

Guiding Question: Why did protests against the British colonial government break out in Boston in the early 1770s?

Document Analysis

Text Analysis: “The Liberty Song” by John Dickinson, 1768

Directions: Times change and so does the style of English we speak and songs we listen to. Read the first stanza of the song in the left-hand column. Notice that someone has translated it from rhyming song lyrics that read like a poem into ordinary English prose in the right-hand column.

Your job is to read the stanza your group has been assigned and to do the same thing. You may use any resources you need in order to decode the lines.

Strategies to try:

- Work out loud. Try emphasizing different words.
- Divide the sentences into parts that sound like chunks of meaning and work on each, one at a time.
- Find the words and phrases you do understand to help you make sense of the ones you don't.
- Rearrange words and phrases.

“The Liberty Song,” published in the Boston Gazette in 1768, was written to be sung to the tune of a popular English tune called “Heart of Oak.” Perhaps the first patriotic song in America, its lyrics were written by John Dickinson, a member of the Pennsylvania Assembly who later fought in the Revolutionary War and became Governor of Pennsylvania.

1	Come, join hand in hand, brave Americans all, And <u>rouse</u> your bold hearts at fair Liberty's call; No <u>tyrannous</u> acts shall suppress your just claim, Or stain with dishonor America's name.	<i>Join together Americans. Awaken your brave hearts because liberty is calling you. The actions of a dictator cannot keep you from getting what is rightfully yours or humiliate us.</i>
2	Chorus: In Freedom we're born and in Freedom we'll live. Our <u>purses</u> are ready. Steady, friends, steady; Not as slaves, but as <u>Freemen</u> our money we'll give.	
3	Our worthy forefathers, let's give them a cheer, To climates unknown did courageously steer; <u>Thro'</u> oceans to deserts for Freedom they came, And dying, <u>bequeath'd</u> us their freedom and fame. <i>Chorus</i>	
4	The tree their own hands had to Liberty <u>rear'd</u> , They lived to behold growing strong and revered; With <u>transport</u> they cried, Now our wishes we gain, For our children shall gather the <u>fruits</u> of our pain. <i>Chorus</i>	
5	Then join hand in hand, brave Americans all, By uniting we stand, by dividing we fall; In so <u>righteous</u> a cause let us hope to succeed, For heaven approves of each generous deed. <i>Chorus</i>	

Source: John Dickinson, “The Liberty Song,” The Boston Chronicle, August 29, 1768; from the Dickinson College Archives and Special Collections, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

Time: At least 25 minutes

Instructions

Goal/Intent: Students work in groups to practice interpreting passages from a document written in period grammar and using vocabulary that is unfamiliar.

Building on their game knowledge and their interpretation of the document, students then respond to the guiding question:

Why did protests against the British colonial government break out in Boston in the early 1770s?

A. Document Analysis (15 min)

Assign different stanzas to groups of students and ask them to use the suggested strategies to figure out the meaning of their stanza. They should work out loud. They should begin with the parts that they do know and work out to the parts that are less familiar. When the group makes sense of the stanza, each group member should write it down.

B. Discussion (15 min)

When all the groups are ready, have them report out in turn and see if the class can reach consensus about what the song means.

Then discuss the following questions to help students connect the song to the essential questions:

- What clues do these lyrics give you about why some colonists rebelled?
- What does freedom mean to them?
- What threatens their freedom?

Given what the students may be learning about the growing tension between colonists and importers of British goods, they may be able to reason out why, in the chorus, the singers are talking about supporting the cause of liberty with their money rather than with their lives. That would come later on.

Additional Discussion Questions

(Optional): You can use the following questions to extend and deepen the class discussion of the song's meaning:

- The last stanza describes the Patriots' cause as “righteous.” What do they think makes it righteous? What reasons does

Word Bank

rouse (v) – to awaken
tyrannous (adj) – cruel and controlling
purses (n) – a pouch used to hold money
Freemen (n) – a full citizen with the right to vote
bequeath (v) – to pass on from one generation to the next

rear'd/reared (v) – raised and nurtured
transport (n) – strong emotion
fruits (n) – the product or consequences of something
righteous (adj) – right and fair

Discussion Questions

1. What clues do these lyrics give you about why some colonists rebelled? Be prepared to cite specific parts of the text to support your answer.
2. What does freedom mean to the colonists who rebelled? What threatens their freedom? Be prepared to cite specific parts of the text to support your answer.

the song provide? What reasons does the game provide?

- What do you think “freedom” means to John Dickinson and the people who sang this song in the 1770s? What makes you say that?
- How do the ideas in the chorus relate to the slogan “No taxation without representation”?