

**National Endowment for the Humanities Landmarks of America Teacher Workshop**  
**Lesson Plan For- Partisans & Redcoats: The American Revolution in the Southern Backcountry**  
**August 2009**  
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**Standards Connection: North Carolina Standard Course of Study: (High School)**

**Competency Goal 1:** TLW investigate the foundations of the American political system and explore basic values and principles of American democracy.

**Objective 1.03:** Examine the causes of the American Revolution.

**Objective 1.04:** Elaborate on the emergence of an American identity.

**Introduction:** The British Empire established colonies in North America beginning in the 1500's, however by the 1700's unrest amongst the colonists was growing. Colonists' unrest and anger towards Britain came as a result of a series of British acts and taxes as well as an ultimate desire to have more control over their destiny. The validity of colonial rebellion is a good controversy for students to consider in order to better understand America's Revolutionary War.

Issues to be considered:

Content/ Topic: The Revolutionary War

Perennial Issue: When is rebellion justified?

Case Issue: Were the American colonists justified in their rebellion against Britain?

**Procedure:**

1. 'Hook'

Ask the class a question to start the class- *Have you ever thought of being independent from your parents? What would the advantages be? What would the disadvantages be?* Get a sampling of answers from the class and explain that the pros and cons of independence from one's parents are similar to the pros and cons the colonists faced in 1776 when considering independence from Britain.

Show a five minute clip from the film, The Patriot (2000) to illustrate the debate over rebellion. (Start the film at the gathering of colonists in the courthouse near the start of the film and end when the people exit the courthouse.)

2. Group Work

Divide students into groups of four students and assign positions. Two students will be assigned either a yes or a no position in response to the question, 'Should the American colonists have rebelled against Britain'? So, within the group of four students two students will argue for the yes side and two will argue for the no side. These partners will work together to understand their position. Students will use a worksheet to help with this task. Students should use relevant textbook sections as well as the position handouts provided.

3. Present Positions

Those who explored the 'yes' perspective will share first with the opposing viewpoint pair followed by those who explored the 'no' perspective. Those presenting should be persuasive in nature and as one side presents the other side must take down information about the perspective on their worksheet.

4. Conclusion

After the groups have finished explaining and taking notes on the viewpoints they will come together and reach an agreement about something relating to what they have been discussing. This will go on their worksheet. It should be made clear that the group need not come to an agreement about the

question at hand, even agreeing to disagree is valid or more information may be needed to come to a conclusion.

Come together as a whole class and take a hand count to get an idea of the opinions of the classroom in regard to the question of justification for rebellion. Options are yes, no, or not sure. Lastly students should write their own opinion on their worksheet.

## **Student Worksheet- Were the American Colonists Justified in Their Rebellion Against Britain?**

**STEP 1:** Read your assigned viewpoint. Circle your viewpoint below. What are the reasons for your viewpoint?

**STEP 2:** Circle the opposing viewpoint below. Listen as the other group presents their reasons. Take down notes as you listen.

**STEP 4:** As a group of four discuss the question-- Were the American colonists justified in their rebellion against Britain? What can your group agree on about this issue?

**STEP 5:** What do YOU think about the question or rebellion after hearing both sides? Do you think the American colonists were justified in their rebellion against Britain? Why or why not?

# Were the American Colonists Justified in Their Rebellion Against Britain? **YES- Said the Patriots**

- The Americans were being taxed by Britain, but they had no representatives to voice their opinions in Parliament:  
“*No taxation without representation*”  
-James Otis-
- Colonists were expected to pay for the debts from the costly French and Indian War:  
“*Her (Britain) motive was interest not attachment; she did not protect us from our enemies on our account, but from her enemies on her own account.*”  
-Thomas Paine, Common Sense 1776-
- The colonists were angry about the Proclamation of 1763 that said they could not settle to the west of the Appalachian Mountains.
- Colonists resented Britain’s policies towards the colonies. Such policies were the Stamp Act that said a stamp must be placed on all printed goods, the Tea Act that allowed only one company to sell tea to the colonists, and the Quartering Act that forced colonists to house and feed British soldiers.
- Britain limited colonial trade through her policies (the Intolerable Acts & the Prohibitory Acts.) These policies made it difficult for colonists to make a living.
- Because of her actions Britain was not a good ruler for the colonies:  
“*But Britain is the parent country say some. Then the more shame upon her conduct.*”  
-Thomas Paine, Common Sense 1776 –
- Britain and the king were far away and out of touch with the lives of the colonists in America. Britain was a different world, a different society than America was:  
“*There is something very absurd in supposing a Continent to be perpetually governed by an island...England and America reverse the order of nature, it is evident they belong to different systems- England to Europe, America to itself.*”  
-Thomas Paine, Common Sense 1776-
- The British actions on April 19, 1775- Boston Massacre (five colonists dead.)
- Liberty (freedom) is a right of all men:  
“*A government of our own is our natural rights.*”  
-Thomas Paine, Common Sense 1776-

## Were the American Colonists Justified in Their Rebellion Against Britain?

### **NO- Said the Loyalists**

- The colonists did not have representation in Parliament, but neither did other people in certain parts of England and their empire.
- George Grenville the Prime Minister of England felt the colonists should contribute to the cost of the French and Indian War because they benefited from the protection of England's military.
- The Tea Act actually gave the colonists a bargain price on tea.
- Britain was forced to close Boston Harbor (Intolerable Acts) as a punishment because colonists destroyed precious tea cargo during the Boston Tea Party.
- British troops kept order in the colonies and ensured the safety of colonists. Britain could provide only so many troops so it was necessary to declare the Proclamation of 1763 for the colonists own protection since too many troops would be needed to protect colonists in the land west of the Appalachian Mountains.
- The colonists were indeed Englishmen and subjects of King George III. It was their duty to obey and respect their king and government:  
*"The Americans are Britons. They have the manners, habits, and ideas of Britons; and have been accustomed to a similar form of government."*  
-Charles Inglis, 1776-
- The Declaration of Independence was an act of treason (illegal) because the colonists were subjects of the crown.
- The British government did allow freedoms and protection to the colonists:  
*"Have we not enjoyed liberty even under the English monarchy? Shall we this day renounce that to go and seek it in I know not what form of republic."*  
  
*"We have presented ourselves in all the ports and in all the cities of the globe, not as Americans, a people scarcely heard of, but as English. Under this respected name, every port was open to us, every way was smooth, every demand was heard in favor"*  
-John Dickinson, 1775-
- Britain must have laws, acts, and policies to govern her people:  
*"It is a fact that America can be well and happily governed by the English laws, under the same king and the same Parliament. Two hundred years of happiness furnish the proof of it."*-John Dickinson, 1775-



