

Rally the Troops: Samuel Doak, Sycamore Shoals and the Battle of King's Mountain

Introduction:

This lesson focuses on the leaders of the Overmountain men and their motivations to take part in the Battle of King's Mountain including the sermon Samuel Doak delivered before the men departed from Sycamore Shoals.

Guiding Questions:

Who were the leaders of the Overmountain men?

What factors motivated the Overmountain men to fight at the Battle of King's Mountain

Learning Objectives:

The learner will analyze adapted primary and secondary sources to determine what factors motivated the Overmountain men to fight at King's Mountain.

The learner will analyze secondary sources to describe the leaders of the Overmountain men.

The learner will demonstrate knowledge of the factors that led to the Battle of King's Mountain by writing a caption to accompany the painting *Gathering of Overmountain Men at Sycamore Shoals* by Lloyd Branson

Curriculum Standards:

History

4.31 Locate and identify the major military battles, campaigns, and turning points of the American Revolution, including: (G, H, TN) • Lexington and Concord • Bunker (Breed's) Hill • Valley Forge • Princeton and Trenton • Saratoga • King's Mountain • Yorktown

4.34 Explain using supporting details how the Revolution affected the Watauga Settlement, including: (P, TN) • Washington District • Cherokee War of 1776 • Nancy Ward • John Sevier • Watauga Petitions

8.25 Identify and explain the significance of the major battles, leaders, and events of the American Revolution, including: (C, E, H, P, TN) • Battles of Lexington and Concord • Capture of Fort Ticonderoga • Battle of Bunker Hill (Breed's Hill) • Battle of Trenton and Princeton • Battle

of Saratoga • Valley Forge • Battle of King’s Mountain • Battle of Yorktown • George Washington • Benedict Arnold • Hessians • Marquis de La Fayette • Friedrich von Steuben • George Rogers Clark • Francis Marion

8.26 Summarize the effect of the Revolution on the Wataugans and the reasons, plans, and struggles in creating the Cumberland Settlement, including: (G, P, TN) • formation of Washington District • Cherokee War • Nancy Ward • Watauga Petitions • Transylvania Purchase • Richard Henderson • James Robertson • John Donelson • severe winter and river travel • Cumberland Compact • Indian attacks • Battle of the Bluffs

Materials Needed:

Image: [*Gathering of Overmountain Men at Sycamore Shoals, 1915, oil on canvas. Collection of the Tennessee State Museum. \(Portrait by Lloyd Branson\)*](#)

Reader’s Theater: Rally the Troops (You will need to provide one copy for each student even if he or she does not have a speaking part)

Vocabulary List (For the teacher to reference during Lesson Activity 3)

Background:

Note: Samuel Doak’s sermon, a primary source, has been adapted for younger readers and incorporated into the reader’s theater script.

Informational Text: [*The Battle of King’s Mountain Content Essay*](#)

Writing Prompt:

Write a short caption to accompany the painting *Gathering of Overmountain Men at Sycamore Shoals*. The caption should be no less than two complete sentences and no more than four complete sentences. The caption should help viewers understand the painting and why the event is important.

Lesson Activities:

Activity 1- Discuss the painting *Gathering of Overmountain Men at Sycamore Shoals* by Lloyd Branson
Whole Class Activity

Begin the lesson by showing the students the image and asking them what they see in the painting. Next, ask the students what action is taking place in the painting. Finally, ask them to make an educated guess as to the time period shown in the painting. After students are finished discussing the image, tell them that they will be participating in a reader's theater that will address those same questions.

Activity 2 – Reader's Theater: Rally the Troops

Whole Class Activity

Assign roles to students. Note that Doak's sermon has been broken down into seven separate parts. You will need one person to read Reverend Samuel Doak's part and seven additional students for the sermon.

Activity 3- Class Discussion

Whole Class Activity

After completing the reader's theater, ask students to focus on Doak's sermon and discuss any unfamiliar vocabulary words. Also ask them to identify and define the key vocabulary words in the sermon. Discuss the following:

1. Who is Major Patrick Ferguson?
Answer: British soldier and leader of Tory or Loyalist troops
2. How do Isaac Shelby and John Sevier react to his threat?
Answer: They are angry and prepare to attack Ferguson before he crosses the mountains
3. What is the purpose of Samuel Doak's sermon?
Answer: To motivate the men leaving to fight
4. Samuel Doak tells the men that they "are not unacquainted with battle."
What does he mean by that? Who had they previously fought?
Answer: They are experienced soldiers who had previously fought the Cherokee. Some of the men may have also fought in French and Indian War.
5. Does Doak seem to know much about Revolutionary events happening in places like Boston or Philadelphia? What evidence supports your answer?
Answer: Yes, in Part 2 Doak uses the phrase "taxation without representation" and mentions the "the quartering of soldiers in the homes of our people."



Assessment:

Students will be instructed to write a short caption that might accompany the painting *Gathering of Overmountain Men at Sycamore Shoals*. The caption should be no less than two complete sentences and no more than four complete sentences. The caption should help viewers understand the painting and why the event is important. Allow students to share their captions. If possible, print a copy of the image and allow students to display their captions near the image.

Extending the Lesson:

Continue the lesson by learning about the tactics used by the Overmountain Men at King's Mountain. The video clip [The Scotch-Irish and the Battle of Kings Mountain](#) provides a good summary of the battle. (Please preview the clip before showing it in your classroom)

Ask the students to write a newspaper story describing the gathering of the Overmountain men at Sycamore Shoals.



Vocabulary List

1. **Expedition:** a journey for a specific purpose.
2. **Hardships:** suffering and experiencing a lack of needed sustenance to live.
3. **Dangers:** exposure or liability to injury, pain, harm, or loss
4. **Almighty:** the Being perfect in power, wisdom, and goodness who is worshipped as creator and ruler of the universe
5. **Taxation:** money people pay to their government to pay for services
6. **Representation:** having someone elected to speak, act, or vote for other people
7. **Quartering:** providing housing for soldiers.
8. **Vestige:** the smallest quantity or trace.
9. **Freedom:** ability to move or act freely c : the state of being released from something usually unpleasant
10. **Enemy:** one that tries to hurt or overthrow or that seeks the failure of another
11. **Hither:** to this place here
12. **Unacquainted:** unknown to somebody or to each other
13. **Savage:** without civilizing influences; "barbarian invaders"; "barbaric practices"; "a savage people"; "fighting is crude and uncivilized especially if the weapons are efficient"-Margaret Meade; "wild tribes"
14. **Liberty:** the freedom to think or act without being constrained by necessity or force
15. **Sycamore Shoals:**
16. **Tory or Loyalist:** a colonist who was loyal to Great Britain; did not support the American Revolution
17. **Kinsman:** a relative



Rally the Troops Script

Character List

| | |
|------------------------|-------------|
| Narrator 1 | Doak Part 1 |
| Narrator 2 | Doak Part 2 |
| Narrator 3 | Doak Part 3 |
| Major Patrick Ferguson | Doak Part 4 |
| Lieutenant | Doak Part 5 |
| Samuel Phillips | Doak Part 6 |
| Isaac Shelby | Doak Part 7 |
| John Sevier | |
| Reverend Samuel Doak | |

Narrator 1: At the same time that the Founding Fathers were meeting in Philadelphia to write the Declaration of Independence, trouble broke out on the Tennessee frontier.

Narrator 2: Settlers had been moving west of the Appalachians for years even though it was against the rules the British set up in the Proclamation of 1763. Some Cherokee leaders, like Attakullakulla and Nancy Ward, accepted the settlers, but others, like Dragging Canoe, wanted them to leave or die.

Narrator 1: The start of the American Revolution gave the Cherokee a chance to attack the settlers. The settlers fought back and the Cherokee surrendered in 1777.



Narrator 3: Once the Cherokee War was over, the men could consider leaving their homes and families to fight the British. Some men crossed the mountains to fight, but many men were still worried about the Cherokee and thought it was just too dangerous to leave their homes and families.

Narrator 1: In August of 1780, the British won a big victory at Camden, South Carolina. After that British General Cornwallis sent Major Patrick Ferguson to wipe out rebels living in the back country.

Major Patrick Ferguson: “Blast these rebels! They are harder to catch than thistle fluff! Most of them live across the mountains anyway. I will send them a message to make sure they know better than to oppose British rule. Lieutenant, bring me one of the prisoners!”

Lieutenant: Here you are sir, one of the prisoners you asked for.

Major Patrick Ferguson: You there! Do you know the rebel dog Isaac Shelby?

Samuel Phillips: I do, Isaac Shelby is my kinsman and a neighbor of mine.

Major Patrick Ferguson: Excellent! You shall deliver a message to him. Tell him that if the people there do not desist from their opposition to British arms, I will march over the mountains, hang your leaders, and lay waste to your country with fire and sword.”

Narrator 2: Phillips crossed the mountains and headed straight for Isaac Shelby’s farm to deliver the message.

Isaac Shelby: Samuel it is good to see you my friend! I thought you had been taken prisoner by the British.

Samuel Phillips: I was but Major Patrick Ferguson released me so that I could bring you a message.

Isaac Shelby: Major Patrick Ferguson, I have heard of him. Cornwallis selected him to lead the Tory Militia in the backcountry. What is the message?



Samuel Phillips: Well, you are not going to like it so remember I am just the messenger.

Narrator 3: Samuel Phillips told Shelby what Ferguson had said. Shelby was furious and went to see his good friend John Sevier.

John Sevier: Isaac, what are you doing here? Is there more trouble with the Cherokee?

Isaac Shelby: Not with the Cherokee, but we sure have some trouble.

Narrator 1: Shelby told Sevier about the threat that Major Patrick Ferguson had made. Sevier was just as angry as Shelby. Together, the two men decided to send out a call for troops to meet at Sycamore Shoals on September 25, 1780. John Sevier asked his friend, the Reverend Samuel Doak to speak to the men before they left.

Narrator 2: Samuel Doak was a Presbyterian minister and teacher. He started Washington College in 1794 to provide educational opportunities for men on the frontier.

John Sevier: Reverend Doak, Major Patrick Ferguson wants us to surrender, but we are not going to do that. Can you say a few words to the men before we leave?

Reverend Samuel Doak: Of course, I know just what to say. Help me get everyone's attention.

Narrator 3: When the men were told that Reverend Doak was preparing to speak, they grew quiet to hear every word.

Doak Part 1 "My countrymen, you are about to set out on an expedition which is full of hardships and dangers, but one in which the Almighty will attend you."



Doak Part 2 "Taxation without representation and the quartering of soldiers in the homes of our people without their consent are evidence that the Crown of England would take from its American Subjects the last vestige of Freedom."

Doak Part 3 "The enemy is marching hither to destroy your own homes."

Doak Part 4 "Brave men, you are not unacquainted with battle. Your hands have already been to war and your fingers to fight."

Doak Part 5 "You have wrested these beautiful valleys of the Holston, and Watauga from the savage hand."

Doak Part 6 "Will you tarry now until the other enemy carries fire and sword to your very doors?"

Doak Part 7 "Go forth then in the strength of your manhood to the aid of your brethren, the defense of your liberty and the protection of your home."

Narrator 1: After Doak's sermon the men began the long, cold march across the mountains to find Major Patrick Ferguson. They would find him at a spot known as King's Mountain.

