

The Founding Fathers- Heroes or Domestic Terrorists? By Sarah Nichols

Standards: This lesson is designed for a high school class, but could easily be adapted for an 8th or 5th grade class

5th Grade Utah Social Studies Standards:

Standard 2

Students will understand the chronology and significance of key events leading to self-government.

Objective 1

Describe how the movement toward revolution culminated in a Declaration of Independence.

A. Explain the role of events that led to declaring independence (e.g., French and Indian War, Stamp Act, Boston Tea Party).

B. Analyze arguments both for and against declaring independence using primary sources from Loyalist and patriot perspectives.

8th Grade Utah Social Studies Standards (US History I):

Standard 5

Students will understand the significance of the American Revolution in the development of the United States.

Objective 1

Analyze what ideas and events led to the Revolutionary movement.

A. Explore the events leading to the outbreak of armed conflict between the American colonies and Great Britain.

Reading for Literacy Standards in Grades 6-8:

Reading for Literacy Standard 1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

Reading for Literacy Standard 2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

US Government and Citizenship:

Standard 1

Students will understand the significance and impact of the Constitution on everyday life.

Objective 1

Investigate the ideas and events that significantly influenced the creation of the United States Constitution and the United States' form of government, a compound constitutional republic.

B. Identify and investigate the events that led to the creation of the Constitution.

Reading for Literacy in Social Studies in Grades 11-12:

Reading for Literacy Standard 1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

Reading for Literacy Standard 2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

Timing: This lesson would take place after teaching the basic information about the events that preceded the Revolutionary War. This would include the French and Indian War (and the Proclamation of 1763), all of the various taxes (Stamp Act, Sugar Act, etc.), the Boston Massacre, the Boston Tea Party, Lexington and Concord, etc. This would fit nicely either at the middle of 1775 or in 1776 after the Declaration of Independence was signed. The content it refers back to the most often is the collection of acts/taxes leveled in the 1760s and 1770s and the colonists' responses.

Anticipatory Set (5-10 minutes):

- Have students create initial definitions for “terrorist” in small groups
- Each group will write their definition on the board
- The teacher will then challenge the definitions, asking questions to refine them:
 - Does someone have to kill a lot of people to qualify? How many? What if they tried to kill a lot but only killed a few? Do they have to kill ANY to be a terrorist?
 - If they don't kill anyone, does destruction of property (buildings, cars, documents) qualify as terrorism?
 - Does someone have to be from a different country to be a terrorist? From a different “group” or identity? Can they be from the same country and identity and still be a terrorist?
 - Do the motivations behind the act/actions change the classification from “crime” to “terrorism”? What is the distinction behind criminal and terrorist?

Introduction:

- Review the background information using a Power Point at the appropriate level
- Show pictures (personal ones from the trip, if possible!) of statues erected of the participants in revolutionary activities, including any Sons of Liberty, any signers of the Declaration of Independence or Constitution, and any other leaders of the movement. Explain that we usually make statues of our heroes, and these men have been remembered as the heroes of our nation. We became a country in great part because of their passion and dedication. But what if these men did these same things today? Would we still see them as heroes? Today, we will look at some primary sources and attempt to see them as one might have seen them in the 1770s —maybe as brave heroes, maybe as harmless and hopeless optimists, maybe as hooligans, and maybe as terrorists.

Primary Source Investigation:

- Review skills involving primary sources
 - Checking the source before evaluating the content
 - Investigating bias and its impact on the reliability of the content
 - Using context to understand unknown words/ideas
- As needed, level these sources to fit your group. This might include previewing vocabulary, adding a word bank to a source, providing extra context, eliminating the longer sources, etc.
- Break class into groups of 5 to perform the Jigsaw strategy with the primary sources. Assign sources according to ability. After an initial investigation with their own source, students will summarize the source to a home group that consists of one student from each source. Students will work together to fill out the accompanying Primary Source Investigation Sheet.
- After all discussions have been fruitful, write a scale on the board. On the far right, write “terrorists.” On the far left, write “Brave Heroes.” In the middle, write “a little bit of both,” or some version of a middle ground. Have students line up on the board according to where their view of the Sons of Liberty and others fighting on their side fit in.

Optional Extensions:

- Host a SpAr debate between the two sides
- Have students write a letter to a famous Son of Liberty to commend them or ask them to change their ways
- Have students group up with someone that read the same source. Have them compare their views.
- Have students research modern rebellions and revolutions to compare and contrast methods of the modern revolutionaries with those of the Sons of Liberty.

Conclusion

- Reaffirm that these same people went on to create a Constitution that protected the rights of the people from a government that was too strong. It built in protections for people to revolt again if their government wasn't representing them. Why would the Sons of Liberty and others build in these protections?
- What about today? Should we revolt if we feel the government doesn't represent us? Should we tar and feather our tax collectors if we don't like the tax? Why or why not?
 - Remind students that the Patriots felt like they were not adequately represented. We have representation that we get to choose. Our elections are free, fair, and frequent. What if that changed? What actions would be considered terrorism?
 - How can we be a part of making sure our government works best? How can we help them represent us better?

Source #1 (2 pictures)



Credit: "Tarred and Feathered and Forced to Drink Tea," 1774 political cartoon, from the website Freedom: A History of Us, www.pbs.org/historyofus. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division (reproduction number, LC-USZ62-9487 [B&W film copy negative]).



Credit: Pulling Down Statue of George III by the "Sons of Freedom" at the Bowling Green, City of New York, July 1776, painted by Johannes A. Oertel, engraved by John C. McRae. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division (reproduction number LC-USZ62-2455 [B&W film copy negative]).

Source #2:

John Andrews, a Boston merchant, writes to his brother-in-law in Philadelphia, May 1774.

In this letter, Boston merchant John Andrews makes reference to the Coercive Acts of 1774 (called the Intolerable Acts in the colonies), which were passed in response to the Boston Tea Party and other revolts against taxes and duties in Boston. These acts included the closing of the Boston port, the prohibition of town meetings, and the mandatory quartering of British soldiers in private homes. The acts outraged the colonists and effectively shut down commercial activity in Boston. (Summary from Smithsoniansource.org)

“Yes, Bill, nothing will save us but an entire stopping of trade, to both England and the West Indies, throughout the continent, and that must be determined both speedily and absolutely. The least hesitation by you to the south and all is over. . . . I sincerely believe they [the British Parliament] intend to carry out their threats, which are to make the town a desolate wilderness and the grass to grow in our streets.”

Source: Charles Sellers, et al., *A Synopsis of American History: Through Reconstruction* (Chicago: Ivan R Dee, 1992).

Source #3:

Excerpts from Patrick Henry's "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" speech, given on March 23, 1775

Patrick Henry gave this speech at the Second Virginia Convention to propose raising a volunteer cavalry to fight against Britain. No one wrote down these words at the time, but several people who heard them got together many years later and wrote down what he said.

"No man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as abilities, of the very worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the house. But different men often see the same subject in different lights; and, therefore, I hope it will not be thought disrespectful to those gentlemen if, entertaining as I do opinions of a character very opposite to theirs, I shall speak forth my sentiments freely and without reserve. This is no time for ceremony. The question before the house is one of awful moment to this country. For my own part, I consider it as nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery; and in proportion to the magnitude of the subject ought to be the freedom of the debate. It is only in this way that we can hope to arrive at the truth, and fulfill the great responsibility which we hold to God and our country.

... Ask yourselves how this gracious reception of our petition comports with those warlike preparations which cover our waters and darken our land. Are fleets and armies necessary to a work of love and reconciliation? Have we shown ourselves so unwilling to be reconciled that force must be called in to win back our love? Let us not deceive ourselves, sir. These are the implements of war and subjugation; the last arguments to which kings resort. I ask gentlemen, sir, what means this martial array, if its purpose be not to force us to submission? Can gentlemen assign any other possible motive for it? Has Great Britain any enemy, in this quarter of the world, to call for all this accumulation of navies and armies? No, sir, she has none. They are meant for us: they can be meant for no other. They are sent over to bind and rivet upon us those chains which the British ministry have been so long forging. And what have we to oppose to them? Shall we try argument?

Sir, we have been trying that for the last ten years. Have we anything new to offer upon the subject? Nothing. We have held the subject up in every light of which it is capable; but it has been all in vain. Shall we resort to entreaty and humble supplication? What terms shall we find which have not been already exhausted? Let us not, I beseech you, sir, deceive ourselves. Sir, we have done everything that could be done to avert the storm which is now coming on.

... There is no longer any room for hope. If we wish to be free--if we mean to preserve inviolate those inestimable privileges for which we have been so long contending--if we mean not basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained--we must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight! ... Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. Besides, sir, we have no election. If we were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged! Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston!

The war is inevitable--and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come.

It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace--but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

Source #4:

Janet Schaw, Journal of a Lady of Quality

Janet Schaw, a Scot visiting her brother's plantation in North Carolina, writes about the realities of British-imposed martial law on colonists. She describes the mandatory quartering, seizure of property, looting, and pillaging of British soldiers, who were given these powers as a way to combat growing colonial unrest. (Summary from Smithsoniansource.org)

“At present the martial law stands thus: An officer or committeeman enters a plantation with his posse. The alternative is proposed. Agree to join us [Loyalists] and your persons and properties are safe . . . if you refuse, we are directly to cut up your corn, shoot your pigs, burn your houses, seize your Negroes and perhaps tar and feather yourself. Not to choose the first requires more courage than they are possessed of, and I believe this method has seldom failed with the lower sort.”

Source: Janet Schaw, Journal of a Lady of Quality, June 1775. Schaw was a Scot visiting her brother, a merchant, in Wilmington, North Carolina, where she was strongly critical of the local [Loyalist] regime.

Source #5:

Two Excerpts and Transcriptions from The Pennsylvania Gazette in 1765

"BOSTON, October 28

WE hear from Halifax, in the province of Nova-Scotia, that on Sunday, the 13th inst. in the morning, was discovered hanging on the gallows behind the Citadel Hill, the effigies of a stampman, accompanied with a boot and devil, together with labels suitable to the occasion (which we cannot insert, not being favoured with the same) this we are informed gave great pleasure and satisfaction to all the friends of liberty and their country there, as they hope from this instance of their zeal, the neighbouring colonies will be charitable enough to believe that nothing but their dependent situation, prevents them from heartily and sincerely opposing a tax unconstitutional in its nature, and of so destructive a tendency as must infallibly entail poverty and beggary on us and our posterity, if carried in execution."

Nov. 7, 1765

"At a general meeting of the Freemen, inhabitants of the county of Essex, in New-Jersey, at the free Borough of Elizabeth, on the 25th day of October, in the year of our Lord 1765, being the anniversary of the happy accession of his present Majesty King George the Third, to the crown of Great-Britain, &c. upon which occasion the said freemen unanimously, and with one voice declared,

- First. That they have at all times heretofore, and ever would bear true allegiance to his Majesty King George the Third, and his royal predecessors, and wished to be governed agreeable to the laws of the land, and the British constitution, to which they ever had, and for ever most cheerfully would submit.
- Secondly. That the stamp act, prepared for the British colonies in America, in their opinion, is unconstitutional; and should the same take place, agreeable to the tenor of it, would be a manifest destruction and overthrow of their long enjoyed, boasted and invaluable liberties and privileges.
- Thirdly. That they will, by all lawful ways and means, endeavour to preserve and transmit to posterity, their liberty and property, in as full and ample manner as they received the same from their ancestors.
- Fourthly. That they will discountenance and discourage, by all lawful measures, the execution and effect of the stamp act.
- Fifthly. That they will detest, abhor, and hold in the utmost contempt, all and every person or persons, who shall meanly accept of any employment or office, relating to the stamp act, or shall take any shelter or advantage from the same; and all and every stamp pimp, informer, favourer and encourager of the execution of the said act; and that they will have no communication with any such person, nor speak to them on any occasion, unless it be to inform them of their vileness.

We have certain information from Boston, that the printers there intend to continue their papers, and to risk the penalties--and that if any of them were to stop on account of the stamp act, their offices would be in danger from the enraged people."

The Sons of Liberty: Heroes, Terrorists, or Something Else?

Context: What do I need to know about the background/setting to better understand these documents?

Documents: In each space below, take notes on the documents. Write about what you learn in the documents, who the author is, what potential bias might be affecting this, and what questions you still have.

#1

#2

#3

#4

#5