



Unit 2 Activities

Decision-Making and Civic Engagement in Revolutionary America

This lesson will introduce students to the ways that 18th century Americans expressed their opinions, protested, and engaged in decision-making within their communities and the colonies during the Colonial and Revolutionary Eras. Students will also learn how these opportunities for expression and decision-making were not equally available to all people.

Aims /Objective

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

- Investigate and analyze historical and contemporary forms of communication
- Evaluate the availability of opportunities for decision-making and civic engagement in British North America
- Create an example of expression/protest from the Revolutionary era and debate the importance of communication in the developing Revolution

Materials

Big Idea 2: Decision-Making and Civic Engagement in Revolutionary America

Other Resources:

- *Season of Independence* Interactive
- MoAR Virtual “American Liberties, 1765 – 1775” through “Give me Liberty or Give me Death” galleries: www.amrevmuseum-virtualtour.org/
- Unit 2 Worksheet: Communication Nation (included)
- Unit 2 Worksheet: Choosing a Voice (included)

Procedures

Engagement 20 – 25 minutes

COMMUNICATION NATION

Teacher Preparation: Prepare copies of the Communication Nation worksheet for distribution to students.

In small groups, ask students to brainstorm how people express themselves and/or communicate with each other today (social media, newspapers, art, internet forums/blogs, phone calls/text messages, etc.). Instruct students to use the Communication nation worksheet to track 1) The form of communication, and 2) What that form of communication is most useful for expressing or sharing.

Once students have had time to brainstorm several possibilities, share out responses with the rest of the class. Ask students in what circumstances someone might choose one form of communication/expression over others and why communication tools are important to individuals and to society.

Development 40 minutes

CHOOSING A VOICE

Teacher Preparation: Explore “American Liberties, 1765-1775” through “Give me Liberty or Give me Death” galleries in the Museum of the American Revolution’s Virtual Tour. Prepare copies of the Choosing a Voice worksheet for distribution to students.

Instruct students to explore the “American Liberties, 1765-1775” through “Give me Liberty or Give me Death” galleries in the Museum of the American Revolution’s Virtual Tour. Ask them to record examples of different ways that people in British North America chose to protest or otherwise express their opinions about events taking place in the colonies. Ask students to use the Choosing a Voice worksheet to categorize the different forms of protest/expression that they discover as either peaceful, violent, destructive, and/or disruptive. Discuss

how these classifications differ (ex: a violent protest may involve an assault on a person whereas a destructive one may only destroy property). Once finished, share out responses and then discuss what the advantages and disadvantages of each types of protest are and why someone might choose one over the others. Ask students if/when they have seen examples of each type of protest/expression in their own lifetimes.

DEEPEN: Ask students if a protest can fall in multiple categories (for example: peaceful and disruptive). Ask: Do we place value judgements on different types of protest? Why?

Development 40 minutes

WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

Teacher Preparation: Read Unit 2 Big Idea essay

Have students read the Unit 2 Big Idea essay, then ask them to review the different individuals from the Season of Independence interactive and categorize them based on each person's level of opportunity for civic engagement/decision-making.

Discuss the following questions as a class:

- What factors seem to impact a person's opportunities for public or civic self-expression? (Try to explore various categories including class, race, gender, etc.)

Extensions and Adaptations

MIRROR MIRROR

Ask students to compare and contrast the types of protest and expression used in British North America with those used today. They can list forms of protest/expression with matching characteristics and provide a rationalization for why/how they are similar.

FREEZE FRAME

Have students act out a tableau (see an example of one in the "Brawl at Harvard Yard" gallery in the Museum's Virtual Tour) that depicts a protest by British subjects in North America. Students can create signs, pose their bodies, etc. and/or utilize a narrator to explain who the protesters are, what they are protesting, and how they are doing so.

- Who had the most opportunity for different forms of public or civic self-expression?
- Did any of these individuals have sufficient representation in colonial assemblies? What about in Parliament? Why or why not?

Culmination 40 – 50 minutes

EXPRESS YOURSELF

Instruct students to express the thoughts of a British subject either resisting or supporting British policy using one of the forms of expression/protest they learned about during the lesson (painting, poem, editorial essay, etc.) Students that would like to focus on a form of physical protest can write a newspaper article with an accompanying image that describes the physical protest and explains what kind of attention it drew. Ask each student to also write a short paragraph with a rationale for the expression/protest they created. Allow students to view each other's creations once they are complete and then answer the following as part of a group discussion:

- Which forms of protest/expression do you think were most persuasive?
- What methods of expression would have been most effective at gaining the attention of those resisting British policy, those supporting British policy, neutral parties, and the British government? Why is this?
- What was the role of communication and expression in the years before the Revolutionary War? Why was it important?

PERSPECTIVES AND PROPAGANDA

Instruct students to view the "Propaganda on Both Sides" gallery in the Museum's Virtual Tour depicting a painting of a man being tarred and feathered alongside an image of the Boston Massacre. Have students examine each piece of propaganda, analyzing what it is depicting and how it is attempting to persuade others to think about each of those events. Ask students to identify where they think they see other examples of propaganda in the present day and justify that classification.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Share the following primary sources with students

- Charleston Non-Importation Agreement
https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/charleston_non_importation_1769.asp
- Hannah Griffitts "The Female Patriots" Poem excerpt
<https://documents.alexanderstreet.com/d/1004076965>
- Mechanics in Union Broadside
www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.10901500/
- Edenton Ladies Patriotic Guild Newspaper Statement
<https://wams.nyhistory.org/settler-colonialism-and-revolution/the-american-revolution/edenton-tea-party/>

Instruct students to analyze each document, identifying who authored/issued it and what it is stating. Ask students to infer whether each document originated from an individual or a group of people or organization, then discuss the following questions:

- What are some examples of ways that people in the Revolutionary era would collaborate or organize their efforts?
- Could one person still make a difference? How?
- Why do people choose to work together in larger groups or participate in organizations, governments, etc. to accomplish goals? What might be the advantages of doing so?
- How might one person make an impact on their own?

Review the definition of civic engagement as communities or individuals working to protect common values and/or make positive changes in communities. Afterwards, have students research one or more opportunities for civic engagement in and around their own communities that they could participate in now or in the future, then have them create a presentation for their classmates to share their findings.