

Tobacco? Trade? Tea? Taxes? What caused the American Revolution?

General

Grade Level

High School

Author Info

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Type of Lesson

Challenge

Type of Project (Individual/Group/Both)

Both

Duration

30-60 minutes

Challenge Question

What are the most important long-term, intermediate, and short-term factors that caused the American Revolution?

Rationale

Students will have to justify the importance of different kinds of causes. Some causes are long-term and structural in nature while others are immediate. The poster that students create will provide a visual for an oral presentation. The challenge provides practice at public speaking and presentation skills in addition to making judgments about the significance of different causes. The outline on paper in advance provides a means to assess the underlying analysis of the image selection. Students will have to justify their choice in that process. You could have them include a comment on the poster to show their thinking

process once they have completed the activity.

Steps

1. Your goal is to provide a “TED-style” talk on the causes of the American Revolution and the poster you will create will provide a visual aid for your discussion.
2. Outline your talk into long-term causes, precipitants, and triggers. In other words, some things are issues or concerns that lasted a long time but did not result in a specific event or protest. These can be thought of as *long-term causes*. These can exist for decades but, by themselves, do not cause conflict.

Precipitants are events or decisions that do cause protest or agitation but not result, for the moment, in conflict. The event or decision may even be resolved in the short term but remain a problem when later and more dramatic events happened.

Triggers are the events that lead directly to conflict or widespread upheaval or violence.

Select what you believe to be the most important long-term cause, the most important precipitant, and the most important trigger. Pick three. Your poster will illustrate these.

3. You can use the images provided to jump start your thinking but you should also search in “Explore.” When you search the collection, remember that one way to search is chronologically. If you know that all of the events that lead to the American Revolution happen before the Declaration of Independence in 1776, for example, you can limit your searches in such a way as to only have images and documents of events prior to that year.
4. Outline your ideas of the causes on a piece of paper. Be prepared to answer the question “Why is this cause the most important?” for each cause. This will be the basis of your talk.