

njpac
arts
education

**schooltime
performance
series**



***the american
revolution***

250th anniversary tour

teacher resource guide

about the performance

In *The American Revolution: 250th Anniversary Tour*, Theater Unspeakable tells the epic story of America's fight for independence in just 50 minutes — using only seven actors — on a 21-square-foot stage. Developed through a year-long devised theater process, the show was collaboratively created by the ensemble through improvisation and experimentation. The performers utilize their bodies, voices and pantomime to portray battles, characters and even cannons, bringing to life the Revolutionary War from Lexington to Yorktown with energy, creativity and humor. By blending history with humor, physical theater and imaginative storytelling, audiences can engage their imaginations as the cast transforms minimal space into an exciting retelling of revolutionary history.

To celebrate America's 250th anniversary in 2026, Theater Unspeakable is launching a national tour to theaters, museums, historical sites and festivals across the original 13 colonies and beyond. *The American Revolution* offers audiences of all ages a lively and educational experience. With its signature “big stories in small spaces” style, the show transforms minimal staging into an inventive, engaging and memorable take on one of the most pivotal chapters in American history.



cultural connections

Physical and devised theater have deep cultural and historical roots, emerging from traditions that placed great importance on storytelling through movement, collaboration and improvisation. Physical theater draws from ancient performance styles like mime, clowning and commedia dell'arte, where the body serves as the primary storytelling tool. These forms were accessible, community-based and often performed in public spaces, making them inclusive and easily understood across cultures and languages. Devised theater, meanwhile, gained prominence in the 20th century as a response to traditional, script-based theater. Rooted in experimental and political movements, it emphasizes collective creation and often addresses social issues.

Physical theater, which communicates a story through movement and visual expression, connects audiences to history on a visceral level. In the context of the American Revolution, it brings to life the chaos of battle, the urgency of rebellion and the resilience of the human spirit in a way that words alone cannot. The physicality invites diverse audiences to access the material emotionally and imaginatively, regardless of background or age.

Devised theater's collaborative nature makes it particularly well-suited for exploring complex and contested histories like the American Revolution. Rather than relying on a single narrative or viewpoint, devised works are built through group improvisation, research and discussion, allowing for multiple voices and perspectives to shape the final performance. When applied to Revolutionary history, devised theater can highlight the experiences of those often left out of traditional retellings — women, enslaved people, Indigenous communities and loyalists — creating a fuller, more inclusive portrait of the era.

These theatrical forms provide powerful ways to revisit historical events like the American Revolution. Culturally, the Revolution has become a foundational narrative in the United States, shaping everything from politics and education to art and national identity. It has inspired generations to question authority, demand change and believe in the power of the people. Artists today use physical and devised theater to explore who was included or excluded from the Revolution's promises, reimagining its legacy through performance. This approach keeps history alive and relevant, inviting audiences to reflect on liberty, equity and the evolving meaning of freedom in contemporary society.

vocabulary

Crossroads of the American Revolution

The nickname for New Jersey, due to its important location in the colonies. Many winter encampments as well as numerous battles, including the Battles of Trenton, Princeton and Monmouth, happened in New Jersey during the Revolution

Daughters of Liberty

A group of colonial women who worked against British rule in the colonies by encouraging boycotts of British goods, while creating homemade goods and materials to be used as replacements

Democracy

A form of government where the people elect their representatives

Devised Theater

A method of theater-making that begins without a script. The performance is created collaboratively by performers, designers and others

French and Indian War (1754 – 1763)

France and England fought each other for control of the colonies. England won the war but was then in great debt, which led to its taxation of the colonies

Loyalist

People who remained loyal to the established political system during the American Revolution; loyalists wanted to remain under the rule of England

Monarchy

A political system with a king or queen as the head of state

Pantomime

Silent acting that uses gestures, movement and facial expression to tell a story

Patriot

A person who strongly supports and defends their country. During the American Revolution, patriots were fighting for independence from England

Physical Theater

A type of performance that uses movement, body and gesture as the primary way to tell a story

Revolution

A popular movement to overthrow an existing power and establish a new power



Sons of Liberty

A secret political organization of colonists who fought against British rule. Started in 1765 in Boston, and members included John Hancock, Paul Revere and Sam Adams

Stamp Act (1765)

A tax that Britain placed on paper products entering the colonies. It was called the Stamp Act because a stamp was placed on the paper products as proof of payment

Sugar Act (1764)

A tax that Britain placed on sugar and molasses entering the colonies

Tableau

From French, meaning frozen image, a staged picture with no sound or movement

Tea Act (1773)

In addition to taxing tea entering the colonies, this act gave the British East India Company a monopoly on the tea trade in the colonies and forced the colonists to only buy tea from them

inspired learning for the classroom

P

Prepare

Begin the lesson by checking in with your students. Some students (and teachers) come to school with the baggage of everything happening in their lives, so it's important to spend two or three minutes in silence, allowing yourself to breathe deeply, consider how you feel today and regulate your mind and body. Once the time is up, let students share a one-word answer about how they feel.

Introduce your students to their field trip by discovering what they already know about this art form, topic or type of performance. Then explain more fully what they will see at the theater and why it's important. This can be accomplished by sharing images, vocabulary, videos or context that might help them appreciate the performance more fully.

Student Activity

Ask students if they could live in any historical time period or place, when they would want to live and why? Create a web or anchor chart to record what the students know about the American Revolution: people, places, events, etc. Share the following teaser for the production:
The American Revolution: 250th Anniversary Tour Trailer (video)

Use these resources for more information on the American Revolution:
The American Revolution: What you Need to Know (video)
Timeline of the American Revolution in Three Minutes (video)
Battles of the American Revolution (video)
Books for middle grades about the American Revolution

NJ Student Learning Standards

English Language Arts
NJLSA.SL1, NJLSA.SL2

Social and Emotional Learning Competencies
Self-Awareness

Visual and Performing Arts
Anchor Standard 1, 2

E

Experience

For some students, this may be their first time in a theater. Review audience etiquette and go over expectations for arrival and departure from the theater. Before watching the show, provide a discussion question for them to consider during the performance.

Encourage students to think about these questions as they watch the performance:

1. The performance will have minimal sets and props. Based on how the actors use their bodies and voices, could you still tell where they were and what they were doing?
2. Is there a moment that stands out where you knew what prop they would have been using? When was that moment, and how did you know?
3. What is something new that you learned about the American Revolution?
4. Whose stories do we usually hear from the American Revolution? Whose stories aren't heard as often?

NJ English Language Arts
NJLSA.SL2, NJLSA.SL3

Visual and Performing Arts
Anchor Standard 7, 8

R

Reflect

As a class, discuss the prompt from the previous section. Then have students reflect on the skill set of the performers they saw in the show. Go around the class and have each student fill in the following statement: "I can already _____ like the performers did, but I can't _____ yet." Their response can be about the performers themselves, the characters they represented or another element they appreciated from the trip. After everyone is done, remind them that with enough time and practice, they can accomplish anything they set their minds to. After reflecting together, give students the chance to reflect privately by free-form writing or responding to a prompt.

Start by returning to the chart you made about student knowledge of the American Revolution, and ask students what new things they learned from the performance that can be added.

Then, invite students to share their observations about how the actors used their bodies to represent props and settings, even though no actual items were used.

Writing prompt: What specific moments do students remember where they could clearly tell what the prop or setting was, just from the actors' physical movements or positioning? Describe what the actors did to make these objects and places "appear."

NJ English Language Arts
NJLSA.SL1, NJLSA.SL2
NJLSA.SL4, NJLSA.R.7.

Social and Emotional Learning Competencies
Self-Aawareness, Social Awareness

Visual and Performing Arts
Anchor Standard 1, 2, 7, 8

F

Focus

Have students complete the *Activity Sheets* and choose one of the following prompts to conduct research:

The Artist: How did the life experience of the artist influence their work?

The Form: What is the history and significance of this type of art?

The History: What is there to learn about the time period, culture, social movement or place this performance references?

Before they begin, ask students to name three things they hope to learn during their research.

Challenge students to use *Activity Sheet 1* to create their own American Revolution stage pictures in small groups.

Next, talk with students about whose stories we often hear in history, and whose stories are often missing. Share the following videos about missing viewpoints from the American Revolution. Then, complete *Activity Sheet 2*.

Black Soldiers of the Revolutionary War (video)

Native Americans in the Revolutionary War (video)

Women of the American Revolution (video)

NJ English Language Arts
NJLSA.SL1, NJLSA.SL2, NJLSA.SL3
NJLSA.SL4, NJLSA.W3, NJLSA.R.7.

Social Studies
6.1.5.HistoryCC.1, 6.1.5.HistoryUP.6
6.1.8.HistorySE.3.b, 6.1.8.HistoryUP.3.b

Visual and Performing Arts
Anchor Standard 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10

Social and Emotional Learning Competencies
Self-Awareness, Social-Awareness
Self-Management, Responsible Decision Making
Relationship Skills

O

Originate

The Artist: Have students reflect on their own life and what art could be inspired by their experience. Have them decide which art form they will use to tell their life story, and begin the brainstorming process.

The Form: Have students create a work of art using the same form they saw in the performance about any topic of their choice.

The History: Have students choose a social movement that is important to them and create a work of art in any form they choose to express their opinion on that movement.

Social and Emotional Learning Competencies
Self-Awareness, Self-Management,
Social Awareness, Relationship Skills,
Responsible Decision-Making

Visual and Performing Arts
Anchor Standard 1, 2, 10, 11

R

Rehearse

Give students time to continue developing their creation. If time allows, let them develop their projects on their own, then break the class out into small groups to discuss their ideas and receive additional ideas from peers.

As they are working, use this time to walk around and ask them each about their project, the materials they are using and what inspired them.

Social and Emotional Learning Competencies
Self-Awareness, Self-Management
Social Awareness, Relationship Skills

Visual and Performing Arts
Anchor Standard 2, 5, 7

M

Mix it all together!

Once everyone is done, come to an agreement as a class on how it would be best to share what everyone's been working on.

Allow each student to present their work, discussing their research and what inspired them. Remind students to be respectful of one another. Between presentations, allow two or three students to describe their reactions to the work that was presented. Encourage them to use phrases like "It reminded me of _____" or "It made me feel _____" rather than describing the project as good or bad.

Social and Emotional Learning Competencies
Self-Awareness, Social Awareness,
Relationship Skills, Responsible Decision-Making

Visual and Performing Arts
Anchor Standard 5, 6, 7, 8

curriculum standards

English Language Arts
NJSLSA.SL1
Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

NJSLSA.SL2
Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

NJSLSA.SL3
Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

NJSLSA.SL4
Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

NJSLSA.W3.
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

NJSLSA.R.7.
Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Social and Emotional Learning Competencies
Relationship Skills
Communicating effectively; Practicing teamwork and collaborative problem-solving

Responsible Decision Making
Recognizing how critical thinking skills are useful both inside and outside of school; Identifying solutions for personal and social problems; Learning how to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, and facts; demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness

Self-Awareness
Integrating personal and social identities; Identifying ones’ emotions; Linking feelings, values and thoughts

Self-Management
Using planning and organizational skills

Social-Awareness
Taking others’ perspectives; Showing concern for the feelings of others; demonstrating empathy and compassion: Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones

Social Studies
6.1.5.HistoryCC.1
Analyze key historical events from the past to explain how they led to the creation of the state of New Jersey and the United States.

6.1.5.HistoryUP.6
Evaluate the impact of different interpretations of experiences and events by people with different cultural or individual perspectives.

6.1.8.HistorySE.3.b
Analyze a variety of sources to make evidence-based inferences about how prominent individuals and other nations contributed to the causes, execution, and outcomes of the American Revolution.

6.1.8.HistoryUP.3.b
Examine the roles and perspectives of various socioeconomic groups (e.g., rural farmers, urban craftsmen, northern merchants, and southern planters), African Americans, Native Americans, and women during the American Revolution, and determine how these groups were impacted by the war.

Visual and Performing Arts
Anchor Standard 1
Conceptualizing and generating ideas

Anchor Standard 2
Organizing and developing ideas

Anchor Standard 3
Refining and completing products

Anchor Standard 4
Developing and refining techniques and models or steps needed to create products.

Anchor Standard 7
Perceiving and analyzing products

Anchor Standard 8
Applying criteria to evaluate products

Anchor Standard 9
Interpret intent and meaning

Anchor Standard 10
Synthesizing and relating knowledge and personal experiences to create products.

Anchor Standard 11
Relating artistic ideas and works within societal, cultural, and historical contexts to deepen understanding.

additional resources

NJPAC
About NJPAC
njpac.org/about

NJPAC’s Arts Education programs
njpac.org/arts-education

NJPAC’s David G. Berger Master Class Series
njpac.org/berger

The American Revolution: 250th Anniversary Tour Activity Sheets
njpac.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/AmericanRevolution_activity

Websites
American Revolution Overview
ducksters.com/history/american_revolution.php

British Perspectives on the American Revolution
countryadventures.net/12-british-perspectives-on-the-american-revolution-rarely-taught-in-schools

Colonial Williamsburg
colonialwilliamsburg.org

Loyalists of the American Revolution
history.com/articles/loyalists-revolutionary-war

Myths of the Revolution
revolutionarywarjournal.com/fifteen-major-myths-of-the-american-revolution

New Jersey Revolutionary War Maps
geography.rutgers.edu/historical-maps-of-nj-articles/1048-historical-new-jersey-revolutionary-war-maps

Paintings of the American Revolution
americanrevolution.org/american-revolution-paintings

Revolutionary Choices Game
americanrevolutioninstitute.org/revolutionary-choices-game

Smithsonian Museum: American Revolution
si.edu/spotlight/american-revolutionary-war

Unsung Heroes of the American Revolution
history.com/articles/6-unsung-heroes-of-the-american-revolution

Videos
The American Revolution: 250th Anniversary Tour Trailer
youtube.com/watch?v=K948qo3mr3U&t=6s

The American Revolution: What you Need to Know
youtube.com/watch?v=diOTAe-sNa4

Battles of the American Revolution
youtube.com/watch?v=V95Q4HxnWnM

Black Soldiers of the Revolutionary War
youtube.com/watch?v=h7PVkGY4hhQ

Native Americans in the Revolutionary War
youtube.com/watch?v=wi2qLeVZBKw

Timeline of the American Revolution in Three Minutes
youtube.com/watch?v=Q2pETzEsaoA

Women of the American Revolution
youtube.com/watch?v=1DZEW9fi-0II

Books
Books for middle grades about the American Revolution
goodreads.com/list/show/72508.The_American_Revolution_in_YA_Middle_Grade_Fiction

Podcasts
Growing Patriots Podcast
fcbpodcasts.com/podcast/growingpatriots

bring the arts to your school

In-School Residencies

NJPAC teaching artists come right to your school to teach the performing arts to your students. Our super-flexible in-person residencies are designed to meet your needs and you'll have a dedicated program manager to help you every step of the way. It's the perfect program to keep your students creating, connecting and expressing themselves through the magic of the arts.

Professional Development

Calling all educators! Expand your teaching skills, deepen your curriculum and give yourself a creative boost in NJPAC's forward-thinking professional development workshops. Our virtual PD programs are for teachers all the way from pre-K to high school and include hip hop, dance, storytelling, theater, music and more. Not only will you learn something... you'll also have fun and be inspired.

NJPAC Arts Education Schooltime team*:

Dr. Sherri-Ann Butterfield

*Senior Vice President,
Social Impact*

Jennifer Tsukayama

Vice President, Arts Education

Rosa Hyde

*Senior Director,
Performances & Initiatives*

Dr. Patricio Molina

*Senior Director,
Faculty & Creative Practice*

Treasure Borde

*Senior Manager,
Performances & Special Initiatives*

April Jeffries

*Manager,
Outreach & Sales Manager*

Jessie Thiele

Coordinator, Performances

Andrea Seigel

Teacher Resource Guide Committee

Sarah Mickle

Teacher Resource Guide Committee

Azriel Wallace

Teacher Resource Guide Committee

Rob Reddington

Teacher Resource Guide Committee

*This guide was written by
Andrea Seigel and reviewed by
Dr. Patricio Molina

arts training for students

Saturday Programs

NJPAC's Saturday programs are geared towards students at every level — from those who dream of starring on Broadway to those who are still learning their scales. Students work with professional artists to build technique and develop their own creative style in hip hop, jazz, theater, musical theater and symphonic band.

Summer Programs

Want to begin to explore the arts? Or immerse yourself in the study of one genre? Then join us at NJPAC next summer in our immersive programs that spark the creativity in every child through the study of music, dance and theater.

contact us!

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please email our team at artseducation@njpac.org. Or visit njpac.org/education

Generous support for SchoolTime provided, in part, by



M&T Bank



Turrell Fund



Made possible by funds from the
New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a partner
agency of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Generous support provided by The Joan and Allen Bildner Family Fund, Broadridge Financial Solutions, Inc., The Arts Education Endowment Fund in honor of Raymond C. Chambers, Jennifer A. Chalsty, Judy and Stewart Colton, Toby and Leon Cooperman, Mimi and Edwin Feliciano, The Izzo Family, Don Katz & Leslie Larson+, McCrane Foundation, Inc., care of Margrit McCrane, The MCJ Amelior Foundation, Albert+ and Katharine Merck+, NJ Advance Media, Pershing Square Philanthropies, David & Marian Rocker, The Sagner Companies/The Sagner Family Foundation and an anonymous donor.

+ deceased