

# African Americans in the Revolutionary War

<sup>1</sup> It was 1776. The Revolutionary War had just started. There were a lot of African Americans living in the colonies. They were not allowed to fight when the war first started. It didn't matter if they were free or if they were slaves.

<sup>2</sup> Soon, Britain let black men fight. Britain said that they would be free if they helped them in the war. This meant a lot more people were helping the British. George Washington changed his mind. He said that African Americans could fight in his army. Only free black men were allowed to join.

<sup>3</sup> There were about 5,000 free African Americans that fought against Britain. The first battles were at Lexington and Concord. There were at least nine black men that fought at these battles. Two of the men who fought there also fought at Bunker Hill. They were Peter Salem and Salem Poor.

<sup>4</sup> There were black men that formed their own groups in the army. The army was also called the militia. Smaller groups of the army were called regiments. African American men served in black regiments. Other men served in white regiments. The black men were also drummers and spies. They fought bravely. The white men in the army respected them.

<sup>5</sup> African Americans also served in the navy. The navy was started during this war. They were sailors and cooks on the ships. Thousands of African Americans sailed on the sea. Their courage helped the colonists win battles at sea.

<sup>6</sup> Slaves had a tough choice if they wanted to fight. They could run away from the plantation and join the British army. But if Patriots caught them, the slaves could be hanged. They could also join the colonial army. But then men in the British army would try to catch them. The British army would then sell the black men to make money.

<sup>7</sup> All African Americans hoped the war would help them. They hoped that after the war, they would be free. The Declaration of Independence said that all men were created equal. African Americans thought this would mean they would be free. If white people were not slaves, then blacks should not be, either.

<sup>8</sup> In some states, African Americans signed petitions. They sent the papers to people who made the laws. The African Americans wanted to be free.

<sup>9</sup> African Americans were not the only people who wanted the war to end slavery. There were white people who hoped for the same thing. Quakers did not like slavery. They lived mostly in the northern colonies. The Quakers spoke out against it. They hoped all men would be freed after the war.

<sup>10</sup> During the war, some colonies made slavery illegal. The war had helped slaves in the North. Many states in the North got rid of slavery during the late 1700s. This did not always help African Americans. These states made new laws. The laws limited what African Americans could do in these states.

<sup>11</sup> The war helped and hurt African Americans. In the North, many states outlawed slavery. In the South, slavery became worse. It would be more than 80 years before African Americans would be free.

- 1. How did Britain convince black men to fight for them?**
- 2. How many African Americans fought against Britain?**
- 3. Why did slaves have a tough choice if they wanted to fight?**
- 4. Besides African Americans, who else wanted the war to put an end to slavery?**
- 5. When did many Northern states make slavery illegal?**

## Women in the American Revolution

<sup>1</sup> Men were not the only people to fight in the American Revolution. Women also fought in the war. They did many other things, too. Women helped the men to win the war.

<sup>2</sup> Women were not supposed to be in the war. Men did not want them to fight. A woman's job was to take care of the home. She was supposed to watch the children. But women found ways to help in the war. Some women fought. Other women sewed clothes and uniforms.

<sup>3</sup> When the men left, women had to do their jobs. They learned how to be blacksmiths or carpenters. One woman became a doctor. Margaret Hill Morris knew a lot about medicine. People in the town went to her when they were sick. They trusted her. Every morning she went to see sick or wounded soldiers at their homes.

<sup>4</sup> Women also fought in battles. One of the most famous is Molly Pitcher. Her real name was Mary Ludwig Hays. She was with her husband at the Battle of Monmouth. It was very hot. She would carry pitchers of cold water to the soldiers. She was in danger of being shot with every trip.

<sup>5</sup> One time when she came back with water, she saw that her husband had been killed. He had been helping to shoot a cannon. Without him, the cannon could not be shot. Mary took his place on the cannon. She stayed during the whole battle. Other soldiers were happy with how well she did.

<sup>6</sup> George Washington made her a sergeant because she was so brave. She is buried in Pennsylvania. There is a cannon next to her grave. There is also a monument that tells about her brave actions.

<sup>7</sup> Another brave woman was Lydia Darrah. The British came to her home one night and had a meeting. Lydia stayed up and listened. She heard the British planning to surprise the colonists at White Marsh. She decided to warn George Washington.

<sup>8</sup> The next day she said she had to get flour. She dropped the flour sack at the mill. Then she ran to the colonists. She told them what she had heard. Lydia was able to stop the British from winning. The British never found out what she had done.

<sup>9</sup> Women gained some independence after the war. More were allowed to go to school. Some women went to work. Others worked to help people. They spoke against slavery. They worked to help people in mental hospitals. The fight for women's rights was beginning.

- 1. During the Revolutionary War, what did most men think a woman's job should be?**
- 2. Who was Margaret Hill Morris?**
- 3. What did Mary Ludwig Hays do?**
- 4. What did Lydia Darrah do?**
- 5. After the war, how were women better off than they were before the war?**



Benjamin Franklin, one of the signers of the Treaty of Paris

## The Revolutionary War is Over

<sup>1</sup> The end of the war was coming. The colonists were going to beat Britain. Charles Cornwallis was leading the British army. He took his army to Virginia. Cornwallis attacked the capital. The governor had to run away.

<sup>2</sup> Then, Cornwallis made a huge mistake. He should have sent half of his army to New York. But he went to Yorktown. Yorktown was a little piece of land. It was near the water. Cornwallis thought that British ships would come to help him.

<sup>3</sup> George Washington knew that this was his chance. If he trapped Cornwallis, the war would be over. He took his army south from New York. A group of ships from France came. They blocked the water. Cornwallis could not get any help. The trap had worked.

<sup>4</sup> Cornwallis had fewer men than Washington. Washington knew this. He fired cannons at Cornwallis for many days. He did not stop. Many of Cornwallis's troops were hurt or killed.

They could not rest. Cornwallis did not quit for a couple of weeks. Soon, he knew it was hopeless. He was running out of food. They had to surrender.

<sup>5</sup> It was clear that the Americans had won the war. Britain was shocked that they had lost. They just couldn't believe that the colonists could beat their army. Britain said they would talk about peace. It was time for the war to end.

<sup>6</sup> The talks started in Paris. It was 1782. Some colonists went to England. They would work out the treaty. Britain just wanted everything to be over. They gave the Americans almost everything that they wanted.

<sup>7</sup> The United States was now free. They were their own country. No other country could be in charge. The country went from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River. The colonists did not get Florida. It went back to Spain.

<sup>8</sup> People who wanted the British to win had lost a lot of property. Americans said they would talk to state legislatures. They would ask that the Loyalists be paid for what they had lost. The Americans asked. But most legislatures ignored the claims. They did not want to pay money to people who had helped England.

<sup>9</sup> On April 15, 1783, Congress agreed to the Treaty of Paris. They ratified it. It had been almost eight years since the first battles of the war.

<sup>10</sup> In the end, America had more things to help them win. They were fighting the war at home. Britain had to send supplies by ship. It took a long time to get things back and forth.

<sup>11</sup> Americans knew the land they were fighting on. They could hide in the forests. If Britain won battles near the ocean, the colonists went inland. The colonists knew the best places to fight battles.

<sup>12</sup> The most important thing was the spirit of colonists. They did not give up. In the beginning, it didn't look like they could win. This didn't stop them. They kept fighting and trying. Soon, they were better fighters. George Washington became a great general. He helped the colonists win the war.

<sup>13</sup> The country was young. There would be many struggles in the future. But for now, everyone was excited. They had beaten the British in the war. America was free

- 1. What was Charles Cornwallis' huge mistake?**
- 2. What were some of the things that helped the colonists win?**