

American Revolution: Events Leading to War

Overview

Students will learn about the events leading up to the Revolutionary War and develop an understanding of the causes of Patriot resentment of the British. Students will experience emotions similar to those felt by colonists by participating in an experiential activity. They will then represent various opinions of the time by creating a political cartoon focused on a particular event, tax, act, or law.

Grade

8

Essential Questions

- What were the causes and effects of the Revolutionary War?
- How did colonist's perspectives of colonial laws and taxes issued during the Revolutionary Period differ from the perspective of the British?
- What events occurred that enhanced hostility between Patriots and Loyalists?

Materials

- Fictional Memo from the Superintendent, example attached
- "American Revolution: Events Leading to War" Power Point (in PDF format) available in the Database of K-12 Resources at <https://k12database.unc.edu/files/2012/04/AmericanRevolutionEventsLeadingtoWarPPT.pdf>
 - To view this PDF as a projectable presentation, save the file, click "View" in the top menu bar of the file, and select "Full Screen Mode"
 - To request an editable PPT version of this presentation, send a request to CarolinaK12@unc.edu
- America's Growing Revolutionary Spirit, handout and answer key attached
- Revolutionary War Political Cartoon examples, attached
- Revolutionary Cartoons Assignment, attached

Duration

60-90 minutes (split over two class periods)

Procedures

Day 1

Experiencing Colonial Sentiment: Unfair Taxation

1. As students enter the room, greet them at the door with a concerned look while handing them a memo from the school superintendent, stating that all students will have to pay a tax to use their lockers from today forward. Any students refusing to pay the tax will have to carry their items with them throughout the day (See the attached *Memo from the Superintendent* as an example. Teachers should create a similar document that will appear believable to students.) As students read they will likely be angered by this. Encourage discussion (the more you can get students riled up, the better) and chart their comments on the board. As you invite students to comment, also ask them to brainstorm ideas for changing this decision.
- **Teacher note:** If students do not have lockers, choose another item or process to tax that is appropriate to your school day, such as carrying book bags or participating in PE or Art.

2. Explain that the superintendent will waive the fee of the first students who volunteer to collect the locker tax and see if any students would like to submit their name. You may also go as far as asking students if any are ready to pay today, so that their locker use is secure for the rest of the month.
3. Finally, explain to students that the memo is not real and have them reflect on their feelings through the process. You may ask questions such as:
 - How did you feel when you read the memo?
 - Why did so many of you feel angry or cheated?
 - Why was your response to this memo so passionate?
 - How did you feel about the superintendent and why? Is there anything he/she could have done to have made you accept this decision more readily?
 - How did you feel about your classmates who volunteered to collect money or pay their tax today?
4. At this point, make it clear to students how their feelings throughout this activity were similar to the feelings of American colonists in the late 1700s, when colonists coined the phrase “**no taxation without representation.**” Briefly describe parallels such as the **Navigation Acts of 1660 & 1663**, the **Sugar Act**, the **Stamp Act**, and the **Tea Act**.

Issues and Events Leading to the Revolutionary War

5. Explain to students that they will be learning about the many issues and events that caused major hostility between colonists and the British, culminating in the **Revolutionary War**. Either in partners or individually, handout the attached worksheet for students to complete (individually or in pairs), instructing them to use their text books, prior knowledge, and inferences to complete the answers.
 - **Optional:** Use the “Events Leading to the American Revolution Power Point” to disseminate background information and facilitate discussion regarding pre-Revolution events, located in CEC’s Database of Civic Resources.
6. Once students are finished, go over the correct answers (and/or take up their work for an assessment) and discuss:
 - If you were a colonist living in America in the late 1700s, which event, tax, act, or law would have angered you most and why?
 - As you considered British perspectives and the colonist perspectives, what reoccurring themes did you notice?
 - In what ways did colonists take civic action and express their feelings towards British rule and decisions? (Discuss specific civic activity such as the **Non-Importation Association**, **boycotts**, the **Boston Tea Party**, the **Edenton Tea Party**, etc.)
 - Imagine if Patriots had not acted on their displeasure. How might things have turned out different in America? Why is civic participation important?
 - **Teacher note:** Students will need to use their completed handout during the second part of the lesson. Thus, teachers should either collect the handouts or inform students that they will need to bring them to class tomorrow.

Day 2

Experiencing the Writs of Assistance

7. This warm up requires a bit of acting skills on the teacher’s part, but should not take more than a few minutes to act out. As the class gets settled, the teacher should pretend to be very angry and inform students that at some point yesterday, your wallet was stolen out of your desk. Explain that you are disappointed, upset, and fairly certain it was someone in this exact classroom who did it. Ask students if

they have any information and escalate your anger when students do not respond. Finally, tell them that you are all going into the hall, and each of them will open their lockers for you to search. Make them believe that you mean business. (If students do not have lockers, teachers can substitute the threat, such as tell students that all of their book bags will be searched.)

8. Finally, let students know that you have made up this scenario. Have students reflect back on their feelings by asking how they felt about the idea of being forced to open their lockers/book bags for a search, even when they were innocent. As students debrief, explain that during colonial times, many merchants were constantly put in the same situation as British tax collectors presented writs of assistance (search warrants) to go through their businesses. This was another factor in causing American hostility towards the British.

Creating Political Cartoons

9. Tell students that they will apply their knowledge of the causes of the Revolutionary War by creating a political cartoon based on a tax, law, or event from yesterday's handout. It is important students know the difference between a regular cartoon and a *political* cartoon so that they do not create simple drawings; rather they create cartoons representing opinion, irony, commentary, etc. Make sure to discuss the definition and characteristics of political cartoons, and use examples to enforce this (see attached *Revolutionary War Political Cartoons*). As you project these examples, ask:
 - What do you see? (Students should simply point out all symbols, characters, objects, text, etc. that they notice. Try to keep them from jumping to interpretation until all pieces of the cartoon are pointed out.)
 - What do you think? What message is the artist trying to convey? What do the symbols represent?
 - What techniques has the artist used and why? (exaggeration, caricatures, humor, sarcasm, etc.)
 - If you were an American Patriot, would you agree with the cartoonist? Why?
 - If you were a Loyalist, would you agree with the cartoonist? Why?
 10. Hand out the attached *Revolutionary Cartoon Assignment Sheet* and discuss your expectations. Encourage students to ask questions about the assignment. Remind them to create a political cartoon, and not a simple drawing. Let students know when their cartoon is due and that it will be shared with the class on that date.
 11. Upon completion of the cartoons, number and display the students' work around the room and give them the opportunity to "tour" the classroom, interpreting the meaning behind each political cartoon.
 - Review class expectations before allowing students to travel around the room to view the displayed work (i.e. remind students to be respectful, positive, and safe as they move throughout the classroom.)
 - Instruct students to travel with notebook paper, noting the number of each cartoon they view and taking notes on what they see and like, and what their fellow student artist might be trying to convey.
 - Once students have viewed the cartoons, have the class participate in a feedback session and discussion of the various political cartoons. This will serve as a great way to review the causes of the Revolutionary War.
- **Alternative assignment:** Another option for a culminating assignment is to assign students a topic from the handout and have them create a headline poster. Finished posters should have four components:
- a headline statement that summarizes the event (it should be catchy, short and does not just list the event)
 - summary of the event (at least 4 bullet points)
 - summary of how the colonists reacted to the event (at least 2 bullet points)
 - visual images-the poster should be eye catchy, neat and have at least one visual

Name: _____

America's Growing Revolutionary Spirit

Using your prior knowledge, your book, the internet, or any other resource in this room, research the following acts, events, and issues that contributed to the Revolutionary spirit of America. For each term:

1. Define what it is.
2. Infer how Patriots and Loyalists may have felt about the act, event, issue, etc.
3. Sketch a small picture or symbol that represents the term and will help you remember its meaning.

Tax or Event	Definition	How would Patriots have felt about this event? ----- How would Loyalists have felt about this event?	Picture or Symbol
Writs of assistance			
Albany Plan of Union, 1754			
Proclamation of 1763			
Sugar Act, 1764			
Quartering Act, 1765			

Tax or Event	Definition	How would Patriots have felt about this event? <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> How would Loyalists have felt about this event?	Picture or Symbol
Stamp Act, 1765			
Stamp Act Congress, 1765			
Declaratory Act of 1766			
Sons of Liberty			
Non-Importation Association (1768)/boycotts			

Tax or Event	Definition	How would Patriots have felt about this event? ----- How would Loyalists have felt about this event?	Picture or Symbol
Boston Massacre, 1770			
Boston Tea Party, 1773			
Intolerable Acts, 1774			
Battles of Lexington and Concord, 1775 (“the shot heard round the world”)			
The Declaration of Independence, 1776			

America's Revolutionary Spirit- ANSWER KEY

*Answers will vary for Columns 2 and pictures/symbols will vary for Column 3

Tax or Event	Definition
Writs of assistance	A legal document that serves as a general search warrant to British officers. This document enabled officials to inspect not only shops and warehouses, but also private homes.
Albany Plan of Union, 1754	A plan to place the British North American colonies under a more centralized government. The plan was adopted on July 10, 1754, by representatives from seven of the British North American colonies. Although never carried out, it was the first important plan to conceive of the colonies as a collective whole united under one government.
Proclamation of 1763	This Proclamation was issued by King George III to organize Britain's new North American empire and to stabilize relations with Native North Americans through regulation of trade, settlement, and land purchases on the western frontier. The Proclamation of 1763 forbade English colonists to live west of the Appalachian Mountains.
Sugar Act, 1764	The Sugar Act set a tax on sugar and expanded the list of taxable items to include specified wines and cloth, coffee, tropical foods and silk.
Quartering Act, 1765	This act required the colonies to provide the basic needs of British soldiers- specified items included housing, cooking utensils, firewood and candles.
Stamp Act, 1765	The Stamp Act of 1765 was a tax imposed by the British Parliament on the colonies that required them to pay a tax on every piece of printed paper they used (legal documents, licenses, ship's papers, newspapers, etc.). The money collected by the Stamp Act was to be used to help pay the costs of defending and protecting the American frontier.
Stamp Act Congress, 1765	The Stamp Act Congress convened in New York City on October 7 with nine colonies in attendance to discuss and act upon the Stamp Act. The delegates approved a 14-point Declaration of Rights and Grievances. The statement said that colonial taxation could only be carried out by their own assemblies, not Great Britain.
Declaratory Act of 1766	This act of the Parliament of Great Britain was one in a series of resolutions passed attempting to regulate the behavior of the colonies. It stated that Parliament had the right to make laws for the colonies in all matters—including taxation.
Sons of Liberty	A secret organization of American colonists formed initially to protest the Stamp Act. Members of the group, including merchants, businessmen, lawyers, journalists, and others, took on the motto "no taxation without representation."
Non-Importation Association (1768)/boycotts	The Non-Importation Agreements were a series of commercial restrictions adopted by American colonists to protest British taxation. Merchants in New York, Boston and Philadelphia agreed collectively to boycott British imports until Parliament repealed the Stamp Act.
Boston Massacre, 1770	During the Boston Massacre, five civilian colonists were killed by British soldiers. It was the culmination of civilian-military tensions that had been growing since royal troops first appeared in Massachusetts in October 1768 to enforce the heavy tax burden.
Boston Tea Party, 1773	The Boston Tea Party was a direct action protest by colonists in Boston against the British government. On December 16, 1773, after officials in Boston refused to return three shiploads of taxed tea to Britain, a group of colonists boarded the ships and destroyed the tea by throwing it into Boston Harbor.

Intolerable Acts, 1774	<p>"Intolerable Acts" was a popular name given by Americans to four laws passed by the British Parliament in 1774 in response to the Boston Tea Party. The Intolerable Acts, also called Coercive Acts, were intended to punish the colony of Massachusetts for destroying tea that belonged to the East India Company and to show the other American colonies what might happen if they disobeyed British policies.</p>
<p>Battles of Lexington and Concord, 1775 ("the shot heard round the world")</p>	<p>The Battles of Lexington and Concord were the first military engagements of the American Revolutionary War. They were fought on April 19, 1775, in Middlesex County, Massachusetts. The battles marked the outbreak of open armed conflict between Great Britain and the colonies.</p>
<p>The Declaration of Independence, 1776</p>	<p>A statement, written primarily by Thomas Jefferson, that was adopted by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, which announced that the thirteen American colonies then at war with Great Britain were now independent states, and thus no longer a part of the British Empire</p>

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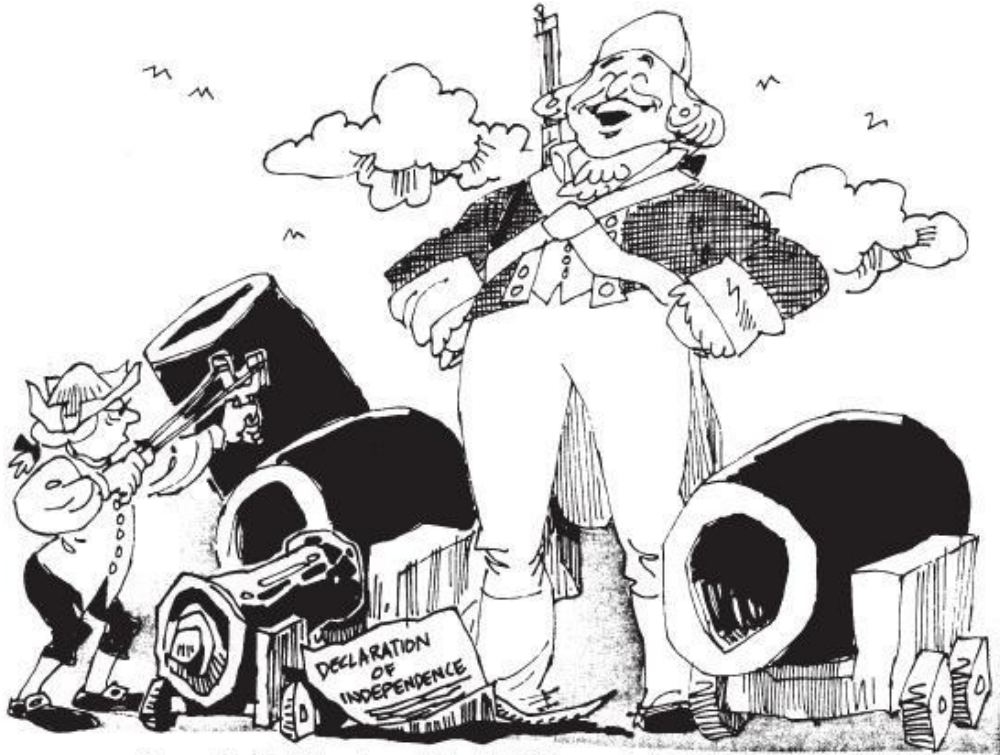
To: All North Carolina Principals
From: The Office of the State Superintendent
Re: Taxation of student locker use

Please note that effective <<insert date>>, all North Carolina public school students will be taxed monthly for the use of their school locker. This tax is non-negotiable, and any student refusing to pay the tax will lose their locker privileges.

The funds collected will assist in the proposed renovation of the State Superintendent's office, as well as the purchase of new office furniture for Board of Education employees working at 301 N. Wilmington Street in Raleigh. The tax will be \$4.00 per month, a fee that we feel is quite reasonable.

While we understand this may be a controversial issue, it is important all students and families recognize that we have no other choice due to recent budget cuts to our state education budget. We trust that every North Carolina student and family will do their part to assist in this matter.

Revolutionary War Political Cartoons Examples



Source: Melvin Schwartz and John R. O'Connor, *Exploring American History*, 2nd edition, Globe Book Company, Inc. (adapted)



Source: Benjamin Franklin, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 9, 1754 (adapted)

Name: _____

Revolutionary Cartoons Assignment

Due date: _____

Assignment: Create a political cartoon focused on an event, tax, act, or law that contributed to the outbreak of the Revolutionary War.

Expectations	Points Possible	Points Awarded
Meets requirements of a political cartoon: contains opinion, commentary, satire, etc.		
Content: focuses on contributing factor of Rev. War		
Accuracy: shows a clear and correct understand of contributing factor represented		
Graphics: clarity, originality, and relevance to the assignment		
Creativity: color, original idea evident, overall attractiveness, etc.		

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