

MUSIC

CHAPTER 9

Yankee Doodle

LEXINGTON AND CONCORD

Objectives

The students will:

Understand the role of music in our military history.

Create their own drum signals as a form of broadcasting system.

Materials

Fife

1. Pass around the fife so that the students can see the instrument that played the melody at many of the battles they have or will study. Explain to them that Yankee Doodle became the rallying cry for the Americans.
2. Play a portion of fife and drum audio to familiarize them with the sound and different beats.

*Click image to hear Colonial Williamsburg Fife and Drum Corps
playing Yankee Doodle ~*



3. Tell them the story of Yankee Doodle.

The American version of *Yankee Doodle*, or *Jankey Duddle*, as the French pronounce it, was originally written by the British Making fun of the colonists and their ragtag appearance. With the new verses it was later used in 1775 by British soldiers marching towards Lexington and Concord to reinforce British troops in battle against the colonists.

*Yankee Doodle came to town,
For to buy a firelock;
We will tar and feather him
And so we John Hancock.*

The colonists adopted the song and started coming up with their own verses. The first rendition, describing their frightening experience at Lexington, was sung at the Battle of Bunker Hill as the colonists begin to push the British back.

*Father and I went down to camp
Along with Captain Gooding,
And there we saw the men and boys
As thick as hasty pudding
And there we saw a thousand men
As rich as Squir'e David
And what they wasted everyday
I wish it could be sav'ed*

*...I saw another snarl of men
A-digging graves, they told me
So tarnal long, so tarnal deep
They 'tended they should hold me*

The song, that began as an insult, became the rallying cry for the colonists' fight for liberty. Almost two hundred verses were written throughout the American revolution.

It had been exactly six years and six months since the 19th of April, 1775, when four pairs of fathers and sons, among seventy-seven militia, nervously waited on Lexington Green for British troops marching down another road from Boston. After a professional volley or two, one quarter of the militia lay dead and bleeding on the Green. The rest fled. But amid the falling away of any human endeavor, how many other times had "father and son gone down to camp, along with Captain Gooding" — Bunker Hill, New York, Brandywine, Saratoga, Trenton, Princeton, Valley Forge, Monmouth, Kings Mountain, Cowpens, and Guilford Court House.

Contributed by historian Dr. Preston Russell

Its significance became so powerful that it literally "turned heads" at the formal surrender ceremonies at Yorktown.

The formal surrender ceremony took place October 19, seventeen hundred and eighty-one. The British and the Germans with fine, clean uniforms came forth. They gave a magnificent appearance. They marched forward, the French on the right and the Americans on the left and what a difference between the two. The French were in their finest white uniforms lined in various colors with plumes in their hats. Their officers were adorned with stars and jeweled badges. Facing them were the Continental soldiers, in simple hunting jackets of rough white cloth that were now ragged and worn.

Their faces were etched deeply with the years of hardship. But they looked grand compared to the militia standing behind them. These men were the laborers, farmers and woodsmen, whose work clothes were now rags. Many of them were barefoot. The officer of the British ordered his men to look to the right, looking at the French, snubbing the American to their left. The Marquis de Lafayette was proudly standing with the Continental soldiers and ordered the fife and drum corps to play “Yankee Doodle” causing the startled British to turn and look at the Americans. But the British were not finished with their insults. To further put down the United States, the British leader tried to turn over his sword to the leader of the French but was quickly put in his place when the French officer said, “You are mistaken, the Commander and Chief of our army is to my right” pointing to Washington. The British officer was then forced to ride over to Washington and surrender his sword. But this was not General Cornwallis! He had sent a subordinate! Washington, setting a standard for the United States, refused his sword and instead selected one of his subordinates to complete the formal surrender.

Activity: Creating fife and drum signals for the school

The fife and/or drum was used like a broadcasting system. Different drumbeats sent different messages: come to town square; fire, etc. In the towns of Colonial America, the citizens could establish their own fife and drum signals.

As a class:

1. The students will determine what signals they want to create. For example: time to change classes, school is out, etc.
2. The students will create a series of beats that will represent the different signals.
3. The students will practice these signals and begin using them to call the class to order and dismiss the class.
4. The students will record the signals and advise the other grade levels what the different signals mean.
5. The signals can be broadcast over the school intercom to be used during the Colonial study instead of the usual school bell.