



## NSDAR Educational Resources Committee

"Music of Revolutionary America"

**Contributor:** Karen VandenAkker **Grade Level:** 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>

**1. Identify the standards to be addressed:**

See other pages.

**2. Statement of the objective and lesson outcomes:**

Students will be introduced to music of Revolutionary America. They will discover that there was a variety of music performed at the time of the American Revolution, and they will discover how music was important to the colonists.

**3. Materials, resources, and technology to be used by teacher/students:**

You-tube and projector, student hand-out and a pencil for each student, teacher script and answer sheet.

"Yankee Doodle-Cedarmont Kids"

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-JoB5bCKsdY&ab\\_channel=CedarmontKids](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-JoB5bCKsdY&ab_channel=CedarmontKids)

"American Revolutionary Song: Chester-William Billings"

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7S\\_07E-9CA&ab\\_channel=IanBerwick](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7S_07E-9CA&ab_channel=IanBerwick)

"American Revolutionary Song: The Liberty Song"

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvLdawl3wHM&ab\\_channel=IanBerwick](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvLdawl3wHM&ab_channel=IanBerwick)

**4. Introduction of the topic:**

Music has played an important role in the lives of people throughout history. When America was being settled by the colonist in the 1700s, music also played an important role in the lives of the people.

**5. Procedure for instruction:**

Hand out student sheets and pencils. Instruct students to fill in the blanks on their sheets as the teacher reads the "Music of Revolutionary America" script. Play the YouTube examples. Collect completed hand-outs. Complete the lesson with discussion about observations made during the class presentation.

**6. Lesson closure:**

After students have completed their handout, a general conversation time may be allowed to answer student questions about music during Revolutionary America, and to clarify unfamiliar terms. ("Suggested Terms for Clarification and Discussion" is attached to the teacher script.)

**7. Assessment of Understanding:**

Handouts may be collected after students have completed the additional assessment questions, graded, and returned to the students the following class period. A follow-up review could include the class singing "Yankee Doodle," dancing a minuet, and observing the teacher playing "Chester" on a wooden recorder.

**Teacher Answer Sheet (Underlined words are for students to fill in.)**

When our ancestors came to America they brought with them music from other countries. There were dance songs, military songs, and church psalms. Music was passed down orally before it was written.

Let’s look at some of the music you might hear during the Revolutionary Era in America.

**3 Types of Music  
that Could be Heard during the Revolutionary Era in America**

**1-Military**

During the American Revolution, the army used music to communicate and boost the morale of the soldiers.



**2-Dance**



Dancing was a favorite pastime of the colonists. There were many tunes to dance to. Whatever instruments that were available at the time were used to accompany the dancers.

**3-Church**

Many people came to America because of religious reasons. Worship in America was important. Many churches simply sang the psalms. The pilgrims sang from “A Book of Psalms” published in Massachusetts already in 1640.



**3 Songs that Came from Revolutionary America**

**1-Yankee Doodle**

Yankee Doodle is a song with 16 verses. It was first written about 1755 and was sung by British troops to poke fun at the American soldiers as they “marched through the countryside.” Yankee Doodle became popular among the American soldiers who added verses and sang it to mock the British. “By 1781, Yankee Doodle had turned from being an insult to being a song of national pride.”

“Yankee Doodle went to town a-riding on a pony.  
Stuck a feather in his cap and called it macaroni.  
Yankee Doodle-keep it up; Yankee Doodle dandy.  
Mind the music and the step, and with the girls be handy.”

Listen to this recording.

## 2-Chester

Chester is a patriotic song written by William Billings in 1702. The words of the last verse are like a hymn.

“What grateful offering shall we bring?  
What shall we render to the Lord?  
Loud Hallelujahs let us sing!  
And praise His name on every chord.”



William Billings lived from 1746 to 1800 in Boston, Massachusetts. He was one of the first American composers and wrote over 200 religious songs.

Listen to this song.

## 3-The Liberty Song

The words were written by John Dickinson and were sung to a tune from England. The words that were sung in 1770 showed that there were growing tensions between England and the Colonies.

The song begins with these words:

“Come, join hand in hand, brave Americans all,  
and rouse your bold hearts at fair Liberty’s call.”

Listen to this song.

## 3 Instruments that were Popular during Revolutionary America

The colonists brought instruments with them from other countries including valveless trumpets and horns, trombones, clarinets, oboes, and cellos. Even harpsichords began to make their appearance during Revolutionary America.

### 1-Violins or Fiddles

Violins were the most popular instrument. Men of all different classes, from Thomas Jefferson, (the 3<sup>rd</sup> President of the United States, American Founding Father, and author of the Declaration of Independence), to servants and slaves played violins or fiddles.





### 2-Flutes

Many different kinds of flutes were popular during America’s early history. A Fife was a small wooden 6-holed piccolo used in Military bands. Recorders of different shapes and sizes were also made of wood.

### 3-Drums

The beat of the drum was part of the everyday life of the colonist. The drum was also important in the military. Drums were used to signal and communicate. The beat of the drum called people to town for meetings and to church. Military drumming was called “field music.” Fifers and drummers played during marches and battles and to boost soldier morale.

This is just some of the music you might hear during the Revolutionary Era in America.



### Final Questions for Reflection

1. After listening to the three musical selections, which was most interesting to you and why did you find that selection interesting?

Musical Selection \_\_\_\_\_

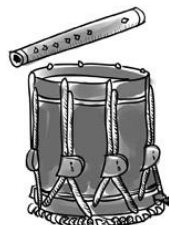
This music was interesting to me because \_\_\_\_\_



2. If you had lived in the 1770s and could have chosen a musical instrument to play, would you have chosen to play a fiddle, a flute, or a drum?

I would have chosen to play a \_\_\_\_\_

I chose this instrument because \_\_\_\_\_



Fill in the blanks as you listen today.

When our ancestors came to America they brought with them music from other countries. There were \_\_\_\_\_ songs, \_\_\_\_\_ songs, and \_\_\_\_\_ psalms. Music was passed down \_\_\_\_\_ before it was written.



Let's look at some of the music you might hear during the Revolutionary Era in America.

### 3 Types of Music that Could be Heard during the Revolutionary Era in America

#### 1-Military

During the American Revolution, the army used music to \_\_\_\_\_ and boost the morale of the \_\_\_\_\_.



#### 2-Dance



Dancing was a favorite pastime of the colonists. There were many tunes to dance to. Whatever \_\_\_\_\_ that were available at the time were used to accompany the dancers.

#### 3-Church

Many people came to America because of religious reasons. Worship in America was important. Many churches simply sang the \_\_\_\_\_. The pilgrims sang from "A Book of Psalms" published in Massachusetts already in \_\_\_\_\_.



### 3 Songs that Came from Revolutionary America

## 1-Yankee Doodle

Yankee Doodle is a song with \_\_\_\_ verses. It was first written about \_\_\_\_\_ and was sung by British troops to poke fun at the American soldiers as they “marched through the countryside.” Yankee Doodle became popular among the American soldiers who added verses and sang it to mock the British. “By 1781, Yankee Doodle had turned from being an insult to being a song of \_\_\_\_\_.”

“Yankee Doodle went to town a-riding on a pony.  
Stuck a feather in his cap and called it macaroni.  
Yankee Doodle-keep it up; Yankee Doodle dandy.  
Mind the music and the step, and with the girls be handy.”

Listen to this recording.

## 2-Chester

Chester is a \_\_\_\_\_ song written by William Billings in the 1702.  
The words of the last verse are like a \_\_\_\_\_.

“What grateful offering shall we bring?  
What shall we render to the Lord?  
Loud Hallelujahs let us sing!  
And praise His name on every chord.”



William Billings lived from 1746 to 1800 in Boston, Massachusetts. He was one of the first \_\_\_\_\_ composers and wrote over \_\_\_\_\_ religious songs.

Listen to this song.

### 3-The Liberty Song

The words were written by John Dickinson and were sung to a tune from England. The words that were sung in 1770 showed that there were growing \_\_\_\_\_ between \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_.

The song begins with these words:

“Come, join hand in hand, brave Americans all,  
and rouse your bold hearts at fair Liberty’s call.”

Listen to this song.

### 3 Instruments that were Popular during Revolutionary America

The colonists brought instruments with them from other countries including \_\_\_\_\_ trumpets and horns, trombones, \_\_\_\_\_, oboes, and cellos. Even \_\_\_\_\_ began to make their appearance during Revolutionary America.

#### 1-Violins or Fiddles

Violins were the most popular instrument. Men of all different \_\_\_\_\_, from Thomas Jefferson, (the 3<sup>rd</sup> President of the United States, American Founding Father, and author of the Declaration of Independence), to servants and slaves played violins or fiddles.



#### 2-Flutes

Many different kinds of flutes were popular during America’s early history. A \_\_\_\_\_ was a small wooden 6-holed \_\_\_\_\_ used in military bands. Recorders of different shapes and sizes were also made of \_\_\_\_\_.

#### 3-Drums

The \_\_\_\_\_ of the drum was part of the everyday life of the colonist. The drum was also important in the military. Drums were used to signal and communicate. The beat of the drum called people to \_\_\_\_\_ for meetings and to \_\_\_\_\_. Military drumming was called “field music.” Fifers and drummers played during marches and battles and to boost soldier morale.

This is just some of the music you might hear during the Revolutionary Era in America.



## Final Questions for Reflection

1. After listening to the three musical selections, which was most interesting to you and why did you find that selection interesting?

Musical Selection \_\_\_\_\_

This music was interesting to me because \_\_\_\_\_

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2. If you had lived in the 1770s and could have chosen a musical instrument to play, would you have chosen to play a fiddle, a flute, or a drum?

I would have chosen to play a \_\_\_\_\_

I chose this instrument because \_\_\_\_\_

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**Music of Revolutionary America-  
a Listening Lesson for Grades 5-6 General Music Class  
Teacher Script**

When our ancestors came to America from England, France, Germany, Italy, Africa, The Netherlands or other countries, they brought with them music from their countries. That music was played and performed in America before American composers wrote the music we can call “American music.” There were dance songs, military songs, and church psalms. Music was passed down orally before it was written. Our ancestors sang “by ear” and from memory. People made music with whatever instruments were available.



Let’s look at some of the music you might hear during the Revolutionary Era in America.

**3 Types of Music  
that Could be Heard during the Revolutionary Era in America**

**1-Military**

During the American Revolution, the army used music to communicate and boost the morale of the soldiers. Drums and fifes told soldiers in the camp when to wake up, to gather provisions, and even when to come to church. With the beats of the drum, the army assembled and marched. The drum beats even communicated a need for medical help if a soldier was wounded.



**2-Dance**

Dancing was a favorite pastime of the colonists. There were many tunes to dance to. Many dances were accompanied by a single violin or fiddle player, but whatever instruments were available were used to accompany the dancers.

**3-Church**

Many people came to America because of religious reasons. Worship in America was important. Many churches simply sang the psalms. The pilgrims sang from “A Book of Psalms” published in Massachusetts already in 1640.



### 3 Songs that Came from Revolutionary America

#### **1-Yankee Doodle**

Copy and paste this url into web browser to play “Yankee Doodle-Cedarmont Kids”  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-JoB5bCKsdY&ab\\_channel=CedarmontKids](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-JoB5bCKsdY&ab_channel=CedarmontKids)

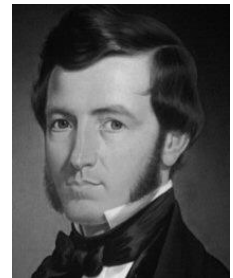
“Yankee Doodle went to town a-riding on a pony.  
Stuck a feather in his cap and called it macaroni.  
Yankee Doodle-keep it up; Yankee Doodle dandy.  
Mind the music and the step, and with the girls be handy.”

Yankee Doodle is a song with 16 verses. We are most familiar with the first verse and chorus. It was first written about 1755 and was sung by British troops to poke fun at the American soldiers as they “marched through the countryside.” Yankee Doodle became popular among the American soldiers who added verses and sang it to mock the British. “By 1781, Yankee Doodle had turned from being an insult to being a song of national pride.”

#### **2-Chester**

Copy and paste this url into web browser to play “American Revolutionary Song: Chester-William Billings”  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7S\\_07E-9CA&ab\\_channel=IanBerwick](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7S_07E-9CA&ab_channel=IanBerwick)

Chester is a patriotic song written by William Billings in 1702. He wrote the words to fit a tune called “Chester.” The first verse lists the names of British officers who we fought against for our independence. The words of the last verse are like a hymn.



“What grateful offering shall we bring? What shall we render to the Lord?  
Loud Hallelujahs let us sing! And praise His name on every chord.”

William Billings lived from 1746 to 1800 in Boston, Massachusetts. He was one of the first American composers and wrote over 200 religious songs.

#### **3-The Liberty Song**

Copy and paste this url into web browser to play “American Revolutionary Song: The Liberty Song”  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvLdawl3wHM&ab\\_channel=IanBerwick](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvLdawl3wHM&ab_channel=IanBerwick)

Here is a song you may not have heard before. It is called “The Liberty Song.” The words were written by John Dickinson and were sung to a tune from England called “Heart of Oak.” It is known as one of the earliest patriotic songs of the thirteen colonies. The words that were sung in 1770 showed that there were growing tensions between England and the Colonies.

The song begins with these words:

“Come, join hand in hand, brave Americans all, and rouse your bold hearts at fair Liberty’s call.”

### 3 Instruments that were Popular during Revolutionary America

The colonists brought instruments with them from Europe including valveless trumpets and horns, trombones, clarinets, oboes, and cellos. Even harpsichords began to make their appearance during Revolutionary America. Let's look at 3 of the more common instruments.

#### **1-Violins or Fiddles**

Violins were the most popular instrument. Men of all different classes, from Thomas Jefferson, (the 3<sup>rd</sup> President of the United States, American Founding Father, and author of the Declaration of Independence), to servants and slaves played violins or fiddles.



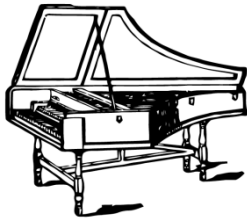
#### **2-Flutes**

Many different kinds of flutes were popular during America's early history. A Fife was a small wooden 6-holed piccolo used in Military bands. Recorders of different shapes and sizes were also made of wood. They were also called English Flutes and were brought with the earliest Americans when they came from Europe. These were played mostly by men.

#### **3-Drums**

The beat of the drum was part of the everyday life of the colonist. The drum was also important in the military. Drums were used to signal and communicate. The beat of the drum called people to town for meetings and to church. Military drumming was called "field music." Fifers and drummers played during marches and battles and to boost soldier morale.

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## Suggested Terms for Clarification and Discussion

**Orally:** by way of speaking or singing. Music was not printed yet.

**Provisions:** all the needed food, materials, and supplies for the soldiers.

**Fiddle:** A Fiddle is the same as a violin. The term violin is used for classical musicians while the term fiddle is used for folk musicians (the common music of that particular group of people).

**Pilgrim:** The pilgrims were the English settlers who came to America on the Mayflower seeking religious freedom during the reign of King James I. They first settled in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

**Verse/Chorus:** The verse is the new set of lyrics, and the chorus repeats after each verse.

**Patriotic Song:** a song that inspires feelings of pride in our country.

**Valveless Instruments:** Before 1838, trumpets and horns did not have valves to change the musical pitch. The player had to change from lower to higher notes by blowing faster or slower air through the mouthpiece.

**Harpsichord:** A Harpsichord is a keyboard instrument invented before the piano. It resembles a small grand piano. The harpsichord tone is produce by plucked strings. The piano sound is created by hammered strings.

**Colonist:** the name of the people who came and first began to settle America before 1776.

