



NSDAR Educational Resources Committee

Independence Cake: Amelia Simmons & Early American Cooking

Contributor: Aryssa Damron **Grade Level:** 6

1. Identify the standards to be addressed:

- Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.
- Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.
- Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

2. Statement of the objective and lesson outcomes:

- Students will learn about Amelia Simmons, learn about fictionalizing real characters, understand the early history of American cooking, and make something from a recipe to demonstrate ability to read different types of texts. They will practice identifying states by shape alone, and have an opportunity to be creative.

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

- Copy of *Independence Cake* by Deborah Hopkinson, illustrated by Giselle Potter
- Digital access to the Library of Congress archives of Amelia Simmons' book, including the front cover and the recipe for apple pie
- Printable Independence Cake creative activity

4. Introduction of topic

- What do you think of when you think of American food?
- When did American food become American—think about the American Revolution, and how food is deeply involved in culture?
- What do you think about when you think about the American Revolution and the founding of this country—what do you imagine they ate?

5. Procedure for instruction:

- Introduce the topic—talk about early American culture, what you know, foods you think of “American foods,” etc
- Read *Independence Cake* by Deborah Hopkinson, preferably aloud, taking turns reading each page, but individually and independently is acceptable.
- Discuss *Independence Cake*—what did you learn about Amelia Simmons? Reading the notes, how much was fictionalized and what was drawn from reality?
- Complete the creative *Independence Cake* activity. Design 13 independence cakes in your preferred style of decoration, and connect the cake to the outline of a colony and on that line, write the name of that colony. Consult a map as needed.

- Review the Library of Congress digitized copy of *American Cookery* by Amelia Simmons, especially the front page and the page of the apple pie recipe (page 26 of 52). What did you learn that mirrors the facts and fictions in *Independence Cake*. Lookup any words that you don't know. Try writing the apple pie recipe in today's English vernacular—like a recipe you would want to try today, if you saw it online or on Tik Tok.

Lesson Closure:

- Find a recipe you want to try—either from a traditional cookbook, online, in a kids cookbook, or from a TikTok. Evaluate the recipe before you try it—what sort of language do they use? Is it similar to language of instruction used by Amelia Simmons?

- Try to make the recipe and report back on what you learn! If you cannot try to make the recipe, use your imagination or an online simulation game like <https://www.culinarieschools.org/kids-games/>

6. Assessment of Understanding:

- Option 1: Evaluate the report on the recipe or simulation of a recipe for understanding of instructional language and ability to tie it back to *Independence Cake*—the differences or similarities

- Option 2: Have students write a one-page story about THEIR idea of how Amelia Simmons became a cookbook author. The only thing we know about her is that she was an orphan—go from there. How did she learn to cook? What recipes did you start with? What inspired her? What was she doing during the American Revolution?

Independence Cakes

Design an Independence Cake for each state, originally a colony. Then, connect that cake to the shape of the state and write the state name along the line.

EXAMPLE



VIRGINIA









