

Lesson 5: Perspectives on the Revolution

Big Ideas of the Lesson

- Different people living in the colonies had different points of view about the American Revolution.
- Loyalists felt the colonies should not have declared independence. Many fought with the British and many moved to places like Canada.
- Some enslaved African Americans fought with the British hoping to gain freedom. Others including many free African Americans fought with the Continental Army.
- Native Americans were divided in their loyalty. Some like the Iroquois fought with the British. Others helped the Americans. Still others remained neutral.

Lesson Abstract:

In this lesson, students explore different people and perspectives during the American Revolution. They begin by reviewing the concepts of historical empathy and historical perspective by completing an activity on George Washington. Next, they listen to the book, *Samuel's Choice*, and explore different perspectives of African Americans regarding the Revolutionary War. They extend their thinking by making predictions about the actions and perspectives of other groups during the conflict including women, Native Americans, people in the frontier, and loyalists. As a final activity they create a fictional person and write a diary entry describing their perspectives on the Revolutionary War.

Content Expectations

- 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.
- 5 – U3.2.3: Compare the role of women, African Americans, American Indians, and France in helping shape the outcome of the war.

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

- RL.5.2:* Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.
- RI.5.9:* Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

Key Concepts

historical empathy
historical perspective

revolution

Instructional Resources

Equipment/Manipulative

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. Pp 147-54, 173-77, 182-85.

Berleth, Richard J. *Samuel's Choice*. NY: Albert Whitman & Company, 1990.

Turner, Ann. *Katie's Trunk*. New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1997. (optional)

Teacher Resource

Egbo, Carol. *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 5)*. Teacher-made material. Michigan Citizenship Collaborative, 2012.

Stories from the Revolution. National Park Service. 29 February 2012
<http://www.nps.gov/revwar/about_the_revolution/those_fought.html>.

Lesson Sequence

1. Review the “questions of history” which were introduced in Unit 2, Lesson 1, and included the following:
 - What happened?
 - Who was involved?
 - When did it happen?
 - How and why did it happen?
2. Explain that students will be exploring answers to the question: Who was involved? Share and discuss the following information regarding this question, which was introduced in Unit 2, Lesson 1.
 - Since history is the story of the past, people are a very important part of history.
 - Historians gather evidence about people of the past.
 - As they gather evidence, historians try to understand the feelings and actions of the people. This kind of understanding is called “historical empathy.” (Word Card #22)
 - Historians also try to understand the point of view of people in the past. Historians call this “historical perspective.” (Word Card #23)
 - People’s point of view can be shaped by their age, their occupation, where they are living, their cultural background, etc.
3. Note that as background information for this lesson or as a possible resource for students you may wish to visit the following website which includes information on various groups of people and their perspectives on the Revolution:
<http://www.nps.gov/revwar/about_the_revolution/those_fought.html>.

4. Divide students into small groups of three or four and provide each group a copy of the “George Washington Group Activity Sheet” located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 5)*. Explain that groups should use what they have learned about George Washington in previous lessons to fill in the chart which relates to Washington’s feelings about the Revolution, his actions, and his point of view. Allow groups time to work together and then have them share their ideas with the whole class. Note that a chart showing sample answers has also been included for use as reference.
5. Briefly review the information on George Washington included in Lesson 1 of this unit including Congress’ choice of Washington as Commander-in-Chief and his role in the taking of Boston from the British. Explain that by spring of 1776, Washington and his army had moved south from Massachusetts to New York. In the summer of 1776, Washington and his troops had been forced to retreat from Brooklyn, New York as the British approached. The British had decided to place 30,000 soldiers and 13,000 sailors at the port of New York where many loyalists were concentrated.
6. Introduce the book, *Samuel’s Choice*, which covers this retreat. Share the following information about the book:
 - The book is about an enslaved African named Samuel Abraham who is owned by a loyalist.
 - He has to make the difficult choice of whether or not to help the Continental Army.
 - He decides to do so and uses his boat to carry Continental soldiers to safety.
7. Read the book to students and discuss the feelings, actions, and perspectives of Samuel as well as other characters in the book, including his loyalist owner. Note that the book is useful in presenting several different perspectives on the Revolution.
8. Provide each student with a copy of the chart, “Samuel’s Choice,” located in the *Supplemental Materials, (Unit 6, Lesson 5)*. Explain that students should fill in the chart regarding Samuel’s feelings, actions, and point of view in the same way they worked in the small groups to fill in the chart on George Washington. Note that a chart showing sample answers has also been included for use as reference.
9. Remind students that, as the book showed, there were many different perspectives on the American Revolution. Place students in pairs and give each pair a copy of the chart, “Making Predictions” located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 5)*. Display the chart and explain that students should think about the various people included on the chart such as a patriot woman and a Native American. Have students think about how their feelings and possible actions might have differed. Working with a partner, students should then fill in the chart. Give pairs time to work and then have pairs join another pair to share ideas. Following this four-person sharing, have students share their predictions with the whole class. List some of the predictions on the board or overhead transparency.

10. Review what students learned from *Samuel's Choice* regarding the difficult decision many African Americans had to make regarding the American Revolution. Then, share the following information with students:
- Free African Americans in New England tended to join the patriot cause. They fought in local militia and were part of early battles including Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill.
 - Enslaved Africans in the south often joined British forces hoping to gain freedom.
 - About 5000 blacks fought for the Continental Army. Thousands joined the British side but only about 1000 served as soldiers. Others served as cooks, laborers, etc.
 - The British launched a campaign encouraging enslaved Africans to flee and join them.
 - As early as 1775, the royal governor of Virginia promised freedom to enslaved Africans if they ran away from their owners and helped the British.
 - Early in the war, Congress and General Washington would not allow the enlistment of African Americans in the Continental Army. This changed over time. In January of 1776, Washington allowed the enlistment of blacks with "prior military experience". By January of 1777, this was extended to all free blacks.
11. Have students engage in a "quick write" about loyalists. After a few minutes, have students share their writings with a partner and then with the entire class. Through the discussion, review what has been learned in previous lessons regarding the loyalists. This is a good time to review the book *Katie's Trunk* from Unit 5. Discuss the perspective of loyalists during the Revolution by sharing the following information:
- Loyalists were subject to the confiscation of property and sometimes threatened and even attacked. In *Samuel's Choice*, his owner loses his land.
 - Many loyalists ended up serving in the British army.
 - The highest numbers of loyalists were in New York City and Long Island. The British, from 1776 to 1783, controlled this area. As a result many loyalist families fled to that area.
 - By the end of the Revolution, about 70,000 loyalists, including 8000 black loyalists left the thirteen states with the majority going to Canada.
12. Ask students to look again at their Prediction Charts and class list of predictions from Step 8. Discuss what various students predicted regarding Native American feelings and actions during the Revolution. Guide students to the idea that Native Americans were divided in their loyalty. Depending on local conditions they often joined the side they thought would favor their interests. Some, like the Iroquois, fought for the British. Others aided the Americans. Using Word Card #24, explain that some Native American groups remained neutral.
13. At this point in the lesson, have students do a textbook search regarding people from the Revolutionary Era. Provide each student a copy of "Textbook Search" located in the *Supplemental Materials, (Unit 6, Lesson 5)*. Instruct students to record information they find about people on this chart. Note that a chart showing sample answers has also been included in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 5)* for reference.

14. Using the “Textbook Search” charts for reference, ask students to help construct a list of women from the Revolutionary period identified in their textbooks. Discuss the various roles they played by reading textbook sections and sharing the following:
- Women ran farms and businesses when their husbands joined the army.
 - Many women followed their husbands from battle to battle. They cooked food, sewed, washed clothes, etc.
 - Some women even fought in battles. Deborah Sampson, for example, dressed as a man so she could fight with the Continental Army.
 - Some women worked as spies.
15. Remind students that there were settlers living in frontier regions west of the populated areas of the new country. Ask students to predict how these people may have felt about the Revolution. Guide students to understand that in the beginning many of these frontier people remained neutral. They tended to want to be free of any government. As the war continued, many began to favor the patriot side.
16. As a culminating activity, have students choose one of the perspectives listed on the Prediction Chart and write a diary entry for that perspective. The entry should reflect the feelings of a person with that perspective regarding the Revolution and describe an action or actions they may have taken as a result of their feelings. Note that a “Writing Plan” to be used as a pre-writing activity has been included in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 6, Lesson 5)*.

Assessment

The charts from *Samuel’s Choice*, the Predictions, and the culminating activity can all be used for assessment. As a more formal assessment, have students choose two perspectives of people during the American Revolution, explain how they might have viewed the American Revolution, and analyze their interests and values with respect to the Revolutionary War.