

Lexington and Concord: A Legacy of Conflict

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Minute Man National Historical Park



On April 19, 1775 ten years of political protest escalated as British soldiers clashed with “minute men” at Lexington, Concord, and along the a twenty-two-mile stretch of road that ran from Boston to Concord. The events that occurred along the Battle Road profoundly impacted the people of Massachusetts and soon grew into an American war for independence and self-government.

This curriculum-based lesson plan is one in a thematic set on the American Revolution using lessons from other Massachusetts National Parks. Also are:

[Boston National Historical Park](#)

[Adams National Historical Park](#)

[Salem Maritime National Historic Site](#)

Included in this lesson are several pages of supporting material. To help identify these pages the following icons may be used:



To indicate a Primary Source page



To indicate a Secondary Source page



To Indicate a Student handout



To indicate a Teacher resource

Lesson Document

Link on the page to the document



[Minuteman National Historical Park](#) commemorates the opening battles of the American Revolution on April 19, 1775. What had begun ten years earlier as political protest escalated as British soldiers clashed with colonial militia and “minute men” in a series of skirmishes at Lexington, Concord, and along the a twenty-two-mile stretch of road that ran from Boston to Concord. The events that occurred along the Battle Road profoundly impacted the people of Massachusetts and soon grew into an American war for independence and self-government.

This lesson explores the lasting significance of the events of April 19, 1775, and examines multiple points of view of the battle. Students read primary source accounts and examine historic engravings of the events.

Enduring Understanding

In the context of rising conflict between groups, a series of events involving armed conflict and bloodshed can harden positions and escalate into war.

Essential Question

How did the events at Lexington, Concord, and along the Battle Road lead to war between the colonies and Great Britain?

Content Objective/Outcomes	Language Objective/Outcomes
<p>The students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss two points of view regarding the events of April 19, 1775. • Explain the significance of the Battles of Lexington and Concord. 	<p>The students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use information gathered about the Battles of Lexington and Concord to write for a variety of purposes.

Number of Days: 2

Intended Grade/Range: 5

Resources/Materials**Primary Source Images:**

Amos Doolittle Prints of Lexington and Concord
Historic Map of Lexington, Concord and the Battle Road

Primary Source Documents:

Order given to Lt. Colonel Francis Smith from Thomas Gage
First-hand accounts of the battle

Website:

Minute Man National Historical Park at www.nps.gov/mima
National Park Service American Revolution website at <http://www.nps.gov/revwar>

Knowledge Required

To complete the lesson successfully, students need to know the following:

- The events leading up to April 19, 1775
- The conflicts that caused tensions to mount between the American colonists and the British government

Background information is available at the websites listed with this lesson plan. The books *Sam the Minuteman* and *George the Drummer Boy* by Nathaniel Benchley may also be used as preparation for this lesson.

Teaching/Learning Sequence**Launch:**

On the night of April 18, 1855, Thomas Gage, a British general serving as colonial governor of Massachusetts Bay, ordered British troops on an expedition to destroy military stores belonging to colonists at Concord, resulting in the Battles of Lexington and Concord.

Read Order Given to Lt. Colonel Francis Smith from Thomas Gage aloud to the class, while students follow on their own copies. Discuss the meanings of vocabulary words as needed. Ask students what they think the order means. Explain to students they are going to learn about the events that took place as the order was carried out. **Lesson Document**

Exploration:**Lesson Document**

Divide the class into six groups. Give each group an Amos Doolittle engraving and a historical map of the route from Boston to Concord. Two of the Doolittle prints will be used twice. Explain to students that Amos Doolittle, a Connecticut militia man, was not present in Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775. He went to Lexington and Concord two weeks after the battles and made the engravings based on his visit and interviews with people who were present at the battles.

Ask students to locate on the historical map the places pictured in Amos's engravings. Then, have students answer the following questions:

What do you see happening in the engravings?

What is Amos's point of view of the battles? How do you know?

Lesson Document

Now, give each group an eyewitness account. Ask students to read the account and identify anything they do not understand. Then, have students answer the following questions:
What is the eyewitness writing about?
What is the point of view of the eyewitness? How do you know?
Discuss each group's findings with the whole class.

Summary:

Use the questions below to summarize what students have learned from examining the engravings, map, and eyewitness accounts:

What was the British point of view regarding what happened at the Battles of Lexington and Concord?

What were the colonial points of view regarding what happened at the Battles of Lexington and Concord?

Assessment:

Ask students to think back to the order given by Thomas Gage. How did the series of events that followed--armed conflict and bloodshed--harden the positions of people of the era? Is war the only way to solve such a conflict? Have students explore these questions through one of the following activities:

Imagine that you are a British soldier, a colonial minute man, or a citizen of Lexington or Concord in 1755. In a letter, a friend asks you, "After what happened on April 19, can war between the colonies and Great Britain be avoided?" Answer your friend in letter form, using information you learned in this lesson.

Write a conversation between a British soldier and a colonial militia man discussing whether or not war between the colonies and Great Britain can be avoided. Use information from this lesson to support your answer.



The Power of Place

Site Visit:

We can all recall standing on the spot where some historical event occurred and feeling a sense of awe, feeling inspired. It meant more because we were there—this is the power of place. Historic places provide us with opportunities to connect with the lives of the generations before us, and the generations that will come after us. In this way, the power of place is that it gives history immediacy and relevance. As stated by historian David McCullough, “And when you stand there, in that very real, authentic place, you feel the presence of that other time, that history in a way that would be impossible did it not exist.”*

Visit Minute Man National Historical Park to see the actual places where the events of April 19, 1775, occurred in Lexington and Concord. Seeing the Battle Road, the Smith House, Hartwell Tavern, and the sites depicted in the Doolittle engravings help the ideas and events in this lesson come alive for students. In conjunction with this lesson plan, seeing these sites in person helps students think about why these events are important to our history as Americans, what causes are worth fighting for, the tensions that made fighting inevitable between colonists and Great Britain in this time period, and how such armed conflict can harden positions and escalate into war.

Students can start their visit by viewing “The Road to Revolution,” an audio-visual program at the Minute Man Visitor Center. See the Minute Man National Historical Park programs and events website for a description of the show and ranger-guided programs that can add further layers of meaning to what students discover in this lesson.

At the Park, students can learn more about the soldiers who fought on April 19, 1775, by participating in a curriculum-based education program called *Brother Jonathan and Thomas Lobster*. In this forty-five-minute program, students experience a militia muster, examine a real musket used by both sides in the battle, and compare and contrast the experiences and perceptions of colonial minute men and British Regulars who actually experienced the battle. These hands-on explorations in the place where the events actually happened help students imaginatively experience the drama of the early Revolutionary period. Reservations are required and a fee applies. Contact the Program Coordinator for reservations and information at 978/318-7832, or jim_hollister@nps.gov

* From "History Lost and Found," Journal of the National Historic Trust for Preservation. Winter, 2002.

Connections to the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework Standards:

History

HISTORY and SOCIAL SCIENCE

- 5.17 Describe the major battles of the Revolution and explain the factors leading to American victory and British defeat.
A. Lexington & Concord

English Language Arts

ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

- 8.19 Identify and analyze main ideas, supporting ideas, and supporting details. (For Informational/Expository texts)
24.3 Apply steps for obtaining information from a variety of sources, organizing information, documenting sources, and presenting research in individual projects.

ELPBO

ELPBO (English Language Arts Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes):

- S.3 Students will comprehend and communicate orally, using spoken English to participate in academic settings.
R.3 Students will read English fluently and identify facts and evidence in order to interpret and analyze text.
W.2 Students will write in English for a variety of purposes with clear focus, coherent organization, and sufficient detail.

Order Given to Lt. Colonel Francis Smith from Thomas Gage

Primary Source

Lieut. Colonel Smith, 10th Regiment Foot
Sir:

Having received *intelligence*, that a quantity of Ammunition, *Provision*, *Artillery*, Tents and *small arms*, have been collected at Concord, for the *Avowed* Purpose of raising and supporting a Rebellion against His Majesty, you will March with the Corps of *Grenadiers* and Light Infantry, put under your command, with the utmost expedition and Secrecy to Concord, where you will seize and destroy all artillery, Ammunition, Provisions, Tents, Small Arms, and all Military Stores whatever. But you will take care that the Soldiers do not *plunder* the inhabitants, or hurt private property.

You have a *Draught* of Concord, on which is marked the Houses, Barns, &c., which contain the above military Stores. You will order a *Trunion* to be knocked off each gun, but if its found impracticable on any, they must be spiked, and the carriages destroyed. The Powder and flower (flour) must be shook out of the Barrels into the River, the Tents burnt, Pork or Beef destroyed in the best way you can devise. And the men may put Balls of lead in their pockets, throwing them by degrees into Ponds, Ditches &c, but no Quantity together, so that they may be recovered afterwards.

If you meet any Brass Artillery, you will order their muzzles to be beat in so as to render them useless.

You will observe by the Draught that it will be necessary to secure the two bridges as soon as possible, you will therefore Order a party of the best marchers, to go on with expedition for the purpose.

A small party on Horseback is ordered out to stop all advice of your March getting to Concord before you, and a small number of Artillery go out in *Chaises* to wait for you on the road, with Sledge Hammers, Spikes, &c.

You will open your business and return with the Troops, as soon as possible, which I must leave to your own Judgment and Discretion.

I am, Sir,
Your most obedient humble servant
Thos. Gage.

Vocabulary

Intelligence: information about an opponent's plans

Provision: food and other necessary supplies

Artillery: cannons and similar large weapons

Small arms: hand-held weapons, often handguns, swords, or knives

Avowed: specific or stated

Grenadier: a type of soldier in the British army

Plunder: take personal goods by force from people who have been conquered

Draught: a map

Trunion: a part of a cannon that helps the barrel be aimed to the correct elevation

Chaises: two-wheeled carriages

First-Hand Accounts of the Battle

Lt. John Barker, British Soldier, 4th Regiment

Diary Account on the beginning of the march to Lexington

Primary Source

[April] 19th. . . about 5 miles on this side of a Town called Lexington which lay in our road, we heard there were some hundreds of People collected together intending to oppose us and stop our going on: at 5 o'clock we arrived there and saw a number of People, I believe 2 and 300, formed on a *Common* in the middle of the Town; we still continued advancing, keeping prepared against an attack tho' without intending to attack them, but on our coming near them they fired one or two shots, upon which our Men without any orders rushed in upon them, fired and put 'em to flight; several of them were killed. . .

Vocabulary

Common: village green or square

Translated Version

John Barker was a British soldier who marched from Boston to Concord on April 19. He wrote about the event in his diary.

When we were close to Lexington, we heard that people were gathered on the common to stop us. There were about 200 or 300 colonists formed into companies. We weren't planning on attacking them but were ready to fight. When we got near to the colonists, they fired at us. We did not wait for orders. We fired our guns and ran after the colonists. Several of them were killed.

*Official Statement of John Robbins, Lexington Militia, April 24, 1775, on Lexington Green**Primary Source*

I, John Robbins, being of lawful age, do testify and say, that on the nineteenth *instant*, the Company under the command of Captain John Parker being drawn up (sometime before sunrise) on the green or common, and I being in the *front rank*, there suddenly appeared a number of the King's Troops, about a thousand, as I thought, at the distance of about sixty or seventy yards from us, *huzzaing* and on a quick pace toward us, with three officers in their front on horseback, and on full gallop towards us; the foremost of which cried, 'Throw down your arms, ye villains, ye rebels;' upon which said Company dispersing, the foremost of the three officers ordered their men, saying 'Fire, by God, fire;' at which moment we received a very heavy and close fire from them; at which instant, being wounded, I fell, and several of our men were shot dead by one *volley*. Captain Parker's men, I believe, had not then fired a gun.

Vocabulary

Instant: a particular point in time, in this case on the nineteenth of April, 1775.

Front rank: front row

Huzzaing: cheering and yelling loudly

Volley: one round of firing

Translated Version

John Robbins was a member of the Lexington militia. He gave the following statement about what happened at Lexington Green on April 19.

Just before sunrise, I was standing in the front row of my company on Lexington Green. My company was under the command of Captain John Parker. We saw about 1000 British soldiers marching toward us, yelling loudly. In front of them, three officers on horseback were galloping toward us. One officer was yelling at us to throw down our guns and calling us villains and rebels. Suddenly, one of the British officers told the soldiers to shoot. I was wounded and fell to the ground. Several other militia men were killed. I don't think any of Captain Parker's men had fired a gun.

Narrative of Ensign Jeremy Lister of His Majesty's 10th Regiment of Foot, on the Fighting in Lexington

Primary Source

It was at Lexington when we saw one of their Compys drawn up in regular order Major Pitcairn of the Marines second in Command call'd to them to disperse, but their not seeming willing he desired us to mind our space which we did when they gave us a fire then runoff to get behind a wall. We had one man wounded of our Compy in the leg his name was Johnson also Major Pitcairn's Horse was shot in the *flank* we return'd their *salute*, and before we proceeded on our march from Lexington I believe we Kill'd and wounded either 7 or 8 men.

Vocabulary

Flank: fleshy section between the last rib and hip

Salute: firing of guns

Translated Version

Jeremy Lister was a British soldier who fought at Lexington. He wrote the following account of what happened.

I saw a group of colonists organized into a fighting company. Major Pitcairn, one of our officers, told them to leave. The colonists did not leave and the Major reminded us to hold our fire. Suddenly, the colonists fired on us. Then they ran and hid behind walls. One of our Company was wounded and the Major's horse was shot. We shot at them before continuing from Lexington. I think we killed and wounded 7 or 8 colonists.

*Statement of James Barrett, Colonel of Concord Militia, on the Battle at North Bridge**Primary Source*

...I ordered said militia to march to said bridge and pass the same, but not to fire on the King's troops unless they were first fired upon. We advanced near said Bridge, when the said troops fired upon our militia and killed two men dead on the spot, and wounded several others, which was the first firing of guns in the town of Concord. My detachment then returned fire, which killed and wounded several of the King's soldiers.

Translated Version

James Barrett was a colonial in the Concord Militia. He was at the Battle of North Bridge and tells what happened there.

I ordered my militia to march to the bridge and to cross the bridge. The men were not to fire at the British. When we got near the bridge, the British soldiers fired at us, killing two of our men and wounding several others. My militia responded and shot at the British. We killed or wounded several of their soldiers. This was the first fighting to take place in the town of Concord.

*Lt. John Barker, British Soldier, 4th Regiment
Diary Account on Battle Road*

Primary Source

We set out upon our return; we were fired on from Houses and behind Trees, and before we had gone $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile we were fired on from all sides, but mostly from the Rear, where People had hid themselves in houses 'till we had passed and then fired; the Country was an amazing strong one, full of Hills, Woods, stone Walls, &c. which the Rebels did not fail to take advantage of, for they were all lined with People who kept an *incessant* fire upon us, as we did too upon them but not with the same advantage, for they were so concealed there was hardly any seeing them: in this way we marched between 9 and 10 miles, their numbers increasing from all parts, while ours was reducing by deaths, wounds and fatigue, and we were totally surrounded with such an incessant fire as it's impossible to conceive, our ammunition was likewise near expended.

Vocabulary

Incessant: continuing without interruption; constant

Translated Version

Lt. John Barker was a British soldier. He recorded what happened to him on the road back to Boston.

When we were returning to Boston, the colonists shot at us from houses and from behind trees. By the time we had marched a half mile, we were being shot at from all sides. Most of the shots came from behind us. The countryside provided hills, woods, and stone walls, which the colonists hid behind. They kept up a steady attack. We returned the fire but were not able to shoot many of them because they were so hidden. This constant shooting kept up for nine or ten miles. More and more minute men came to attack us. Many of our British soldiers were killed or wounded or so tired that they could not continue to march. The constant firing kept up, and we ran low on ammunition.

Alice Stearns Abbott, Citizen of Bedford, Massachusetts, on the Beginning of Fighting

Primary Source

I was eleven years of age, and my sisters Rachel and Susannah were older. We all heard the alarm, and were up and ready to help fit out father and brother, who made an early start for Concord. We were set to work making *cartridges* and assisting mother in cooking for the army. We sent off a large quantity of food for the soldiers, who had left home so early that they had but little breakfast. We were frightened by hearing the noise of guns at Concord; our home was near the river, and the sound was conducted by the water.

I suppose it was a dreadful day in our home, and sad indeed; for our brother, so dearly loved, never came home.

Vocabulary

Cartridges: small, round cases containing gunpowder and musket ball

Translated Version

Alice Stearns Abbott was an eleven-year-old girl living in Bedford with her two older sisters, a brother, and her parents.

Our family heard the alarm that meant British soldiers were marching to Concord. We got up to help Father and Brother prepare to leave early for Concord. My sisters and I made cartridges for the soldiers. We also helped Mother cook for the soldiers. Father and Brother left home so early that they did not eat much breakfast. Mother, Rachel, Susannah, and I could hear the fighting at Concord. Our house is so near the river that the sound of gunfire, carried by the water, was loud and frightening. It was a very sad day for my family. My brother, whom I loved very much, died in the battle.

The Battle of Lexington. April 19th 1775. Plate 1



1. Major Pitman, at the head of the Regular Grenadiers.
 2. The Party, who first fired on the Provincials at Lexington.
 3. Part of the Provincial Company of Lexington.

4. Regular Companies on the road to Concord.
 5. The Meetinghouse at Lexington.
 6. The Public Inn.

A. Doolittle Sculp.



Plate II. A View of the Town of Concord



1 Companies of the Regulars marching into Concord 4 & 5 Colonel Smith & Major Pitcairn viewing the Provincials
 2 Companies of Regulars drawn up in order who were mustering in an East Mill in Concord
 3 & 4 Detachment destroying the Provincials' Horses 6 The Sawhouse 7 The Meetinghouse

A. S. 1775



Plate III. The Engagement at the North Bridge in Concord.



1 The Detachment of the Regulars who first fired on the Provincials at the Bridge

2 The Provincials headed by Colonel Robinson & Major Puttrick. 3 The Bridge

A. G. White Sculp.



Plate IV. A View of the South Part of Lexington



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| <p>1. Colonel Smith's Brigade retreating before the Provincials.
 2. Earl Percy's Brigade meeting them.
 3 & 4. Earl Percy & Col. Smith. 5. Provincials.</p> | <p>6. & 7. The March-guards of Percy's Brigade.
 8. A Field-piece pointed at the Lexington Meetinghouse.
 9. The Burning of the Houses in Lexington.</p> |
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A. S. Coulter. Sculp.



British Return from Concord

April 19, 1775

