

Tennessee during the Revolutionary War
Table of Contents

	Pages
1. Content Essay	2-3
2. 4 th Grade Activity	4-5
3. 8 th Grade Activity	6-7
4. Primary Source: Watauga Petition	8-11

Tennessee during the Revolutionary War

Essential Question: How did the American Revolution impact Tennessee?

The American Revolution brought profound changes to the settlements in East Tennessee. It should come as no surprise that settlers who defied the British government by settling west of the Appalachian Mountains, privately purchasing the land from the Cherokee and creating their own independent government, would endorse the Patriot cause. However, the outbreak of fighting at Lexington and Concord, which came only one month after the Transylvania and Watauga Purchases, made the settlers realize how precarious their situation was. The settlers in Watauga, Nolichucky and Carter's Valley and other settlements formed a Committee of Safety and later took the name Washington District.¹

The British intended to use American Indian allies to attack settlements along the frontier and began arming warriors from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico with hatchets, guns and ammunition.² The Cherokee and many other tribes sided with the British for a number of reasons. First, since the removal of the French at the end of the French and Indian War, the British had been the key trading partner of most tribes. Secondly, many American Indians had close personal or family ties with British traders and Indian agents. For example, John Stuart, British Indian Agent during the Revolution, was spared during the Fort Loudoun Massacre because of his friendship

¹ Paul Bergeron, Stephen Ash and Jeanette Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 24.

² James Mooney, (1900) *Myths of the Cherokee and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees*. Reprint. (Nashville: Charles and Randy Elder Publishers, 1980.),47.

with Attakullakulla. Lastly, the British government had made clear efforts to stop the flow of settlers into American Indian lands.

When the British government repeated its demand that the settlers abandon their lands or face war with the Cherokee in the spring of 1776, the settlers took action. The settlers asked North Carolina for help in a document known as the Watauga Petition. North Carolina eventually agreed to assist the Washington District as the settlers now called their allied settlements. However, before help could arrive, Dragging Canoe and his allies launched a series of attacks against the settlements in 1776 known as the Cherokee War of 1776. The settlers were warned of the attack by Nanye-hi and had time to prepare.³ The settlers defeated the force led by Dragging Canoe at the Battle of Long Island. The Wataugans held out against a two week siege of their fort at Sycamore Shoals. The Carter's Valley settlers fled, allowing the Cherokee to easily raid and burn the homesteads there.⁴ Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia retaliated by sending militia forces to attack Cherokee towns in the region. By 1777, more than 50 Cherokee towns had been burned and hundreds of Cherokee had been killed or sold into slavery. The Treaty of Long Island negotiated in 1777 ended the hostilities, but also created a rift within the Cherokee which resulted in Dragging Canoe and others moving south to Chickamauga.⁵

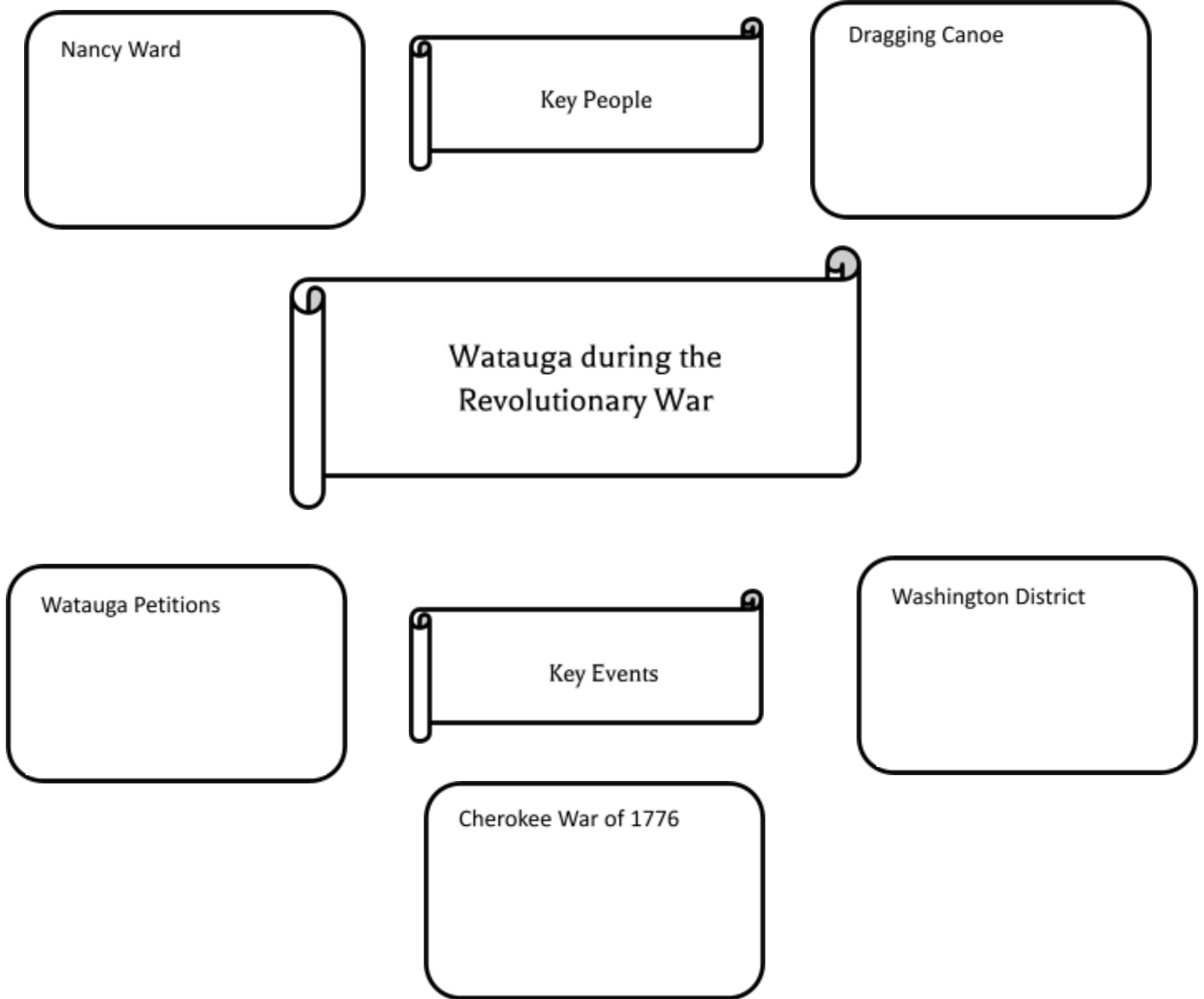
³ Ibid., 47-48.

⁴ Bergeron, Ash and Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*, 27-28.

⁵ Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, 53-54.

Watauga during the Revolutionary War

Complete the graphic organizer below, by filling in supporting details about each of the people or events listed below. Then complete the statement at the bottom of the page.



I believe that the effects of the Revolutionary war on were mostly _____
because _____,
_____, and
_____.

Watauga during the Revolutionary War Key

Complete the graphic organizer below, by filling in supporting details about each of the people or events listed below. Then complete the statement at the bottom of the page. *Answers will vary*

Nancy Ward- Cherokee leader also known as Nanye-hi who wanted peace and helped the settlers.

Key People

Dragging Canoe leader of the Chickamauga who opposed settlements.

Watauga during the Revolutionary War

Watauga Petitions- 1776 requests to North Carolina and Virginia for annexation.

Key Events

Washington District- area formed when North Carolina agreed to assist Watauga.

Cherokee War of 1776- series of battles between Watauga settlers and Cherokees who wanted to end white settlements.

I believe that the effects of the Revolutionary war on were mostly **negative** because there was a war with the Cherokee, men from Watauga had to leave home to fight in the Revolution and Watauga lost its independence.

Watauga during the Revolutionary War

Complete the graphic organizer below, by filling in supporting details about each of the people or events listed below. Then write a paragraph in response to the prompt at the bottom of the page.

The graphic organizer consists of a central scroll with the title "Watauga during the Revolutionary War". Surrounding this central scroll are six boxes, each representing a different topic related to the war:

- Nancy Ward**: A rounded rectangular box on the top left.
- Key People**: A scroll-shaped box on the top center.
- Dragging Canoe**: A rounded rectangular box on the top right.
- Watauga Petitions**: A rounded rectangular box on the bottom left.
- Key Events**: A scroll-shaped box on the bottom center.
- Washington District**: A rounded rectangular box on the bottom right.
- Cherokee War of 1776**: A rounded rectangular box at the very bottom center.

Paragraph Prompt

Do you believe that the effects of the Revolutionary were mostly positive or negative for Watauga and its people?

Cite evidence from the text to support your answer.

Watauga during the Revolutionary War Key

Complete the graphic organizer below, by filling in supporting details about each of the people or events listed below. Then complete the statement at the bottom of the page. Then write a paragraph in response to the prompt at the bottom of the page. *Answers will vary*

Nancy Ward- Cherokee leader also known as Nanye-hi who wanted peace and helped the settlers.

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Watauga during the Revolutionary War

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Paragraph Prompt

Do you believe that the effects of the Revolutionary were mostly positive or negative for Watauga and its people? *Answers will vary, but should be supported by text evidence.*

Cite evidence from the text to support your answer.

Watauga Petition

The renewed threat of violence from the Cherokee that accompanied the outbreak of the Revolutionary War convinced the Wataugans that they needed the protection of one of the neighboring Revolutionary states in order to survive. Therefore, they sent the following petition the North Carolina legislature.

1776 Petition of the Inhabitants of Washington District

To the Hon. the Provincial Congress of North Carolina:

The humble petition of the inhabitants of Washington District, including the River Wataugah, Nonachuckie, etc., that about six years ago, Col. Donelson, (in behalf of the Colony of Virginia,) held a treaty with the Cherokee Indians, in order to purchase the lands of the Western Frontiers; in consequence of which Treaty, many of our petitioners settled on the lands of the Wataugah, etc., expecting to be within the Virginia line, and consequently hold their lands by their improvements as first settlers; but to their great disappointment, when the lines was run they were (contrary to their expectation) left out; finding themselves thus disappointed, and being too inconveniently situated to remove back, and feeling an unwillingness to loose the labour bestowed on their plantations, they applied to the Cherokee Indians, and leased the land for the term of ten years, before the expiration of which term it appeared that many persons of distinction were actually making purchases forever; thus yielding a precedent, (supposing many of them who were gentlemen of the law, to be better judges of the constitution than we were,) and considering the bad consequences it must be attended with, should the reversion be purchased out of our hands, we next proceeded to make a purchase of the lands, reserving those in our possession in sufficient tracts for our own use, and resolving to dispose of the remainder for the good of the community. This purchase was made and the lands acknowledged to us and our heirs forever, in an open treaty, in Wataugah Old Fields, a deed being obtained from the Chiefs of the Cherokee nation, for themselves and their whole nation, which deed was for and in consideration of the sum of two thousand pounds sterling, (paid to them in goods,) for which consideration they acknowledged themselves fully satisfied, Contented and paid; and agreed, for themselves, their whole nation, their heirs, etc., forever to resign, warrant and defend said lands to us, and our heirs, etc., against themselves, their heirs, etc.

The purchase was no sooner made, than we were alarmed by the reports of the present unhappy differences between Great Britain and America, on which report, (taking the now united colonies for our guide,) we proceeded to choose a Committee, which was done unanimously by consent of the people. This committee, (willing to become a party in the present unhappy contest) resolved, (which is now on our records,) to adhere strictly to the rules and orders of the Continental Congress, and in open committee acknowledged themselves indebted to the united colonies their full proportion of the Continental expense.

Finding ourselves on the Frontiers, and being apprehensive that, for the want of a proper

legislature, we might become a shelter for such as endeavoured to defraud their creditors; considering also the necessity of recording Deeds, Wills, and doing other public business; we, by consent of the people, formed a court for the purposes above mentioned, taking (by desire of our constituents) the Virginia laws for our guide, so near as the situation of affairs could admit; this was intended for ourselves, and was done by the consent of every individual; but, wherever we had to deal with people out of our district, we have ruled them to bail, to abide by our determinations, (which was, in fact, leaving the matter to reference) otherways we dismissed their suit, lest we should in any way intrude on the legislature of the colonies. In short, we have

endeavoured so strictly to do justice, that we have admitted common proof against ourselves, on accounts, etc., from the colonies, without pretending a right to require the Colony seal.

We therefore trust we shall be considered as we deserve, and not as we have (no doubt) been many times represented, as a lawless mob -- It is for this very reason we can assure you that we petition: we now again repeat it, that it is want of proper authority to try and punish felons, we can only mention to you murderers, horse-thieves and robbers, we are sorry to say that some of them have escaped us for want of authority. We trust, however, this will not long be the case; and we again repeat it, that its for this reason we petition to this Honourable Assembly.

Above we have given you an abstract of our proceedings, since our settling on the Wataugah, Nonachuckie, etc., in regard to our civil affairs we have shown you the causes of our first settling and the disappointments we have met with, the reason of our lease and of our purchase, the manner in which we purchased, and how we hold of the Indians in fee simple; the causes of our forming a committee, and the legality of its election; the same of our court proceedings, and our reasons for petitioning in regard to our legislature.

We now proceed to give you some account of our military establishments, which were chosen agreeable to the rules established by convention, and officers appointed by the committee. This being done, we thought it proper to raise a company on the District service, as our proportion, to act in the common cause on the seashore. A Company of fine riflemen were accordingly enlisted, and put under Capt. James Robertson, and were actually embodied, when we received sundry letters and depositions (copies of which we now enclose to you,) you will readily judge that there was occasion for them in another place, where we daily expected an attack. We therefore thought proper to station them on our Frontiers, in defense of the common cause, at the expense and risque of our own private fortunes, till further public orders, which we flatter ourselves will give no offence. We have enclosed you sundry proceedings at the station where our men now remain.

We shall now submit the whole to your candid and impartial judgment. We pray your mature and deliberate consideration in our behalf, that you may annex us to your Province, (whether as county, district, or other division,) in such manner as may enable us to share in the glorious cause of Liberty; enforce our laws under authority, and in every respect become the best members of society; and for ourselves and constituents we hope, we may venture to assure you, that we shall adhere strictly to your determinations, and that nothing will be lacking or any thing neglected, that may add weight (in the civil or military establishments) to the

glorious cause in which we are now struggling, or contribute to the welfare of our own or ages yet to come.

That you may strictly examine every part of this our petition, and delay no time in annexing us to your Province, in such manner as your wisdom shall direct, it is the hearty prayer of those who, or themselves and their constituents, as in duty bound shall ever pray.

Signers—Members of the Committee

John Carter, Chn.	Zach. Isbell	Jacob Brown	George Rusel
Charles Robertson	John Sevier	Wm. Bean	Jacob Womack
James Robertson	Jas. Smith	John Jones	Robert Lucas

Jacob Womack	Jos Brown	Adam Sherrill
Joseph Dunnam	Job Bumper	Samuel Sherrill,
Rice Durrton	Isaac Wilson	Jun. Ossa Rose
Edward Hopson	Richard Norton	Henry Bates, Junr.
Lew. Boyer, D. Atty.	George Hutson	Jos. Grimes
Joseph Buller	Thomas Simpson	John Brown
Andw. Greer	Valentine Sevier	Joshua Barton,
Joab [X] Mitchell	Jonathan Tipton	Sen. Henry Gates,
Gideon Morris	Robert Sevier	Jun. Will'm Dod
Shadrack Morris	Drury Gordon	Govers Morris
William Crockett	Richard Fletcher	Wm. Bates
Thomas Dedmon	Ellexender Greer	Ge. Hartt
David Hickey	Andrew Grear, Jun.	Isaac Wilson
Mark Mitchell	Teeler Nave	Jno. Waddell
Hugh Blair	Lewis Jones	Jarrett Williams
Elias Peeber	John I. Cox	Oldham Hightower
Jos. Brown	John Cox, Jr.	Abednego Hix
John Neave	Abraham Cox	Charles McCartney
John Robinson	Emanuel Shote	Frederick Vaughan
Christopher	Tho. Houghton	Jos McCartney
Cunningham Jas. Easley	Jos. Luske	Mark Robertson
Ambrose Hodge	Wm. Reeves	Joseph Calvitt
Dan'l Morris	David Hughes	Joshua Houghton
Wm. Cox	Landon Carter	John Chukinbeard
James Easley	John McCormick	James Cooper
John Haile	David Crockett	William Brokees
Elijah Robertson	Edw'd Cox	Julius Robertson
William Clark	Tho's Hughes	John King
John [X] Dunnam	William Robertson	Michael
Wm. Overall	Henry Siler	Hider John
Mat Hawkins	Frederick Calvitt	Davis John
Christopher Cunningham, Sen.	William Newberry	Barley

Source: William L. Saunders, editor, *The Colonial Records of North Carolina* 10 volumes (Raleigh, North Carolina: Josephus Daniels, 1886-1890), 10: 708-