

Lesson 1: The Second Continental Congress

Big Ideas of the Lesson

- At the end of the First Continental Congress, members agreed to meet again if the King and Parliament didn't take their concerns seriously. This Second Continental Congress was called in May 1775.
- One of the first things the Congress did was form an army. They chose George Washington to lead it.
- In July of 1775, the Congress sent the King a letter trying to find a peaceful resolution to the problems between the colonies and Britain. This was called the Olive Branch Petition.
- The King refused to accept the petition. In August of 1775 he declared the colonies to be in a state of rebellion.

Lesson Abstract:

In this lesson, students explore the early days of the American Revolution, including the convening of the Second Continental Congress, the issuing of the Olive Branch Petition, the Battle of Bunker Hill, and the selection of George Washington as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army. Students begin by accessing prior knowledge about the American Revolution and then examine epitaphs, timelines, and informational text.

Content Expectations

5 – U3.1.4: Describe the role of the First and Second Continental Congress in unifying the colonies (addressing the Intolerable Acts, declaring independence, drafting the Articles of Confederation).

5 – U3.1.6: Identify the role that key individuals played in leading the colonists to revolution, including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams, John Adams, and Thomas Paine.

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects:

RI.5.7: Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently

Key Concepts

conflict
government by consent
revolution

Instructional Resources

Equipment/Manipulative

Chart paper

Overhead projector or document camera/projector

Student Resource

Bower, Burt, et al. *America's Past*, Social Studies Alive Program. Palo Alto, CA: Teacher's Curriculum Institute, 2010 or a similar fifth grade social studies textbook. Pps. 161-63

Fritz, Jean. *Can't You Make Them Behave, King George?* New York: Putnam Juvenile, 1996. (optional)

Ingram, Scott. *The Battle of Bunker Hill*. San Diego, CA: Blackbirch Press, 2004. (optional)

Teacher Resource

Egbo, Carol. *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 1)*. Teacher-made material. Michigan Citizenship Collaborative, 2012.

Ethan Allen and the Taking of Fort Ticonderoga. National Archives. 29 February 2012 <<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/revolution-images/images/ethan-allen.gif>>.

Map of Boston Area. The American Revolution. Gutenberg. 29 February 2012 <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/18618/18618-h/18618-h.htm>>.

Olive Branch Petition. July 8, 1775. America's Homepage. Georgia Institute of Technology. 29 February 2012 <http://ahp.gatech.edu/olive_branch_1775.html>.

Lesson Sequence

1. This lesson begins with a K-W-L Chart. This type of chart is used to activate and assess students' prior knowledge, to establish a purpose for reading, and to motivate students by stimulating their interest. It promotes both active reading and critical thinking. Display the "K-W-L Chart" for this lesson located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 1)*, or create a similar chart on chart paper. Using Word Card #1, discuss the term 'revolution' and ask students to jot down a few things they know, or think they know, about the American Revolution. Then, have students share their ideas in the large group. Make a list of things they know under the "K" section of the chart.
2. With a partner, have students make a list of things they would like to know about the American Revolution. Have pairs share their lists with the large group and make a list of things students would like to know under the 'W' section of the chart. Put the chart away until the last lesson of the unit.
3. Lead a discussion regarding the events leading to the American Revolution which were covered in Unit 5. This could be done by reviewing the timelines students created. As an alternative, read students the book, *Can't You Make Them Behave, King George?* by Jean Fritz. This book provides a good review of the Road to the Revolution and offers a different perspective of events leading to revolution through the eyes of the British king.

4. Display the two “Mystery Sources,” located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 1)*. Read the text of each box out loud and ask students what kind of sources these represent. Guide students in understanding that these are epitaphs from gravestones.
5. Discuss each epitaph using the following questions to guide your discussion:
 - Are epitaphs primary or secondary sources? Why?
 - Whose graves did the gravestones mark that contained these epitaphs?
 - How are the epitaphs similar?
 - How are they different?
 - What kinds of information can be learned from reading epitaphs?
6. Explain that following the battles of Lexington and Concord, British troops had begun to gather around Boston. Explain that colonial leaders decided it was time to convene a Second Continental Congress as they had promised to do if things did not improve. Share the following information regarding this:
 - On May 10, 1775, representatives from all colonies except Georgia met in Philadelphia.
 - The Congress included Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Adams, John Adams, Richard Henry Lee, and many others.
 - John Hancock was chosen to preside over the Congress.
 - The Congress met believing in the beginning that problems between the colonies and Britain could be solved.
7. Display “Primary Source #1”, located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 1)*. Explain that on the same day as the Second Continental Congress convened, May 10, another important event took place which is shown in this painting. Use the following questions to guide students in analyzing this source:
 - What appears to be happening in the painting?
 - At what time of day is it happening? How do you know?
 - Where is it happening?
8. Help students clarify their understanding of the painting by explaining that the painting shows the taking of Fort Ticonderoga in New York by a Vermont blacksmith named Ethan Allen. Share the following information regarding this event:
 - Ethan Allen and a group of Vermont men known as the Green Mountain Boys (patriots) made a surprise attack on Fort Ticonderoga. There were cannons at the fort that they knew would be useful to the Continental Army.
 - They crept through morning fog and surprised the British who surrendered the Fort. Allen was able to take the cannons.
9. Ask students to think about the First Continental Congress and engage in a quick write about what they remember. Have students share their written responses. Remind them that there were people of different perspectives who attended the First Continental Congress. This was also the case with the Second Continental Congress. Ask students to describe what they think some of these perspectives were. Discuss student responses. Possible answers include people who were ready to declare independence and fight Britain on a large-scale, people who

were hoping to solve things peacefully, people who wanted independence but were unsure about fighting the British. Explain that despite these differences, the Congress decided in June to at least prepare for war.

10. Explain that as a first step in preparing for war, the Congress decided to form an army that would be made up of full-time regular soldiers plus part time militia (Word Card #3) which each colony already had. Ask students what else would be required in order to have an effective army. Discuss student responses and guide students to the idea that the army would need a leader. Ask students to name some of the colonial leaders they studied in the previous unit and make a list of the names on the board or an overhead transparency. Ask students to list three people from the list who they think would have made a good choice for leader of the army. Have students share their lists with a partner. Then, ask students to narrow the three down to one. Take a quick tally of who got the most votes. Then, explain that the Congress chose George Washington. Ask students why they think Washington was chosen. Discuss student responses. Possible answers include he had experience from the French and Indian War, he was highly respected, etc.
11. Give each student a copy of the “Battle of Bunker Hill” chart, located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 1)*. Assign students to read the section of their text on the Battle of Bunker Hill and have them summarize what they have learned by answering “Questions of History” on the chart. Provide time for students to read and fill in the charts. Have students compare their charts with a partner and then discuss what students learned as a whole class. As an alternative use the completed chart as a tool for briefly explaining the Battle of Bunker Hill. Note that you may also wish to read students “The Battle of Bunker Hill” by Scott Ingram which is listed in the student resource section.
12. Using the “Map of the Boston Area” located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 1)* and the information below, discuss the Battle of Bunker Hill by having students share what they wrote on their charts from the previous step:
 - This was one of the first major battles of the Revolution.
 - The British took the hill, but at great cost to them.
 - The battle showed that the Continental Army was capable of standing up to the British.
 - One of the heroes of the battle was a Continental soldier named Peter Salem. He was a former enslaved African.
 - Joseph Warren, the patriot leader who students learned about in the previous unit, was killed in the Battle of Bunker Hill.
 - George Washington was not involved in this battle. He did not take command of the Continental Army until July 3, 1775.
13. Display “Primary Source #2”, located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 1)*. Explain that this is a part of one of the first position statements adopted by the Second Continental Congress. Read the text out loud and ask students to summarize what they think the source means as a quick journal prompt. Give students time to write and then have them share with a partner. Next, ask a few students to share their thoughts with the whole group.

14. Explain that this quotation is part of the Olive Branch Petition (Word Card #4), which was adopted by the Second Continental Congress on July 5 of 1775. As students should have inferred from the text, this was an attempt to try and settle problems peacefully. It was directed to the king personally. Share the following information about the petition:
- The petition was a statement of loyalty to the king but disapproval of the actions of his ministers and Parliament.
 - It included a protest against policies and asked the king to repeal the Intolerable Acts and stop the war.
15. Ask students to put themselves in the place of King George and think about how he might respond to the Olive Branch Petition. Have students write a short response from the king in their social studies journals. Give students time to write and then have them share their writing in a group of three. Have each group choose one of the three responses to read aloud to the whole class.
16. Explain that the king reacted by refusing to receive the petition. Then, on August 23, 1775, he proclaimed the American colonies to be in rebellion and urged that all efforts “should be made to suppress such rebellion and bring the traitors to justice.” The King also ordered 20,000 more soldiers to the colonies. Using Word Card #5, explain that In order to enlarge the army he ordered the hiring of mercenaries, or soldiers who serve for pay in the military of a foreign government. Write the term “Hessians” on the board or an overhead transparency. Explain that many of these mercenaries were known by this term because they came from the Hesse region of Germany.
17. Explain to students that Congress was not aware of the king’s response until much later. Ask why this was true. Discuss student responses and guide them to reflect on how information traveled in those days.
18. Display the “Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms” chart, located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 1)*, and give each student a copy. Explain that the day after adopting the Olive Branch Petition, the Congress issued this Declaration. Ask students to independently “translate” or figure out the meaning of the two sections of the Declaration. Note that in the previous unit, students worked numerous times in groups to ‘translate’ primary source documents. Therefore, it is important to offer them an opportunity now to work independently. A chart showing possible answers has also been included in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 1)*. When students have finished, lead a discussion regarding the Declaration. Draw special attention to the following ideas from the document:
- We did not start this conflict. The British are the aggressors.
 - Our freedom and property have been threatened.
 - We are united in our efforts and our beliefs.
 - We have many resources but if we need to we can also get other countries to help us in our cause.
19. Ask students to compare the two documents -- The Olive Branch Petition and the Declaration of Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms. Discuss with the class why the Second Continental Congress might have authored two different approaches to address the problems with the King of England. Push students to think about the time frame in which both were written. Explain

that historians over time have proposed different reasons or theories about why these two documents were written. Have students work in small groups of three or four students each to discuss possible reasons for the dual approach. Have the groups share their theories with the entire class.

20. Share the following events which occurred at the end of 1775 and have students predict the causes and effects of each event:
- On November 28, 1775, the Congress established an American Navy. In the beginning it was made up of just fishing boats.
 - On November 29, 1775, the Congress appointed a secret committee to seek help from European countries.
 - On December 22, 1775, King George issued a proclamation closing the colonies to all trade.
21. Ask students to predict what they think will happen next in their social studies journals.

Assessment

As an assessment, have students place the “Event Cards”, located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 1)*, in chronological order. Note that the Lesson Graphic Organizer shows the correct sequence for the cards.