

American Revolution: Are All Men Created Equal?

Historical Thinking Skills Assessed: Sourcing, Critical Reading, Contextualizing

Author/School/System: Angela Haube, Howard County Public School System, Maryland

Course: United States History

Level: Elementary

Task Question: Did the ideals of the American Revolution affect the condition of enslaved people?

Learning Outcomes:

Students should be able to use the skills of sourcing, critical reading, and contextualizing to determine how the American Revolution's ideals of liberty and freedom affected enslaved people.

Standards Alignment:

Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy

- RI.5.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- W.5.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
- W.5.1.a Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose.
 - W.5.1.b Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details.

National History Standards

Era 3: Revolution and the New Nation (1754-1820s)

Standard 2: The impact of the American Revolution on politics, economy, and society

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies Standards

- D2.His.5.3-5 Explain connections among historical contexts and people's perspectives at the time.
- D2.His.11.3-5 Infer the intended audience and purpose of a historical source from information within the source itself
- D2.His.16.3-5 Use evidence to develop a claim about the past.

Materials:

- RS#01: Document A – Excerpt from *Act of the Rhode Island Legislature*, February 1778
- RS#02: Document B – Excerpt from *Earl of Dunmore's Proclamation*, November 7, 1775
- RS#03: Document Analysis Chart
- RS#04: Teacher Copy – Document Analysis Chart (SAMPLE)
- RS#05: Document C – Excerpt from *Liberty Further Extended* by Lemuel Haynes (1776)
- RS#06: *Lemuel Haynes: From Words to Beliefs*
- RS#07: Teacher Copy – *Lemuel Haynes: From Words to Beliefs* (SAMPLE)
- RS#08: Thoughtful Application – Argument Writing
- RS#09: ARCH Elementary Historical Thinking Skills Rubric – Elementary (Sourcing/Contextualizing)

Background for the Teacher:

The American Revolution, with its rhetoric of God-given liberty and wrongful oppression, had profound consequences for the institution of slavery and the enslaved population. At the time of the American Revolution, enslaved people made up about 20%, or approximately 500,000, of the nearly 2.5 million people in the British colonies. The hypocrisy of the colonists' accusations of "enslavement" against the British while themselves holding human beings in bondage was glaring, and Americans struggled with this issue both during and after the war.

Despite their participation in the early battles of the war, the Continental Congress voted in November 1775 to exclude blacks from military service in deference to the opinions of Southerners, whose support was critical to the war effort. That same month, however, Virginia's royal governor, Lord Dunmore, offered people enslaved *by patriots* their freedom in exchange for enlistment in the King's Army. Importantly, freedom was not extended to enslaved people owned by Loyalists. In all, only about 1,000 enslaved people took Dunmore up on his offer, although as many as 100,000 slaves fled to the British lines for protection during the war. But African Americans – whether soldiers or refugees – did not receive a warm welcome from the British. They were provided with miserable living conditions, and soldiers were not provided treatment equal to their white comrades-at-arms.

Worried that large numbers of blacks would assist the British, the Continental Congress and the Northern colonies reversed policy and also granted freedom to enslaved people who joined their troops by 1778. In all, about 5,000 blacks, free and enslaved, served in the Continental Army, but many of this number remained the property of their owners. Rhode Island was one of the states that welcomed African-American soldiers and promised them freedom. Their forces had suffered great loss of life in the early battles of the war and were in dire need of soldiers. Rhode Island, like other states, offered to pay slave owners for their slave's freedom under the condition that the slaves would agree to fight.

Sources:

"Slavery, the American Revolution, and the Constitution." Digital History. Accessed 10/26/14.

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/active_learning/explorations/revolution/revolution_slavery.cfm

Dobyns, Lloyd. "Fighting . . . Maybe for Freedom, but Probably Not." Colonial Williamsburg. Accessed 10/26/14.

<http://www.history.org/Foundation/journal/Autumn07/slaves.cfm>

Procedure

Context Setting:

- Ask students to identify the types of people living in the colonies at the time of the American Revolution. Accept answers such as Patriots, Loyalists, Neutralists, Native Americans, enslaved Africans and African Americans, and free Africans and African Americans.
- Review the present-day meaning of this phrase from the *Declaration of Independence*: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Ask: What do Americans today think this sentence means?
- Ask students what they think the founding fathers meant by this sentence. Did they mean the same thing we believe it means, or did they mean something different? Remind students that nearly 20% of the people living in the thirteen colonies at the outset of the American Revolution were enslaved Africans and African Americans.
- Ask students to consider how the *Declaration of Independence* might have affected the condition of enslaved people. Encourage discussion about their lack of freedom. Tell students that they will be looking at sources that address the condition of enslaved people during the American Revolutionary War.

Document Analysis:

- Distribute RS#01: Document A – Excerpt from *Act of the Rhode Island Legislature*, February 1778 and RS#02: Document B – Excerpt from *Earl of Dunmore's Proclamation*, November 7, 1775. Have students briefly preview the texts. Set the context for reading by having students access their background knowledge to think-pair-share; “What was happening in the colonies during the 1770s, at the time when these documents were written?”
- Engage students in a shared reading of the original excerpt of both primary sources (*An Act of the Rhode Island Legislature* and the *Earl of Dunmore's Proclamation*). While reading, use the following procedure to assist students in accessing the text.
 - Highlight important words and phrases that may be quoted later, such as “may enlist,” “upon his passing muster,” and “that are able and willing.”
 - Make inferences about what enslaved people *may have* thought about these ideas in the margins of the text.
 - Ask comprehension questions related to the author’s purpose for writing. Encourage students to quote accurately from the text to support their answers.
 - Discuss the multiple perspectives people may have had in relation to these sources (i.e. feelings about the opportunity offered enslaved people to earn their freedom by joining the army).
- Distribute RS#03: Document Analysis Chart, and provide time for students to complete the activity. Discuss as a whole group to assess the students’ ability to determine the source, author’s purpose, and their ability to contextualize. Students can complete the chart independently or in pairs. Use RS#04: Teacher Copy – Document Analysis Chart (SAMPLE) to lead the discussion.

Corroborating Evidence and Constructing Interpretations – *Close Analysis*:

- Distribute and preview RS#05: Document C – Excerpt from *Liberty Further Extended* by Lemuel Haynes (1776). Before reading the excerpt, read the background information about the author to better understand his perspective while reading.
- Engage students in a shared reading of the original excerpt. (NOTE: If necessary, consider using the translated version of the document.) While reading, use the following procedures to assist students in accessing the text:
 - Highlight key details pertaining to Lemuel Haynes’ beliefs about freedom and injustice.
 - Highlight important words and phrases. Make inferences about what Lemuel Haynes thought about the ideas in the margins of the text.
 - Ask comprehension questions such as:
 1. From where does Lemuel Haynes believe freedom comes? (from God)
 2. Who does Lemuel Haynes believe is entitled to freedom? (all people)
 3. What does Lemuel think is a greater injustice than the British oppressing the colonists? (the colonists enslaving Africans and depriving them of freedom)
- Distribute and have students complete RS#06: *Lemuel Haynes: From Words to Beliefs* to assess students’ ability to accurately explain or make inferences about quotations from a primary source. Students can complete the chart independently or in pairs. Assess students using RS#07: Teacher Copy – *Lemuel Haynes: From Words to Beliefs* (SAMPLE).

Thoughtful Application:

- Explain to the students that they have been asked to examine various sources concerning freedom and the condition of African Americans during the Revolutionary period.
- Distribute RS#08: Thoughtful Application – Argument Writing. Read the following constructed response prompt with the students: “Would Lemuel Haynes support the ideas from the *Act of the Rhode Island Legislature* in 1778 and *Dunmore’s Proclamation* of 1775? Think about the time period when Haynes lived and the words and ideas that he shared in his 1776 piece, *Liberty Further Extended*. Would he agree with the idea that enslaved people could earn their freedom by enlisting in the army?” Remind the students that they should refer to any reliable sources they have studied.
- Review RS#09: ARCH Historical Thinking Rubric with the class.
- Allow approximately 20-30 minutes for students to complete the task.
- Assess the students using the rubric.

Resource Sheet #01

Document A – Excerpt from *Act of the Rhode Island Legislature, February 1778*

Whereas, for the preservation of the rights and liberties of the United States, it is necessary that the whole power of Government should be exerted [used] in recruiting the Continental battalions [army units]; and, whereas, His Excellency, General Washington, hath inclosed to this State a proposal made to him by Brigadier General Varnum, to enlist into the two battalions raising by this State such slaves as should be willing to enter into the service; and, whereas, history affords us frequent precedents [examples] of the wisest, the freest and bravest nations having liberated their slaves and enlisted them as soldiers to fight in defence of their country;...

It is Voted and Resolved [decided], that every able-bodied negro, mulatto [mixed race], or Indian man-slave in this State may enlist into either of the said two battalions, to serve during the continuance of the present war with Great Britain;... It is further Voted and Resolved, that every slave so enlisting shall, upon his passing muster [being accepted] by Col. Christopher Greene, be immediately discharged [released] from the service of his master or mistress, and be absolutely free, as though he had never been incumbered [burdened] and be incumbered with any kind of servitude or slavery....

Source: An Act of the Rhode Island Legislature, February 1778. First Rhode Island Regiment of the Continental Line. Retrieved July 12, 2013. <http://www.americanrevolution.org/firstri.html>

PARAPHRASE

Excerpt from *Act of the Rhode Island Legislature, February 1778*

Because we are trying to save the rights and freedom of the United States, the government is recruiting members for the Continental battalions. General Washington has taken the advice of Brigadier General Varnum and asked this state to allow willing slaves to enlist into the two battalions we are raising. History tells us that the wisest, bravest, and most free nations have freed their slaves and allowed them to enlist as soldiers to defend their country.

Therefore, we have decided that every able-bodied slave (black, mixed race, or Indian) in Rhode Island may enlist in the battalions to fight during the war with Great Britain. If a slave is accepted by Colonel Green into the battalion, he will be immediately freed from slavery, as if he was never a slave at all.

Resource Sheet #02

Document B – Excerpt from *Earl of Dunmore's Proclamation*, November 7, 1775

. . . And I do hereby further declare all indentured Servants, Negroes, or others, (appertaining to Rebels) free, that are able and willing to bear Arms, they joining his Majesty's Troops, as so on as may be, for the more speedily reducing this Colony to a proper Sense of their Duty, to his Majesty's Crown and Dignity.

Source: By His Excellency the Right Honourable John Earl of Dunmore . . . A proclamation. [Declaring martial law and to cause the same to be . . .] Williamsburg, 1775, Printed Ephemera Collection, Portfolio 178, Folder 18, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Retrieved July 12, 2013
<http://www.viriniamemory.com/docs/DunmoresProclamation.pdf>

PARAPHRASE

Excerpt from *Earl of Dunmore's Proclamation*, November 7, 1775

. . . I hereby declare that all indentured servants and slaves belonging to the rebels are free if they are able and willing to fight in the King's troops, so that we may more quickly return this colony to a proper understanding of our duty to our King.

Resource Sheet #03

Document Analysis Chart

Name: _____ Date: _____

	Questions	Document A: <i>An Act of the Rhode Island Legislature</i>	Document B: <i>Earl of Dunmore's Proclamation</i>
Sourcing	When was the document written and by whom?	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
	Why was the document written?	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____
	Is this a primary source or a secondary source?	_____ _____	_____ _____
Critical Reading	What key points does the author(s) make?	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____
Contextualizing	What was happening in the colonies during the 1770s, at the time these documents were written?	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____	

Resource Sheet #04

Teacher Copy -- Document Analysis Chart (SAMPLE)

Name: _____ Date: _____

	Questions	Document A: <i>An Act of the Rhode Island Legislature</i>	Document B: <i>Earl of Dunmore's Proclamation</i>
Sourcing	When was the document written and by whom?	John, the Earl of Dunmore, who was the royal-appointed Governor of Virginia, in November of 1775	The Rhode Island Legislature, in February of 1778
	Why was the document written?	To proclaim that any slaves who would fight for the British would be given their freedom	To recruit more soldiers to the Rhode Island troops by offering freedom to slaves who would join and fight for the Continental Army
	Is this a primary source or a secondary source?	Primary	Primary
Author's Purpose	What key points does the author(s) make?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you are a slave or indentured servant and are able and willing to serve in the British Army in the war, you will be given your freedom. Freedom will happen when order is restored to the colonies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> George Washington requires 2 additional battalions of troops from Rhode Island. Nations in the past have freed their slaves to allow them to defend their country. All slaves may enlist in the battalions. If they serve well, the slaves will be considered free, as if they were never enslaved.
Contextualizing	What was happening in the colonies during the 1770s, at the time these documents were written?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slavery existed in the British colonies at the time of the Revolutionary War. The British had already fired on the Massachusetts militia at Lexington and Concord (1775) The Second Continental Congress declared independence from Great Britain (1776) 	

Resource Sheet #05

Document C – Excerpt from *Liberty Further Extended* by Lemuel Haynes (1776)

Lemuel Haynes was born in Connecticut in 1754. He was abandoned by both his (white) mother and his (black) father. He was raised on a farm in Massachusetts as an indentured servant, working to earn his freedom. At the age of 21, he earned his freedom. Later in life he became a preacher and wrote many important essays, poems and sermons. A recently discovered essay, called *Liberty Further Extended*, addresses the issue of slavery.



. . . Liberty, and freedom, is an innate [natural] principle, which is unmoveably placed in the human Species; . . . Even an affrican, has Equally as good a right to his Liberty in common with Englishmen. . . We live in a day wherein Liberty & freedom is the subject of many millions Concern; and the important Struggle hath already caused great Effusion of Blood; men seem to manifest the most sanguine [positive] resolution not to Let their natural rights go without their Lives go with them; a resolution, one would think Everyone that has the Least Love to his country, or future posterity [generations], would fully confide in, yet while we are so zealous [eager] to maintain, and foster our own invaded rights, it cannot be thought impertinent [rude] for us Candidly [honestly] to reflect on our own conduct, and I doubt not But that we shall find that subsisting [existing] in the midst of us that may with propriety be stiled [called] Oppression, nay, much greater oppression, than that which Englishmen seem so much to spurn at [reject]. I mean an oppression which they, themselves, impose upon others. . .

Source: Bogin, Ruth. "'Liberty Further Extended': A 1776 Antislavery Manuscript by Lemuel Haynes." *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Jan., 1983), pp. 85-105. Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture. Accessed July 14, 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1919529>

PARAPHRASE

Excerpt from *Liberty Further Extended* by Lemuel Haynes (1776)

Liberty and freedom are ideas that are put into humans at birth. . . Even Africans have as much right to liberty as Englishmen. . . Many people these days are concerned about freedom and liberty, and the War has already started. People are dying because they are unwilling to let their natural rights go without first giving their life to defend them. We are passionate about getting back our rights from Britain, but we should look at our own actions. In this midst of our nation, there is much greater oppression than the Englishmen use against us and that we despise. We have oppressed our own (the enslaved Africans).

Resource Sheet #06

Lemuel Haynes: From Words to Beliefs



Name: _____ Date: _____

On the left hand side of the chart, thoughtfully choose and then write direct quotations from Document C – *Liberty Further Extended* by Lemuel Haynes. On the right hand side of the chart, explain what he believes in your own words or make an inference about what he believes.

Lemuel Haynes writes:	Lemuel Haynes believes:

Resource Sheet #07

Lemuel Haynes: From Words to Beliefs (SAMPLE)

Name: _____ Date: _____

On the left hand side of the chart, thoughtfully choose and then write direct quotations from Document C – *Liberty Further Extended* by Lemuel Haynes. On the right hand side of the chart, explain what he believes in your own words or make an inference about what he believes.

Lemuel Haynes writes:	Lemuel Haynes believes:
"Liberty, and freedom, is an innate principle"	<i>Own Words:</i> All people are born free.
"Even an affrican, has Equally as good a right to his Liberty in common with Englishmen"	<i>Own Words:</i> Africans have as much right to liberty as Englishmen. <i>Inference:</i> Africans don't have to EARN liberty. They are entitled to it the same as Englishmen.
"not to Let their natural rights go without their Lives go with them"	<i>Own Words:</i> Living a free life is more important than living life at all.
"in the midst of us that may with propriety be stiled Oppression, nay, much greater oppression, than that which Englishmen seem to much to spurn at."	<i>Inference:</i> Americans are hypocrites because they complain about oppression by the English while themselves oppressing African Americans.

[illegible]

Resource Sheet #09

ARCH Historical Thinking Skills Rubric – Elementary (Sourcing, Critical Reading, and Contextualizing)

	Close-Reading Strategies		Strategies/Procedural Concepts
Criteria	Sourcing	Critical Reading (Author's Craft)	Contextualization
4	Identifies all authors and all original dates of primary and secondary sources. Evaluates the reliability of sources based on the author's perspective and when and why they were produced.	Identifies the author's viewpoint and claims based on what is written and what the author leaves out. Cites examples of how the author uses persuasive language and specific words and phrases to influence the reader.	Applies prior and new knowledge to determine the historical setting of sources. Uses the setting to attempt an interpretation of the sources within that historical context, as opposed to a present-day mindset.
3	Identifies most authors and most original dates of a variety of primary and secondary sources. Examines the reliability of sources based on the author's perspective and when and why they were produced.	Identifies the author's viewpoint and claims based on what is written. Identifies at least one way the author attempts to influence the reader through persuasive language and specific words and phrases.	Applies prior and new knowledge to determine the historical setting of sources. May attempt an interpretation of sources with a present-day mindset.
2	Identifies some authors and some original dates of primary and secondary sources. Attempts to evaluate the reliability of sources.	Attempts to identify the author's viewpoint and claim. Attempts to identify how the author tries to influence the reader.	Attempts to determine the historical setting of sources.
1	Identifies few authors and few original dates of primary and secondary sources. Does not attempt to evaluate the reliability of sources.	Demonstrates little to no attempt to identify the author's viewpoint or claim.	Demonstrates no attempt to understand the historical setting of sources.