Choosing Independence
Lesson Plan

Overview
Students explore different perspectives on the Revolutionary War by examining primary source documents and considering how separation from England will affect the lives of various colonial people.

Objectives
Students will:
- Analyze primary source documents to gain historical information.
- Recognize different perspectives on the American Revolution.
- Identify choices and consequences faced by Americans as a result of declaring independence.

SOLs:
VS.4, VS.5, USI.6, USI.1

Materials:
- Primary Sources on CD to be used as Evidence: Portrait of King George III, Stamp Tax Image, Inventory of the Estate of Thomas Holmes, Tobacco Note, Store Advertisement, Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation, Tobacco Labels #1, Tobacco Labels #2
- Description of Evidence- teacher background resource
- Document Analysis Worksheet
- Persona Worksheets (Merchant, Virginia Farmer, Enslaved African American, Colonial Official)
- 4 large envelopes or folders for Evidence
- Poster board
- Markers
- Pencils

Background Essays:
- Road to Revolution, 1760-1775
- Life of a Private
- Colonial Life

Procedure:
- Review historical background of the Revolutionary time period with students to establish that not all people felt the same about the American colonies separating from Great Britain. Review information on Patriot, Loyalist and neutral stances and factors that contributed to choosing sides.
- Introduce the four groups of colonial people that the students will be thinking about in this lesson: Virginia farmers, merchants, colonial officials and enslaved African Americans.
• Review how primary sources are used to study the past. Explain that the primary sources in this lesson will be used to think about a group of people in the occupation they are assigned, not to represent any specific individual. Students should consider the “evidence” to make generalizations about life for their person in pre-Revolutionary times.

Activity 1
• Print at least one copy of each primary source for each group. These resources will be used to make inferences about the colonial personas listed below as students work in small groups. Sort resources into four large envelopes of “evidence” and label them as follows:

  ➢ **Virginia Farmer** – Inventory of the Estate of Thomas Holmes, Tobacco Note

  ➢ **Merchant** – Store Advertisement, Tobacco Labels #1

  ➢ **Colonial Official** – Portrait of King George III, Stamp Tax Image

  ➢ **Enslaved African-American** – Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation, Tobacco Labels #2

• Divide students into four groups and give each team an envelope of “evidence” and each person a *Choosing Independence Document Analysis Worksheet*. Direct students to study their documents and share ideas about how they relate to their persona. Direct each student to record their findings on the *Choosing Independence Document Analysis Worksheet*.

• While each group is going through the document analysis, the teacher should monitor their findings and assist as needed to help them understand the “evidence.” Refer to the *Description of Evidence* sheet for extra information to share with students about their documents.

• Have students use available classroom resources (books and computers) and the background essays to research more about their colonial persona and the time period.

• Have each group share their “evidence” with the whole class.

Activity 2
• Give each team member the *Persona Worksheet* appropriate to the person they studied in Activity 1.

• Direct the students to read the boxed information about the person, and then hold a group discussion to answer the questions on the bottom of the worksheet. Encourage them to think like the person they were assigned. Students should use prior knowledge and available study resources about the Revolution to come up with answers representative of their person’s opinions at the beginning of the war. For example, the British official group should not consider the outcome of the war.
• As a group, agree on whether their persona would become a Patriot or Loyalist or remain neutral, and circle the choice on the bottom of the sheet.

**Activity 3**
• Give each team the supplies to create a poster expressing their person’s viewpoint on the Revolutionary War – Patriot, Loyalist or neutral. Direct them to attach the copies of their primary sources from Activity 1 and use answers from the *Choosing Independence Persona Worksheet* in Activity 2 to help express how this person might react to the war: How it will affect them?, What do they hope for?, Which side will they support? For example, the enslaved African American can present the pros and cons of joining the fight. If available, have the students search the Web for additional images to print to supplement the visual materials related to their persona.

**Activity 4**
• Each group should prepare a presentation to share with the class on how their person would be affected by the Revolutionary War. As part of the presentation, the team should explain the content of their poster and how it expresses the viewpoint of their persona on declaring independence from Great Britain.

**Assessment**
• Collect *Choosing Independence Document Analysis* and *Choosing Independence Persona Worksheets* from each student to check for completeness. Assess poster and oral presentation results.