

REPORTING

The Revolutionary War

Lesson Plan: Analyzing Perspective, Bias, Cause and Effect

RATIONALE: Newspapers during the Revolutionary period did not hire reporters to write about their events. They relied heavily on everyday people or military officers to share their personal correspondence or write letters to the publishers, which were then printed, either in part or in whole. Since the intended audience was often an individual or military superior, their bias is often very clear. It is possible to analyze these documents for only perspective, or only cause and effect, but the two are often inextricably connected. As your students read the letter included in this lesson, or other suggested letters, encourage them to think about the ways in which bias and perspective affect the writer's reporting of events.

TIME: Two 45-minute class periods

PRIOR LEARNING: Students should have already discussed the textbook/historical account of the Benedict Arnold affair, including an understanding of the role of West Point during the Revolutionary War.

OBJECTIVES: Students will be able to...

- Analyze and evaluate the role that bias and perspective plays in the way the events are reported.
- Analyze and evaluate the roles that individual choice and chance play in the events that occurred.

STANDARDS ADDRESSED: (*Common Core Standards*)

Listed below are some of the Common Core Standards for Literacy in History and Social Studies addressed for grades 9-10, but teachers can easily level down to grades 6-7-8 or up to 11-12 with minor modifications. Depending on how a teacher structures an assignment and the requirements for completion, these assignments can be modified to address many of the College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards. You can find the reading standards broken down for history at: <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy>

RI: Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.10 By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

RI: Key Ideas and Details

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

RI: Craft and Structure

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.6 Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

RI: Integration of Knowledge and ideas

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.8](#) Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9](#) Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

W: Text types and Purposes

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.1](#) Write arguments focused on *discipline-specific content*.

W: Production and Distribution of Writing

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.4](#) Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W: Range of Writing

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.10](#) Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

(National Center for History in the Schools)

- ***Historical Thinking: Historical Comprehension***
 - Identify the central questions the historical narrative addresses and the purpose, perspective, or point of view from which it has been constructed.
 - Read historical narratives imaginatively, taking into account what the narrative reveals about the humanity of the individuals and groups involved—their probable values, outlook, motives, hopes, fears, strengths, and weaknesses.
- ***Historical Thinking: Historical Analysis and Interpretation***
 - Analyze cause-and-effect relationships bearing in mind multiple causation including a) the importance of the individual in history; b) the influence of ideas, human interests, and beliefs; and (c) the role of chance, the accidental and irrational.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS:

- *Boston Gazette*, 16 October 1780.
- Document Projector, if possible.

DAY 1**WARM-UP: 5-10 minutes**

1. **Review the meanings of the words *traitor*, *perception*, and *bias*.** Write these terms and the class's definition of them on the board for students to reference throughout the lesson. (This could also be teacher-created and given to students prior to the lesson, if time is an issue.)
2. **Review the following in relation to cause-and-effect relationships.**
 - a. The role of the individual
 - b. The influence of ideas, human interests and beliefs
 - c. The role of chance, the accidental and irrational

ACTIVITY:

1. **(15-20-minutes) Have students read the article independently. As they read, students should annotate the text. (Alternatively, students can use**

a double entry journal).

Remind students...

- a. that the goal is not to read the entire passage, but to read deeply for full understanding of what they can get done in the time limit. (Students should be able to read approximately half the letter in the time allotted.)
- b. To note at least three things in each paragraph. (This number can be adjusted based on student ability.)

You may want to write these questions on the board, or provide them on a handout:

- a. *What is the writer's perspective, or point of view?*
- b. *What words help to identify his bias?*
- c. *What decisions by individuals affected the outcome?*
- d. *How did the ideas or beliefs of individuals affect their decisions?*
- e. *In what ways did chance or accident affect the outcome?*
- f. *Where did you struggle to understand the text? Was it vocabulary or sentence structure that made it difficult? **
- g. *What reading strategies did you use to help you understand the text? **

**for students who have difficulty comprehending the text (IEP or ESL students)*

Walk around and provide guidance to students as they work silently. Students should be able to complete several paragraphs in the time allotted. Do not give additional time at this

2. **(15-20 minutes) Put a copy of the text on the Document Projector, if available. Lead the class through a discussion of the text focusing on one paragraph at a time.**
 - a. Ask students to tell the class one thing they got out of the paragraph. Each student should share only one, and at least five students should respond.
 - b. Remind students to identify what, specifically, they are referring to in the text (by word or phrase), and to explain their insight about the word or phrase.
 - c. As students share their insights, annotate the text on the Document projector.
 - d. Encourage students to provide multiple perspectives, even on the same sentence.
3. **For homework, or if completing in a block schedule:** finish reading the article and annotating the text.

DAY 2

WARM-UP: (5 Minutes)

- **Have students list the order of events.** Students should be able to quickly list 5-10 events.

ACTIVITY:

1. **(20 minutes) Have students work in pairs to combine their list and explain to what extent each of the following affected each event:**
 - the role of the individual

- the influence of ideas, human interests and beliefs
- the role of chance, the accidental or the irrational.

2. **(20 Minutes) Students continue to work in pairs to write a paragraph in which they argue which of the above played the greatest role in thwarting Benedict Arnold's plan.**

The paragraph should meet the following requirements:

- A topic sentence which states their position on the question
- At least three valid pieces of evidence from the text to support their position *with* explanations
- A concluding statement, which wraps up the paragraph.
- Correct spelling, punctuation and grammar.

SUGGESTED ACCOMODATIONS:

- Limit the scope of student annotations: either focus on bias and perspective OR on the role of the individual and chance, depending on their skill level.
- In lieu of annotations or the double entry journal
 - Have students summarize each paragraph in one sentence each and highlight any words from the paragraph they do not understand. (Especially good for ESL students.)
- In lieu of the first paired activity, have students identify three events that occur as the result of individual decisions and three events that happen as the result of chance or accident.
- In lieu of an argumentative paragraph, have students write a summary of events.

SUGGESTED EXTENSIONS:

- Write a full essay in which they analyze how the event was affected by each of the following: a) the role of the individual, b) the influence of ideas, human interests, and beliefs and c)
- Create a newscast of the event, using the writer as the "eye-witness."
- Rewrite the event from the perspective of a Loyalist.

SUGGESTED SUPPLEMENTAL READING:

Reporting the Revolutionary War: Before It Was History, It Was News by Todd Andrlik

