

Rationale: The American Revolution

In today's world, the children of America stand to face the flag in their classrooms and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. They are surrounded by words and images associated with liberty. Through their community, and ever-present media, they learn of the threats to such freedom. Still, though inundated with these ideas, the children do not understand how Americans *became* free.

Understanding how the United States came to be a country of rights, opportunities, and independence allows children to better appreciate their freedom. Learning about the past will also help them interpret the present and determine actions for the future. The students will be better prepared to take roles as active citizens, knowing what can be done to improve society.

This unit is designed to present the information regarding the people and events of the 1770s and 1780s in a way that is interesting, clear, and comprehensive. Abstract ideas of independence and freedom become concrete and meaningful through the exploration of colonial life, expression, evaluation of opinions, and role-play activities. Incorporation of various curricula and, in turn, a number of New York State and National Standards allows all students opportunities to make connections between subject areas and to succeed in understanding course material.

Subject areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening are addressed frequently in teaching content related to the Revolutionary War. The demonstration of skills used in these areas meets the criteria of both New York State (NYS) and National Language Standards. For instance, activities asking students to read history books for information and write reactions as colonists meet the requirements of NYS Language Arts Standards One and Two. At the same time, the students are addressing vocabulary skills. In discussing the meaning of poetry and working collaboratively to research and present information, students meet criteria set forth in Language Arts Standards Three and Four. By demonstrating these abilities, students are developing the strategies and skills required by the National standards.

Students will also interpret maps and graphs throughout the unit. This exposes them to the "geography of the interdependent world in which we live" (NY Social Studies Standard 3). It also allows students to "understand mathematics and become mathematically confident by communicating and reasoning mathematically". They will also learn to "[apply] mathematics in real-world settings". These activities meet both New York State and National math standards, which refer to skills such as data analysis, communication and making connections.

The MST standards related to science and technology are met as students explore water pressure and the use of the submarine. Through these lessons, students will use "scientific inquiry and engineering design" as they investigate principles of water pressure and study the submarine (MST Standard 1). They will also "apply technological knowledge and skills to design, construct, use, and evaluate products" (MST Standard 5). As a result, the sixth MST standard is met, relating science and technology. By meeting the state standards, the lessons also address national science standards.

Through their studies, students will also apply fine arts skills. The use of movement and music will enhance understanding for students while bringing content to life.

Tasks involving singing, making masks, reflecting on actions before role play, and the use of colors to indicate the Mohawk culture address New York State's criteria of Fine Arts Standards 1-4, respectively.

In addition, a number of concepts (including empathy, change, and citizenship) are incorporated in the unit. Students are challenged to empathize with colonists, determine how they would have felt, and how this could be expressed. Change is addressed as students note the results of the Revolutionary War. Citizenship is covered as children study the slaves who fought in the war.

Such concepts are taught while addressing NYS social studies standards. For instance, in lessons relating to the Boston Tea Party among other events, students will "demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York" (NY Social Studies Standard 1). They will also demonstrate their knowledge of economics, a key idea in the American Revolution. Students will taste teas and "investigate how production, distribution, exchange" are "economic decisions" (NY Social Studies Standard 4).

Along with learning about economics, students will also be introduced to politics. Through authentic tasks, such as writing a treaty, students will "demonstrate their understanding of the necessity for establishing governments" and the "roles, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship" (NY Social Studies Standard 5). Standards of local schools, such as those in the Newburgh Enlarged City School District, are also met as they relate to the criteria set by NYS and the nation.

According to the National Social Studies Standards, this unit is part of the "Revolution and the New Nation (1754-1820)" era. In studying this, students will "[understand] the causes of the American Revolution, the ideas and interests involved in forging the revolutionary movement, the reasons for the American victory, and the impact of the American Revolution on politics, economy, and society".

Throughout this unit, a number of student attitudes are fostered. In participating in authentic, exciting lessons, students will become "eager to discover things", "[appreciating] the arts" that allowed such discovery. Through the lessons, designed to challenge students and provide them with opportunities for success, they will learn to "communicate ideas clearly" and develop "faith" in their abilities and themselves. Furthermore, students will be exposed to and "understand social problems", and appreciate democracy, "the rights, privileges, and duties of citizenship in a democracy".

Learning the influence of historical events throughout the American Revolution on society will remind these students of their relevance today. The students will have a better understanding of their freedom, its origin, and their roles as citizens. As a result, when the students stand in the morning, they will have a sense of what it means to pledge allegiance to the flag, the republic, and the nation, "with liberty and justice for all".