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The American Revolution

Backwards Planning Curriculum Units

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Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 978-1-56004-678-3

Product Code: ZP412

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How to Use This Unit

Backwards planning offers an innovative yet simple approach to meeting curriculum goals; it also provides a way to keep students engaged and focused throughout the learning process. Many teachers approach history instruction in the following manner: they identify a topic required by state and/or national standards, they find materials on that topic, they use those materials with their students, and then they administer some sort of standard test at the end of the unit. Backwards planning, rather than just starting with a required instructional topic, goes a step further by identifying exactly what students need to know by the end of the unit—the so-called “enduring understandings.” The next step involves assessment: devising ways to determine whether students have learned what they need to know. The final step involves planning the teaching/learning process so that students can acquire the knowledge needed.

This product uses backwards planning to combine a PowerPoint presentation, activities that involve authentic assessment, and traditional tests (multiple-choice and essay) into a complete curriculum unit. Although the materials have enough built-in flexibility that you can use them in a number of ways, we suggest the following procedure:

1. Start with the “essential questions” listed on slide 2 of the PowerPoint presentation (these also appear in the teacher support materials). Briefly go over them with students before getting into the topic material. These questions will help students focus their learning and note taking during the course of the unit. You can also choose to use the essential questions as essay questions at the end of the unit; one way to do this is to let students know at the outset that one of the essential questions will be on the test—they just won’t know which one.
2. Next, discuss the activities students will complete during the unit. This will also help focus their learning and note taking, and it will lead them to view the PowerPoint presentation in a different light, considering it a source of ideas for authentic-assessment projects.
3. Present the PowerPoint to the class. Most slides have an image and bullet points summarizing the slide’s topic. The Notes page for each slide contains a paragraph or two of information that you can use as a presentation script, or just as background information for your own reference. You don’t need to present the entire PowerPoint at once: it’s broken up into several sections, each of which concludes with some discussion questions that echo parts of the essential questions and also help students to get closer to the “enduring understandings.” Spend some time with the class going over and debating these questions—this will not only help students think critically about the material, but it will also allow you to incorporate different modes of instruction during a single class period, offering a better chance to engage students.
4. Have students complete one or more of the authentic-assessment activities. These activities are flexible: most can be completed either individually or in groups, and either as homework or as in-class assignments. Each activity includes a rubric; many also have graphic organizers. You can choose to have students complete the activities after you have shown them the entire PowerPoint presentation, or you can show them one section of the PowerPoint, go over the discussion questions, and then have students complete an activity.

5. End the unit with traditional assessment. The support materials include a 20-question multiple-choice quiz; you can combine this with an essay question (you can use one of the essential questions or come up with one of your own) to create a full-period test.
6. If desired, debrief with students by going over the essential questions with them again and remind them what the enduring understandings are.

We are dedicated to continually improving our products and working with teachers to develop exciting and effective tools for the classroom. We can offer advice on how to maximize the use of the product and share others' experiences. We would also be happy to work with you on ideas for customizing the presentation.

We value your feedback, so please let us know more about the ways in which you use this product to supplement your lessons; we're also eager to hear any recommendations you might have for ways in which we can expand the functionality of this product in future editions. You can e-mail us at access@socialstudies.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Dr. Aaron Willis
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The American Revolution



In the mid-to-late 18th century, as several European nations struggled to keep a presence in the New World, the 13 British colonies prospered. Founded for reasons including economic, political, and religious freedom, the colonies grew in both population and wealth.

Conflicts between England and France led to the French and Indian War in North America. England won control of a huge empire it couldn't effectively govern, and had run up a massive war debt. England began to press the colonies for revenue through taxation and imposed restrictive laws. Colonists resisted, citing their right to "no taxation without representation" in Parliament.

As the British continued to assert their authority, protests—and eventually war—broke out. The colonists initially found themselves outgunned by superior British forces, but managed to do well enough to win the support England's enemies, France and Spain. The Treaty of Paris that ended the war granted the colonies independence, and also gave them the vast Northwest Territory.

The Revolution proved not only a military conflict, but a shift in political ideals as well. The Declaration of Independence's statement of human rights and the equality of man inspired independence movements worldwide.

Essential Questions

- Why did England increase colonial taxation in the years leading up to the Revolution?
- Why did England move away from a policy of “salutary neglect”?
- Which colonial leaders stood out as the most vocal and most radical?
- What British policies and laws caused the strongest colonial reaction?
- Why did the British government continue to tax the colonies without allowing them representation in Parliament?
- Why did the American Revolution become a battle of ideas, rather than simply a military conflict?
- How did the Revolution affect women, blacks, and Indians?
- How did the Revolution create a new “American character”?

England and the Colonies (1763)

- Victorious in French and Indian War
- British territory in North America doubled
- British military and economy stretched thin
- England expected colonies to help pay for war
- Colonists' view of these expectations



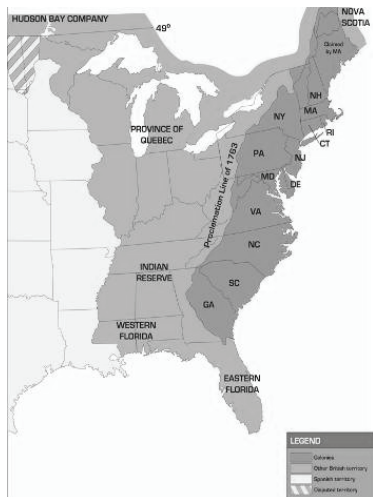
The green area indicates British holdings as a result of the Treaty of Paris.

England's victory in the French and Indian War made it a superpower both in Europe and in North America. The 1763 Treaty of Paris that ended the war gave England most of France's territories in the New World, nearly doubling the amount of land the British held there.

However, the cost of winning the war was huge. British Prime Minister William Pitt had spent millions to defeat the French, and had run up a massive debt. In addition, the British army now had thousands of miles to defend that it didn't before the war. The British military and treasury were stretched extremely thin. To compensate, the British looked to its colonial empire to help pay the costs of the war, largely through taxes and legislation regarding colonial economies. To the British, it made sense that, since the colonists had benefited from British protection, they should also help cover the costs of that protection.

However, the colonists didn't see it that way. In their view, not only were the taxes too high, but they felt that the taxation itself was unfair. Groups soon arose aiming to force Britain to repeal the tax laws.

Pontiac's Rebellion and the Proclamation of 1763



Map showing the Proclamation Line of 1763

- Ottawa chief Pontiac
- Led Indian confederacy against British forts and outposts
- Rebellion crushed
- British government created Proclamation Line
- Colonists angered

A confederation of Native Americans led by an Ottawa Indian chief, Pontiac, began a rebellion against the British in the territory England had just gained from France in the Treaty of Paris. The rebellion included attacks on several British forts and outposts, including Fort Detroit and Fort Pitt. However, Pontiac could not hold the various tribes together, and British forces eventually crushed the rebellion.

As a result of this near-disaster, the British government realized the difficulty of protecting settlers and British interests in these newly acquired areas. In an effort to protect British interests there, George III signed what became known as the Proclamation of 1763, which temporarily restricted settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains. Both settlers and land speculators looking to find cheap land were enraged and believed that the proclamation had unfairly restricted them. In addition, they were unhappy that the British had reserved some of the land on the frontier for veterans of the French and Indian War, not ordinary settlers.

“Salutary Neglect”

- Unofficial British trade policy
- Restrictive trade laws affecting colonies not strictly enforced
- Belief that non-enforcement would help colonies’ economic growth
- Britain began to enforce laws more strictly after French and Indian War

One factor which tended to cause friction between the colonies and England was its moving away from the policy of “salutary neglect.” Under this policy, the British simply didn’t bother to enforce many (if any) laws affecting colonial trade. The logic was that, if England didn’t restrict colonial trade, colonies’ economies would grow and benefit both them and mother country.

The British government generally left the colonies alone, allowing them a fair amount of self-government and control of their own matters. However, with the coming of the French and Indian War and the subsequent increase of British debt, England had to rethink the policy. Faced with a massive deficit, the British needed to more strictly enforce trade laws in order to collect revenue needed to pay down the debt. Colonists became angered by this, particularly since they had become accustomed to non-enforcement, but also because they had become used to self-rule. The increasing restrictions led the colonists to more openly resist British authority.

Discussion Questions

1. What differences in views did the British and the colonists have about each other in 1763? Why?
2. How did Pontiac's Rebellion affect the relationship between the colonies and England? Why?
3. Why did the British follow a policy of "salutary neglect" in regard to colonial trade? What led them to abandon this policy?

1. The British saw the colonies as obligated to help pay the costs for the French and Indian War. The British believed that, since they had fought the war for the colonies' protection, the colonists should help pay off the debt incurred from financing the war. However, the colonists felt that taxes were unfair and believed it necessary to resist them.
2. Though the British crushed Pontiac's Rebellion, they realized that they had spread their military forces extremely thin in order to do so. Parliament concluded that it needed to stop colonial expansion into the territories acquired from France because England could not effectively protect these territories. The resulting Proclamation of 1763 did not allow colonists to settle any land west of the Appalachian Mountains. While the British saw this as a necessary measure, the colonists saw the proclamation as an unfair restriction.
3. Salutary neglect was a policy of non-enforcement intended to allow colonial economies to grow, which would then benefit both the colonies and the mother country. However, the debt England ran up during the French and Indian War forced the British to enforce trade laws more strictly so as to bring in more revenue. The increased British control and regulation angered the colonists.