

Grades 9-12 Lesson & Activity



JACOBUS VANDERVEER HOUSE & MUSEUM
BEDMINSTER, NEW JERSEY

Lesson Title: Jacobus Vanderveer House Dinner Party

Standards Addressed in this Lesson:

6.1 U.S. History: America in the World All students will acquire the knowledge and skills to think analytically about how past and present interactions of people, cultures, and the environment shape the American heritage. Such knowledge and skills enable students to make informed decisions that reflect fundamental rights and core democratic values as productive citizens in local, national, and global communities.

Cumulative Progress Indicators (CPIs)

6.1.12.A.1.b

Analyze how gender, property ownership, religion, and legal status affected political rights.

6.1.12.D.2.a

Analyze contributions and perspectives of African Americans, Native Americans, and women during the American Revolution.

6.1.12.D.2.d

Analyze arguments for new women's roles and rights, and explain why 18th century society limited women's aspirations.

Rationale: The Jacobus Vanderveer House was a very special place because it represented the crossroads of Revolutionary America. The Vanderveers were Dutch immigrants who settled in the colonies in 1659 and by the mid 18th century began to side with the revolution. Within the scope of macro history, they represented the larger trend of colonists making the transition from loyal British subjects to revolutionaries. But if you look closer at those who lived at the Jacobus Vanderveer House both permanently and transiently, you can observe these crossroads playing out on a much more local scale.

Prior Knowledge: In order to better complete this activity, students should have a brief introduction to the supplemental historical characters provided and also they should have a tour of the Jacobus Vanderveer House before partaking in the dinner party so that they understand the special significance of this historic place. Also, teachers should make sure to stress that some of the historical figures in the Dinner Party activity actually stayed at the Jacobus Vanderveer House and others did not. Those who did not stay at the Jacobus Vanderveer House were important figures during the American Revolutionary Period. Students should think about how their views might have been shaped by this special place.

Length of Time: 1 hour

Objectives:

Students will be able to discover why their historical figure was important during the time period of the Revolutionary War.

Students will be able to have exposure to multiple viewpoints of the Revolutionary War period.

Students will be able to understand the tensions that present on both a local and national level within the context of a major war.

Formative Assessment: Students will be able to check their own progress throughout this process by completing their historical figure research and answering the questions on the Jacobus Vanderveer House Dinner Party Overview. Further, students will be able to assess their own progress when they engage in their dinner party discussions with other historical figures. Their ability to thoughtfully engage in dialogue and answer the questions of their peers will also allow them to self monitor and assess their own work.

Hook: Teachers should engage students in a brief discussion of what is talked about around their own dinner tables. Students might comment on everything from what small events occurred during their day to the larger current events that effect many people in our country. Teachers should use this opportunity to reiterate that history is the study of people and that even though the topics may have varied, that the general structure of discussion has remained relatively constant. Historical figures would have talked about topics ranging from their daily lives to larger, more worldly events. Teachers should also tell students how staging a historical dinner party will allow them to speculate on what discussions might have occurred between some of our most prominent historical figures during the revolutionary period!

Activities: **Timing 1 hour** **with House Tour 1 hour 30 minutes**

- 1.) Prerequisite- Jacobus Vanderveer House Tour- 30 minutes
Students should take a tour of the Jacobus Vanderveer House and grounds to better understand the unique place in history that this place occupies. In addition to understanding the home itself, students should place the home into the context of the American Revolutionary Period. They should think specifically about what purpose the house served and to what extent the house influenced the events of the time.

- 2.) Teacher-led introduction of the Jacobus Vanderveer House Dinner Party- 5 minutes
Teacher will introduce the purpose of the dinner party and discuss directions with students.
- 3.) Teacher distribution and student research of historical figure- 20 minutes
Teachers can distribute the biography cards at random or have students pick their own historical figures from the time period. Students should then have some time to read the notes on their person and answer the questions on the front of the Dinner Party Worksheet. If time allows, teachers should encourage students to conduct additional research using their own device (tablet/ phone) and also take out books in the house library.
- 4.) Teacher introduction of dinner party- 5 minutes
Once about twenty minutes has passed teachers can take a general appraisal of student progress and begin to introduce the dinner party. Teachers can use this time to reiterate the directions on the Dinner Party Student Worksheet and how the process of the activity

will work. The teacher will also take time to introduce all of the dinner party guests.

5.) Student-led dinner party dialogue- 20 minutes

At this time, students will be able to ask questions to all of the dinner guests and dialogue in historical character about events of the time. The teacher will circulate about the room and observe these conversations, aiding student dialogues when necessary.

6.) Closure Activity (see below in further detail)- 10 minutes

Teachers should pick one of the closure activities from the Closure section below. One option allows for closure at the Jacobus Vanderveer House, while the other option extends the activity back to the classroom.

Accommodations for diverse learners:

- 1.) Sometimes speculation dialogue can prove to be difficult for learners as it requires higher order skills of synthesis to generate the language. There is a Dinner Party fill in sheet to make the process more accessible to all students.
- 2.) Some students may want more information than what was put on the biography card. If time allows teachers may wish to invite students into the Library at the Jacobus Vanderveer House to conduct additional research on their historical figure.

Closure: Choose one of the following closure activities to complete.

- 1.) For this activity you will need a spool of yarn. Take students up to the activity space in the Jacobus Vanderveer House on the second floor. Have the students who participated in the Jacobus Vanderveer House Dinner Party stand in a circle. Students will hold a section of the yarn, share a fact that they learned about the American Revolutionary Period, and gently toss the remaining yarn to another student in the circle. Each student should at least share one fact, but you can have students do this longer, sharing multiple facts. By the end of the activity the yarn will create a web in your circle and students can discuss how their facts were related to and influenced by each other.
- 2.) Have students write a reflection on the historical figure from the American Revolutionary period that they researched. This reflection can be due several days after the field trip to the Jacobus Vanderveer House to allow students time to think back on the activity and their time at the house. The reflection should include facts the students learned about their historical figure and how exposure to different thoughts and ideas of the Revolutionary Period might have influenced them. Students should complete their reflections for homework and share them in the classroom at a later date.

Materials:

To complete this lesson, students will need to have the following:

- 1.) Jacobus Vanderveer House Dinner Party Overview
- 2.) Jacobus Vanderveer House Dinner Party Historical Figure Card
- 3.) Access to the Jacobus Vanderveer House and Library

Referenced Materials:

The American Historical Theatre Character Biographies
<http://ahtheatre.org/america/characters/1700s-and-earlier>

The Jacobus Vanderveer House: History <http://www.jvanderveerhouse.org/history.html>

National Constitution Center and The Bill of Rights Institute Dinner Party Template
[http://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/Prohibition DinnerParty final.pdf](http://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/Prohibition_DinnerParty_final.pdf)

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Jacobus Vanderveer House Dinner Party

Directions: You will be given a new identity as an individual from the Revolutionary era in America. Your goal is to answer the questions below by researching your historical figure and finding out more about them.

1. What is your person's name and historical significance?

2. What was this person's role in American history leading up to, during, and/or after the Revolutionary era in America?

3. How did this person's beliefs about Independence in America or Loyalty to the Crown change over time?

4. What characteristics might you share with this person? Think about adjectives you would use to describe them and adjectives you would use to describe yourself.

Once you learn more about your historical figure you will be introduced to other individuals from the Revolutionary Era through a "dinner party" activity. You will meet other "guests" from the time period and be able to discuss ideas of the time and ask each other questions. Some of the historical figures may have actually met each other in real life, while others did not. The "dinner party" activity will let us speculate on the discussions of some of our most significant historical figures

Jacobus Vanderveer House Dinner Party Fill In (optional)

My name is _____ . I was born in the year

_____ in _____ . Where I lived and grew up

influenced my political views because _____

_____.

I am an important historical figure from the American Revolutionary War period because

_____.

I had to be _____ during the American Revolutionary War period because

My family agreed/disagreed (circle one) with my stance on the war. They felt this way because

If I met _____ I would want to ask them _____

This matters to me because _____

_____.

Henry Knox (1750-1806)

Henry Knox was born in Boston, Massachusetts. He was a self-made and largely self-educated man: the son of a mostly absent shipmaster who died in 1762 when Henry was 16. Both tall and heavy compared with many of his contemporaries and jovial by disposition, Henry was a physically impressive presence, weighing some 280 pounds as an adult. Henry studied at Boston Public Latin Grammar School until his father's death, when he was apprenticed to a bookseller, which both gave him a livelihood and completed his education through reading the books sold by his master.

Henry opened his own bookstore in Boston in 1771, advertising works for sale on a wide variety of topics of "polite literature," as well as stationery, wall paper and "Ladies Pocket Memorandum Books." His bookstore became a gathering place for young well-to-do Bostonians, whose behavior Henry emulated. He stocked a large number of military works for (British) officer customers, and mastered the content of these books. He joined the local artillery company at the age of 18 and had risen to the rank of second lieutenant of the Boston Regiment's grenadiers by 1772.

He married Lucy Flucker in 1774. In contrast to Henry, who was "in trade," she was among Boston's political and financial elite. Henry refused a commission as a British officer from his father-in-law, thus starting a break with Lucy's Loyalist family. With the outbreak of hostilities in Boston in 1775, Henry and Lucy escaped through British lines in the summer, and Henry met George Washington. Henry started as a civilian consultant to the Continental Army and then was commissioned. At the beginning of 1776, Henry led a raid and captured cannon and munitions from the British at Fort Ticonderoga, hauling the guns 300 miles through winter ice in western Massachusetts to Washington's forces in Boston. Henry was promoted to brigadier general in 1776, and distinguished himself in the battles of Trenton and Princeton, Brandywine, Germantown and Monmouth.

In the winter of 1778-79, General Knox supervised the creation and use of the Pluckemin Cantonment, where, under his leadership, American military training was begun before the creation of West Point. The Cantonment was located to the south and east of the Vanderveer House.

After the Revolution, Henry continued to be a key player in American military affairs, becoming Secretary at War in 1785, reporting to Congress before the drafting of the Constitution, and then Secretary of War after its ratification. A Federalist, Knox was a crucial figure in Indian affairs. He resigned as Secretary in 1794 and "retired" to his estate "Montpelier" as a gentleman farmer in Thomaston, Maine, thanks to the extensive lands inherited in Maine by Lucy and land tracts he purchased speculatively. At Montpelier, he was occupied by a number of business enterprises, and died there at the age of 56.

Lucy Flucker Knox (1756-1824)

Lucy Flucker was born into a family at the apex of Boston pre-Revolution society, the daughter of the royal provincial secretary Thomas Flucker and his second wealthy wife, Hannah Waldo. An obituary described Lucy as a woman of “strong mental powers” and having “acquired much useful information” through “extensive reading.” Her level of education was exceptional, even among her elite social class.

She first met Henry Knox at his bookstore and they married in 1774 despite her family’s strong opposition to someone “in trade.” Throughout their life together, she continued to encourage him toward the grand lifestyle to which he aspired, although it was sometimes beyond their means. The Revolution caused her to choose life with her husband over her Loyalist family. Like her husband, she was a physically large person, attaining 250 pounds as an adult. Although many officers’ wives did follow their husbands to field headquarters like the Vanderveer House, Lucy Knox did so to an unusual extent, living in rented facilities in a number of locations.

While she was at the Vanderveer House, Lucy was either in the late stages of pregnancy or ill after the birth of her daughter Julia, who died at the house. Lucy went to live at Mount Vernon with her friend Martha Washington after leaving the Bedminster area in the summer of 1779. After the end of the war, the Knoxes moved to Boston. She was awarded the family estates as the only non-Loyalist Flucker. The Knoxes followed the capital to New York and Philadelphia in the 1780s and ’90s, where Lucy became a close friend of the socially prominent Federalist Anne Willing Bingham.

After the Knoxes moved to Montpelier, Lucy continued to entertain visitors in her grand house. One of the tragedies of the Knoxes’ life was the loss of nine of their twelve children in infancy or before adulthood.

This biography is available at <http://www.jvanderveerhouse.org/knox.html>

Knox Children “Little” Lucy Knox (1776-1854)

The elder daughter of Lucy and Henry Knox, Lucy accompanied her parents. She was two or three at the time of her parents' residence at the Vanderveer House. She was the oldest of the three Knox children to survive to adulthood, along with her brother Henry and sister Caroline.

Julia Knox (1779)

The second child of Henry and Lucy, Julia was one of the nine children of the Knoxes who did not survive to adulthood. She was born and died in the Vanderveer House. Her burial sparked a controversy because she died of a “paroxysm” that indicated possible demonic possession to the members of the Dutch Reformed Church clergy. Further, her family were not members of the church. According to tradition, she was buried in unconsecrated ground given by Jacobus Vanderveer where he had buried his own infant daughter who had died two years before. This land is now incorporated in the existing cemetery.

These biographies are available at <http://www.jvanderveerhouse.org/knox.html>

June (Vanderveer Family Slave)

During the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, Dutch-American families tended to rely heavily on the institution of slavery for help in the care of their homes, in the working of their farms and in daily operation of their businesses. Although slaveholding was not uncommon in the 18th and 19th century New York and New Jersey among wealthy individuals of all ethnic backgrounds, the Dutch were perhaps the only groups to so completely incorporate the practice as part of their culture.

June is the first slave known to be historically associated with the Jacobus Vanderveer House. The oldest part of the house was erected in the years between the writing of Jacobus Vanderveer Sr.'s will in 1772 and 1778. Jacobus Vanderveer Jr. remained in possession of the property until his death in 1810. The inventory of his estate did not specify how many slaves he owned but gave their total value as being \$658.00. Comparisons with the values of the slaves enumerated in the inventory of his son's estate would suggest that this figure probably represented between four and six individuals. His will specifically mentions two slaves.

These transactions emphasize the fact that although slaves may have been a party of the Vanderveer extended household they were still possessions and their lives could be uprooted at a moments notice. Even if a slave holding family chose not to sell their slaves out of the household during their lifetime, the death of a master could be a traumatic time of upheaval for slaves who could be sold to satisfy a debt or willed to distant relatives in another part of New Jersey or even further afield. Thus regardless of their desires, slave families could be torn asunder with little warning or time for preparation.

This is an excerpt from the article *Slavery: A Dutch-American Cultural Tradition* which is available at <http://www.jvanderveerhouse.org/vanderveerfamily.html>

Jacobus Vanderveer Jr.

Jacobus Vanderveer, who built the house, was born September 12, 1743. He was descended from Dutch settlers who arrived in Flatbush on Long Island in 1659. His grandfather, Jan Cornelise Vanderveer, was one of ten children, four of whom eventually located in New Jersey. One of these was Jacobus Vanderveer Sr., the first member of the family to own the property on which the Jacobus Vanderveer House now stands.

Jacobus (Senior) married Femmetje Ditmars, and they had six children, all of whom lived to adulthood. He was a wealthy landowner and miller. Upon his death in 1776, he left the 560 acre tract of land on which this house is situated to his son, Jacobus (Junior).

Jacobus married his first wife “abt 1773” and she died four years later in 1777. He married again “sometime between 1777 and 1782,” only to have his second wife die in 1782. He was an active member of the Somerset County Militia during the Revolutionary War and helped supply the Continental Army. He died on February 3, 1810 at the age of 66.

Jacobus’ brothers included Elias, who was taken prisoner during a British cavalry raid on Pluckemin in 1776 and died in captivity in 1778, and Lawrence, who served as a surgeon during the war and was also taken prisoner by the British. Lawrence survived the war and was the founder of the New Jersey Medical Society.

This biography is available at <http://www.jvanderveerhouse.org/vanderveerfamily.html>

Patrick Henry

Patrick Henry teaches us that you can be poor, you can grow up in the backwoods with a limited education, and you can fail more than once, yet you can still ultimately succeed. Mr. Henry kept trying. Early on he got married and had a store, but it failed. His first wife was brought low by the depression that followed her bearing their 6th child. Rather than committing her, Henry kept her in the basement. After his first wife's death, Henry remarried and fathered 11 children. He had a farm, but he managed to burn it down. This self-taught musician then became a self-taught lawyer. He won an important case when local parsons were paid in cash instead of tobacco. He argued the case and won, gaining a reputation as a skillful lawyer.

For this passionate orator, best known for his, "Give me Liberty or give me Death!" it was all about freedom. He was against a federal government, he was against the Constitution, but he was vehemently in favor of what would become the Bill of Rights.

This biography is available at <http://ahtheatre.org/america/home/patrick-henry>

General William Howe

General William Howe challenges us to understand the other side of the Revolutionary War. A relative of Great Britain's King George III, William Howe was sent to end the colonial rebellion quickly and at a minimal cost. England had already spent vast sums of money to develop their colonies' raw materials and to protect her lands from the French and Indians. Howe was to protect this substantial British investment.

William Howe told King George he did not think this war could be won. Howe knew how vast the territory was and he knew how difficult it would be to get reinforcements. Howe would not only be fighting George Washington, he would be fighting all of America and its geography: the land was not flat, there were woods rather than roads, and there was not merely one capital to capture but there were thirteen. In Europe, the British could replace fallen soldiers and gain new supplies. In America, the British were 3000 miles from new men and new resources. To make matters worse, Americans could run away faster than the British could drag their equipment behind them.

William Howe was a practical man who didn't want to take on a war he couldn't win. And he was a compassionate leader who didn't want to win battles with high British casualties. By Philadelphia, Howe realized he would have to capture every capital of every colony. A show of force wouldn't be enough, so he requested 100,000 additional troops. Howe's timing could not have been worse – France had joined the fray and Britain was now engaged in a world war. George III could not spare the troops.

This biography is available at <http://ahtheatre.org/america/home/general-william-howe>

William Penn

William Penn is best known as the English-born Quaker who founded Pennsylvania. What is less well known is that Penn was also a key figure in the histories of Delaware and New Jersey. Born in 1644, Penn grew up in a time of great religious and political strife in England. The state religion changed five times during his lifetime. Penn's father was an officer in the Royal Navy who rose from the rank of Lieutenant to General of The Sea by the time Penn was seven. Penn's mother was a Dutch Protestant who raised Penn in the Puritan faith. When Penn was 12 years old he had a vision that God was in the room with him and he afterward said that a seal had been placed upon him, calling him to a holy life.

During his time at Oxford, Penn found himself drawn to a new movement within the Puritan faith. This Religious Society of Friends spoke of an "inner light"- the same light that Penn had seen in his vision. Penn soon joined these Friends or Quakers as they were called and began to preach. Because Quaker teachings were contrary to the established state religion, Quakers were often persecuted- their meetings broken up and their members jailed. Penn himself spent time in the infamous Tower of London for his teachings and writings.

By the 1670s Penn came to realize that he and others like him would never have freedom of conscience in England. Indeed, Penn traveled throughout Europe and found that people everywhere were being persecuted for their religious beliefs. He longed for a place where people would be free to worship as they choose. The death of his father and the subsequent inheritance of a debt owed by the king gave him the opportunity to create just such a place. In 1681 King Charles I granted William Penn the Province of Pennsylvania. Penn immediately began to make plans for a capital city upon the Delaware River. Philadelphia would be his "holy experiment"; a place where people could worship based on the dictates of conscience, not on the religion of the king.

William Penn was, at points, a soldier, courtier, philosopher, preacher, and entrepreneur. The colony he created out of the green Pennsylvania wilderness was unique in many of the liberties we take for granted today. Religious tolerance, freedom from unjust imprisonment, and the right to trial by jury all were granted in Penn's Charter of Privileges. It is in part because of these freedoms that William Penn's "green country towne" was chosen as the place where, a century later, the Founding Fathers would meet to debate the issues that would lead to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

This biography is available at <http://ahtheatre.org/america/home/william-penn-thomas>

Molly Pitcher

“Molly Pitcher,” born Mary Ludwig and married to William Hays, is best known for participating in the Battle of Monmouth, taking her husband’s place when he fell. Hers is the story of a colonial woman whose financial circumstances were too dire to permit her to remain home while her husband fought in the Revolutionary War. Molly’s choice was between staying at home cooking and cleaning for others (if she could find such paid work) in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, or going with her husband and cooking and cleaning for him on or near the battlefield. Molly was one of many women who followed the army, performing valuable services that lifted the morale of the soldiers, as well as keeping them clean and fed. History has maligned such women, labeling them camp followers and even prostitutes. But this is unfair: it was better and more respectable for these women to stay with their husbands, rather than staying home.

Molly Pitcher reminds us what life was like during the Revolutionary War for women with limited financial resources. Molly is not a small, delicate creature, but a woman who did what she had to do at the time, what she felt had to be done. At the Battle of Monmouth, one day in a life that spanned decades, Molly’s husband fell in battle and Molly took his place, probably bending down and passing cartridges.

This biography is available at <http://ahtheatre.org/america/home/molly-pitcher>

Martha Washington

Martha Washington's remarkable, and mostly untold, story helps audiences to understand the unique role women played in the building of our nation. Martha Washington was instrumental throughout the revolutionary war. Joining her husband at his winter encampments, she provided stockings and other necessities to the soldiers at Valley Forge and elsewhere. Her most valuable contributions were, undoubtedly, those of her kind ministrations to the soldier's morale. As a first lady, though she felt imprisoned by the role and longed always for the sweet country life at Mount Vernon, she never showed it, and was "determined to be cheerful despite [her] circumstances", which on many occasions took a stalwart resolve.

This biography is available at <http://ahtheatre.org/america/home/martha-washington-spacht>

George Washington

Without George Washington, America might have had a Napoleon to lead her troops and then her government. But the General, and future First President, remained faithful to the principles for which he and his country had fought. Leading by example, Washington resigned his commission as Commander in Chief of the Continental Army and then declined a possible third term as President. His well-earned retirement to his beloved Mount Vernon lasted less than 3 years, but he and Martha enjoyed living beneath “fig and vine” together until his death in 1799.

This biography available at <http://ahtheatre.org/america/home/george-washington-lopess>

Thomas Paine

Born in England, the son of a Quaker, unsuccessful in a series of jobs, Thomas Paine was advised by Benjamin Franklin to emigrate to America. Britain's loss was certainly our gain. Establishing himself as a publicist and then an editor, Paine's writings provided the fuel for the colony's break with the mother country. Professing to offer "nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments and common sense" in his much-discussed provocative pamphlet, *Common Sense*. Paine became even more urgent in his follow-up, *The Crisis*, by declaring these the "times that try men's souls" and exhorting his fellow Americans to join the fight for Independence, rather than acting as the "the summer soldier and the sunshine patriot." Lacking the formal training of Jefferson or Adams, Paine's direct, passionate words stirred the political pot, providing effective propaganda for the Cause. Paine led by example by contributing to the national bank. Standing against gratuitous bloodshed, Paine was jailed for opposing the execution of dethroned king Louis XVI. While in prison, his *Age of Reason* began publication, praising the Age of Enlightenment, but causing him to lose favor because he was branded an atheist. Returning to the United States on Thomas Jefferson's invitation, Paine returned to America, but discovered his work during the Revolution had been largely forgotten.

This biography is available at <http://ahtheatre.org/america/home/thomas-paine-2>

Marquis de Lafayette

The heir to one of the largest fortunes in France, Lafayette had to come to the United States from Spain because he was acting against the King's will and could have been arrested. Unlike many of his fellow countrymen who came to the United States to party, Lafayette took the cause of freedom to heart. The idealistic young man offered to join the Continental Cause, but received no immediate answer because Congress was tired of French glory-seekers. But when Lafayette explained that he would serve with no pay, he was commissioned as a major-general, although he was assigned no unit. Benjamin Franklin intervened to recommend Lafayette to George Washington as an aide-de-camp. Lafayette offered to pay and outfit his own troops and spies, fund his own equipment and even purchase his own ship, La Victoire. He displayed extraordinarily good manners when meeting Washington and the two men soon enjoyed a warm father-son relationship. In fact, over the years, Washington asked Lafayette to speak with Congress on many occasions. After Lafayette left the United States and returned to France, he continued to work on behalf of freedom and civil rights. Jailed during the French Revolution, his wife and daughters joined him in prison.

This biography is available at <http://ahtheatre.org/america/home/marquis-de-lafayette-barnieu>