



SPHERE

PROHUMAN FOUNDATION

Fostering Civil Discourse and Diverse Viewpoints for Every Classroom

Women in the American Revolution: The Story of Nanyehi/Nancy Ward

Lesson Overview

In this lesson, students will explore the life of Nanyehi/Nancy Ward, a Cherokee leader who served as an important intermediary and peacemaker between her people and American settlers during the American Revolution. Through close reading and character analysis, students will examine how Nanyehi/Nancy Ward's leadership skills enabled her to lead the Women's Council of Clan Representatives and become the only woman with a vote in the Cherokee General Council. Students will also practice generating thoughtful questions about character development and support their analysis with textual evidence. These activities will enable students to explore how Nanyehi/Nancy Ward demonstrated humanity when she spoke in treaty negotiations about how peace would be possible only if Native Americans and settlers saw themselves as one people.



Unit at a Glance

Lesson number	Featured person	Accomplishments	Target character trait
Lesson 1	Elizabeth Freeman	Sued for her freedom and inspired many enslaved women	Curiosity
Lesson 2	Anna Smith Strong	The only female member of George Washington's spy ring	Courage
Lesson 3	Nanyehi (Nancy Ward)	A respected member of the Cherokee Nation	Humanity
Lesson 4	Deborah Sampson	Disguised herself as a man to fight in the Revolutionary War	Grit
Lesson 5	Esther de Berdt Reed	Author and fundraiser for the Continental Army	Compassion

Unit Essential Questions

- The Declaration of Independence lists several self-evident truths: People, by their very existence, are free, equal, and have rights. No one, not even a king, can govern them without their consent. What are freedom, equality, rights, and government with consent?
- To what extent were the women covered in these lessons able to use their character strengths to achieve the self-evident truths outlined in the Declaration of Independence?

Objectives

- Identify character traits and analyze the development of a historical individual using textual evidence.
- Support claims using textual evidence in a structured written response.
- Formulate meaningful questions about the development of a historical individual in a nonfiction text.
- Collaborate with others to generate questions and share different perspectives about a nonfiction text.

Materials

- “Promoting Humanity for a Strong Civil Society: The Story of Nanyehi/Nancy Ward” text
- Painting of the “**Beloved Woman**” of the Cherokee Nation by Ben Hampton from the Tennessee State Museum Collection

Warm-Up

- Show or display the painting of the “**Beloved Woman**” of the Cherokee Nation by Ben Hampton in the Tennessee State Museum Collection. Ask students what they notice about the painting. Then ask them to turn and discuss the following questions with another student:
 - What stands out to you in this painting? Why?
 - What can we know about Nanyehi/Nancy Ward from this painting? What details do you see that tell you something about her?
 - What are some questions you have after looking at this painting?
- If there is time, debrief about these questions as a whole class.

Learning Activities

READ ABOUT NANYEHI/NANCY WARD

Hand out the text “Promoting Humanity for a Strong Civil Society: The Story of Nanyehi/Nancy Ward.” Have students read the text individually or in pairs. While they are reading, ask them to annotate the text in the following ways:

- **Highlight words and phrases that reveal Nanyehi’s identity.** Remind students that Nanyehi’s identity can be determined by reading passages that describe what she thinks of herself or what other individuals think of her.

- **Underline words and phrases that show Nanyehi's actions.** Tell students that these actions can be large or small. Each action in a text tells us, as readers, something about the individual.
- **Star words and phrases that describe Nanyehi's background.** An individual's background reveals a lot about their beliefs by telling us where and when they live, whom they care for, and what they pay attention to throughout their life.

SMALL-GROUP QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

After students have finished reading and annotating the passage, separate them into small groups. Ask each group to discuss the following questions, using evidence from the text to support their responses:

- How did Nanyehi become a leader in her community? What events led to this, and how did she respond?
- What did the Cherokee community in Chota believe to be true about Nanyehi? How did this change from before the American Revolution to after?
- How were the communities of the Cherokee and colonial settlements different? How did they each view the role of women in government and society?
- What did the Americans believe about Nanyehi? How did that affect the way they treated her and her family?
- What obstacles did Nanyehi face following the raid and the American Revolution? How did she respond, and what does that demonstrate about her character?
- How did Nanyehi's role in her community change after the American Revolution?
- What is Nanyehi's legacy today?

ACTIVITY

In a 1781 speech, Nanyehi spoke with American soldiers from Virginia. She knew that these soldiers valued women's role of motherhood in society rather than women's role in government. She was aware of the soldiers' worldview about women, how it would affect their listening to her point of view, and that the best path forward for peace was finding mutual understanding. She shared with them, "Our cry is all for peace, let it continue. This peace must last forever. Let your women's sons be ours; our sons be yours. Let your women hear our words." In response, a Virginia militia leader said, "Such words and thoughts show the world that human nature is the same everywhere. . . . We will not quarrel with you, because you are our mothers." Nanyehi had used her conversational skills to listen and understand her audience of American soldiers who valued the role of motherhood, and it led to a treaty negotiation with no land lost after battle.

Ask students to collaborate with a partner to apply their knowledge from the reading, quotation, and discussion to fill out the table. They will explore how being open, using

discourse to communicate with others, and being curious helped Nanyehi work toward peace and demonstrate her humanity.

Principles	What actions did Nanyehi take to make each principle true in her community?	Why was the principle important?
Openness (i.e., How was she open to new ideas?)		
Discourse (i.e., How did communicating respectfully with others help her advance the public good?)		
Curiosity (i.e., How was she open to new ideas?)		

- Use the answers in the table to discuss with a partner how the principles of openness, discourse, and curiosity of others shaped Nanyehi's worldview and effect on government?
- How do these principles relate to the principles in the Declaration of Independence? Provide one example.

Return to a whole-group discussion. Ask students to share their responses and what they identified in the table. Note commonalities and explore where differences arise in student answers. As an extension, you can ask students to explore how other women they have studied from this unit furthered these principles in their communities.

DEBRIEF

As a whole class, debrief and reflect on the following prompt. Have students recall the definition of a civil society:

How does believing in the humanity of others and respecting others create the opportunity for a strong civil society?

Closing

Individually, through an exit ticket, ask students the following question:

- The Declaration of Independence lists several self-evident truths: People, by their very existence, are free and equal, and they have rights. No one, not even a king, can govern them without their consent. To what extent did Nanyehi/Nancy Ward show humanity to achieve the self-evident truths outlined in the Declaration of Independence?

Extension Activity

- Show students this short video about the musical "[Nanyehi: Beloved Woman of the Cherokee](#)" (about three minutes).
- As students watch, have them answer the following questions on a sheet of notebook paper:
 - Why was the composer of the musical, Becky Hobbs, interested in Nanyehi/Nancy Ward?
 - How was Nanyehi/Nancy Ward first honored?
 - What happened when Nanyehi/Nancy Ward's husband was killed?
 - Why did Nanyehi/Nancy Ward begin to advocate for peace?
- Facilitate a whole-class discussion (two to three minutes) about the answers to the questions.

ELA Common Core Standards Met

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.4 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.4 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.9 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.9 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.7.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.6.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.1	Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.6.10 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.10 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 6–8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6–8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Character and Social Emotional Development National Guidelines Met

Standard Type	Standard Text
Intellectual character A2	Identify individuals, fiction and real, past and present, who exemplify the different intellectual character strengths in a concrete and compelling manner.
Intellectual character A3	Recognize and understand why the intellectual character strengths are not innate (something you are born with) but can be developed with practice and support.
Responsible and ethical decision-making A3	Write about and share a principle you want to live by that you learned from a family member, book, movie, or personal experience.
Social awareness A1	Experience and demonstrate empathy.
Social awareness A4	Analyze the impact of stereotyping, discrimination, and prejudice (at school, in the community and beyond).
Social awareness A5	Practice "perspective taking" as a strategy to strengthen your acceptance of others.
Social awareness A6	Demonstrate awareness and understanding that despite differences, all people have similar needs, feelings and wants.