

George Washington's Powder Bag and Puff: A Different Side of War

Students will learn...

- The more 'gentlemanly' side of war that officers experienced
- How military discipline shaped and was influenced by Washington's character
- To use objects and primary documents to answer questions

You will need...

- Picture of Washington's powder bag and puff
 - Envelopes with a mix of the different handouts related to the bag and puff
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Opener: What is this?

- Show a picture of the powder bag and puff and ask your students what they think it is.
 - Gradually reveal more information, such as this was used by Washington when he was at camp during the Revolutionary War, it is a little over a foot long, it is made of deerskin, etc.
 - Finally, tell them that it is called a powder bag and puff- what do they think it was used for then?
 - Reveal what it is used for.
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Task: Gathering Context

- Divide your students into pairs or groups and give them each an envelope that contains a couple of the handout documents that relate to the powder bag and puff.
- Then assign or let each pair or group pick a question that they need to answer using various documents.

- Sample questions could be:

- What was military life like during the Revolutionary War?
- Why do you think an officer's appearance mattered so much to the generals and the soldiers under them?
- How do you think they balanced the more 'civilized' side of war with the atrocities that went along with it?
- How does military life in the Revolutionary War compare to how you view war today?
- Why do you think this item was saved throughout the years? Do you think this documentation is enough to say for sure that it was Washington's power bag and puff?
- What do you think it was like for Benjamin Graves, a 15-23-year-old during the Revolutionary War, to be a body servant for Col. David Humphreys? Why?

- *Optional:* Have groups come together to compare their documents.
- *Optional:* Record their answers in some way- like a big poster paper or online through sites like Padlet

Closer: Reflections

- Bring the class back together to talk about their answers to the questions.
- Does everyone agree with their conclusions or have other students drawn other conclusions from the documents.
- Have each pair or group cite the documents they used to answer their questions.

