

Topic: **Benedict Arnold – The Boy, The Traitor and The Hero**

Time Frame: Brainstorming: 5 minutes  
Reading: 10 minutes  
Discussion and Timeline: 25 minutes  
Presentation: 20 minutes  
Total: 60 minutes

Population: 4<sup>th</sup> grade

State Standards: Social Studies

1. Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York

Language Arts

1. Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information understanding
2. Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis evaluation.

Content Area: History/Language Arts

Strategy/Strategies: Cooperative Groups

Objectives: After a small group reading and discussion about Benedict Arnold (The Boy, The Hero, or The Traitor), each student will be able to report his or her findings to the class and construct a timeline with five events and annotations in their given time period, which will conclude with an individual one page biography on Benedict Arnold with 90 percent accuracy.

Procedure:

- Opening:
1. As a class, brainstorm information that can be recalled about Benedict Arnold, making a list at the side of the chalkboard.
  2. Split the class into three groups to focus on one time period of Benedict Arnold's life.

- Body:
1. Each student will read the assigned story independently.
  2. The students will discuss the information they read within his or her small groups and chronologically list the major events.
  3. (suggested)The students will chose five events and place them on the timeline under the picture and name of the specific time period of

Benedict Arnold's life. To avoid a biography of just facts and dates, the timeline will be annotated with details below each event, answering the questions: who, what, when, where and why.

**Closure:** 1. The groups will present the five events found to the rest of the class, ending with one full class discussion, comparing and contrasting what was brainstormed in the beginning of the lesson.

**Materials:** The Reading for specific groups: The Boy, The Hero and The Traitor (attached below)  
Large timeline with room for annotation (suggested)

**Links to Other Lessons:**

This lesson fits into our Social Studies curriculum focusing on the American Revolution and its Famous People. It also serves as a reading comprehension activity with a concentration on time sequence.

**Assessment:** Students will individually write a one-page biography on Benedict Arnold, including each stage of his life. *The teacher will informally assess the students while they are working in groups by observing their group progress in developing their timelines.*

**Extensions:**

1. Cause and Effect Activity: A class discussion on how his earlier years affected the events in his later years.
2. After the Unit on America's Famous People, there will be a convention where small groups of students will play the role of a particular famous person. This will work on communication, dialogue and speaking from the point of view of someone else.

**Teacher Resources:** Books  
Fritz, Jean, *Traitor: The Case of Benedict Arnold*, New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1981  
Marranca, Bonnie, *Hudson Valley Lives*, New York, Overlook Press, 1991  
Syme, Ronald, *Benedict Arnold, Traitor of the Revolution*, New York, William Morrow and Company, Inc. 1970.

**URLS's**

<http://www.earlyamerica.com/review/fall97/arnold.html>

<http://www.ushistory.org/valleyforge/served/arnold.html>

<http://www.battlereports.com/viewreports.php?reportnum=5103>

## **Benedict Arnold; the Boy**

Benedict Arnold was born on January 14, 1741, in a place called Norwich, Connecticut. He had a little sister named Hannah. He had four other brothers and sisters, but they all died of Yellow Fever. Benedict Arnold lived in a four- room house with his mother, father, and sister Hannah. While he was away at a private school in Canterbury, Connecticut, his mother would often send him chocolates and letters in hopes that Benedict would behave himself, since he was known as a troublemaker. After a while he had to be taken out of school because his family did not have a lot of money. His father's business went bankrupt, so Mr. Arnold lost a lot of money. After he lost his business Mr. Arnold began to drink heavily, and he soon became an alcoholic. This caused him to become depressed, or very unhappy. At the same time, Benedict was both ashamed of and embarrassed for his father.

Benedict was always full of energy, which often got him into trouble. He was a very lively child, and had a bad temper and a loud voice. He wanted to be the best but was known as a coward. The other boys his age all made fun of him because he was short, because of his father's problems, and because he was a coward. Benedict put up with this for a while, but he soon became tired of being the target of everyone's jokes. He started fighting with boys who were bigger than him, and he began winning. This caused him to become more confident, or sure of himself. As his own confidence increased, the other boys began to like him more as well. He liked to go ice skating and sledding with his friends in the winter and fishing in the summer. He also loved to pretend to be in the army with his father.

In 1756, when Benedict was only 15 years old, he ran away from home and joined the army during the French and Indian War. In that time he made his way from Albany and Lake

George to stop the French from taking over the land in New York. However, Benedict was released by his Commander, without having much of a chance for fighting in the war. This left him hungry for more war action. However, he would have to wait.

As a teenager, when he was just about 15 or 16 years old, he made many trading voyages to Canada and the Caribbean. He was the person in charge of buying and selling cargo, or goods. On these trips Benedict met many people from all over the world. When he came back home he worked in a drug shop in his hometown of Norwich until 1762, when he moved to New Haven, Connecticut, and went into business as a druggist and bookseller. His mother died in 1759, when Benedict was only 18 years old. His father died two years later, in 1761. In 1767, at the age of 26, Benedict married a woman name Margaret Mansfield, and they had three sons.

All of these events influenced the type of man that Benedict Arnold became. He suffered from many problems and obstacles in his youth, many of which turned into bigger problems for him as an adult.

## **Benedict Arnold: The Hero**

At a time when America was in trouble and looking for people to lead it through the American Revolution, Benedict Arnold became one of those men. He was brave, a quick thinker on the battlefield, a planner, and a motivator of troops. Even though he was a highly successful military leader, he often struggled with the Continental Congress and its lack of praise for his accomplishments.

When Arnold heard about the first fighting at Lexington and Concord, in the Massachusetts Colony, he took his militia, of volunteer townspeople, to help surround Boston. On his way to Boston, he dreamed up a plan to attack Fort Ticonderoga in New York. He realized the British cannons in the fort could be used to help force the British out of Boston. He received permission to attack the fort, but was angered that Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys were also going too, but would not be under Arnold's command. They quickly left for upstate New York and successfully captured the fort on May 10, 1775.

Congress and Arnold's superiors never patted Benedict on the back for his achievements. Benedict Arnold thought he had accomplished something very good and deserved a reward, but nobody gave him one and this upset him. To make things worse, he didn't get along with Ethan Allen or his men during the capturing of the fort. However, Ethan Allen agreed with Arnold that an invasion of Canada was necessary.

George Washington believed in Arnold's abilities and recommended him as the Colonel for the mission too and eventually the Continental Congress allowed him to go ahead with his plans to attack Canada. Arnold was eager to start. There were weather problems, hard marching conditions through the wilderness towards Quebec, spoiled food, and little water, but this would not stop Arnold. Arnold managed to push his men on, even though they were forced to eat bark

from the trees and leather from their shoes. Even with the difficult conditions, he was able to encourage and motivate his troops until they finally arrived in Canada. The magnificent feat that Arnold's troops arrived will forever be seen as an amazing accomplishment. On December 30, 1775, Arnold's forces attacked the city of Quebec. Although they failed to capture Quebec, George Washington still praised Arnold for his leadership and remarkable task of getting his men from Massachusetts to Quebec.

As Arnold left Canada, he ordered the legal taking of supplies in Montreal. Arnold was taken to court but not convicted of stealing supplies in the summer of 1776. Afterwards, he saw many officers of lower rank receive promotions above him. He had fallen from favor with the Continental Congress because of the alleged stealing. George Washington asked Congress why Arnold was not being promoted. With Congress not giving Arnold any information about why he was being skipped for a promotion, he went to Philadelphia to ask Congress himself. On his way there, he helped drive the British off after they burned Danbury, Connecticut. For this act, he was promoted. He would never forgive Congress for originally passing him over for promotion.

At Saratoga, Arnold found himself under the command of General Horatio Gates. Gates was a much more cautious man than Arnold and they constantly disagreed. After the Battle of Freeman's Farm on September 19, 1777, Arnold was stripped of his command for not obeying Gates. On October 7, 1777, at the Battle of Bemis Heights, and with no official command, Arnold ordered an attack on the British. The sight of Arnold rallied the American troops, and they followed him. His forces caused the British collapse and later surrender. During the battle, his horse fell on him and he was shot in the leg, leaving him severely injured. It was Arnold's decision to attack that won the battle for the Americans. He was finally promoted ahead of the junior officers who had skipped him earlier. The Battle of Bemis Heights at Saratoga eventually

became the turning point of the Revolution, and Benedict Arnold was the key figure in winning the battle.

On May 30th, 1778, Benedict Arnold signed the Oath of Allegiance to his country. George Washington rewarded Arnold for his achievements with the command of Philadelphia. By this point, Arnold was very upset with his treatment by Congress and his fellow officers. While in command of Philadelphia, he met his new wife and lost a lot of his money. Eventually Congress caught him making illegal business deals and ordered him court-martialed.

Faced with an uncertain future, because Congress was upset with him, Arnold made the critical decision to start scheming with the British. In January of 1780, George Washington offered him a position as the highest commander under himself in the northern army. Earlier in his career, he would have considered this a great achievement and honor. He used his injured leg as an excuse not to take the command, but asked Washington for the command of West Point instead, which was given to him in July of 1780. Arnold was planning to turn West Point over to the British, but his plan was discovered in September 1780. He would be forgotten as an American hero and only remembered as a traitor. Today, at West Point, where all generals have a plaque, his is blank, except for his rank and the dates of his life, 1741 -1801.

## **Benedict Arnold; the Traitor**

Benedict Arnold wasn't always a traitor to his country. From the very beginning he was creative, daring, and brave. These personality traits helped him work for and against the United States. There were many heroic events that led Benedict Arnold to do the bad things he did. Unfortunately, today, we know him as a traitor instead of a hero.

In 1775, Arnold traveled through Concord, Lexington and Fort Ticonderoga fighting for the United States of America. The British soldiers were ordered to go to Concord and take the weapons that were being stored there. They decided to go through Lexington to achieve this task but were met by the American troops. At this time Benedict Arnold was being promoted to higher positions, rewarded with power and money, while gaining the respect from Congress for the great jobs he was doing. But when he asked for \$1,060 in Massachusetts dollars (about \$60,000 today) he was accused of using this money for his own life. From this point on people were starting to see Benedict Arnold differently. He always wanted the power and the rewards that came with it, and he would risk his life and the lives of others to get what he wanted.

In early 1777, Congress promoted Benedict Arnold to major general after his great work in Quebec and gave him a new horse as a reward. Although a lot of the troops started to notice the other side of Benedict Arnold and didn't like him, Washington rewarded Arnold for his work in Saratoga, by promoting him as commandant at Philadelphia in July 1778. It was also around this time that Arnold began secret meetings with the British. He had then made the decision to look for more money and fame by helping Great Britain. After getting control of the fort at West Point, N. Y. in 1780, he offered to surrender it to the British for 20,000 pounds (England currency) and authority in the British army. The American troops found about the plan after his British contact, J. Andre', was captured and hanged.

As a brigadier general in the British army, Arnold performed attacks in many areas of Virginia, fighting against his country. Then, in 1781, Arnold continued these events and went to New London, Connecticut, where he invaded former neighbors. There he burned more than 150 buildings, and his troops killed American armies at Fort Griswold, near New London. There was no turning back for Benedict Arnold. He had changed sides hurting whoever he could to have the power he always wanted.

In December of 1781, Arnold and his family moved to England. There, he was fired from the British army, his businesses failed, and received less than one-third the money he asked for. Arnold's abused his position of power and trust, betraying America to secure his own success. His selfishness took over his life, his decisions and his honor. Arnold died in London, on June 14, 1801.