

PROJECT TITLE: Self Evident Truths: Did the Punishment Fit the Crime?	
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CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Overview/Teaching Thesis:

As Americans, we are taught that because of the injustice at the hands of King George III and England, the 13 colonists had every right, if not every obligation, to break the ties from England; to become a free and independent state. What if, however, some of the grievances included in the Declaration of Independence, were justified by the British and their supporters? What if they had a point? In order to have a more meaningful understanding of what caused the Revolutionary War, students must be aware of both the Patriot and the British perspective of the events leading up it. Should all of the grievances of the Declaration of Independence been included, or were some better justified than others? In this mini-unit, students will uncover, through the analysis of primary documents, if six of the grievances included in the Declaration of Independence were justified by the British and their supporters. While serving as jurors, students will analyze one of these six grievances and decide if they justifiably belonged (not guilty) or did not belong (guilty) in the Declaration of Independence.

Guiding Questions:

How can teachers get students to understand there is always more than one side to history? Even the side we, as Americans, are taught to be “wrong” must be looked at in order to fully understand the event. By comparing the British perspective of the events leading up to the writing of the Declaration of Independence to the more commonly known Patriot side, students can judge for themselves which side had the stronger case, instead of relying on a biased history book to think for them.

- Were all the grievances listed in the Declaration of Independence justified by the British?
- How can looking at history from more than one perspective give a more accurate picture of what really happened?

Suggested Grade Level and Length of Activities

5th or 6th Grade Social Studies

2-3 60-minute periods

Significance & Relevance:

This is a lesson that could be used in several ways during a unit on the journey of turning the 13 American Colonies into the United States as a free and independent nation, and one that lends itself well to differentiation. All students will need a solid base of background knowledge. Students should understand the events leading to the writing of the Declaration of Independence and should include what the

Declaration was and what Thomas Jefferson included in it. After their background knowledge is solid, they will then be able to look at the Declaration more critically and determine the legitimacy of the grievances. Understanding the background of these grievances and investigating alternative perspectives in the events that led to them will give students a deeper understanding of the Revolutionary War and a deeper connection to the global context.

Virginia Standards of Learning and/or National Standards

Virginia Studies.1 The student will demonstrate skills for historical and geographical analysis including the ability to

- a) Identify and interpret artifacts and primary source documents to understand events in history;
- b) Determine cause and effect relationships;
- c) Compare and contrast historical events;
- d) Make connections between past and present;
- e) Sequence events in Virginia history
- f) Interpret ideas and events from different historical perspectives
- g) Evaluate and discuss issues orally and in writing;

VS.5 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the role of Virginia in the American Revolution by

- a) Identifying the reasons why the colonies went to war with England as expressed in the Declaration of Independence
- b) Identifying various roles played in the Revolutionary War with emphasis on George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and James Lafayette.

Historical Skills Used:

- Chronological Thinking
- Historical Comprehension
- Historical Analysis and Interpretation
- Historical Research Capabilities
- Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision Making

Lesson/Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

- Compare and contrast primary sources from different perspectives. (Lessons 1-3)
- Compare and contrast the list of grievances in the Declaration of Independence (Lessons 1-3)
- Describe the basic facts of the events leading up to the American Revolution, and apply this knowledge while analyzing primary resources. (Lessons 1-3)
- Rank 7 of the grievances of the Declaration of Independence in order of importance (Lessons 2-3)
- Argue the validity one of the grievances in the Declaration of Independence to determine if it should have been included in the Declaration of Independence...if the punishment fit the crime. (Lessons 1-3)

Lesson Plans or Instructional Activities –

Using primary and secondary resources, students argue the validity of the grievances listed in the Declaration of Independence. Could the grievances be looked at differently by introducing a new perspective? If the “punishment” of England committing these grievances was the American colonies severing all ties with them, did this “punishment” actually fit the crimes? Students will look at 7 of the grievances and decide as groups which side was “right” and which side was “wrong” by analyzing primary and secondary sources.

Technology

- Students could use the National Archives website to access many of the primary source documents used in the lesson. (<http://www.archives.gov>)
- The British National Archives has many primary documents that give insight to the British point of view of the events leading up to the writing of the Declaration of Independence. (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>)
- The Colonial Williamsburg website has great background information regarding the Revolutionary War and the events leading up to it. (<http://www.history.org>)

Modifications/Differentiation/Extensions:

Differentiation:

- Use fewer sources thus less information to read and process
- Use more visually based sources
- Adapt some primary sources so that students better understand them.
- Group stronger students with weaker ones
- Do more modeling before allowing students to work as groups

Extensions:

- What effect did the Declaration of Independence have on other countries?
- What was the reaction to the Declaration of Independence in Europe?
- Have students research what movies have been made about the Revolutionary War. Have they seen any of these films? Lead a discussion on whether these films would be an accurate display of what happened.

Annotated list of supplemental resources

Secondary Sources:

Cook, Don (1995). *The Long Fuse: How England Lost the American Colonies*. New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press.

Summary: This book discusses the American Revolution and the events leading up to it from the British perspective. Among the topics it discusses are the Intolerable Acts, the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party, all of which are helpful when studying the American Revolution because it gives the reader a larger picture; a more thorough context. The author also uses many primary sources such as personal letters to illustrate his points.

Hibbert, Christopher (1990). *Redcoats and Rebels*. WW Norton & Company Inc.

Summary: This book discusses the history of the American Revolution from the British perspective, from the colonists' uproar over the Stamp Act of 1765 to the Treaty of Paris in 1783. Seeing things through the British eyes deepens the readers' understanding of the obstacles and hardships Britain faced at the time in an attempt to keep control over the American Colonies. This book illustrates the steps leading up to the writing of the Declaration of Independence including some origins of the grievances Jefferson listed in the document.

Rakove, Jack (2009). *The Annotated U.S. Constitution and Declaration of Independence*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Summary: This book provides a narrative account of how these documents were written. He establishes a historical context for each of the grievances listed. This historical context, in user-friendly wording, can help students "decode" their grievance to make sure they know what it is actually saying before they get started on whether or not it was justified. For the teacher, the book supplies great background information that can in turn enrich our teaching of the subject.

Bender, Thomas (2006). *A Nation Among Nations: America's place in World History*. New York: Hill and Wang.

Summary: In this book, Thomas Bender gives an invaluable look at American History from a world history context. This book can help teachers widen their historical thinking and thus, their teaching.

"Principles of Freedom: The Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution."
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. 2005. <http://research.history.org/pf/declaring/>

Summary: This website is a wonderful resource for background information on the events leading up to the American Revolution. It has a wonderful interactive timeline full of teacher friendly resources. This website could also be useful for students doing an extension project or for teachers in need of primary resources for a lesson or for their own knowledge.

"The Gilder Lehrman Institute Modules on American History." The Gilder Lehrman Institute. 2009.
http://www.gilderlehrman.org/teachers/module1/intro_pop9.html.

Summary: This series for teachers and students gives an in-depth look at specific topics throughout American history. It includes documents, films, and historic pictures useful for teachers putting together a

unit or background knowledge, or research for a students doing an extension project. I used the Revolutionary War module, specifically the Declaration of Independence that broke down all the grievances and justifications behind each one.

Primary Sources:

The American Declaration of Independence. Jefferson, Thomas, c. 1776. Charters of Freedom Division, National Archives. Retrieved from <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration.html>

Summary: Drafted by Thomas Jefferson in 1776, the Declaration of Independence summarized the philosophy of individual liberty and brought forth grievances against the King in order to justify breaking away from England and setting forth being their own country. Students will have the opportunity, by examining this document, to draw their own conclusions regarding the justification of the American Colonies breaking ties with England.

The Destruction of Tea at Boston Harbor. Sarony and Major, 1846. Retrieved from: <http://www.archives.gov/global-pages/larger-image.html?i=/historical-docs/doc-content/images/rev-war-boston-tea-party-l.gif&c=/historical-docs/doc-content/images/rev-war-boston-tea-party.caption.html>

Summary: This lithograph clearly depicts the events of the Boston Tea Party. It shows the involvement of more than one ship, that Patriots dressed as Mohawk Indians, and that many others stood by and watched the destruction. Again, this document will allow students to readily identify the subject, while still offering new information to students studying the picture.

Boston Massacre. Bufford, John. Chromolithograph, 1770. Retrieved from: <http://www.archives.gov/research/american-revolution/pictures/images/revolutionary-war-003.jpg>

Summary: Bufford's lithograph differs significantly from Revere's famous engraving. I used this picture for precisely that reason. While students will immediately be able to identify the event, it forces them to look at the event through different eyes. It also shows a less one-sided view of the event, as the colonists are armed in this picture.

The Bloody Massacre Perpetrated in King Street. Revere, Paul, ca. 1770.
Retrieved from: <http://www.archives.gov/historical-docs/todays-doc/index.html?dod-date=305>

Summary: Revere's version of the Boston Massacre sharply contrasts Bufford's picture of the same event. Its one-sided depiction was meant to stir up feelings against the British government. I would use this picture along with Bufford's to illustrate the importance of looking at history from more than one perspective.

The Cruel Fate of the Loyalists. Humphrey, William, ca. 1740-ca. 1810.
Library of Congress.

Retrieved from <http://www.picturehistory.com/product/id/1018>
(Item#: 1780.0012).

Summary: During the War for Independence more than 60,000 Americans who remained loyal to the Crown fled the country. In this British cartoon from 1783, three Indians, representing the United States, murder Americans who remained loyal to the Crown. By examining this cartoon, students will be able to see through symbolism and “humor” the treatment of the people loyal to the crown. They will be able to analyze another point of view other than the American Colonist Patriot.

The United States Declaration of Independence (Rough Draft Copy). Jefferson, Thomas, 1776. Retrieved from

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=4>

Summary: This is the original copy of the Declaration of Independence before the final edit of Congress. I am using this copy, specifically the grievance about slavery that was taken out during this final edit, as a way to model the lesson. Because it was so obviously conflicting with what was going on with slavery in the colonies at the time, it is a great document to illustrate the idea that perhaps some of the grievances were unfounded.

Virginia's Slave Codes. Ca.1705. Retrieved from

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1p268.html>

Summary: This document describes rules for slaves during 1705 in Virginia. By reading and analyzing this document, students will be able to infer how the colonists felt about slavery and how much their livelihood depended on them, thus whether or not Thomas Jefferson's slave grievance was warranted.

Landing of Negroes at Jamestown from a Dutch Man-O-War, 1619. Pyle,

Howard, Ca. 1917. Retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1h289.html> Library of Virginia.

Summary: In this image, Dutch sailors are negotiating a trade with the Jamestown settlers for food. After analyzing this source, students will use it as evidence whether or not Jefferson's slave grievance was warranted.

Slave Runaway Advertisements. Ca. 1776. Virginia Gazette. Retrieved

From <http://www.history.org/history/teaching/runaway.cfm>

Summary: This is a list of advertisements taken out in the Virginia Gazette in the 1770's. These advertisements could help the students decide whether the Jefferson slave grievance has evidence to back it up.

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Related Materials & Resources:

See Lesson Plans