



## NSDAR Educational Resources Committee

Polly Cooper: Allies in War, Partner in Peace

**Contributor:** Aryssa Damron **Grade Level:** 4-5

1. **Identify the standards to be addressed:** Common Core Standards

W.4.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

W.4.6 With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.

W.4.7 Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

W.4.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

SL.4.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher- led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

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

Students will learn about Polly Cooper and explore representations of historic figures from the American Revolution through art from the Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian. By exploring artistic representations, they will explore how they can articulate what they do and don't see in statuary and engage in their own artistic representations of historical people.

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

See attached

4. **Introduction of the topic:**

See attached

5. **Procedure for instruction:**

See attached

6. **Assessment of Understanding:**

See attached

## INTRODUCTION OF TOPIC

The most famous figures of the American Revolution are the men who fought, wrote, and died for this country's independence. "Founding Fathers" they are often called. When picturing the American Revolution, one conjures images of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and the like: men. Less often explored is the role that women played in the American Revolution. Many students learn about "Remember the Ladies" Abigail Adams, or Dolley Madison "saving" a portrait of George Washington, but what about women outside of this sphere of influence? What about women who played a role not in the culmination of the revolution, but in keeping it afloat?

Enter Polly Cooper, an Oneida Native woman who was critical to the success of the American Revolution simply by keeping the men at Valley Forge from starving together. Without the support of the Oneida, and of Cooper in particular, would there be a "Founding Father" legacy to live up to? Would the war have been won by the upstart young Americans?

Why is Polly Cooper a name most students don't know?

In this lesson plan, students will be introduced to Polly Cooper through an artistic representation of her alongside George Washington and use inferences, artistic interpretation, and reading comprehension to learn about her important role in the American Revolution.

# PROCEDURE FOR INSTRUCTION

## 1. Warm Up Questions

- a. What does this sculpture make you feel? Do you recognize these people? What would you guess about them based on this sculpture?

## 2. Introduction to Polly Cooper, Valley Forge, and the American Revolution

- a. Read this biographical sketch of Polly Cooper:

[womenhistoryblog.com/2012/04/polly-cooper.html](http://womenhistoryblog.com/2012/04/polly-cooper.html)

- b. Watch this video: [youtube.com/watch?v=gj9PgSUqh3U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gj9PgSUqh3U)

## 3. Art Study - "Allies in War, Partners in Peace" (See Provided Sheets)

- a. Take 5 minutes to study the sculpture.

- b. Write down--5 words that you think of when you see this sculpture. They can be adjectives or nouns.

- c. Write down--What can you guess about the person who sculpted this?

- d. Write down--Does the sculpture seem light or heavy? What do you think it is made of?

- e. Write down--Where do you think this sculpture lives now?

- f. Talk in small groups--What do you like about this sculpture?

- g. Talk in small groups--What did you notice in the details of this sculpture? What do these details mean?

- h. Talk as a large group--What does this monument make you feel?

## 4. Research

- a. Find answers to questions and further information using online or print resources, including books on Valley Forge, information from the Oneida, online resources, and more

- b. Some examples of this include:

- i. <https://www.oneidaindiannation.com/allies-in-war-partners-in-peace/>

- ii. <https://www.si.edu/newsdesk/releases/monumental-oneida-sculpture-enhanced-light-sound-and-music>

- iii. <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/biographies/polly-cooper>

- iv. <https://www.oneidaindiannation.com/polly-cooper-from-cook-to-oneida-icon/>

## LESSON CLOSURE

1. Talk about what stories of the American Revolution persist. Why do you think some people have never heard of Polly Cooper? What elements of her story feel real, and what feels like mythology?
2. Talk about how statues such as "Allies in War, Partners in Peace" facilitate cultural understandings across time and space.

## ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT UNDERSTANDING

1. Think about other figures in big moments in the history of the world or on a topic you're passionate about. What other three people would you put together to tell a story about a moment?
  - a. Examples to get you thinking: Civil Rights, Climate Change Activism, The American Revolution, the Civil War, Man Landing on the Moon, World War II, the War in Iraq, etc.
2. Design your monument of the three people and their movement—either by describing it, drawing it, creating it in modeling clay, etc.
  - a. Who are you depicting and why?
  - b. What movement or moment in time are they associated with?
  - c. What other elements of your sculpture tell their story?

**PHOTOS: ALLIES IN WAR, PARTNERS IN PEACE**



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# ALLIES IN WAR, PARTNERS IN PEACE

Take 5 minutes to study the sculpture and then complete the following questions and exercises



Write down 5 words--nouns or adjectives--that come to mind when you look at this sculpture:

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What can you guess about the person who made this?

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Does the sculpture seem light or heavy? What do you think it is made of?

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Where do you think this sculpture lives now?

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What do you like or dislike about this sculpture?

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# ALLIES IN WAR, PARTNERS IN PEACE

Take 5 minutes to study the sculpture and then complete the following questions and exercises



What can you guess about the people in this portrait based on these details?

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What does this sculpture imply about Polly Cooper?

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What details of this sculpture make you ask questions about history?

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What details of this sculpture have you seen depicted in other kinds of art? What does it remind you of?

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# PHOTOS: ALLIES IN WAR, PARTNERS IN PEACE

## Edward E. Hlavka

b. 1964

St. George, Utah

### Allies in War, Partners in Peace, 2004

Bronze

Gift of the Oneida Indian Nation (NMAI UN0825)

This statue honors the alliance between the Oneida Indian Nation and the United States during the American Revolution. General George Washington stands alongside the Oneida diplomat Oskanondonha, or Skenandoah, and Polly Cooper, an Oneida woman who came to the aid of Washington's starving troops at Valley Forge in 1777–78.

The enhanced presentation of *Allies in War, Partners in Peace* is made possible by support from the Oneida Indian Nation. The *Nation to Nation* exhibition in the next gallery explores the history of diplomatic relations and treaty making between American Indian Nations and the United States.



"Allies in War, Partners in Peace"  
Kevin Gover, director of the National Museum of the American Indian and Ray Halbritter, Oneida Indian Nation representative and CEO of Oneida Indian Nation Enterprises at the dedication of the newly enhanced bronze, "Allies in War, Partners in Peace," a gift from the Oneida Indian Nation in 2004.



## FROM THE ONEIDA WEBSITE

[oneidaindiannation.com/allies-in-war-partners-in-peace](http://oneidaindiannation.com/allies-in-war-partners-in-peace)

Visitors to the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. are encouraged to begin their tour on the fourth floor, the level named for the Oneida Indian Nation. Featured on this top floor is a pause area and in its confines is the statue "Allies in War, Partners in Peace," a bronzed embodiment of the friendship that was forged between the Oneida Indian Nation and the United States during the Revolutionary War.

The 19-½ foot, 2,200 lb. statue created by Utah-based sculptor Edward Hlavka depicts Oneida Chief Shenendoah and an Oneida woman, Polly Cooper, along with Gen. George Washington. The statue is a commemoration of the bonds between two nations - the Oneida and the United States.

"We wanted a statue that would tell the story of how the Oneidas embraced the colonists' cause of freedom, fighting beside their colonial friends and aiding them in their time of need," said Keller George, Wolf Clan Representative to the Oneida Indian Nation's Council, and a member of the board of trustees for the museum. "We also wanted symbols of importance in our culture to be allotted a presentation point, and I think the artist captured all these elements, telling our story as we have told it for generations."

## FROM THE ONEIDA WEBSITE

Oneidas fought alongside the colonists in key battles of the war, including Oriskany and Saratoga. The alliance was further cemented when a group of Oneidas walked from their home in Central New York to Valley Forge, a journey of more than 400 miles, during the winter of 1777-78, carrying life-saving corn to feed the starving soldiers. With them traveled Polly Cooper, who taught the soldiers how to prepare the corn. When the Oneida men returned to their homes, Polly Cooper remained and aided the troops. She would accept no payment for her services, but did accept a gift of a bonnet and shawl from Martha Washington. The shawl is still in existence today.

Shenendoah, also known as Skenandoah, is held in great esteem by the Nation and holds a deserving place in the statue. He was the wampum keeper and the inaugurator of government-to-government agreements. In addition, he played a major role in the Oneida Indian Nation's decision to side with the colonists during the Revolutionary War. One reason Shenendoah chose to fight with the Americans was due to the friendship that existed between himself and the Rev. Samuel Kirkland, who was a missionary to the Oneidas and the founder of Hamilton College in Upstate New York. The friendship was so deep that Shenendoah asked to be buried next to Kirkland in the cemetery of the college.

One of Shenendoah's prized possessions was a silver pipe given to him between 1807 and 1810 when he was nearly 100 years old, by New York State Gov. Daniel Tompkins. The pipe in the statue tucked inside Shenendoah's belt is similar to the aforementioned pipe. The gift symbolized the good will that existed between the two men. The engraving on the pipe's bowl reads, "Presented by Governor Tompkins to Skenandoah."

## FROM THE ONEIDA WEBSITE

Shenendoah is wearing a traditional headdress in the statue, a kasto:wí. The Oneidas' kasto:wí has two feathers straight up and one down, differentiating it from the headdresses of the other nations of the confederacy.

As depicted, Washington is holding a Wampum Belt, which symbolizes an agreement between the U.S. and the Oneida Indian Nation, and acknowledges that neither will interfere in the internal affairs of the other. During the Revolutionary War, Gen. George Washington asserted that "[t]he Oneidas have manifested the strongest attachment to us throughout the dispute."

A white pine tree looms in the background high above Washington, Shenendoah and Polly Cooper. The white pine bears significance to the Oneida Indian Nation and the other nations of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy, the Mohawk, Seneca, Onondaga, Cayuga and Tuscarora. The Peacemaker united the warring nations with his message of the Great Law of Peace, unearthing the white pine tree and burying the weapons of war beneath its roots. A hatchet, war club and additional instruments of war are buried under the tree in the sculpture, signifying this event. The roots of the pine tree are also visible and extend in the four directions, welcoming others to embrace peace and live under the branches of the tree in harmony.

And high atop the branches of the formidable pine an eagle is perched, ready to warn the nations of approaching danger. Five bound arrows, symbolizing the union of the nations of the confederacy, are shown in the back of the work. Also in the tree is a rock, which was used by the Oneidas to mark boundary lines.

## FROM THE ONEIDA WEBSITE

Several icons of the Nation are also embedded in the statue. The turtle, wolf and bear have a dominant place in the statue as they represent the three clans, determined through the mother's lineage, of the Nation. The Three Sisters – the sustainers of life – corn, beans and squash are also represented in the intricately detailed work.

In the back of the statue a little girl is rendered clutching a no-face doll. The child represents the future, the seventh generation to come. The no-face doll's story is an allegory told by the Oneidas to teach children about the foibles of vanity. The hawk in the tree, according to legend, absconded with the doll's face, after she consistently marveled at her own beauty, despite repeated warnings by the Creator to not indulge in such vain behavior.

Etched across the base of the sculpture is the Oneida belt. The belt is comprised of six squares joined together, each square representing one of the nations of the confederacy.

"The sculpture is so rich in history and Iroquois aesthetic that it should thrill many audiences," said Gerald McMaster, Ph.D., director's special assistant for mall exhibitions/deputy assistant director for cultural resources at the museums opening. "Already various people have marveled at it. It is so rich in detail from the story of the Oneidas' relation with Gen. Washington through to the cultural content. We'll have to ensure that an interactive display is nearby to point out these many, many details. I'm always so amazed by how rich our cultures are that all the Oneidas should be so very proud of their contribution to this country, both historically and culturally."