

Perspectives on the American Revolution: Patriots vs. Loyalists

Historical Background

“To study history goes beyond memorizing a series of significant dates and events, or describing notable individuals' actions and contributions.” With this premise, Professor Peter Gibbon argues that students must develop what he calls “historical habits of mind” (Gibbon).

For example, chief among these habits of mind is “understanding points of view and multiple perspectives.” Also on this list is the student’s ability to use “documents and other primary data” to develop the “skills necessary to analyze point of view, context, and bias, and to understand and interpret information.” These habits of mind are the basis for this lesson.

Also fundamental to this lesson are the words of renowned historian Bernard Bailyn as he describes the plight of the Loyalist. “For a century and a half after the Revolution the loyalists’ story was the subject of the fiercest and blindest partisanship that can be found anywhere in American historiography. The earliest patriotic chroniclers of the Revolution saw the loyalists as the words of all enemies: traitors, betrayers of their own people and homeland. Just as they portrayed the Founding Fathers as flawless paragons commanding the almost universal allegiance of the population, so they saw the leading loyalists as craven sycophants of a vicious oligarchy parasites of the words corrupters of the ancient regime, and they simply blasted them into oblivion. (Bailyn, 210)”

The object of this lesson is for students to examine key events that led to the Revolutionary War. Students will first read about the perspective of Patriots and/or Loyalists. Then, they will read about key events, examine primary source documents, and respond from the perspective of either a Patriot or a Loyalist. How did Patriots feel about the Boston Massacre? How did Loyalists view the event? What was the Loyalist reaction to the Boston Tea Party? How did Patriots respond? Which event leading up to the first battle made the Patriots the most upset? Which event made the Loyalists most upset? How can one event conjure up two dramatically different perspectives?

Summary including objectives

This lesson serves two purposes. The first purpose is to provide students with practice at the skill set of reading critically and analyzing primary source materials. The second purpose is to provide students with an opportunity to look at key events in history from different perspectives. Students will reflect on key events from the perspective of either a Patriot or a Loyalist. Since most students will have learned about such important events as the Boston Massacre, the Boston Tea Party, etc. in elementary school, the emphasis will not be on learning about the event, per se. Rather, this lesson will emphasize how events can be viewed differently by different groups of people.

In addition, this lesson will be part of a larger interdisciplinary unit on newspapers. Working together with the ELA teacher, this instructor will introduce students to a variety of primary source documents. Students will be introduced to the concept of propaganda, as well. Working with the ELA teacher, students will read and evaluate the basic elements of current day newspapers and journalistic writing. Eventually, groups of students will create a colonial newspaper. The articles for the newspapers will be small research papers. The ELA teacher will supervise the writing process, and this instructor will supervise the research process. The outcome will be a colonial newspaper with nine articles and illustrations.

Content Standard Alignment

Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework:

USI.4 Analyze how Americans resisted British policies before 1775 and analyze the reasons for the American victory and the British defeat during the Revolutionary war. (H)

USI.5 Explain the role of Massachusetts in the revolution, including important events that took place in Massachusetts and important leaders from Massachusetts. (H)

- A. the Boston Massacre
- B. the Boston Tea Party
- C. the Battles of Lexington and Concord and Bunker Hill
- D. Sam Adams, John Adams, and John Hancock

Procedures

1. After the teacher cuts out each profile and places them into a bin, students randomly choose a profile of either a Patriot or a Loyalist. (Student Handout 4.2A)
2. Students will read and highlight their profile. Teacher will help students understand the perspective of the individual on the profile.
3. Teacher will distribute a note taking guide (Student Handout 4.2B) to be completed by each student.
4. Students will travel around the classroom in small groups. At each station, students will read a placard (Placard 3.3A-3.3I) about a different event that led up to the Revolutionary War.* At each station, students will fill in the appropriate boxes in their note taking guide. For each placard, students will summarize “what happened?” In addition they will write a newspaper headline for the event from the perspective of their profile. The headline should capture how their particular person feels about the event.
5. After each student has visited each station, students will share their headlines by pasting them on the class matrix which the teacher will create on the board. The teacher will then lead a class in a discussion. Teacher will emphasize how each individual student read the same “facts,” yet reached a different conclusion. This conclusion is a result of each individual’s PERSPECTIVE. Teacher may also wish to discuss various features of propaganda as it relates to colonial times. Possible connections can be made with the Sons of Liberty, Committees of Correspondence, and other propagandistic groups and materials.
6. As a follow up to this class activity, each student will be responsible for learning more about the event from the last station he/she visited, and writing a one page newspaper article from his/her perspective. The title of the newspaper will be either “The Patriot” or “The Loyalist”. Students will write an article to go with their headline and provide at least one illustration for the piece.

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Assessment

Informal

Students will be assessed informally by their completion of the note taking guide (attached).

Student work (summaries and headlines) should reflect how each side viewed each event.

Student discussion should emphasize how any event (fact) can produce vastly different perspectives (opinions).

Formal

Students will be assessed for their newspaper articles using the rubric to be provided by the ELA teacher.

Bibliography/ Sources Cited

Bailyn, Bernard. *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*. Belknap Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. 1974.

Colonial Life and the American Revolution, Teachers' Curriculum Institute. 1997. (All TCI documents are printed with permission from TCI – 9/23/2009).

Gibbon, Peter. Online. <http://amoreperfectunion.wikispaces.com/Historical+Habits+of+Mind>.

Wood, Gordon. *The Purpose of the Past: Reflections on the Uses of History*. The Penguin Press, New York. 2008.

PATRIOT or LOYALIST (CIRCLE ONE)

Event	Summary of what happened	Newspaper Headline
Placard 3.3A Proclamation of 1763		
Placard 3.3B Quartering Act 1765		
Placard 3.3C Stamp Act 1765		
Placard 3.3D Townshend Act 1767		
Placard 3.3E Boston Massacre 1770		
Placard 3.3F Boston Tea Party 1773		
Placard 3.3G Intolerable Acts 1774		
Placard 3.3H First Continental Congress 1774		
Placard 3.3I Lexington & Concord 1775		

