

Title: Patriot, Loyalist, or Neutral? You Decide

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Historical Background: During the American Revolution, the American colonists had to decide to support the War for Independence or remain loyal to the British and King George III. Some Americans could not decide which side to choose and remained neutral during the war. Most American colonists, however, did choose sides. Those who supported independence from Britain were known as Patriots and colonists who opposed independence from Britain were known as Loyalists. Most Patriots supported independence because they felt that recent British laws on the American Colonies violated their rights as British citizens (e.g. taxing without consent, quartering soldiers in citizens' homes, and denying colonists the right to a trial). Many Patriots live in the New England Colonies, especially Massachusetts. Most Loyalists who opposed independence tended to be wealthy landowners, Anglican clergymen, or people with close business or political ties to Britain. There was a high concentration of Loyalists in New York City and in the Southern Colonies. Many Loyalists agreed that the American colonists had suffered at the hands of the British but the Loyalist hoped that a peaceful reconciliation with British government was possible. During the Revolution taking a Loyalists stance was dangerous, especially in the Southern Colonies. Many Loyalists were brutally attacked and killed. Their property was destroyed or confiscated. Loyalists by thousands fled the American Colonies for their own safety. Some Loyalists moved to England and many more moved to nearby Canada.

Those living in the American colonies had various reasons for choosing their side. The Iroquois Confederation, except the Seneca Tribe, had a working relationship with British officials and was angered by colonists encroaching into their territory, sided with British. Tenant farmers often choose their position on the Revolution based on which side their landowner supported. For example, if a Patriot landowner was cruel and always raised the rent, the tenant would be a Loyalist, but if the Patriot landowner was kind and collected a fair rent, the tenant would be a Patriot. Non-English speaking colonists, especially those living in the frontier, often kept to themselves and viewed the conflict between the British government and the Patriots as family quarrel among the English. They wanted to stay out of it and be left alone. Colonists who were in debt with British creditors often became Patriots since they hoped winning the Revolution could get them out of paying back their debt.

It is surprising to most students that not all Americans wanted nor fought for independence. They can't imagine why any American would want to remain part of the British Empire. This activity will make students realize that the colonists had different points of view and that deciding which side to take was not easy and was often life threatening.

Correlation to New York State Grades 7/8 Social Studies Core Curriculum:

Unit Three: A Nation is Created

II. The Shift from Protest to Separation

Suggested Timeframe: 1-2 classroom periods

Materials and Resources:

- Worksheet - "Patriot, Loyalist, or Neutral? You Decide" (attached)

Student Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Explain the difference between a Patriot and a Loyalist during the American Revolution.
- Examine colonists' biographies and determine whether the colonist is a Patriot, a Loyalist, or is neutral.
- Predict which colonist would make an excellent spy for the British

Teaching Strategies, Procedures, and Methodologies:

1. Through class notes or class discussion explain what a Patriot, Loyalist, and neutral were during the Revolution. Explain why different groups chose different sides.
2. Arrange class into groups of three or four students. Distribute the “Patriot, Loyalist, or Neutral? You Decide” worksheet. Review the directions with the students. Tell them that they are to read the individual biographies and using their knowledge of who the Patriots, Loyalists and neutrals were decide whether an individual was a Patriot, Loyalist, or was neutral. For each biography, they must explain why they made their decision.
3. After assigning each individual a side in the Revolution, the students will then have to decide which of the colonists could be recruited by the British to be a spy. Students must write a short explanation for making their selections.
4. After all groups have finished, have the groups share and explain their answers.
5. To conclude the activity, share with students the history of what happened to many Loyalist during and after the Revolution (e.g. the violent attacks, destruction of property, fleeing the colonies).

Evaluation/Assessment:

As an informal assessment, monitor students in their groups to assess whether they grasp the differences between a Loyalist and a Patriot.

Patriot, Loyalist, or Neutral? You Decide

Directions: Read the following biographies of colonists during the American Revolution. Some of the biographies are of real individuals and other biographies are fictional individuals but their situations are similar to those of actual colonists. After reading each biography, circle whether the colonists would have been a Patriot, Loyalist or a neutral and explain why you made your decision.

To help you with the following activity, use your classroom notes or textbook to define the following terms:

Patriot: _____

Loyalist: _____

Neutral: _____

Colonist A

Colonist A is a poor farmer in the Hudson Valley of New York. Colonist A has paid no attention to the trouble brewing in the colonies. His day to day struggle to maintain his farm and family is what worries him. His problems have recently become worse; his landowner, a Loyalist, has had some financial troubles and to get himself out of his enormous debts, his landowner raised Colonist A's rent three times in the last five months. Colonist A barely earns enough from selling his crops to pay the original rent amount and now with the raise in the rent, Colonist A will be evicted from his farm. He and his wife have six children and fear they will have no where to go if they are forced to leave the farm.

Patriot

Loyalist

Neutral

Reason for decision:

Colonist B

Colonist B is a wealthy woman from New York City. Her husband's business earns tremendous wealth and honor for the family. She frequently claims to be related to several members of the House of Lords in the British Parliament. She worries about the amount of violence being committed by mobs of men called the Sons of Liberty. She and her husband fear that their wealth and their connections to Britain may cause them to be targets of the mob.

Patriot

Loyalist

Neutral

Reason for decision:

Colonist C

Colonist C is a wealthy tea merchant in Boston. Colonist C's goal in life is to make money and he doesn't care if he violates the law. Since the Townshend Acts placed a tax on tea, Colonist C has been illegally importing tea from the Dutch. His ships frequently have to hide from the British navy and British customs officials who can board his ships whenever they please. Recently he was caught smuggling in tea, but fortunately he was able to buy off the official with a large sum of money. Friends have informed Colonist C that the Royal Governor of Massachusetts has issued an arrest warrant for Colonist C, and friends advise him to go into hiding.

Patriot

Loyalist

Neutral

Reason for decision:

Colonist D

Colonist D is a merchant from rural Virginia. He follows the British laws and sells all of his goods, mainly tobacco to the British. Colonist D's lifestyle is extravagant and spends large amounts of his money purchasing the finest clothes and furnishings from Europe. As a young boy, his father sent him to study in Britain and he hopes that next year, he too will send his son to Britain, the only place in his mind one can get a decent education. Due to his rich lifestyle, Colonist D is in heavy debt with several British banks. He fears that the people he owes money to will foreclose his property.

Patriot

Loyalist

Neutral

Reason for decision:

Colonist E

Colonist E is originally from Germany and lives on the Pennsylvania Frontier. Colonist E decided to move his family out of the Pennsylvania colony into the fertile Ohio Valley. He plans to move near a British fort in the Ohio Valley which can provide protection from Indians. As Colonist E and his family moved towards the Ohio Valley, British soldiers stopped him and informed him that the Proclamation of 1763 prohibits him from moving into the Ohio Valley.

Patriot

Loyalist

Neutral

Reason for decision:

Colonist F

Colonist F is a merchant in New York City. His business imports many products from Europe, especially Britain. Colonist F has secretly grown concerned over the recent talk of independence from Britain. He fears an independent America could not protect his ships at sea; the British navy escorts colonial ships as they cross the Atlantic to protect the ships from pirates or foreign ships wanting to steal goods. Since the Townshend Acts, the Sons of Liberty have been bullying storeowners into removing British goods from their shelves. A store owner friend of his was badly beaten up by a mob of Son's of Liberty for selling British products. Since hearing of his friend's attack, Colonist F has participated with the boycotts.

Patriot

Loyalist

Neutral

Reason for decision:

Colonist G

Colonist G lives close to Boston's waterfront. He has very little money and cares little about politics. He works on docks loading and unloading the ships and at night he hangs out and plays cards in one of the many taverns along the waterfront. He has been known to spend a few nights in jail after fighting in the taverns. His toughness has caught the eye of the Sons of Liberty and for months they have been trying to recruit him. Colonist G accepted their rum and ale but refused to join the Sons of Liberty. Yesterday, Colonists G was informed that he was out of a job because the British passed a series of acts called the Intolerable Acts which closed Boston Harbor to trade.

Patriot

Loyalist

Neutral

Reason for decision:

Activity Two: Recruit a spy for the British Army

Directions: During the American Revolution both the American Continental Army and the British Army had spies to keep track of their enemy. You have been hired by the British to recruit a spy in the colonies. You must choose your spy from one of colonists above. When making your decision use the following criteria

1. The spy cannot be someone who the Patriots mistrust. The spy should be a person who appears to agree with the Patriots.
2. The spy should live in a populated area where the Patriots are active and can report on Patriot activity. A colonist in a rural area will have little information to provide.
3. The spy should need something from the British, either money or military protection, to entice him or her to risk his or her life.

Which colonist will make the best spy? _____

Why did you choose this colonist?