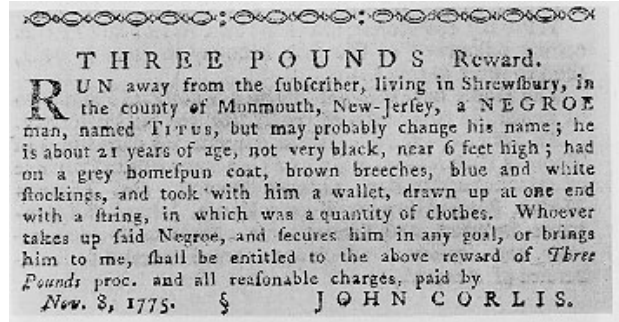


# Is Colonel Tye an American hero?

## Background

When students learn about the American Revolution, the focus is almost entirely on the conflict between Great Britain, the Mother Country, and the American colonists. This simplified narrative ignores internal racial, economic, social class and geographical conflicts within the colonies that later play major roles in United States history. Historians have found that tenant farmers tended to oppose independence if their landlords were Patriots and supported it if their landlords were Tories. Some even reversed their positions if their landlords switched sides. Clearly, the primary conflict here was not with the British. Some of the sharpest conflict was within the African population of the colonies. Enslaved and free Africans were confronted by important individual and collective decisions as the thirteen colonies increasingly challenged British authority. In 1775, Lord Dunmore, the Royal Governor of Virginia, offered freedom to all “negroes . . . willing to serve His Majesty’s forces to end the present rebellion.” This promise became even more inviting when the colonial army rejected the use of Black troops.



Graham Hodges *Root & Branch, African Americans in New York and East Jersey 1613-1863* (1999), describes how African Americans such as Boston King, an escaped slave from Virginia, freeborn Benjamin Whitecuff and John Thompson of Long Island, and thousands of others crossed to the British lines. Many worked to build fortifications or served in Lord Dunmore’s Ethiopian Regiment and the Black Pioneers. At the same time, some Africans decided to take their chances with the rebels, including Cuff Smith and Peter Williams of New York and Samuel Sutphin of Somerset County, New Jersey.

Amongst the Africans who fought for the British, the most prominent and feared was “Colonel Tye.” Titus, as he was known as a youth, had been the “property” of John Corlies of Shrewsbury, New Jersey (in the eastern part of Monmouth County). He escaped in November, 1775 and at the age of twenty-one joined Dunmore’s Ethiopian Regiment. While not officially a commissioned British officer, he was given the title of colonel out of respect for his achievements.

Not that much is known about Colonel Tye’s life or war record. In June, 1778 he participated in the Battle of Monmouth and captured a captain in the colonial militia. In 1779 and 1780, Colonel Tye led a band of raiders, consisting of both Black and White irregulars, that fought and defeated colonial forces in New Jersey and on Staten Island. During the winter of 1779, Colonel Tye was among an elite group of black Loyalists, known as the Black Brigade, who helped defend British-occupied New York City. In September, 1780 Colonel Tye was during an attack on the home of Josiah Huddy, a colonial officer. While it was only a minor wound, he became ill with tetanus and died.

At the end of the war, Boston King wrote that when “peace was restored” there was “universal joy among all parties, except us, who had escaped from slavery, and taken refuge in the English army; for a report prevailed at New-York, that all the slaves, in number 2000, were to be delivered up to their masters.” However the British refused George Washington’s demand to surrendered confiscated human property and loyalist Blacks were evacuated to Canada.

The role of Black soldiers such as Colonel Tye and of guerilla units that fought for the British during the Revolutionary War is a forgotten piece of American history. The play that follows is designed to rectify this problem and to involve students in a discussion of the question of whether Colonel Tye, a man who went to war to secure his freedom and the freedom of his people, should be honored as an American hero. - Susan Guarrieri and April Francis

# Colonel Tye

Source: Adapted from [http://www.libertyskids.com/pt\\_play\\_coloneltye.html](http://www.libertyskids.com/pt_play_coloneltye.html)

**Characters:** Narrator, John Corlies (slave owner in New Jersey), His daughter, Titus (later Captain Tye and Colonel Tye), Friend, Officer

## SCENE I

**NARRATOR:** In November 1775 John Murray, Earl of Dunmore and royal governor of Virginia, issued a proclamation that offered freedom to enslaved Africans who would leave their Patriot masters and join the royal forces. It was Dunmore's hope that his own force of 300 soldiers, seamen, and loyalist recruits, cut off from the support of British troops in Boston, would be reinforced by black fighting men and laborers.

**JOHN CORLIES:** Where is Titus?

**DAUGHTER:** I don't know, father. Is he not in the barn?

**JOHN CORLIES:** Don't be a fool, girl. If he were in the barn I would not ask thee where he is.

**DAUGHTER:** I don't know where he is. Do you want me to go search for him?

**JOHN CORLIES** (*Furious*) Of course I want thee to search for him!

[Daughter leaves. Corlies paces. Daughter returns.]

**DAUGHTER:** I'm sorry, father. Titus appears to be gone.

**JOHN CORLIES:** Gone! What do you mean gone?

**DAUGHTER:** The other slaves said he has fled to join the British forces to earn his freedom.

**JOHN CORLIES:** His freedom - I'll give him freedom when I catch him.

**DAUGHTER:** Titus is 22 years old, Father. According to our own Society of Friends, he should have been freed when he reached his 21st birthday.

**JOHN CORLIES:** Watch your tongue, young lady, when thee speaks to thy father. Because I am a good Quaker does not mean I should be a weak master. Freeing slaves is a foolish and expensive idea. I'll have no part of it. I'll offer a reward for him. Someone will turn him in, and when he is returned to me, I'll make him sorry he ran away.

**DAUGHTER:** (*Softly but clearly*) In that case, I hope he is not caught.

## Discussion Questions

1. What do you think some of the motivations for Lord Dunmore's Proclamation were?
2. How does John Corlies respond to his daughter's implication that he is not being a good Quaker?

## SCENE II

**NARRATOR:** On November 8, 1775, John Corlies placed an ad offering a reward of three pounds for the return of his slave Titus "not very black; near 6 feet high, had a grey homespun coat, brown breeches, blue and white stockings, had with him a wallet, drawn up at one end with a string, in which was a quantity of clothes."

**TITUS:** So, I hear my old master has a reward out for me. You could earn three pounds if you turn me in.

**FRIEND:** I ain't no fool, Titus. I want to go with you and fight so I can be a free man.

**TITUS:** Never call me Titus again. From this day on, I'm Tye, slave to no man. I will be back in Monmouth County one day. I know this place well, the swamps, the woods, the twisting paths. It may be that John Corlies won't want to see me again.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Do you think the description of Titus is unique?
2. Why do you think Titus changed his name?

**SCENE III**

**NARRATOR:** Tye joined the Loyalist forces in Virginia. In three years, he had become Captain Tye, the pride of Dunmore's Ethiopian Regiment. In June 1778, he led his Loyalist troops in the Battle of Monmouth.

**CAPTAIN TYE:** How many men do we have ready for battle?

**FRIEND:** Around 600, sir, black and white. Waiting your orders.

**CAPTAIN TYE:** Any prisoners we capture should be taken to New York to the Sugar House. Burn the houses; free all the slaves.

**FRIEND:** Captain, we've captured an officer from the Monmouth militia. Here he is.

**OFFICER:** I know you, you're no captain. You're John Corlies' slave from over at Shrewsbury.

**CAPTAIN TYE:** I'm no man's slave, and you, sir, are my prisoner. The title "captain" was bestowed on me by the British army out of respect. How many slaves are fighting on your side?

**OFFICER:** I'm proud to say not a single one.

**CAPTAIN TYE:** We'll see how proud you are when you are imprisoned in the Sugar House.

**OFFICER:** We fight for our independence.

**CAPTAIN TYE:** Men like me who fight for our freedom fight even harder.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What does the title of Captain mean to you?
2. What does Captain Tye mean by his last statement, "Men like me who fight for our freedom fight even harder"?

**SCENE IV**

**NARRATOR:** In July 1779, Tye gathered his forces for an important raid.

**FRIEND:** Captain, the men are ready for the raid on Shrewsbury.

**CAPTAIN TYE:** I counted several of our force who come from this area. I guess my motley crew knows the lay of the land pretty well. We can strike quickly and disappear.

**FRIEND:** Sir, it ain't just for what we can take for our men. You know that. A lot of it is for getting even.

**CAPTAIN TYE:** So, we'll steal what we can carry, free the slaves, get paid five gold guineas for each militia man we capture, and get even all at the same time. We'll make it a worthwhile summer.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What is the advantage to the British by having people who know the land on their side?

**SCENE V**

**NARRATOR:** The summer raids were successful and the freed slaves joined the British. During the harsh winter of 1779, Tye was among an elite group of 24 black loyalists, known as the Black Brigade,

who joined with the Queen's Rangers, a British guerrilla unit, to protect New York City and to conduct raids for food and fuel. June 1780 proved how valuable Colonel Tye had become to the British.

**FRIEND:** Colonel Tye, sir, New Jersey's Governor Livingston's declared martial law.

**COLONEL TYE:** It won't make any difference. We stopped Joseph Murray from ever executing another captured Tory. We captured Barnes Smock and destroyed their cannon; we captured eight militiamen in a single day and took them to New York. No one saw us coming. No one stopped us and we didn't lose a man.

**FRIEND:** The men gladly follow your lead, sir. Where do we go next?

**COLONEL TYE:** A surprise attack on the home of Captain Josiah Huddy. No one else has been able to capture that hated Patriot leader. Now, it's our turn.

**FRIEND:** Sir, Huddy and his men have been holding us off for two hours. What can we do?

**COLONEL TYE:** Start a fire to drive them out.

[Tye winces with pain and grabs his wrist where he has been shot.]

**FRIEND:** Sir, you're hurt.

**COLONEL TYE:** It's nothing. Give me something to wrap around my wrist. We must finish what we set out to do!

**NARRATOR:** The fire flushed Josiah Huddy and his followers out of the house. He was later hanged in 1782. The minor wound Colonel Tye suffered became fatal when lockjaw set in. Days later, Colonel Tye died. His reputation lived on and the Patriots agreed that the war would have been won much sooner if Colonel Tye had fought on the side of the Americans.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What lessons can we draw from the story of Colonel Tye?

### **Next it's up to you:**

In the next class meeting you must investigate the fate of those Slaves who joined the British for their freedom

Be sure to keep a log of the websites you consult and write up a paragraph for the class of all of your research.

## Lesson 2: Colonel Tye and the Loyalist slaves

### **Objective:**

1. Students will explore the role of African Americans in the American Revolution.
2. Students will explore and understand the motivations behind Lord Dunmore's Proclamation.
3. Students will discuss the role of Colonel Tye in the context of the American Revolution
4. Students will conduct research to investigate what happened to these slaves once they attained their freedom and the British lost the war

### **Materials:**

1. Background on Lord Dunmore's Proclamation
2. Play and discussion questions on Colonel Tye
3. computers with internet access (day 2)

### **Procedure:**

1. Students will read the background
2. Assign parts and students will perform the play, pausing in between each scene to discuss the questions attached
3. Students will then investigate the next day and find out what happened to slaves who joined the British
4. Students will share their finding at the end of the class and submit a write-up and list of sources

**Summary:**

Students will share their finding at the end of the class and submit a write-up and list of souces

Lessons of the “Forgotten” in the American Revolution

Jennifer Dassaro

September 22, 2010

## **Lesson Rationale**

In these three lessons students will explore the role of three segments of society that are normally unmentioned in the traditional story of the American Revolution. Women, loyalists, and African-Americans were all part of the story of the American Revolution, but often are not given enough credit in the standard textbook. By using various resources including Carol Berkin's Revolutionary Mothers, David McCullough's 1776, as well as others students will get a wider perspective on how these segments of society were a vital part of the American Revolution and make it a much more interesting story.

### **Lesson 1: Women**

In this lesson the role of women who were called "camp followers" is explored thoroughly by reading Chapter 4 of Carol Berkin's Revolutionary Mothers. Students will get a chance to explore a new side of history and discuss the impact these women must have had on the larger story at hand.

### **Lesson 2: Loyalists**

By using a portion of 5 pages from David McCullough's 1776 dealing specifically with Loyalists and what happened to them during the evacuation of Boston students will get a deeper understanding of how complex this war really was. They will see that it was the most prominent and the most powerful that remained loyal and see the cost of that loyalty. Loyalist and Patriot lived side by side; they were neighbors, family, and loved ones.

### **Lesson 3: Slaves**

Students will read an account of a slave turned soldier in the British army, known as Colonel Tye. Here students will discover the various motivations in how a person chose their side. Students will then research what happened to those slaves who joined the British for freedom.

## Lesson 1: Women as “Camp Followers”

### **Objective:**

1. Students will explore the role of women in the Revolutionary War.
2. Students will discuss this role of women as “camp followers” and what impact these women had on the overall war for independence.
3. Students will display their knowledge by writing a brief essay.

### **Materials:**

1. Chapter 4 of Carol Berkin’s Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the Struggle for America’s Independence( 2005)
2. Discussion Questions handout

### **Procedure:**

1. For homework or in reading circles have students read Chapter 4 “Such a Sordid set of Creatures in Human Figure.”
2. Have students choose 7 questions from the discussion set and have them complete those for homework or in their reading circles.
3. Re arrange desks into a semi-circle and conduct a discussion using the questions a guide (teacher will facilitate and decide how students get their turn to speak; raising their hand, talking stick)

**Summary:** Once the discussion is over have students write a brief essay on one of the parts of the Chapter they found most enlightening and how the impact of women can better be dealt with and included in American history textbooks.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. History

## **“Women Who Followed the Army”** **Discussion Questions**

Source:

Berkin, Carol. Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the Struggle for America's Independence. New York: Vintage Books, 2005.

1. Describe what Hannah Winthrop saw as the defeated British and Hessian troops left through Boston after the battle of Saratoga?
2. What role did these women have as part of the armies of both the British and Americans?
3. What estimates are given on how many women followed the American army? What are the estimates for women and children in the British army?
4. What drove these women to join the armies?
5. How were these camp followers spoken of by the men?
6. What was George Washington's opinion on the women following the army?
7. Why does even Washington admit that the women in the camps were necessary?
8. Why were soldiers not accustomed to washing their own clothing?
9. What sort of problems did poor hygiene have ?

10. After reading the description of a nurse's job, what descriptions do you find to be the most interesting?

11. What did the troops admire about the women in the camps?

12. What were some of the reasons women hid their identity and joined the arm?

13. How were they viewed by society? Why was there a difference in how some of these women were viewed?

14. What were some of the problems that women brought into the camps?

15. Why did commanders try and regulate the presence of prostitutes in the camps?

16. What is your interpretation of Berkin's concluding paragraph in this chapter?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. History

# Loyalists and the Evacuation of Boston

Source:

McCullough, David. 1776. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005.

Consult pages 100-105 from the above source

1. What emotions might you feel if you were told you had 6 hours to pack up your life and leave to an undisclosed location?
2. What sorts of items did Reverend Caner leave behind? What does this tell you about him?
3. Why did these Loyalist see themselves as the “true American patriots?”
4. Read the excerpted quote from Boston merchant Theophilus Lillie on page 101 and interpret what he is saying there?
5. Where did they say the fleet was heading?
6. What sorts of people found themselves fleeing Boston on March 10, 1776?

7. How many Loyalist went aboard the ships?
  
8. How were the conditions on board the ships?
  
9. What happened in Boston once those who were leaving boarded the ships?
  
10. How many ships were there? How many people aboard? How many soldiers?  
How many women? How many children?
  
11. What is the significance of this story in the context of the American Revolution?