What do you know about the American Revolutionary War?

1. Before the United States became a country, there were thirteen colonies. (A colony is a country under control of another country.) The thirteen colonies fought for their independence from: A. France  B. England  C. Spain

2. The American Revolutionary War took place from: A. 1754-1763  
   B. 1812-1815  C. 1775-1783

3. George Washington was  A. Commander in Chief of the Continental Army  B. A owner of slaves.  C. Married a widow named Martha  D. First president of the United States.  E. All of the above.


   Yankee Doodle went to town
   A-riding on a pony
   He stuck a feather in his hat
   And called it macaroni

(Chorus)
Yankee Doodle, keep it up
Yankee Doodle dandy
Mind the music and the step
and with the girls be handy!

Father and I went down to camp
Along with Captain Gooding
And there we saw the men and boys
As thick as hasty pudding.

(Chorus)
And there was General Washington
Upon the slapping stallion
Giving orders to his men
I guess there was a million. . . .

The Spirit of '76 by Archibald MacNeal Willard, painted in 1878.

1. What are the men doing?
2. Where are the men?
3. What do you see in the foreground (the part of the painting nearest you)?
4. If you were in this scene, what sounds would you hear?
5. Do you think the men are losing or winning the battle?
Reading Comprehension

It is believed a British military officer wrote the song to make fun of the Americans during the French-Indian War. Then when the Americans fought for independence from England, the English soldiers sang the song again to mock the American soldiers. But when the colonists started to win the war, they sang the song with pride. There are several confusing words in the song.

**Yankee:** Originally yankee referred to anyone from New England who had come from England. Now Yankee means anyone from the United States. It is often shortened to “Yank.”

**Doodle:** This word has no meaning now. It probably came from a German word that meant “fool.”

**Dandy:** This word is still used but it is not so common. It refers to a man who pays a lot of attention to his clothes and the way he looks. It is not a compliment. “He is quite the dandy.”

**Macaroni:** We eat macaroni today, a type of pasta. But back then, macaroni was a big wig that covered the head. In this song, the man puts a feather in his cap, thinking it is a fashionable wig. In other words, he is confused and stupid.

**Mind the music:** We don’t hear this term today. But you might hear: Mind your own business. (rude) Or mothers might tell their children, “Mind your manners.” In London, you will see this sign, “Mind the gap.” There is a space between the train and the platform. This is the gap. In other words, be careful when you step into the train. But mind the music has a different meaning. “Pay attention.”

**Girls be handy:** We don’t use this term today. In this song, it means keep the girls near you. We do use the word “handy.” It means near you. “Keep your credit cards handy.” Or something that is useful. “This electrical drill is handy.”

**Hasty pudding:** a pudding made with milk and wheat flour that is eaten in England. Very thick. In the song, there were so many men and boys following George Washington that they were as “thick” as hasty pudding. Hasty means something that is done quickly. ‘He was very hasty in his decisions.’ Perhaps the pudding can be made quickly.

Questions. Mark true or false.

1. Americans first sung Yankee Doodle Dandy with pride about themselves. True False
2. The term Yankees originally referred to someone from New England. True False
3. Doodle means that someone is very smart. True False
4. A macaroni was a type of a wig that was very big. True False
5. “Mind your business” is a rude command. True False
6. Hasty pudding is a dessert popular in England. True False
Follow-up Activities

Issues:
1. Discuss current revolutions that are taking place throughout the world or revolutions from the past in the students’ countries.
2. Have students write short essays about military heroes in their countries.
3. Encourage students to bring in songs or music describing patriotic events in their countries.

Vocabulary:
1. Some words are not used in the same context in today’s English. This could lead to an interesting discussion. Why are some words dropped, and others take on a new meaning. For example, macaroni is pasta. But in the song, macaroni is slang for a type of a wig. Do we have slang for any type of clothing or fashionable trend? If you didn’t know anything about Hasty Pudding, what do you think would be in it? What other types of pudding do you know? In the song, the men and boys were as thick as hasty pudding. This is a metaphor. Using food that you know, create your own metaphors. i.e. as sloppy as spaghetti sauce.
Yankee Doodle Dandy and the American Revolutionary War

Objective: Learn why Americans are called Yankees and how a song exemplified American pride during the Revolutionary War. Learn words that are used today -- e.g. Yankee and phrases that can be used in different applications. i.e. Mind the music--Mind your business.

Skills: Reading comprehension. Speaking about the War of Independence.

Teacher’s notes: Yankee Doodle Dandy has a catchy tune. The video clip combines visuals with the words. The difficulty is that the song has words that are not used today or used in a different context. The video clip greatly helps comprehension by matching images with the words. This is the first of a series of ESL lessons on American history through song.

What do you know about the Revolutionary War?:

1. B. England
2. C. 1775-1783 (A. 1754-1763 was the French-Indian War. B. 1812-1815 was the War of 1812.)
3. E. All of the above.
4. A.

Answers:

Americans first sung Yankee Doodle Dandy with pride about themselves. False
The term Yankees originally referred to someone from New England. True
Doodle means that someone is very smart. False
A macaroni was a type of a wig that was very big. True
“Mind your business” is a rude command. True
Hasty pudding is a dessert popular in England. True