

Six Degrees of Separation (from England)

General

Grade Level

High School

Author Info

Matt Ridenour – Barringer Fellow, MTI

Type of Lesson

Challenge

Type of Project (Individual/Group/Both)

Both

Duration

30-60 minutes

Challenge Question

It is said that every person in this world is no more than six steps away – via introduction – from any other individual. Can events prior to the American Revolution be connected to one another in the same way? In this challenge, students will be asked to derive their own six degrees of separation theory. This time, however, it's not separation from Kevin Bacon...it's separation from England.

Rationale

In taking this challenge, students will be developing their ability to identify, analyze, and evaluate multiple cause-and-effect relationships in a historical context, distinguishing between the long-term and proximate (also known as Historical Causation)

Notes to Teacher

This activity is best used as a formative assessment after students have discussed the 'Road to Revolution' in depth, insofar as it requires a more sophisticated understanding of events between 1754 and 1776. However, this activity can be easily adapted for any type of learner. You may consider limiting the historical events to be used, or cutting the activity from six degrees to three.

Steps

1. Start by dragging Benjamin Franklin's "Join or Die" image onto a timeline, along with the image of the Declaration of Independence – they will become the beginning and end of your six degrees theory, so be sure to read a bit more about them before moving on. REMEMBER: The "Join or Die" political cartoon first appeared in 1754. It was intended to symbolize that the colonies needed to join together with Great Britain to defeat the French and Indians during the Seven Years' War (also known as the French and Indian War in America).
2. Next, consider the chain of events that would have been set in motion as a result of the French and Indian War (for which the "Join or Die" cartoon was created). Thoughtfully add six other images to your timeline, with each of them representing one step in the timeline of historical causation that leads to the Declaration of Independence. Images can be added from the collection provided within the challenge (at right), or taken from the general collection as well.
3. (If applicable) Compare your six degrees of separation (from England) theory with another student in your class and discuss the ways in which in your theories are similar and different. Pay specific attention to the explanations and justifications you and your partner are using.