

Arkansas  PBS

#ARVoicesAt250

History Isn't Just the Past—It's About You.

ARKANSAS PBS & NATIONAL HISTORY DAY ARKANSAS STORY PROMPTS

FOR STUDENTS: YOUR VOICE IN THE STORY OF AMERICA'S REVOLUTION

In 2025 and beyond, the U.S. will mark the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution. Arkansas PBS is partnering with National History Day Arkansas to showcase **student stories** that connect Revolutionary history to our state, our communities, and our future. Your work could be featured on Arkansas PBS and social media!

Choose a prompt below or adapt it to your own interests. Use National History Day research methods — primary and secondary sources — and choose the format you like best:

- Performance
- Documentary
- Exhibit
- Website
- Paper



Learn more about “The American Revolution” at pbs.org/americanrevolution.

Visit myarpbs.org/america250 to get started!

REVOLUTIONARY YOUTH: TELLING THE STORY OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE REVOLUTION

“The American Revolution” documentary by Ken Burns highlights real young people who lived through the war — the same kind of stories that inspired “Hamilton: An American Musical.” These were teenagers and young adults, full of ambition, passion, and big choices.

- **Betsy Ambler** – A young Virginian girl whose diary offers glimpses of wartime life.
- **Chainbreaker** – An Oneida boy who sided with the Revolution.
- **James Potter Collins** – A teenage soldier from South Carolina.
- **James Forten** – A free Black teenager who later became a leader in Philadelphia’s Black community.
- **John Greenwood** – A 16-year-old fifer who marched with the Continental Army.
- **Marquis de Lafayette** – Only 19 when he crossed the Atlantic to fight for American independence.
- **Roger Lamb** – A British soldier and later prisoner of war who kept detailed accounts.
- **Boston King** – An enslaved teenager who escaped to the British and later became a Methodist minister.
- **Joseph Plumb Martin** – A 15-year-old soldier whose memoir gives a vivid account of life in the Continental Army.
- **Phillis Wheatley** – Enslaved poet in Boston whose writings helped fuel revolutionary thought.

Prompt: Choose one of these young figures. Tell their story through performance, documentary, or other suggested format. What choices did they face? How did their youth shape their experience of the Revolution?

ARKANSAS AT THE TIME OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

Arkansas, then part of Spanish Louisiana, was the site of the **Colbert Raid at Arkansas Post (April 17, 1783)** — the only Revolutionary War battle fought in present-day Arkansas.

- **Spanish Control** – Arkansas Post, on the Arkansas River, was under Spanish rule during the Revolution.
- **The Colbert Raid (April 17, 1783)** – British partisan Captain James Colbert, with Chickasaw allies, attacked the Spanish garrison at Fort Carlos III.
- **Spanish Defense** – Spanish soldiers, Quapaw allies, and settlers defended the fort successfully.
- **Impact** – This was the last land-based battle of the Revolutionary War in the Mississippi Valley, highlighting the war’s global alliances and conflicts.
- **Shifting Power** – The raid highlights how the Revolution involved not just colonists and Britain, but also Spain, Indigenous nations, and the balance of power in the West.
- **Arkansas Post Today** – The site is preserved at Arkansas Post National Memorial, where the story of this battle and Arkansas’s role in the Revolution is shared.

Prompt: Research the Colbert Raid and Arkansas Post. How does this story show that Arkansas — though far from the East Coast — was still part of the Revolution’s global stage? What role did Spain, Native allies, and settlers play? Who were the people involved — Spanish soldiers, Quapaw allies, Chickasaw fighters, British partisans?

ARKANSAS CONNECTIONS: VETERANS AND MEMORY

Many Revolutionary War veterans later settled in Arkansas, and some are buried here. Their graves, census records, and pension files help tell their stories.

Prompt: Find a Revolutionary War veteran buried in your county (use DAR or SAR resources). Research their journey — Where did they come from? What role did they play in the Revolution? Why did they move to Arkansas? Share their story through a short video, exhibit, or “virtual walking tour” of their gravesite.

LETTERS ACROSS TIME

Use your research to create a “letter exchange” or dialogue that shows how Revolutionary War ideas connect to today.

Prompt: Research a Revolutionary War figure and base their “voice” on real writings, speeches, or actions. Then, write a letter or script imagining how they might respond to questions from a modern young Arkansan. Support your creative interpretation with historical evidence.

Examples:

- Phillis Wheatley responding to questions about freedom and creativity.
- Joseph Plumb Martin explaining what army life was really like for a teenager.
- Marquis de Lafayette reflecting on global alliances.

MY REVOLUTION

The Revolution was about ideas: liberty, representation, freedom of speech, equality.

Prompt: Choose one Revolutionary-era idea and connect it to a cause you care about today. How are people still fighting for these ideas? Show how civic engagement is a modern form of “revolution.” Highlight ways young people can make a difference.

MEDIA SKILLS CHALLENGE: MAKE YOUR PROJECT BROADCAST-READY

Historians and filmmakers don’t just tell stories — they also make sure the pictures, music, and videos they use are safe for broadcast media. If you want your National History Day documentary project to be produced with best media practices, here’s an optional challenge:

- ✓ Take your own photos or video — gravesites, Arkansas Post, reenactments, performances.
- ✓ Use free public sources — Library of Congress, National Archives, Smithsonian.
- ✓ Try Creative Commons — like Wikimedia Commons (check that it’s labeled for reuse).
- X Don’t use copyrighted music or images unless you have written permission.

Quick test: If your project aired on TV, could every photo, clip, or song be shown without a problem?

Note: The Media Skills Challenge is optional. All #ARVoicesAt250 projects submitted are eligible to be shared and considered for prizes.

ARKANSAS PBS #ARVOICESAT250 AWARD

Three special prizes will be awarded at National History Day Arkansas State Contest and Award Ceremony in Spring 2026:

- Junior Division (grades 6–8)
- Senior Division (grades 9–12)
- Media Skills Challenge (documentary only, grades 9–12)

Projects will be judged first under National History Day rules. Arkansas PBS awards add extra recognition for projects that:

- Bring our story prompts to life and make the Revolution connect to Arkansas or today.
- (Media Challenge only) Use images, video, and music that are original or safe to share — the way professional filmmakers do.

Selected projects will also be highlighted and shared by Arkansas PBS using the hashtag **#ARVoicesAt250**.

Special prizes sponsored by Arkansas PBS Foundation and the Stella Boyle Smith Trust.

Resources to Get Started

- Encyclopedia of Arkansas – Article on the Colbert Raid and Arkansas Post.
- DAR Arkansas Veterans List – Names and locations of Revolutionary War graves in Arkansas.
- National Archives – Military service and pension records.
- Library of Congress – Revolutionary War maps, images, and documents.
- Ken Burns: The American Revolution – Coming soon to PBS.
- PBS LearningMedia.

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THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

A FILM BY KEN BURNS, SARAH BOTSTEIN & DAVID SCHMIDT

For more information, visit myarpbs.org/america250

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