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Bio4Kids: Benedict Arnold (1741–1801)

Brief Outline

If you're called a "Benedict Arnold," someone is saying that you're a traitor. But the real Benedict Arnold didn't start out that way. He started out on the colonists' side during the Revolutionary War. It was only later that he decided to switch sides and let down his country.

Arnold was born in Norwich, Connecticut, on January 14, 1741. Before becoming a soldier, he ran a drugstore in New Haven. He then tried his hand as a trader. He made a lot of money from buying and selling goods from the West Indies. Arnold served as a captain with the Connecticut militia. A militia is a group of citizens who serve as soldiers in times of need. Early in the Revolutionary War, he became a colonel. On May 10, 1775, Arnold, along with Ethan Allen and his troops, helped capture Fort Ticonderoga, in New York. He was later wounded during an attack on the Canadian city of Quebec.

Arnold showed his bravery in several more battles, but was badly hurt in 1777. No longer able to fight, he was put in charge of Philadelphia in 1778. Many thought he abused his position and spent too much money. He was charged with breaking state and military rules. Although he was cleared of the charges, Arnold was reprimanded, or harshly criticized, by his friend General George Washington for his actions.

Arnold thought he had done a lot for the country as a military officer and political official. He felt that all of his accomplishments were being overlooked. Feeling mistreated and angry, Arnold began writing to the enemy—the English. He offered his help for a fee. In 1780, Arnold was in command of West Point, an important military base. He came up with a plan to give this base to the British. His plot was stopped when some of Arnold's letters were discovered. He avoided capture and joined the British Army. Arnold and his family went to England in 1781. He died on June 14, 1801, in London, England.

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