

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# Benedict Arnold: Two Sides of a Bitter Coin

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From Social Studies For Kids • 2014

*Benedict Arnold (1741-1801) was an American general during the American Revolutionary War. He originally fought for the colonists' Continental Army but later defected to the British Army. Today, the name "Benedict Arnold" has become synonymous with treason and betrayal. As you read, takes notes on what led to Arnold's change of loyalties.*

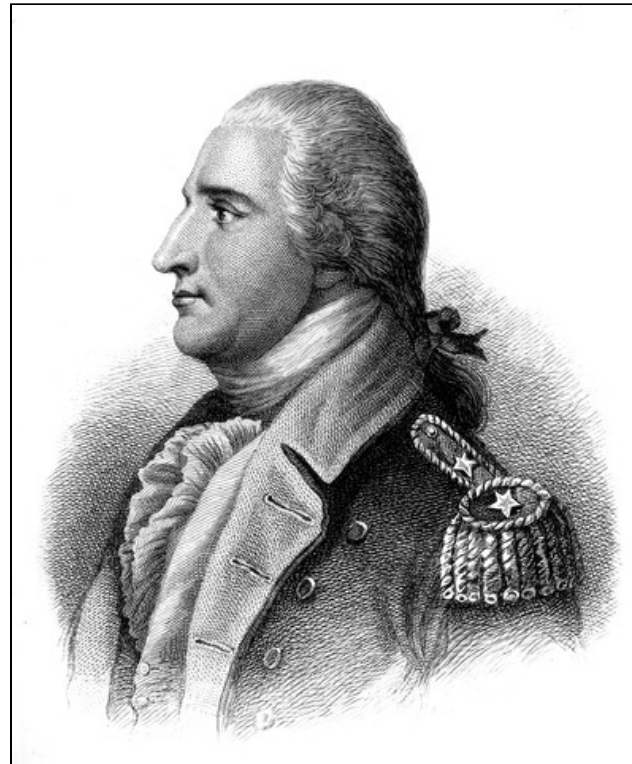
## Part 1: Rise to Fame

- [1] Benedict Arnold was the product of a proud family upbringing, and this pride that was instilled in him by his family would temper his outlook and actions for the rest of his life. He built himself into a genuine war hero, then died penniless in exile from the country he once loved.

An intensely loyal and brave man, he made a brilliant battlefield commander but, once spurned,<sup>1</sup> turned his back on the country that put its faith in him and is forever more remembered as a traitor.

Arnold was born in 1741 in Connecticut. He was one of six children, only two of whom survived to adulthood. The other four died of yellow fever. His great-grandfather was an early governor of the Rhode Island colony.

Arnold's family life wasn't the greatest, primarily because of a lack of money. Young Benedict found work as an apprentice to an apothecary (a sort of pharmacist). He later had his own pharmacy business, in addition to being a bookseller.



*"Benedict Arnold" is in the public domain.*

## Part 2: Wartime Heroics

- [5] Arnold enlisted in the militia<sup>2</sup> and fought in the French and Indian War,<sup>3</sup> at the disastrous (for the British and the Americans) Battle of Fort William Henry. His return to the business world was the addition to bookselling to his pharmacy trade. At this time, his surviving sister, Hannah, came to live and work with him. (She would continue to do both after he got married, in 1767.)

1. **Spurn (verb):** to reject with disdain or contempt; to snub or look down upon
2. A "militia" generally refers to an army or other fighting unit that is composed of non-professional fighters, citizens of a nation or subjects of a state or government that can be called upon to enter a combat situation, as opposed to professional, full-time military personnel.

Arnold and his business suffered much from the implementation of the Stamp Act,<sup>4</sup> and he protested it by smuggling and by publicly calling for its repeal. Incensed<sup>5</sup> by Great Britain's arrogance regarding taxation, Arnold joined the Sons of Liberty.<sup>6</sup> Desperate to keep his business alive, he traveled to various ports, including the West Indies, where he was on the night of the Boston Massacre.<sup>7</sup>

The incident strengthened Arnold's resolve to stand up for the rights of himself, his business, and his fellow Americans. When the call for volunteers for state militias went out, Arnold answered, becoming a member of the Connecticut militia.

Impressed with Arnold's plan to seize Fort Ticonderoga, the Massachusetts militia gave Arnold the rank of colonel and approved his daring raid on what was supposedly a well defended British fort. In reality, a skeleton crew policed the fort and its surroundings, and Arnold and his force had little trouble seizing it.

Arnold had help in this endeavor from Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys,<sup>8</sup> who generally get most of the credit for this brilliant military success, despite the fact that Arnold devised the plan and led men to carry it out. This would not be the last time that Arnold would be in someone's shadow.

[10] After a dispute over leadership in the wake of the capture of Fort Ticonderoga, Arnold resigned his commission in the Massachusetts militia and returned home. His wife had died at home during his struggle to take the fort, and he mourned her death for a period of time.

Arnold couldn't stay away from the limelight long, however, and volunteered to take part in an expedition to invade Canada. Not liking the plan on offer, Arnold devised his own and sold it to Continental Army commander George Washington, who gave Arnold the title of colonel and more than a thousand men. As it turned out, both forces landed in Quebec about the same time, and a fierce battle ensued. During the battle, Arnold was wounded in the leg, an injury that would plague him the rest of his life.

British troops held onto Quebec, and Arnold became military commander of American forces in Montreal. That city eventually returned to British control, and Arnold returned to the colonies to assume a role in protecting Rhode Island. Here again, Arnold, put in charge of the defense of a colony, was passed over for appointment to major general, which others who had less military service received.

Again incensed, Arnold tried to resign, but Washington wouldn't accept the resignation, primarily because he knew that Arnold had battlefield smarts. Washington ordered Arnold to New York, where he eventually played a major part in the American victory at the Battle of Saratoga.

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3. The French and Indian War (1754–1763) was fought between the colonies of British America and New France in the North American territories, part of the larger conflict of the Seven Years' War.
  4. The Stamp Act of 1765 imposed a direct tax on the colonies of British America and was very unpopular among colonists.
  5. **Incensed** (*adjective*): very angry or enraged
  6. The Sons of Liberty was a secret society formed to protect the colonists' rights and to fight taxation by the British government.
  7. The "Boston Massacre" occurred on March 5, 1770, when a group of British soldiers fired on an angry crowd, killing five and injuring six others.
  8. The Green Mountain Boys were a militia organization first established in the late 1760s, led by Ethan Allen.

This was the victory that brought France into the war on the side of the Americans, and Saratoga might have turned out differently if Arnold had followed his orders. A series of disputes between Arnold and commanding general Horatio Gates<sup>9</sup> resulted in Arnold's being removed from his field command and confined to his quarters. During the battle, however, Arnold, despite Gates's orders to the contrary, rushed onto the field and led the troops to victory. Gates was angry at Arnold but not as angry as he would have been if the gamble hadn't worked.

## Part 3: Final Choices

- [15] Arnold spent a few months trying to heal his shattered leg, then spent the spring of 1778 in Valley Forge with the Continental Army. (He was one of a group of soldiers who pledged the first-ever Oath of Allegiance.) From Valley Forge, Arnold went to Philadelphia, to serve in his new post, as military commander of the city (appointed by George Washington).

Around this time, two things happened that would turn Arnold on his fateful final course. France, after hearing of the American success at Saratoga, agreed to enter the war and fight against its old enemy Great Britain. Arnold found this development worrying because of his suspicions of French motives dating back to the French and Indian War.

The second thing that happened to Arnold was initially very happy: he met the woman who would become his new wife, Peggy Shippen. A young girl (she was no more than 18 when she met Benedict), she nonetheless had connections, including a famous father in Judge Edward Shippen of Philadelphia and the interest of a British Major named John Andre. (Andre and Peggy were a couple for a while.)

Arnold and Peggy fell in love and married, all rather quickly. The more he learned about Peggy, the more Arnold discovered that she had many powerful pro-British friends and was really an enemy of American independence. Thus began the spiral for Benedict Arnold, from which his name would thereafter be synonymous with "traitor."

His bitterness about being ignored, passed over for promotions, and relegated to military commander of a city instead of a group of soldiers boiled over when stirred by his new wife's anti-American sentiments and pro-British contacts. Arnold decided to change sides.

- [20] In 1780, Arnold won command of the U.S. Army fort at West Point. This was welcome news for his new circle of friends, which included Major John Andre, Peggy Arnold's former suitor. Andre was in direct contact with Henry Clinton, the British general in charge of northern operations.

West Point was built on a strategically important site. The fort's cannons could keep ships from moving further up the Hudson River. Arnold thought that handing over West Point to the British would give them an entry into northern New York, a move that he hoped would allow British troops to link up with forces from Canada, divide the new American-French alliance, and perhaps make French troops leave for good.

He never got the chance, for Andre was captured and identified as a spy, complete with a letter from Arnold in his pockets. Andre was hanged, and Arnold fled to the British side.

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9. Horatio Gates (1727-1806) was a retired British soldier who later served as an American general during the Revolutionary War, taking credit for the victory in Saratoga.

The next in a long list of indignities<sup>10</sup> to greet Benedict Arnold was that the British made him a brigadier general, a position with some power and influence, but paid him much less money than they otherwise would have because he had failed in his mission to turn over West Point.

Determined to carry on, Arnold led British troops to victory in Virginia, capturing the important city of Richmond and its vibrant port. However, the surrender of General Charles Cornwallis at Yorktown resulted in a large withdrawal of British troops (including Arnold) from America altogether.

- [25] Arnold tried his luck at shipping, in Canada, for a few years but had little luck. He suffered from poor health and large debts and died, relatively unknown, in 1801.

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10. **Indignity** (*noun*): treatment or circumstances that cause one to feel shame or to lose one's dignity

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following best describes a central idea of the text? [RI.2]
  - A. Benedict Arnold's betrayal has been misunderstood and exaggerated in US history.
  - B. Benedict Arnold was the most loyal patriot to the American colonies before his betrayal.
  - C. Lack of appreciation and credit for his military career was one of the driving forces behind Benedict Arnold's change of loyalties.
  - D. Peggy Shippen, Arnold's wife, is mainly to blame for his treason.
  
2. PART B: Which of the following quotes best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
  - A. "He built himself into a genuine war hero, then died penniless in exile from the country he once loved." (Paragraph 1)
  - B. "An intensely loyal and brave man, he made a brilliant battlefield commander...." (Paragraph 2)
  - C. "The more he learned about Peggy, the more Arnold discovered that she had many powerful pro-British friends and was really an enemy of American independence. Thus began the spiral for Benedict Arnold...." (Paragraph 18)
  - D. "His bitterness about being ignored, passed over for promotions, and relegated to military commander of a city instead of a group of soldiers boiled over when stirred by his new wife's anti-American sentiments and pro-British contacts." (Paragraph 19)
  
3. Which statement best describes how Benedict Arnold's involvement in the American Revolutionary War is first introduced in the text? [RI.3]
  - A. He fought successfully in the French and Indian War and made a name for himself there.
  - B. The enactment of the Stamp Act spurred Arnold into protesting British taxation, trying to save his business.
  - C. The Boston Massacre outraged Arnold and pushed him to seeking American retribution.
  - D. He joined the Sons of Liberty and the Connecticut militia, eager to fight the British.
  
4. PART A: What does the term "skeleton" most likely mean as used in paragraph 8? [RI.4]
  - A. Bones
  - B. Sparse
  - C. Skinny
  - D. Frightened

5. PART B: Cite evidence to support the answer to Part A.

[RI.1]

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6. Why does the author organize the article to focus more on Benedict Arnold's background than his act of treason? What does this distinction communicate to the reader? Consider the author's point of view and purpose in your answer. [RI.6] [RI.5]

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