

AMERICA 250 | CT EDUCATOR RESOURCES

8TH GRADE

In 2026, the United States will commemorate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the founding of the country. It is an opportunity for reflection on the ideals of the nation's founders and a time to consider the path forward in expanding our realization of those ideals today.

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USING THIS PACKET

As the nation prepares to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the founding of the country, this educator's packet encourages K-12 students to reflect on the ideals of the nation's founders and consider how those ideals have evolved over time. Supporting a reawakening of civic engagement, this packet touches on the following America 250 | CT themes, specifically within the context of Connecticut and the American Revolution:

- **Power of Place***
 - Grade 3 - Our Town's Story: "What Makes Our Town Special?"
- **Tell Inclusive Stories***
 - Grade 5 - Hannah Bunce Watson: "Whose Story Gets Told?"
- **Doing History**
 - Grade 8 - Benedict Arnold and Abigail Hinman: "Sources and Stories"
- **For the Common Good***
 - High School - Lemuel Haynes: "Freedom and Liberty in 1776"

All lessons align with the [2022 Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Standards](#). While lessons have been designed to speak to certain grade levels and learning goals, any lesson can be modified to suit any grade. Please feel free to adapt these lessons and activities as you see fit for your classroom.

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*For other grade level lessons, see [full packet](#).

DOING HISTORY

"Doing History" means actively participating in understanding the past. It's more than just memorizing facts; it's about becoming comfortable with the idea that history can be ambiguous, contested, and always- evolving. It involves asking questions, carefully looking at different sources of information like documents, images, and even family stories.

Questions to Consider:

- *How do primary and secondary sources allow us to make sense of the past?*
- *Where do we find sources for previously untold stories?*
- *Who holds knowledge in different communities? How is it shared?*

GRADE 8 LESSON

Benedict Arnold and Abigail Hinman: "Sources and Stories"

- **Educator Guide**
 - Time Allotment
 - Learning Objectives
 - Standards
 - Materials
 - Step-by-Step Procedure
 - Opportunities for Assessment
 - Additional Resources
- **Printables and Worksheets**
 - Student-friendly summary of Benedict Arnold and Abigail Hinman
 - Daniel Huntington's painting, Abigail Dolbeare Hinman, 1853-1856
 - Benedict Arnold's Oath of Allegiance from May 30, 1778
 - Primary vs. Secondary Sources Worksheet
 - Source Analysis Worksheet
 - Connect to Today: Burning of Benedict Arnold's Effigy Article

BENEDICT ARNOLD AND ABIGAIL HINMAN

Sources and Stories

Educator Guide

Grade Level: 8th Grade

Time Allotment: 2-3 class periods (adaptable)

Learning Objectives:

- Students will explain the concept of "Doing History," understanding that historical narratives can be ambiguous, contested, and require the evaluation of sources.
- Students will compare the nature of the historical evidence available for different parts of Arnold's and Hinman's stories.
- Students will analyze how different representations (like a painting) can shape our understanding of historical figures and events.
- Students will consider the importance of examining multiple perspectives and types of sources.

Standards:

- 8.Inq.3.a. Gather information from multiple sources and evaluate their relevance and intended use (e.g., origin, authority, structure, context, corroborative value, credibility).
- 8.Inq.3.c. Develop claims and counterclaims while pointing out the strengths and limitations of different sources.
- 8.His.10.a. Describe how individual and group perspectives of the American Revolution are documented in historical records while identifying representation of marginalized voices (e.g., journals, letters, pamphlets, newspaper articles from sources such as the Hartford Daily Courant).

Materials:

- Student-friendly summary of Benedict Arnold and Abigail Hinman
- Projector or copies of Daniel Huntington's painting and Benedict Arnold's Oath of Allegiance
- Whiteboard, chart paper, or digital tool for recording student ideas
- Source Analysis worksheet

Procedure:

1. Engage (15-20 minutes):
 - Begin by asking students a compelling question related to "Doing History": "How do historians figure out what really happened in the past, especially when different accounts exist?" or "Why is history sometimes described as 'contested'?"
 - Introduce Abigail Hinman by showing the class the painting by Daniel Huntington. Ask students what they observe in the painting (her clothing, expression, the musket, the

background). Prompt them to think about the story the artist might be trying to tell about this woman during the American Revolution.

2. Explore (30-40 minutes):

- Provide students with the summary of Benedict Arnold and Abigail Hinman or guide them through key information from the sources.
- Explain that while Arnold's story is well-documented with many historical sources, there is little written about Abigail Hinman, although there is more information about her husband, Elisha (who wasn't there for this event), and Benedict Arnold (seen in the background of the painting). Explain that "Doing History" means we don't just read stories; we investigate where they come from and how they are supported by evidence.
- Revisit the Huntington painting. Discuss:
 - Is this painting a historical source that proves the musket event happened, or is it an artist's representation based on the story? The painting was made decades after the event (mid-1850s).
 - Why might a story like Abigail's musket incident become a popular legend, even if it's not fully confirmed by historical evidence? (What qualities does it show? Courage? Patriotism?)
 - How does the Huntington painting help keep Abigail Hinman's story alive? Does the painting make the story seem more like fact or legend?

3. Introduce a Different Kind of Source (30-40 minutes):

- Present students with the text of Benedict Arnold's Oath of Allegiance from May 30, 1778. Explain that this is a document from the War Department Collection of Revolutionary War Records. Have students read the Oath carefully. Discuss what Benedict Arnold is swearing to do in this document.
 - He acknowledges the United States of America as Free, Independent and Sovereign States.
 - He renounces allegiance or obedience to King George.
 - He swears to support, maintain and defend the United States against the King and his supporters.
 - He swears to serve in his office of Major General with fidelity.
- Explain that despite swearing this oath in 1778, Arnold later conspired to surrender West Point to the British in 1780, betraying his oath. He then joined the British side and, in September 1781, commanded the British troops that raided and burned New London, Connecticut.

4. Unpack "Doing History" (25 minutes):

- How do historians figure out what really happened?
- Historians gather information from multiple sources. The Oath of Allegiance is a **primary source**, or an original document or object created at the time of an event, offering firsthand testimony or direct evidence about that event, topic, or period, while the Abigail

Hinman painting is considered a **secondary source**: a document, text, image, or object created by someone who was not directly involved in the event or conditions being researched.

- What are other kinds of sources that might help us understand the stories of Benedict Arnold and Abigail Hinman?
 - Have students complete the **Primary vs. Secondary Sources Worksheet** individually or in pairs (page 10).
5. Opportunity for Assessment (30-40 minutes):
- Historians also must evaluate the structure, origin, purpose, point of view, corroboration, and credibility of sources. Introduce these ideas to students (page 11). Assign half of the group the Oath of Allegiance and the other half Huntington's painting (or allow them to choose). Have them complete the provided Source Analysis Worksheet (page 12) individually or in pairs.
6. Contrast the Sources and Accounts (15 minutes):
- Have students share some of their analyses. Lead a discussion comparing the documented reality of Benedict Arnold's betrayal (evidenced, in part, by his broken oath) with the legendary account of Abigail Hinman's confrontation depicted in the painting:
 - The Oath provides verifiable evidence of Arnold's sworn loyalty at a specific point in time, making his later actions a clear violation. Arnold's command of the New London raid is also a documented historical event.
 - The Abigail Hinman story, particularly the detail of her firing a musket, is described as a legend with little evidence to corroborate it beyond family stories and the later painting. The painting is evidence that the story existed and was passed down, not necessarily proof that the specific event happened.
7. Contrast the Sources and Accounts (15 minutes):
- Have students read about the burning of Benedict Arnold's effigy (page 13) and the revived tradition in New London. Discuss:
 - What kinds of historical sources would help us understand why people started burning Arnold's effigy?
 - Why was this tradition revived in recent years after it had stopped? What does that tell us about how communities remember history today?

BENEDICT ARNOLD AND ABIGAIL HINMAN

The Story

In late summer of 1781, Benedict Arnold [laid siege to New London](#) (where the American colonists stored a large supply of arms). He and his soldiers raided the city, forcing the patriots to retreat. The British then prepared to burn the town as battles raged and massacres ensued at [Groton Heights and Fort Griswold](#). Abigail Hinman, one of the few colonists who had not fled the city when the Redcoats landed, watched the catastrophic events from her home with her children beside her.

Hinman and her family had been friendly with Arnold years earlier when he lived in the nearby town of [Norwich](#). But when he came to her home that day in September of 1781 with the intention of burning it, along with the rest of the city, Hinman allegedly confronted her former acquaintance, now an infamous traitor. Because of their prior relationship, Arnold agreed not to torch Hinman's house or those of her neighbors.

As the story of Hinman's legend unfolds, Arnold reportedly walked away from her home, at which point Hinman seized her husband's musket, aimed it at the traitor, and pulled the trigger. Though the shot had no effect (due to either poor aim, a misfire, or perhaps even because the musket was not loaded), Arnold heard the noise and questioned her about it. Thinking quickly, Hinman is said to have hid the gun and attributed the noise to a chair breaking in the house. Arnold then left, unaware of what might have been, and ultimately spared several houses, including Hinman's.

In the mid-1850s, 19th-century American painter Daniel Huntington, the husband of Hinman's grandniece, immortalized the legend of Abigail Hinman.

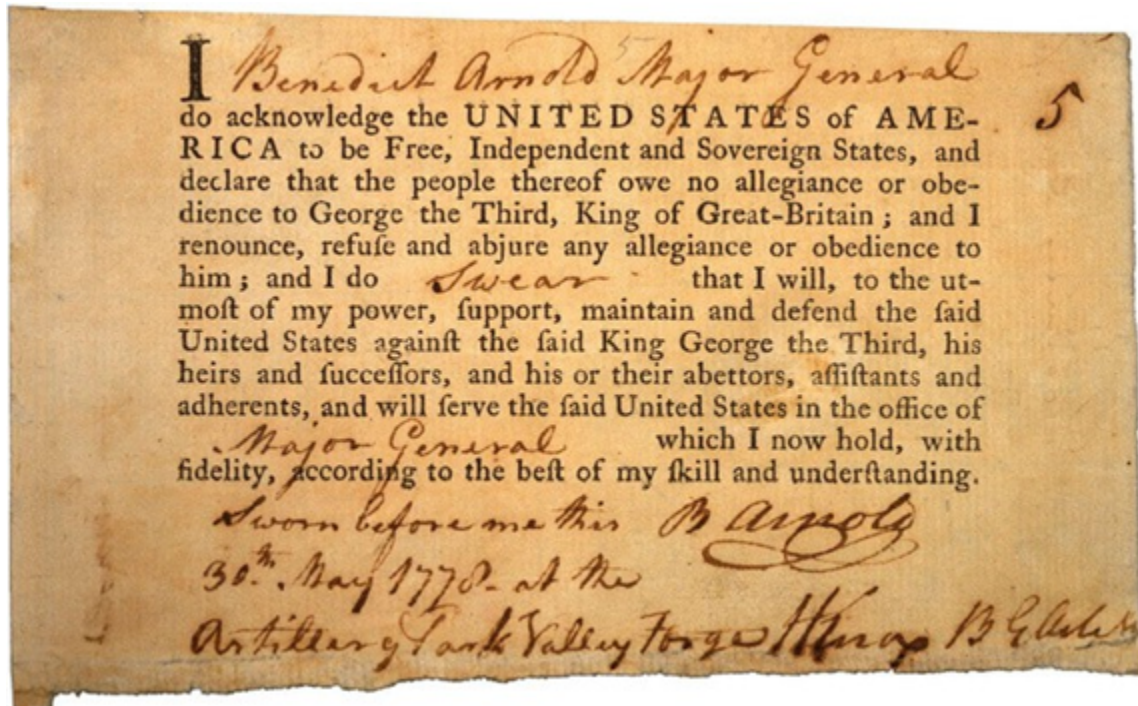
DANIEL HUNTINGTON PAINTING
Abigail Dolbeare Hinman, 1854-1956



Daniel Huntington, *Abigail Dolbeare Hinman*, 1854-1856.
Lyman Allyn Art Museum, New London, Connecticut.

BENEDICT ARNOLD'S OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

May 30, 1778



A photograph of a handwritten document on aged, yellowed paper. The text is written in cursive ink. At the top right, there is a small number '5'. The main body of the text is an oath where Benedict Arnold, Major General, declares his loyalty to the United States and renounces his previous allegiance to King George the Third. The signature 'B Arnold' is written in a large, stylized cursive at the bottom. Below the signature, the date and location are written: '30th May 1778 - at the Artillery Park Valley Forge H Knox B G Artillery'.

I Benedict Arnold Major General
do acknowledge the UNITED STATES of AME-
RICA to be Free, Independent and Sovereign States, and
declare that the people thereof owe no allegiance or obe-
dience to George the Third, King of Great-Britain ; and I
renounce, refuse and abjure any allegiance or obedience to
him ; and I do *Swear* that I will, to the ut-
most of my power, support, maintain and defend the said
United States against the said King George the Third, his
heirs and successors, and his or their abettors, assistants and
adherents, and will serve the said United States in the office of
Major General which I now hold, with
fidelity, according to the best of my skill and understanding.
Sworn before me this B Arnold
30th May 1778 - at the
Artillery Park Valley Forge H Knox B G Artillery

Procedure:

I Benedict Arnold Major General do acknowledge the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA to be Free, Independent and Sovereign States, and declare that the people thereof owe no allegiance or obedience to George the Third, King of Great-Britain ; and I renounce, refuse and abjure any allegiance or obedience to him ; and I do *[handwritten]* Swear *[end handwritten]* that I will, to the utmost of my power, support, maintain and defend the said United States against the said King George the Third, his heirs and successors, and his or their abettors, assistants and adherents, and will serve the said United States in the office of Major General which I now hold, with fidelity, according to the best of my skill and understanding.

Sworn before me this B Arnold
30 th Day of May 1778 – at the
Artillery Park Valley Forge H Knox B G Artillery

Benedict Arnold's Oath of Allegiance; 5/30/1778; War Department Collection of Revolutionary War Records, Record Group 93. Used Through Public Domain.

BENEDICT ARNOLD AND ABIGAIL HINMAN

Worksheet: Primary vs. Secondary Sources

Circle whether each source listed below is a primary source (P) or a secondary source (S):

1. A diary entry written by a soldier in World War II	P / S	6. An interview with an activist during the Civil Rights Movement	P / S
2. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech	P / S	7. A documentary about the fall of the Roman Empire	P / S
3. A historical fiction novel set during the Roaring '20s	P / S	8. A biography of Eleanor Roosevelt written by a modern historian	P / S
4. A TikTok recorded by someone at a recent protest	P / S	9. A review of the latest Marvel movie	P / S
5. A painting by Pablo Picasso	P / S	10. Census data from the 1970s	P / S

Write one example of a primary source and one secondary source, explaining what makes them primary or secondary:

Primary:

Secondary:

BENEDICT ARNOLD AND ABIGAIL HINMAN

Source Analysis

Structure: What kind of source is it - primary or secondary? Is it a formal government paper, a personal diary entry, a newspaper article, a map, a photograph, or a painting? The type of source affects what kind of information it gives you and how you should use it.

Origin: Where did this source come from? Who made it? When and where was it made? Was it created during the time period you're studying or much, much later? Knowing the origin is the first step to trusting a source. What was happening in the world when the source was made?

Purpose: What was the creator's purpose? Was Arnold required to take the oath? Was the painter trying to celebrate a local hero?

Understanding the situation and the creator's goals helps you understand the source.

Point of View: Was the person or group who made this source in a position to really know what happened? Were they there? Were they involved, or just observing? Were they an official record-keeper? What sort of bias might the creator have? Who is the author's intended audience, and how might they affect the reliability of the source?

Corroboration: Does this source agree with or back up what other reliable sources say? Historians look for multiple sources that tell the same story. If you find the same detail in several different, trustworthy places, it corroborates that detail. If a dramatic detail only appears in one later source, it has less corroborative value.

Credibility: Finally, after considering all the above: How believable or trustworthy is this source overall? Some sources are highly credible for certain facts, while others might be less credible or only useful for understanding beliefs or legends from the time.

BENEDICT ARNOLD AND ABIGAIL HINMAN

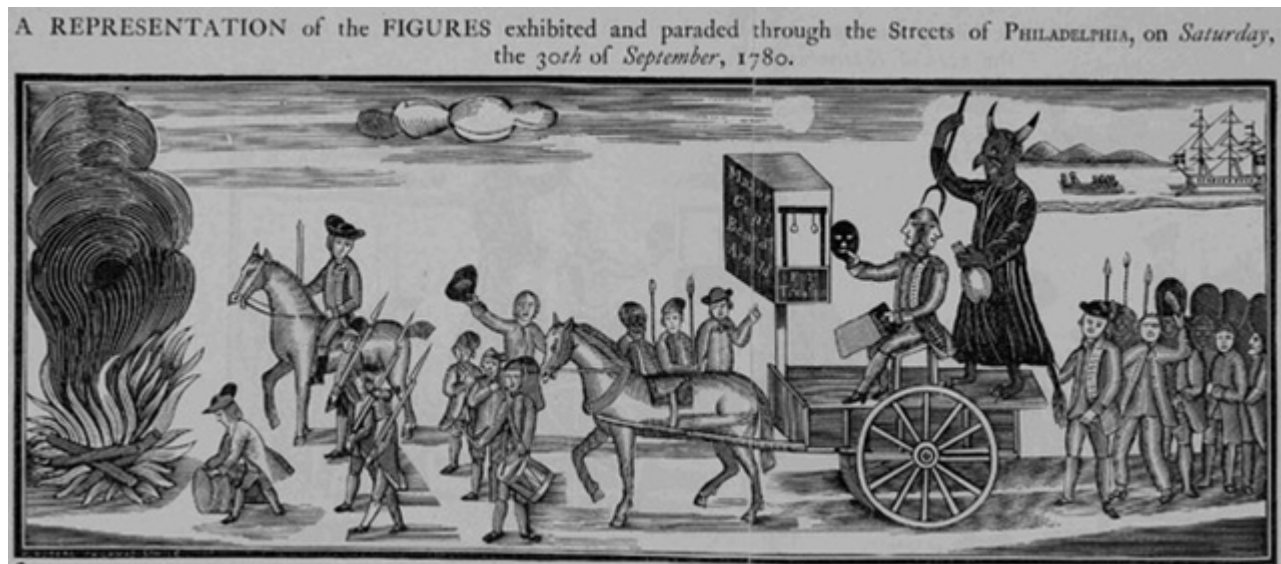
Worksheet: Source Analysis

Source: _____

Structure	
Origin	
Purpose	
Point of View	
Corroboration	
Credibility	

BENEDICT ARNOLD AND ABIGAIL HINMAN

Connect to Today



Detail from a 1780 broadside depicting one of the first burnings of Benedict Arnold's effigy in Philadelphia - Library of Congress

In response to Benedict Arnold's betrayal, cities like Philadelphia, Boston, and Newport held symbolic parades where they burned effigies of Arnold. Philadelphia's parade featured a two-faced dummy of Arnold, with the Devil offering him money, highlighting his perceived corruption.

New London, Connecticut, which Arnold had attacked, revived this tradition after the American Revolution and again in 2013. Flock Theatre, in collaboration with the New London County Historical Society, reenacts the burning every year, calling it "The March of the Traitor." The parade culminates in burning an Arnold effigy, with a symbolic gesture of cutting off the dummy's leg and sending it to Norwich, honoring Arnold's earlier injury while fighting for the Continental Army.



New London's March of the Traitor – Vincent A. Scarano, Flock Theatre

BENEDICT ARNOLD AND ABIGAIL HINMAN

Images, Additional Resources

Benedict Arnold, 1741-1801, by John Trumbull, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. Used through Public Domain.



A sketch of New London & Groton with the attacks made on Forts Trumbull & Griswold, Sept. 6th, 1781. Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division. Used through Public Domain.

Additional Resources:

[Benedict Arnold: 1741-1801](#)

[Benedict Arnold Turns and Burns New London](#)

["To Thomas Jefferson from Elisha Hinman, 16 November 1801"](#)

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

For Teaching “Doing History”

Teach It Lessons

- Share Abigail Hinman’s story with younger students with a Teach It activity for Grade 5: "[New London’s Role in American Independence](#)."
- Continue to explore how historians reconstruct the stories of people from the past with the Grade 8/High School activity "[Telling Their Stories: African Americans in the American Revolution](#)."

People

- [James Mars](#), activist (*pictured at middle right*)
- [Gladys Tantaquidgeon](#), Mohegan Medicine Woman
- [Joshua Hempsted](#), diarist (*pictured at bottom right*)

Places

- [Connecticut Museum of Culture & History](#), Hartford
- [Hempsted Houses](#), New London
- [Hartford History Center](#)

Events

- [COVID-19 Pandemic](#), 2020
- [Connecticut State Historical Records Advisory Board](#), est. 1976
- [Lafayette’s Farewell Tour](#), 1824-25



RESOURCES

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

[Teach It](#) provides inquiry-based activities that reinforce the principles found in the state social studies standards to help Connecticut's teachers bring Connecticut history into the classroom.

[ConnecticutHistory.org](#) is a state public history resource that provides engaging, well-researched stories about Connecticut history that link to reliable primary and interpretive resources.

The [Connecticut Council for the Social Studies](#) will be hosting conferences for students and teachers focused on the themes of the 250th.

Teachers and students are encouraged to participate in [Connecticut History Day](#) and develop projects related to the 250th and the themes for this commemoration.

Connecticut's [Kid Governor](#) immerses 5th graders in a real election for the CT Kid Governor, a fellow 5th grader who will represent them during a one-year term of active leadership. The program teaches about state government, voting, elections, and civic participation.

The Museum of the American Revolution has put together a [Summer Reading List](#) for young readers, covering books appropriate for ages 7-14.

ONLINE RESOURCES

[Connecticut Archives Online \(CAO\)](#) brings together information about primary source collections from over 50 institutions in CT into one site. CAO can connect you with unique archival material and where you can go to find it.

[Connecticut Collections \(CTCo\)](#) makes resources from over 50 museums and archives throughout the state accessible in one place. CTCo is a resource for teachers, students and researchers to learn discover collections, find local history, and learn about art.

The [Connecticut Digital Archive \(CTDA\)](#) is a digital repository of over 3+ million digital objects. CTDA facilitates access to a wide range of resources from over 100 Connecticut organizations.

[Connecticut Explored](#) is the nonprofit magazine of Connecticut history. Anyone with an interest in the untold stories of Connecticut's past can satisfy their curiosity with each issue of Connecticut Explored. The magazine offers a variety and range of stories that connect our past to our present and future.

About CT Humanities

CT Humanities (CTH) is the non-profit organization recognized by the State of Connecticut to coordinate and lead the plans for commemorative, educational, and civics-based initiatives leading up to and during 2026. CTH will serve as the administrative agent and act as the nonprofit fiduciary on behalf of any activities undertaken by the America 250 | CT Commission.

As the principal grantmaking organization for history, cultural, and civics organizations in Connecticut, CTH will bring together communities and cultural resources throughout our state and lead the sector in developing a meaningful commemoration.



ABOUT THE COMMISSION

In order to recognize this moment in our history, Governor Ned Lamont established the America 250 | CT Commission with Executive Order 22-2.

Mission:

To plan and coordinate activities commemorating the 250th anniversary of the nation's founding; and enhance tourism, economic development, historic education and preservation, and outdoor recreation within the state; and coordinate, engage, and liaise with the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission, and other local, county, and state commissions, as well as private and public organizations and partners. The Commission will develop, encourage, and execute an inclusive celebration, commemoration, and observance of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence through civic, cultural, and historical education events and programming; and will promote the documentation, identification, and preservation of cultural and historic resources, including archives, buildings, landscapes, objects, and sites related to the semiquincentennial period.

To learn more about the America 250 | CT Commission, including existing resources, upcoming meetings, and ways to get involved, visit CT250.org, email info@ct250.org, or find us on Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube @america250ct.

