



Unit 5 Activities

Opposition to Independence

This lesson will introduce students to the fact that there were many people who opposed the idea of independence, and that they had a variety of reasons for doing so. Students will learn that supporting protests to preserve British Liberties did not automatically equate to support for independence. They will learn that the number of people opposing independence was significant and that they outnumbered those who advocated for it in certain places.

Aims /Objective

The modular activities and extensions in this unit provide opportunities for students to:

- Practice historical empathy through analysis of and reflection upon primary source documents
- Critique the efficacy and validity of popular arguments against American independence made by Loyalists
- Evaluate the opportunity level different people had for making their voices heard in Revolutionary British North America

Materials

Unit 5 Big Idea: Opposition to Independence

Primary Sources:

- *Common Sense and Plain Truth*
<https://www.amrevmuseum.org/collection/common-sense-and-plain-truth>
- *The Alternative of Williams-burg*
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/ds.14481/>
- *Lord Dunmore's Proclamation*
<https://www.amrevmuseum.org/virtualexhibits/finding-freedom/pages/eve-lord-dunmore-s-proclamation>
- Joseph Brant Letter
<https://museumvirtualtour.org/vt/?startscene=pano2865>
Find this letter in the Museum's Virtual Tour by navigating to the Green portrait of Joseph Brant in the long glass case along the wall.

Other Resources:

- *Season of Independence* interactive
- Unit 5 Worksheet: Plain Truth (included)
- Unit 5 Worksheet: What's in a Name? (included)

Procedures

Engagement 10 – 15 minutes

OVERRULED

Ask students to think of a time when they had an opinion on a choice to be made but were overruled by others.

Ask the following discussion questions:

- How did you react?
- How did it feel?
- What did you say or do to protest?
- How did others respond to your opinion and/or protests?

After allowing several students to share their experiences, ask the class if they think it is okay for a majority to overrule others. If the answer is yes, then under what circumstances? If no, why not? What about by a plurality? Why or why not?

Development 30 – 40 minutes

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Teacher Preparation: Read the Unit 5 Big Idea Essay and prepare copies for students. Prepare copies of the Unit 5 Worksheet: What's in a Name?. Familiarize yourself with its contents along with the primary sources listed later in this activity. Be prepared to share links for each primary source with students.

Begin by instructing students to read the following sections from the Unit 5 Big Idea Essay: For King and Country: Loyalist Perspectives on Independence, Opposition Elsewhere, and Local Support. Have students take turns reading in small groups and summarize sections together after they complete each one.

After providing students with time to read the Big Idea essay, distribute the Unit 5: What's in a Name? worksheet. Read aloud or provide students time to read it themselves. Discuss the following questions:

- What happened in Barnstable?
- Why did the people of Barnstable choose not to publicly declare support for independence? Did they all agree with this outcome?
- Do you think the people of Barnstable would have considered themselves Loyalists? Why or Why not?

- Where did Loyalists outnumber Revolutionaries? Consult the *Season of Independence* interactive map to help students visualize geographical support. Click on "Other Colonies and Territories" to dig into nearby Loyalist opposition to American independence elsewhere in the Empire.
- Why didn't more of Britain's colonies also choose to rebel?
- Were the views of British Americans opposing independence represented by the actions of the Continental Congress when they declared independence? Why do or don't you think so?

Share links to the following primary source samples with students:

- The Alternative of Williams-burg
- Lord Dunmore's Proclamation
- Joseph Brant Letter

For each primary source, discuss how it demonstrates or connects to a different motivation for opposing independence. Ask students:

- What does the term "Loyalist" mean?
- Does it make sense to refer to everyone who opposed independence as a loyalist?
- What are some examples of reasons people may have opposed independence for reasons other than loyalty to Great Britain?

Development 35 – 45 minutes

PLAIN TRUTH

Teacher Preparation: Prepare copies of the Unit 5 Worksheet: Plain Truth.

Display the combined printing of *Common Sense* and *Plain Truth* from the Museum of the American Revolution's digital collection for students to see. Ask a student to read aloud the "advertisement" on the inside cover. Review how Thomas Paine's gritty writing style and consolidated arguments had swayed many to independence, then discuss how and why these same things could alienate some people.

Distribute the Unit 5 Worksheet: Plain Truth and instruct

students to read the two excerpts from *Plain Truth* and summarize their meaning on the worksheet. Discuss the following questions with the class:

- Why does James Chalmers think that an attempted rebellion against Britain will fail?
- What are James Chalmers's criticisms of democracy?
- What other arguments against independence existed? How could someone's gender, race, religion, job, social status, level of wealth, etc. impact their choice to oppose independence?

Then, either introduce or ask students to re-read the excerpt from John Dickinson's *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania* in the Unit 4 "The Art of Persuasion" worksheet and summarize its message (displaying the excerpt to the class or referencing the Worksheet as necessary). Next, ask them to read the new excerpt from *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania* on their Unit 5 Worksheet: Plain Truth. Discuss it as a class with the following questions

- What is John Dickinson saying in this excerpt from his writing?
- Does this surprise you based on what you previously read from him? Why or why not?
- Why might someone protest British policy but still refuse to support independence?
- Why might they want to remain part of the Empire even if they were upset with recent events?
- What objections do you think they might have to a war for independence? Do you think protesting British policy automatically meant supporting independence to British subjects in North America? Why or why not?
- How do you think some were able to have mixed opinions such as John Dickinson's? How do you think it felt to be in this position? How do you think you would be treated by other protesting colonists if you refused to support independence despite earlier resistance?

ADAPT: Consider highlighting key phrases in each excerpt for younger or lower-level readers to help them interpret the texts in this activity.

DEEPEN: Share copies of *Common Sense* and *Plain Truth* with students. Have them read both pamphlets and summarize in full the arguments that they are making. Afterward, instruct students to script out an argument between the two authors via text message where they

offer points and counterpoints to each other on the matter of independence. Students can write out the scripts (like in a theatrical production) or draw alternating speech bubbles with text to show who is speaking.

Culmination 35 – 45 minutes

WHAT'S MY MOTIVATION?

Teacher Preparation: Prepare copies of the Unit 5 Big Idea Essay, as well as drawing supplies.

Instruct students to read the "Plain Truth" section of the Unit 5 Big Idea Essay, then review several different motivations British Americans may have had for opposing independence. Next, ask students to share these motivations and discuss what factors and circumstances impacted them.

After allowing time for discussion, ask students to access the *Season of Independence* interactive and assign each student or group of students a different Loyalist from the interactive to investigate. Ask them to summarize their reason(s) for opposing independence, as well as their location and other background information about them that may have impacted their views on the matter.

Afterward, distribute drawing supplies and have them draw a portrait or silhouette of that individual, as though in a frame. Then, have them summarize that person's motivation for opposing independence or siding with the British beneath their portrait as they think they might have done in their own words. Display these portraits and quotations around the classroom and provide students with time to do a gallery walk.

Discuss each individual as a class and ask students to compare and contrast their motivations for opposing independence. Why are some of their motivations different?

EXTEND: For older/more advanced students, have them research one of the Loyalists in the *Season of Independence* Interactive and Unit 5 Big Idea Essay and create a webpage that profiles that person. Students should include biographical information, as well as where they lived in the Empire, how and why they opposed independence, and what happened to them because of their decision. Link the webpages together into a "Loyalist Wikipedia" that combines all their work.

Extensions and Adaptations

MEET MR. CRESSWELL

Share excerpts from Nicholas Cresswell's Journal (<https://americainclass.org/sources/makingrevolution/rebellion/text3/vacresswell.pdf>). Split students into groups, assign them different portions of his journal, and instruct them to summarize his experiences to share with the rest of the class. Ask students to comment on his experiences with the following questions:

- What are some of the things that concern him the most regarding the behavior of Revolutionaries? How do Nicholas Cresswell's religious beliefs impact his perspective on what he sees?
- How does he feel, being a Loyalist among Revolutionaries?
- Have you ever been anywhere that you felt unwelcome? Why or why not? How did it feel?
- Do you think there are people living today that feel similarly unwelcome where they live? Who are they? Why is this? (political/social/religious reasons, etc.) How could this be changed?

TIME TO RECONCILE

Instruct students to research examples of petitions/addresses for reconciliation and resolutions against independence from within the British Empire. Have small groups of students construct timelines to show this data, then compare it to the *Season of Independence* interactive timeline. Ask students to analyze the interactive timeline to figure out which colonies were still pushing for reconciliation when others were pushing for independence. Ask students what trends they observe in terms of which colonies were the last to support independence. Why didn't these colonies support independence sooner? Were there more Loyalists living in these areas? What types of people were prevalent in these areas and how might this affect support for independence?

LOYALIST LITERATURE

Common Sense inspired a number of rebuttals and responses from subjects in the Empire that disagreed with its arguments. Share transcripts of *Plain Truth* by James Chalmers (www.umbc.edu/che/tahlessons/pdf/historylabs/Should_the_Colo_student:RS07.pdf) and *The True Interest of America Impartially Stated* by Charles Inglis (<https://shc.ashp.cuny.edu/items/show/1128>). Have students read each pamphlet, then compare and contrast them to see how each of the authors refuted Thomas Paine. Have students work within small groups to track their findings with a chart or Venn Diagram before sharing the results. Ask students, did everyone have the same reasons for disagreeing with independence? Why not?

POETIC JUSTICE

Share the poem *Upon Reading a Book Entitled Common Sense* by Hannah Griffitts (<http://americainclass.org/sources/makingrevolution/rebellion/text7/griffittscommonsense.pdf>) with students and read together. Ask students how she is rebutting Thomas Paine in her poem. What does she think of Thomas Paine? What animal does she compare him to and why? How does she feel about the way Revolutionaries are treating those who disagree with them? What does she mean when she writes that "Sixty as well as one can tyrannize"?

After discussing Hannah Griffitts's poem, ask if they can think of examples of artists inserting political messages into creative works today.

Instruct students to create a song or poem that argues against independence. Encourage them to use descriptive language and metaphors, and to incorporate events and arguments from the Unit 5 Big Idea Essay into their writing. Have students share their song or poem and then ask the class to identify connections to historical events and Loyalist arguments that they recognized.