

immersionED American Revolution: **Recommended One Week Lesson Plan**

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Background to Cover Before Episode 1

Students should have a sense that the American colonists in the Northern Colonies (where this experience takes place) were immigrants or descendants of immigrants who braved a long, dangerous ocean voyage either to escape persecution or to make their fortune in the vast wilderness of America (or both). Try to unpack the mindset of the colonists in a way that can help explain the revolutionary ferment of the time.

Sources & Content:

[Khan Academy 1754-1800 lessons 1 & 2](#)

[Crash Course American History: Prelude to Revolution](#)

[Crash Course World History: Tea, Taxes, and the American Revolution](#)

[The Boston Massacre: A Family History by Serena Zabin](#) (*excellent and accessible account of the events and communities explored in this game*)

Concepts to cover:

- Immigration to the Colonies—who was taking this voyage? What was the makeup of the colonies?
 - What was the voyage like?
 - What would it be like upon arrival?
 - What would it take?
 - Reasons?
 - Opportunities
 - Old World Oppression: political, religious, economic poverty
 - Enormous Growth of colonies during 18th century
 - All of this is to set the stage for a people who are willing to stand up against perceived oppression
 - Split identities: British or original ethnicity vs new identity in America
- British Administration of the Colonies
 - Mercantilist Policies like the Navigation Acts which prohibited Americans from freely trading with anyone but the British home isles thus incentivizing smuggling.
 - The effect these had on American merchants/smugglers, artisans/industrialists who were constrained by their government from producing high value wares or selling them on the open market, thereby reducing their income.
- Colonial & British Government
 - Americans lacked representation in British Parliament
 - Taxation was traditionally a “gift” to be voted by the people’s representatives in Parliament. Thus the lack of representation made taxation a betrayal of fundamental British values and mores. This can be seen in the third point of the Proceedings of the Stamp Act Congress: “it is inseparably essential to the freedom of the people, and the undoubted right of Englishmen, that no taxes

should be imposed on them but with their own consent, given personally or by their representatives.”

- Colonists had long established self-government in assemblies with governors either voted upon by colonists, appointed by the King, or descended from a proprietor who had been granted the land.
- Aftermath of the French & Indian War:
 - Britain had conquered much of French North America and prohibited its colonists from encroaching on Native land to the West, which rankled colonists who wanted to continue expansion.
 - Britain had incurred significant war debt from, in their view, defending colonists from the French and their Native allies.
 - Native Americans allied to the French lost territory while Britain's Native Allies were guaranteed protection by the British government from Colonial expansion. This led to resentment on the part of colonists who wanted to settle Native land and gave Native Americans a sense of security backed by Parliament.
 - Due to the size and wild boundary of its colonies, the British Government decided to permanently station soldiers in the colonies to patrol and defend the borders as well as to police the colonists, preventing them from expanding into Native territory and ensuring they pay import taxes.
 - While this was nominally to defend the colonists, it was also an imposition and could be seen as coercion.
 - Britain levied taxes to defray the cost of these soldiers along with new systems for making the taxes more effective to collect. Thus a situation was created in which taxes were levied without representation, soldiers garrisoned in the colonies without American input, and tax collectors made more intrusive. It's worth exploring the effect this would have on the American experience of their colonial government.

Activity: Perspective Journaling (10 minutes)

Take the Perspective of a recent immigrant from Great Britain who arrived on American shores a year ago. Come up with a backstory that includes some of the following:

- What led you to leave your home and cross the Atlantic to America?
 - What personality traits does this require?
- What was your voyage like?
- Where did you land? Describe the colony and where you settled.
 - Are you a farmer? Did you stay in port? What is your occupation?
- What's your view of other colonists?
 - Do you have much regard for the Native Americans who live here?
 - What are your views of the British Government back home?
 - How is the colonial government here? Are they fairly appointed or elected?
- How do other colonists view you? There's been a huge influx of immigrants over the past hundred years and the colonies have grown tremendously. Does that impact how they treat you?

Activity: Structured Academic Controversy on British Taxes

Students will research a particular tax or law passed by Parliament on the colonies and then divide into groups to discuss the different perspectives on it.

Laws:

- [The Stamp Act](#) [Gilder Lehrman]
- [The Townshend Acts](#) [Wikipedia]
- [The Sugar Act](#) [Mass Historical Society]
- [The Quartering Act](#) [Wikipedia]

Structured Academic Controversy:

- In groups, research the tax, its rationale, and the colonial response
- Split into two sides arguing for or against the law from the perspective of for or against. These will represent the Loyalist (pro-British authority) or Patriot (pro-American self government).
- Come up with two to three arguments supporting your side and explain them to your counterparts.
- Then switch sides and argue again. Feel free to use their strongest arguments, but also see if you can come up with new ones.
- Afterwards, come to a consensus about the facts, what arguments were most convincing, and whether the taxes were justified or not.
- In your original perspective (Patriot or Loyalist):
 - Was this tax justified? If so, why? If not, why not?
 - How would you respond to this tax if you were a colonist at that time?
 - How would you react to the other side's position and response?
- Then, present your group's tax to the class.
 - What was it?
 - What was the response to it?
 - What consensus did your two teams reach about the tax?

Exit Ticket: Taxation

- Were the taxes imposed by Great Britain on the colonies justified? Why or why not?
 - If you have time, what reasons do you see for the opposing view?

Episode 1 Lesson Plan

Do Now: Perspective Journaling (10 minutes)

Choose one prompt:

- As a British Colonist, how attached do you feel to the British Government and the governments they appoint to rule here in the New World? How much power over the government do you feel that you and your fellow colonists should have? How much do you think is right for the government back in Britain to have? Explain.
- Pretend you run a newspaper in Boston and all of a sudden your paper increases in price due to the Stamp Act. How do you feel about this? What types of articles and opinion pieces will you publish in response to this? Will you take an even stance or take a side?
- As a merchant who imports finished goods from Britain and other colonies (notably sugar, molasses, and rum from the Caribbean islands), you've seen the price of your goods increase substantially with these new taxes. Imagine sitting with your friends, other merchants, and discussing the impact of these taxes. Do you think your customers will pay the higher price? What do you think about smuggling these goods into the colonies and trying to escape the British tax collectors at the harbor? Is it worth the risk?
- As a British Colonist living in America, you can feel your loyalty pulled between King and country. You are a British citizen, but you live so far away from the British home islands. How do you rationalize the recent tax increases on sugar, paper, and other everyday goods? Is it fair for Parliament to ask you to pay for the recent war fought in North America?
- As a Native American whose tribe allied itself with the British against the French and their native allies, how has the war impacted you? How do you feel about the British, the colonists, and other Native Americans, both those you allied with and those whom you fought against? Do you trust the British to keep their word to prevent their colonists from expanding into your land? What do you foresee for the future relations between your people and the newcomers? What are your hopes and fears at this time of peace?

Play Episode 1

Think Pair Share Discussion:

- Individually reflect: why did Britain raise taxes on the American colonies? Was that fair?
 - Why would some colonists support the presence of the British Army in Boston?
 - Why would some colonists oppose the presence of the British Army in Boston?
- Pair: Together, create an argument in favor of taxation and then against it.
- Discussion:
 - Were the various tax acts justified?
 - How did the British Government justify them?
 - Why did some Americans not see the justice in them?
 - How should the colonists have responded?
 - How should Parliament have acted and then responded to colonial resistance?

Episode 2 Lesson Plan

Play Episode 2

Activity: Independent Research First Person Perspectives on the Boston Massacre

- Read eyewitness testimonies from the event:
 - Thomas Preston and an anonymous Patriot publication; [National Council of Social Studies](#)
 - Various Viewpoints of Bostonians: [Alpha History](#)
 - [Initial reactions with clickable primary sources, Massachusetts Historical Society](#)

Reflection on the Boston Massacre: Choose one perspective

- As a Patriot, how would you see the events of that night? Journal from that perspective about how this makes you feel about the British Government, their administration, the recent taxes, and soldiers stationed in the colonies. Do you feel a vibeshift?
- As a Loyalist, how do you feel about your fellow colonists? Do you feel that they acted responsibly? What's your impression about how the British Soldiers acted? Do you think they acted out of self defense or did they act as vicious oppressors? How does this make you feel about where you live?
- If you've been impartial up until now, how does this shape your view of the increasingly tense relationship between the British Administration and the colonies? Does this push you to sympathize with one side or the other? Do you think there's a way back towards peace? Do you want to find a way back?

Discussion:

- What did you discover happened that night? What do you think happened?
 - Do you think the British soldiers were acting in justified self defense?
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- How do you think the colonists will react upon hearing the news?
- How do you think the colonists will talk about what happened?
- How do you think the British government will react?
- How would you react?
 - If you lived back then, how would you wish for the different sides to respond?
How would you have liked to respond?

Exit Ticket: Effect of Boston Massacre

What do you think the effect of the Boston Massacre will be on the relationship between the British Government and the American colonists?

Episode 3 Lesson Plan

Play Episode 3

Debrief on Engraving:

- How did you represent the massacre: what choices did you have? What choices did you make? What choices did Paul Revere make?
- If this were posted around the colonies, in newspapers, and on signs what effect do you think it would have?
- What's the modern equivalent today? What would Paul Revere do today? Have you seen anything like this on Youtube, Tiktok, or other places on the internet?

Debrief on Trial:

- Were you surprised by the verdict of the trial?
- How do you think the Loyalists would have responded? How about the Patriots and Sons of Liberty?
- Do you think their responses would have been balanced or would one side react more strongly than the other? If so, what effect do you think that would have on events going forward?

Exit Ticket: Mock Trial Preparation

- Pick a character for mock trial
- (If time) Begin crafting an identity for them as well as the statement they will give

Mock Trial: The Trial of Captain Preston and His Men

Assign Groups ahead of time. Each student should prepare a written statement that they will use to address the court. They should also prepare for their specific role.

The teacher will perform the role of Judge, announcing the charges, keeping order, and sentencing.

Excerpts of testimonies can be found in the accompanying powerpoint

The Mock trial will proceed as follows:

- 5-10 minutes of prep time
- The judge will open the session and explain the charges brought against the British Soldiers.
- The Prosecution and Defense will then deliver their opening statements, explaining the case from their point of view.
- Witnesses will then be called to the stand, they will deliver their own statements and then answer one question from each team of lawyers. Follow up questions may be permitted by the judge.
- Defendants will then be called as witnesses themselves.
- Each team of lawyers will then deliver closing statements, summing up what has been shared from their points of view.
- Finally, the jury will deliberate and then address the court room, sharing their perspectives having heard from numerous parties before announcing their consensus on the guilt or innocence of the soldiers. If there's time, the jury can take time after school to reflect on the evidence they have heard, write their statements and deliberate before coming back to class to vote.
- The judge will then sentence the soldiers.

Prosecution Team: You are tasked with establishing the guilt of the British Soldiers in the deaths of five Boston citizens and injuring six more with their muskets.

You must prepare an opening statement, laying out the case as you see it. You should also prepare a set of goals for cross examination and questions to ask the witnesses to lead them to testimonies favorable to your case.

Defense Team:

You have been hired to make sure that all are accorded a fair trial. You must make sure that the British Soldiers are treated fairly before the law despite the uproar their actions have caused.

You must prepare your own opening statement, establishing the events as you see fit as well as questions to ask the witnesses to lead them to answers that favor the innocence of the soldiers.

[Closing Statement of John Adams](#)

Eyewitnesses:

- [Jane Crothers](#)
- [Edward Langford](#)
- [Ebenezer Hinkley](#)

- [Peter Cunningham](#)
- [John Cole](#)
- [Daniel Calef](#)
- [Richard Palmes](#)
- [Newton Prince](#)
- [Charles Hobby](#)
- [Edward Payne](#)
- [Daniel Usher](#)
- [William Wyatt](#)
- Etc. Many other testimonies can be found online and in the “perspectives on the Boston Massacre source list”

Soldier Testimonies:

- [Note: Thomas Preston is quite lengthy](#)
- [Joseph Whitehouse](#)

Jury: An odd number of students to vote on the verdict based on evidence and arguments presented. Unlike other roles, the jury will have to create their statement at the end of the case. If time allows, ideally the jury will be able to craft statements after the trial concludes as homework and deliver their verdict the next day in class.

Debrief of Trial:

- What should the outcome be for the soldiers?
- How confident do you feel about knowing what happened?
- If you were an eyewitness, how confident do you feel you would know exactly what happened?
- How do you think the history of the Boston Massacre was shaped?