

# *Divided Loyalties: Seeing Both Sides of the American Revolution*

## Lesson Plan

**Grade Level:** 6-8

**Curriculum Focus:** U.S. History

**Lesson Duration:** One class period

### ***Student Objectives***

- Examine both the rebel and the loyalist positions taken by colonists during the Revolution.
- Write a well-reasoned “letter to the editor” supporting one of these positions.

### ***Materials***

- Discovery School video on *unitedstreaming: The Revolutionary War: The Price of Loyalty & Dark Days*  
Search for this video by using the video title (or a portion of it) as the keyword.

Selected clips that support this lesson plan:

- George Rogers Clark Retakes Vincennes and Claims Western Lands for Virginia
  - John Paul Jones Takes a British Warship
  - Benedict Arnold Is Accused of Profiteering
  - Benedict Arnold Betrays the Rebels and Becomes a British General
- Samples of contemporary letters to an editor

### ***Procedures***

1. Share with students several examples of recent letters to the editor. Include samples from local newspapers and national newspapers.
2. Explain that newspapers in this country have published written opinions since the American Revolution. These letters or editorials expressed strong and passionate opinions about our country’s fight for independence. Tell students that they are going to write their own letters to the editor as if they were living during the Revolution. Their letters should express their opinions about how the war is going and a desired outcome. Each letter must make clear:
  - where the writer is from—the American colonies or Britain;
  - the writer’s sympathies—loyalist (that is, faithful to the crown) or patriot (that is, favoring the American cause)—and support for that position; and
  - the newspaper’s sympathies—loyalist or patriot.

3. Review with your students the fundamentals of writing a letter to an editor (or of writing an editorial):
  - a) Tell the reader specifically what you are writing in response to— usually, to an article, an editorial, or a column previously published in the newspaper.
  - b) Announce your position.
  - c) Give evidence in support of your position, making sure that the details you include are relevant, fair, and reliable.
  - d) Appeal to both a reader’s logic and a reader’s emotions.
  - e) Acknowledge that the newspaper and some readers may hold an opinion different from yours. Show why your position is superior to theirs; in other words, show what’s wrong with their position.
  - f) When appropriate, conclude your letter with a call for action by the readership.
4. Help students select an issue appropriate for a 1780 letter to the editor. Possibilities include the following:
  - John Paul Jones’s exploits at sea
  - Benedict Arnold’s behavior
  - Guerilla warfare by patriots in the South
5. After students draft their letters to the editor, have them exchange letters with a partner for peer evaluation. Direct students to check each other’s letters for the following problems:
  - Insufficient support
  - Unclear organization
  - Overstatement or hyperbole
  - Fallacies of reasoning (such as either-or thinking, red herring, attacking the person instead of the position)
6. Give students an opportunity to revise their drafts before handing them in to you.

### ***Discussion Questions***

1. the colonists’ relationship with the Native Americans in the years following the war?
2. Benedict Arnold went from being "The Hero of Saratoga" to one of the most infamous traitors in U.S. history. What personal characteristics and events in his life led to his decision to turn against the United States and help the British?

3. Analyze what makes a strategic position in war. Consider the location of cities, trade and communication routes, the availability of food and other supplies, and the ability to defend the position or retreat if necessary.
4. The Southern states had a significant number of loyalists, colonists whose loyalty lay with the king and government of England rather than with an independent American government. Discuss why some colonists would be willing to fight to be independent while others would be willing to fight to remain as British subjects.

### **Assessment**

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Student's letter clearly states a timely position; offers significant support for the position; articulately acknowledges but undercuts opposing views; ends with a call for action if appropriate; error-free writing.
- 2 points: Student's letter adequately states a timely position; offers some support for the position; insufficiently acknowledges or insufficiently undercuts opposing views; ends with a call for action if appropriate; some errors in writing.
- 1 point: Student letter does not adequately state a position; does not include sufficient support for the position; does not acknowledge and deal with opposing views; omits necessary call for action; many errors in writing.

### **Vocabulary**

#### **cannonade**

*Definition:* A heavy fire of artillery (bombardment).

*Context:* On May 9th, a furious cannonade would erupt between the two armies. Mortar shells crossed and exploded long into the night.

#### **column**

*Definition:* A long row of soldiers.

*Context:* On May 29th, Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton and his men caught Colonel Abraham Buford's column of 300 Virginians on flat ground with no cover.

#### **guerilla**

*Definition:* A person who engages in irregular warfare especially as a member of an independent unit carrying out harassment and sabotage.

*Context:* The greatest threat to the British supply lines came from bands of guerilla fighters called *partisans*.

### **loyalists**

*Definition:* One who is or remains loyal especially to a political cause, party, government, or sovereign.

*Context:* American loyalists assured the Crown that unlike troublesome New England, the South was teeming with subjects ready to take up arms for the king.

### **profiteering**

*Definition:* Makes what is considered an unreasonable profit on the sale of essential goods during times of emergency.

*Context:* Some Americans were benefiting from the war. Profiteering was rampant. Benedict Arnold was accused of closing down rival shops, forcing people to buy his goods.

### **regiment**

*Definition:* A military unit consisting usually of a number of battalions.

*Context:* Within minutes, 2,500 men, four-fifths of the American army, ran away. Only one militia regiment and Dekalb's Maryland and Delaware veterans stayed on the field.

### **treason**

*Definition:* The offense of attempting by overt acts to overthrow the government of the state to which the offender owes allegiance or to kill or personally injure the sovereign or the sovereign's family.

*Context:* Most Americans believed the wrong man had been executed, that Andre had paid with his life for Arnold's treason.

## ***Academic Standards***

### **Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)**

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- U.S. History – Revolution and the New Nation: Understands the causes of the American Revolution, the ideas and interests involved in shaping the revolutionary movement, and reasons for the American victory.
- U.S. History – Revolution and the New Nation: Understands the impact of the American Revolution on politics, economy, and society.
- Geography – Environment and Society: Understands how physical systems affect human systems.



- Economics: Understands that scarcity of productive resources requires choices that generate opportunity costs.

### **The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)**

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching social studies. To view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Time, Continuity, and Change
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### **Support Materials**

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the Discoveryschool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>