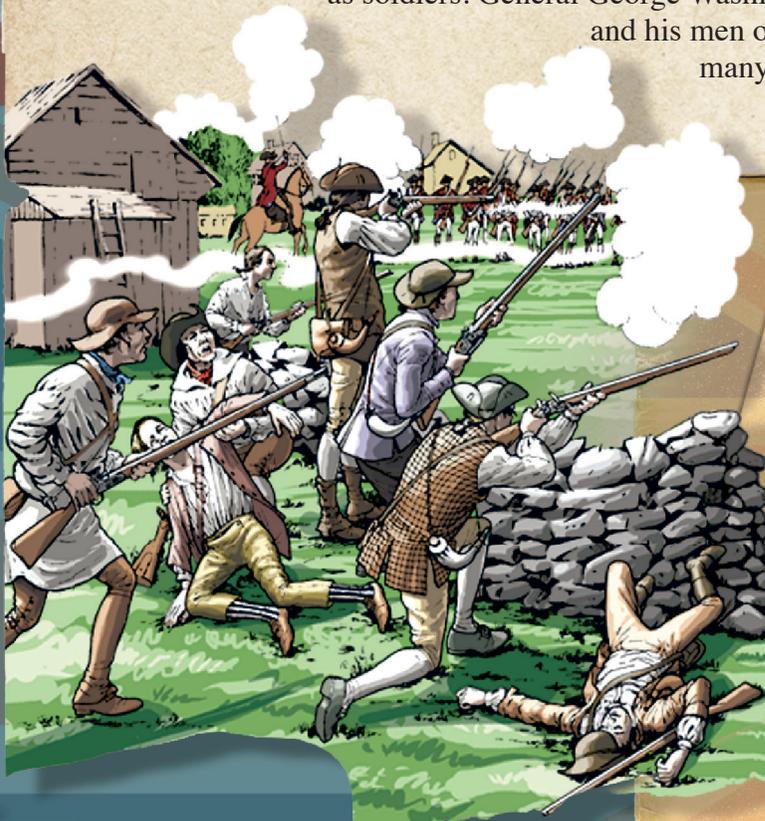
“Stand your ground, men. Don’t fire unless fired upon, but if they mean to have a war, let it begin here!” These words, spoken by Captain John Parker to his band of minutemen, may have been the last words spoken before shots were fired at Lexington, Massachusetts, in April 1775. They may have been the last official words of peacetime before the first shots of the American Revolutionary War. It’s true that Lexington is far north of Alabama, but it’s pretty clear that those shots and the war that followed them shook things up here in our neck of the woods and all the way around the world.

In this week’s Alabama Studies Weekly, you will learn more about the American Revolution, a war unlike any other war that America has fought. The army was made up mostly of farmers and shopkeepers who had no training as soldiers. General George Washington and his men overcame many hardships,

including not having enough money to buy all of the guns, ammunition, food and warm clothing that they needed. They lost many battles and many men. Still they held their heads high, eventually won the war and gave America its freedom.

We will also learn about the Constitution, a body of laws that everyone must agree to obey. (Can you imagine what a difficult task writing that would be?) We will meet George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, great American leaders and patriots who helped draft, or write, this important document.

Even though Alabama was not directly involved in the Revolutionary War (Alabama wasn’t one of the 13 original colonies), try to imagine what it was like to be a colonist during the Revolutionary War. As you read, think about what it might have been like to sit at the table with the men who wrote the Constitution of the United States. Can you think of something that you might have added to make America a better place to live?



Connections

Knitting for Charity—An American Tradition

Did you know that, all across our country, people are knitting for charity? In homes, churches, schools and even prisons, they meet regularly to knit for people in need around the world. They knit hats for cancer victims, caps for premature babies, afghans for refugees, blankets for the homeless, socks for soldiers and blankets for shelter animals.

One charity knitting program, Afghans for Afghans, makes hats, mittens, sweaters, vests, socks and blankets to help keep schoolchildren in Afghanistan warm during the harsh winters.

Another group, called Warm Up America, has distributed more than 250,000 blankets to people in need. One of their programs, called Caps to the Capital, collects knitted caps for newborns in developing nations.

The tradition of knitting for those in need actually started during the Revolutionary War when Martha Washington organized officers’ wives into a group who knitted for the soldiers. Farm women also knitted socks and clothing, and many even rode to the battlefield themselves to deliver them!

During the Civil War, women across the country made socks, gloves, mufflers and blankets for soldiers. During World War I, John D. Rockefeller, a wealthy New York politician, welcomed knitters into his mansion. President Woodrow Wilson allowed sheep to graze on the White House lawn to provide some wool. Eleanor Roosevelt, America’s first lady during World War II, set an example for the country by knitting for soldiers. Today, there are many groups that continue this tradition by knitting for our soldiers overseas.



Alabama and the Revolutionary War



War for Independence

On April 19, 1775, a “shot heard around the world” started the American Revolution. Congress appointed George Washington general and commander-in-chief of the new continental army.

On July 4, 1776, the Congress accepted the Declaration of Independence. This made the break with Great Britain complete and gave birth to a new nation. It is also why we celebrate Independence Day on July 4.

For the next year or so, the British won many victories over the Americans. In October 1777, the Americans won their first victory of the Revolutionary War, the battle at Saratoga. In 1779, Spain and France decided to help the Americans win the war. They sent soldiers, supplies and money. For the next two years, however, the British continued to win many victories, and the Americans became very discouraged. Things didn't look good for the continental army.

Alabama Loyalty

When we talk about the American Revolution, we seem to always mention the 13 colonies that said they wanted to be independent from England. Well, guess what? Alabama wasn't one of 'em! In fact, Alabama was pretty set on remaining loyal to England. Here are a couple of facts that may help you understand just how people around here felt. Fact number one: During the revolution, Alabama became a popular place for loyal British colonists who wanted to be safe from the guns of American patriots in the Carolinas and Georgia. Fact number two: When a man finally did come into Alabama carrying copies of the Declaration of Independence, he was thrown in a Fort Charlotte prison. The facts seem to speak for themselves: Alabama was loyal to England.

Founding Fathers

A few years after the American Revolution was won, the leaders of our new nation felt that our country needed a stronger government. So they asked the states to send delegates (people to represent each state) to help write a Constitution of the United States. Great men like Benjamin Franklin, George Washington and James Madison were delegates. Washington was chosen to be the chairperson of the meeting. The new constitution called for a president to lead the people. The electoral college chose Washington as their first president. George Washington served two terms as president. He was a very wise, caring, and fair leader. He is known as the “Father of Our Country.”

Benjamin Franklin was one of the most important men in the nation. He is the only person who helped write three very important documents – the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and the Treaty of Paris, which ended the American Revolution. In his spare time, he invented the Franklin stove, the lightning rod, swim fins, the harmonica and bifocals. He also established the first lending library and the first fire department in the country. Historians have called him the “First American.”

Thomas Jefferson was a gifted writer who wrote the Declaration of Independence in just one day. He also served as governor of Virginia, ambassador to France and secretary of state under George Washington. He later became the third president of the United States.

James Madison is remembered as the “Father of the Constitution.” He took notes that detailed everything that happened at the convention. His notes were so good that they painted a picture of the events for future generations. He followed Jefferson as the fourth president of the United States. As president, he signed the bill that made Alabama a state.

Surrender at Yorktown

The last important battle of the Revolutionary War was fought far northeast of our fair state at Yorktown, Virginia. With the help of the French armies that joined his forces, George Washington trapped the main British army under General Cornwallis. This time, the British were outnumbered. Though they were near the sea, there was no way to get help from their navy because the French fleet controlled the Chesapeake Bay.

Hopelessly trapped, General Cornwallis asked for a temporary cease-fire, but General Washington demanded an immediate and unconditional surrender. At long last, the Revolutionary War was over. A new nation was finally free and independent.



THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

Have you heard someone say, “The pen is mightier than the sword”? This saying means that things written down on a piece of paper can be more powerful than a person swinging a sharp sword. For example, a treaty can stop armies from fighting; a law can stop us from hurting others; a newspaper can help people find ways to solve problems without fighting.

A perfect example is a document called a constitution. A constitution is a body of laws that everybody agrees to obey. Our U.S. and state constitutions protect many rights. They also provide a way to make new laws as we need them. Some of our rights protected by the U.S. Constitution include the following:

Right to Privacy (Fourth Amendment)—Can anybody walk into your house and start snooping through your closets and drawers, taking things, just because they feel like it? Our constitution says, “NO!” because we all enjoy the right to privacy. Politicians in some states want all school students to take drug tests to see if they are using drugs. Are these tests a violation of your right to privacy or are they helpful in fighting the drug problem?

Freedom of Speech (First Amendment)—Can you say anything you want? Matt Fraser, a student in Washington, gave a speech at a school assembly using profanity, or indecent language. Angry teachers suspended him from school. Matt went to court, saying that the teachers violated his right to free speech. Was Matt right or wrong? The U.S. Supreme Court said that Matt was wrong. A school, the court said, is a protected learning environment where students, teachers and parents can expect protection from indecent, or profane, language.

Freedom of Religion (First Amendment)—Do you go to church or participate in a religious belief? If you do, you are free to practice any part of your religion so long as it doesn't hurt other people. If you don't practice a religion, nobody can force you to join a church or participate in a religious observance.

Innocent Until Proven Guilty (Sixth Amendment)—In our country, a person can't be put in jail unless someone can prove that the person is guilty of a crime. In other countries, people are sometimes thrown in jail and kept there until they can prove they are innocent. What do you think about this right?

Right to Bear Arms (Second Amendment)—In early America, England tried to take the guns from colonists as a way of keeping control over the people. (This still happens in other countries even today.) When our constitution was written, the right to keep a weapon was protected. Today, some people think this right refers only to a local militia or the National Guard. Some people want to ban guns, hoping that will reduce crime. What do you think?

Alabama Adventures

Unwanted News

Seymour Thomas rode into Mobile with a joyful heart. After all, in a satchel at his side he carried copies of the document that would change America forever. Everyone knew the importance of the Declaration of Independence, didn't they?



He rode through the streets, looking for a crowded square where he could be heard by everyone. He heard a church bell ringing, and then he saw the church doors open. People started to fill the street. “Perfect,” he thought. He rode right into the middle of the crowd and began brandishing his papers. He even tossed a few copies into the crowd with a joyful laugh.

“Hear ye, hear ye, my good people!”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Trustworthiness

Do you know what it means to be trustworthy? It's simple, really. Being trustworthy means that people can trust you. It means that if someone gives you a job to do, you do it. If someone tells you a secret, you keep it. If you say you're going to do something for someone, you follow through. It's easy to see that when people are trustworthy, there are good feelings, understanding and peace. On the other hand, when people are not trustworthy, there are angry feelings, confusion and suspicion. Being trustworthy is important, but it's just one step on the road to being a great person.



American Character

What is taxation without representation?



“No taxation without representation!” That's the cry the colonists took up in the 1760s when the British government began making American colonies pay taxes to England. The colonists believed they had a right to be represented if they were expected to pay taxes. (That's how it works in America today. Taxes are proposed and put into action by officials elected by the people who must pay the taxes.) The British disagreed.

At the same time the colonists were making this demand, they realized two things: It would be very difficult to send representatives to England's Parliament, and the voting practices of the day were very unfair. (In some places only white men who owned property were permitted to vote.)

As it turned out, “No taxation without representation” really meant, “No taxation by Parliament. No representation in Parliament. We'll take care of our own business!”

Striped Skunk

Alabama Wildlife

The striped skunk is the most numerous and well-known member of the weasel family. If polecats and minks had the same perfume as skunks, there would probably be a lot more of them around, too!

Most striped skunks are solid black with two white stripes on their backs. They are good at finding food, but most people don't know that skunks are almost blind. Skunks can only see about two feet in front of themselves.

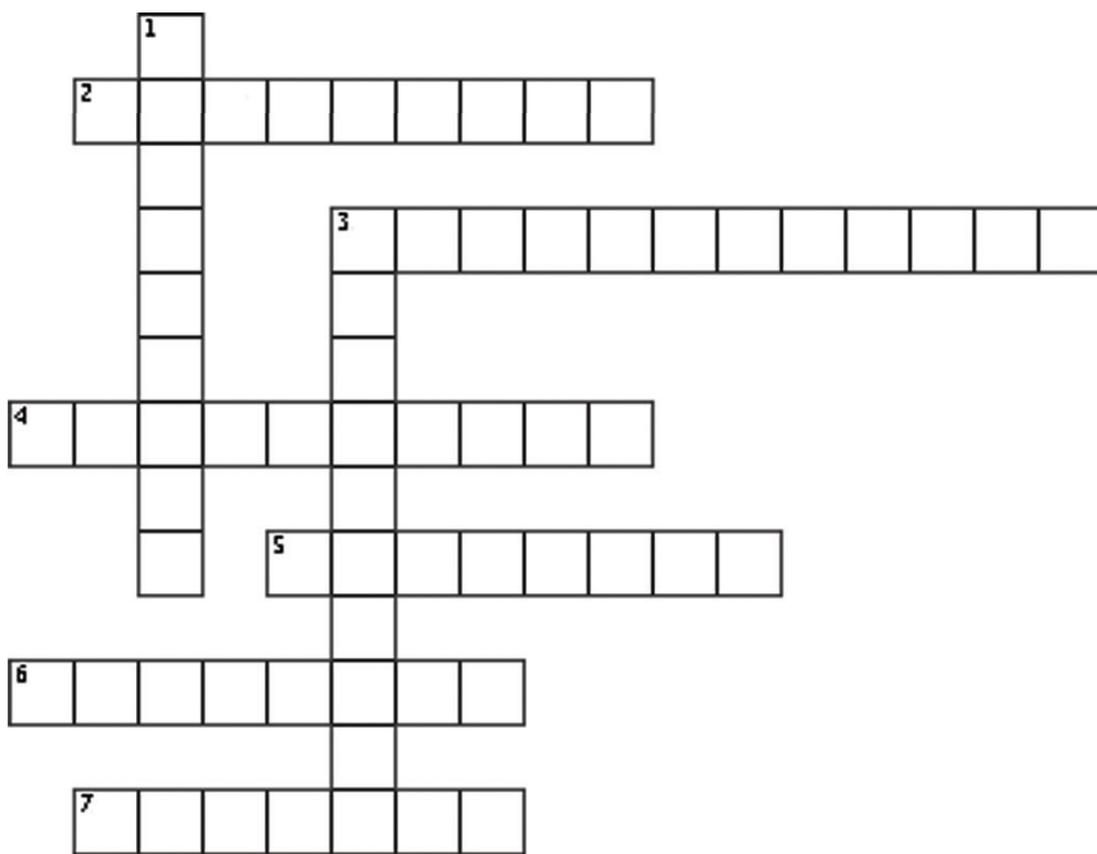
Skunks are almost totally vegetarian, but they do eat meat sparingly (mice and birds).

Do you want to hear a true story about a pioneer and a skunk? Well, on the way out West, an old pioneer went hunting to get food for the people in his wagon train. There were just two problems: His old age had robbed him entirely of any sense of smell,

and being an immigrant from a large European city, he had never seen a skunk. Imagine everyone's surprise when he joyfully returned to camp holding a skunk he had caught and killed with his bare hands! Imagine his surprise when everyone in the camp insisted that he walk a half mile behind them for the rest of the trek!



Name _____



ACROSS

2. place where first gunshots of Revolutionary War were fired
3. body of laws that everyone agrees to obey
4. American commander-in-chief during Revolutionary War
5. place where Americans won their first victory of Revolutionary War
6. Historians call him the “First American.”
7. president who signed a bill making Alabama a state

DOWN

1. He wrote the Declaration of Independence.
3. British general who surrendered at Yorktown



As you read this week’s lesson, circle or highlight all proper nouns with any color pen or highlighter. This will help you find some of the crossword answers and get ready for this week’s test.

Unwanted News CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

he shouted. “This is it! This is the document that will change everything!” Some people, without understanding his speech very well, laughed anyway. Some applauded.

One man picked up a copy of the declaration that had fallen at his feet and began to read. Seymour went on, “Ladies and gentlemen, you are far from where the fighting is, but this is still a day to rejoice. . . .”

He was suddenly cut off by a man holding one of the papers. “Stop that man!” he shouted, pointing at Seymour, “and call the authorities!”

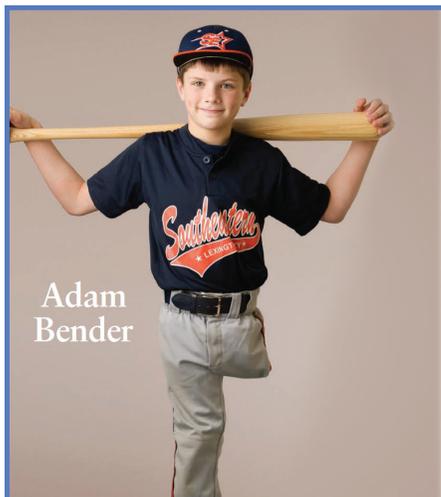
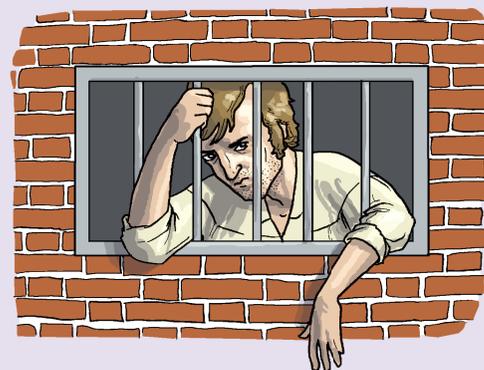
Seymour grew pale. “I don’t understand. . . .” He was interrupted before he could say more. The reader held the declaration high above his head. “This man is a revolutionary!” he cried. “This paper suggests that we break with England!”

Ladies screamed. Men shouted. “Treason, treason!” they began to cry. Seymour couldn’t believe his ears. “But I thought you’d be glad to hear.” His words were drowned out by the shouting.

Even as he spoke, he was pulled from his horse and hauled roughly toward the fort. Before he knew it, he was staring at the world through the bars of a dark cell. How could they misunderstand him? He thought they’d be happy. What had he done wrong? He didn’t understand that Alabama citizens were still loyal to England, but he could smell the smoke of his smoldering copies of the declaration that was supposed to make everyone so glad. The people were burning them in the street.

Yes, there was much Seymour didn’t understand about this

strange day, but there was one thing he knew for sure: Behind these bars, he’d have a long time to think it over!



Adam Bender

Threw cancer a curve ball.

OVERCOMING
Pass It On.
 VALUES.COM THE FOUNDATION FOR A BETTER LIFE

Pretend that the American patriots didn’t win the Revolutionary War. What

Let’s Write

country would we live in today? Would we still be part of England, or would Spain have taken over again? What about France? Perhaps they all ended up owning part of America. Put your imagination’s gas pedal to the floor and write a totally fictional 200-word story about life in America—without the United States.