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
5

North Carolina Essential Standards for 5th Grade Social Studies
- 5.H.1.3 - Analyze the impact of major conflicts, battles and wars on the development of our nation through Reconstruction.

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
  - 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 viewed 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, more simple, 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
**Differentiation**

**Students with special needs**
- Modify the reading and note taking by listing specific events or taxes on which the student should focus.
- Pair students with special needs with a reading/learning partner.
- Modify the political cartoon as needed, assisting students with special needs in choosing the subject matter of his/her cartoon and discussing the opinion they want their political cartoon to represent.
- Instead of the political cartoon, assign the poster activity described in step 12.

**AIG Students**
- Instruct students to research political cartoons further and find current examples that reveal similar themes to the spirit felt during post-Revolutionary America. Students can present these to class and describe their findings.

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**PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA**

**STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

301 North Wilmington Street, Raleigh, 27601

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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 loose 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: Benjamin Franklin, The Pennsylvania Gazette, May 9, 1754 (adapted)
Name: __________

Due date: ______________________________

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

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<thead>
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<th>Expectations</th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
<th>Points Awarded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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**Revolutionary Cartoons Assignment**

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