



Unit 4 Activities

Support for Independence

This lesson will introduce students to the varied motivations that people had for supporting independence and show them how support for independence was a last resort for many that developed out of years of protest and resistance. Students will examine the risks that came with independence and learn how unity and unanimity were seen as crucial elements to any successful action taken by the Second Continental Congress.

Aims /Objective

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

- Examine how personal identities could impact someone's views on independence
- Analyze primary source documents for their audience, purpose and impact on historical events
- Evaluate methods of persuasion, investigating primary source examples and considering their potential efficacy

Materials

Unit 4 Big Idea: Support for Independence

Primary Sources:

- *Charleston Non-Importation Agreement*
avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/charleston_non_importation_1769.asp
- *Petition to the King*
avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/contcong_07-08-75.asp
- *Declaration on the Causes and Necessity of Taking up Arms*
https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/arms.asp
- *Olive Branch Petition*
www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&p-sid=3881
- *A Proclamation for Suppressing Rebellion and Sedition*
www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&p-sid=4105

Other Resources:

- *Season of Independence* interactive
- Unit 4 Worksheet: Risk, Reward (included)
- Unit 4 Worksheet: Document Discussion (included)
- Unit 4 Worksheet: The Art of Persuasion (included)

Procedures

Engagement 5 – 10 minutes

WHY DO I DECLARE?

Instruct Students to brainstorm a list of reasons why independence from Britain might be a good idea in the eyes of those living in British North America. Share out these lists with the whole class.

Engagement 5 – 10 minutes

LEAP OF FAITH

Ask students to imagine a time when they've taken a leap or done something radical or previously unthinkable because it felt necessary, or like there were no other acceptable options. Ask students to explain how they got to that point, what the risks were, what the potential rewards were, etc. Discuss what these moments felt like for students. Then ask students how they think British Americans felt in the run-up to independence. Can they imagine a situation where they would feel compelled to rebel against their own country?

Development 40 – 50 minutes

RISK, REWARD

Teacher Preparation: Prepare copies of Risk, Reward worksheet and Timeline of Protest and Independence.

Distribute the Risk, Reward Worksheet. Then instruct students to read the quote from the Ipswich, MA Resolution on Independence. Discuss the audience and purpose of the resolution, as well as the historical context surrounding it. You may want to prompt students to use the Timeline of Protest and Independence to recall some of the events leading up to the Resolution. Provide students with time to summarize what this quote is saying and then share answers as a class. Afterwards, display King George III's *A Proclamation for Suppressing Rebellion and Sedition* and read aloud with students or provide them with their own copies and allow them time to read independently. Ask them to answer the following:

- What is King George III saying in this proclamation?

- British subjects in North America had been protesting for years before this proclamation. How do you think King George III's proclamation changed things?
- What were the risks of declaring independence from the British Empire?
- Do you think the risks of seeking independence were worth taking? Why or why not?

Afterward, explore the Revolutionary individuals from the *Season of Independence* interactive either individually or as a class. Allow students to discuss how they think their personal identities and other information about them might have impacted their views on independence.

Development 30 – 40 minutes

DOCUMENT DISCUSSION

Teacher Preparation: Read Unit 4 Big Idea essay sections entitled "Enlightenment Ideals: New Ways of Thinking About the World" and "Why Separate?". Prepare copies of Unit 4 Big Idea essay and Document Discussion worksheet for students.

Distribute Unit 4 Big Idea essay. Instruct Students to read the first two sections (Enlightenment Ideals: New Ways of Thinking About the World and Why Separate?). Have them answer the following questions on the Document Discussion Worksheet as they read, then share responses:

- What ideas from the Enlightenment influenced British-American views on British governance?
- How did British subjects in North America try to change their relationship with the Empire?

Afterward, split students into groups and share the following primary source documents with them:

- *Charleston Non-Importation Agreement*
- *Petition to the King (Olive Branch Petition)*
- *Declaration on the Causes and Necessity of Taking up Arms*

Have each group examine a different document together. Students should focus on answering the following as they examine it:

- When was this document written?
- What is the purpose of this document?
- Who was the intended audience?
- Did this document have the intended effect on its audience?

Afterward, provide them time to share their findings with the class and discuss how these topics represent an effort by colonists to pursue reconciliation and avoid independence. Ask students why they think some American colonists gave up on reconciliation

ADAPT: For younger or less-experienced readers, consider modifying the activity by highlighting parts of each document that can help them identify the purpose and audience, designating a strong oral reader in their group to read the document aloud before/as the group investigates, or providing a summary of the document as an alternative.

Culmination 40 – 50 minutes

THE ART OF PERSUASION

Teacher Preparation: Read Unit 4 Big Idea Essay section entitled “Common Sense”. Prepare copies of Unit 4 Big Idea essay and Art of Persuasion worksheet for students.

Instruct students to read the final section of the Unit 4 Big Idea Essay (Common Sense), answering the following questions on their Art of Persuasion worksheets, then discuss their responses, emphasizing how Thomas Paine’s writing style was very effective with readers in ways that others had not been:

- List two or three different arguments that Thomas Paine made for independence in the pamphlet, *Common Sense*.
- What were some of the stylistic ways that Thomas Paine made his arguments more agreeable to those that read *Common Sense*?

Next, have students read the excerpt from John Dickinson’s *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania* on their Art of Persuasion worksheet. Instruct students to underline, highlight, or circle evidence from the excerpt that help identify what John Dickinson is trying to say. Have them answer the following questions on the worksheet and briefly discuss their responses.

- What is John Dickinson trying to say in the above quotation? How is it relevant to the idea of American Independence?
- How is John Dickinson making his argument? Is he making an ethical argument? A logical one? An emotional one? Which of these do you think is most effective? Why?
- Afterward, discuss the different ways that people can try to persuade each other and in what circumstances/for what audiences they are most likely to be successful. Highlight emotional, ethical/moral, and logical arguments and discuss how they differ.

EXTEND: Provide individual students or groups of students with materials to create a poster. Instruct them to create a persuasive advertisement in support of independence. Hang advertisements around the classroom when they are finished. Provide students with time to do a gallery walk and view the work of their peers. Instruct them to stand next to the advertisement that they think is most effective and explain to the class why they think so. Ask them to categorize it as a piece of logical, moral/ethical, or emotional persuasion.

Extensions and Adaptations

GRAPH IT OUT

Assign individual students or small groups the task of collecting data on expressions of support for independence and graphing the data using a line or bar chart. Instruct them to use the *Season of Independence* interactive as a starting point for this data, with the option of branching out to other resources afterward. Students can use a line chart to graph the number of colonies that had authorized delegates to vote for independence, showing how that number changed as each month progressed. Alternatively, students can investigate all the different examples of support for independence from each bubble that appears for the interactive timeline and create a bar chart to illustrate the number of each based on the category that they fall in (ex: resolutions, grand jury presentments, instructions, constitution preambles, act repealing allegiance).

INFORMAL PERSUASION

Introduce students to Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* or revisit his pamphlet. Remind them of how people often share ideas and opinions in less formal ways today, such as with blog posts, long Facebook posts, or opinion/editorial publications. Have students share their thoughts on how/why pamphlets like *Common Sense* had similar characteristics. Afterward, have them create a social media page or Twitter Feed for Thomas Paine or another influential author from the Revolutionary Era (Phillis Wheatley, Mercy Otis Warren, John Dickinson, etc.), translating their ideas and expressing them in contemporary language that is more appropriate for the present day.

ALL ABOARD

Instruct students to reference the *Season of Independence* Digital Interactive and research which colonies were the last few to instruct their delegates to vote for independence. Then have them create persuasive advertisements targeted at these colonies that encourage them to support independence. Refer students to the excerpt from John Dickinson's *Letters From a Farmer in Pennsylvania* on the Art of Persuasion worksheet and have them include a plea for unity and unanimous action as part of their advertisement.

PAST PARALLELS

Discuss the concept of "cultural memory" and how lingering memories of past historical events can impact people's and nations' behavior in the present. Have students brainstorm and discuss examples of this concept that may apply today. Next introduce the English *Declaration of Rights/Bill of Rights* (https://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/england.asp), framing it as a document that was created in 1689 as a response to King James II and the events of the Glorious Revolution in England. Allow students time to investigate the *Declaration of Rights* and identify connections between the actions of King James II that precipitated his removal and the American Revolutionaries' case for independence. Share these connections out with the class and discuss how they may have impacted American views on independence.

PUTTING IT IN CONTEXT

Assign the different primary source documents and excerpts included in this unit to small groups of students and have them research the context behind each of them. Instruct students to identify when they were written and what other events created a need for them and/or impacted their purpose. Afterward, have students construct a timeline that illustrates when these documents were drafted and issued and the events surrounding them.