

Two Worlds, Two Wordles

General

Grade Level

Middle School, 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

The Declaration of Independence outlines a series of grievances leveled against the King of England by the American colonists. However, many other documents prior to the Declaration also give voice to the frustrations of the people (and the manners by which they feel their liberties are being taken away), as well as the English justification for their policies and actions. What themes dominate the positions of the two sides, who seem to be worlds apart by 1776? In this challenge, you will discover that for yourself.

Rationale

In this challenge, students exercise the historical thinking skills of comparing and contrasting. This includes the ability to describe and evaluate multiple historical developments within one society and one or more developments across or between different groups. It also involves the ability to identify and evaluate multiple perspectives on a given historical experience.

Notes to Teacher

This is best used as an introduction to the Declaration of Independence (and the events that precipitated it), although it may also be helpful as a review activity.

Steps

1. Explore the general images collection from 1763-1776 and select five documents that you believe best represent the frustrations of the American people during the aforementioned years. Add those images to your personal collection.
2. Explore images from the very same time period and select five documents that you believe best represent the policies (and justification for those policies) of the British during the years leading up to the American Revolution in 1776. Add those images to your collection.
3. Open TWO separate word clouds (or “wordles”). Place the documents you’ve chosen into their respective word clouds boxes. NOTE: Word clouds – or wordles – break down documents (or in this case, a series of documents) and display their most common or frequently used words. Otherwise stated, what shows up in your word cloud are the words/themes that dominate the collection of documents you have inputted. Words that appear with greater frequency are larger than the others.
4. Compare and contrast the two word clouds you have created. Consider the following questions (in no particular order), either on your own or with another student in your class:
 1. What words/themes dominate the two individual clouds?
 2. What connections can you make between the two clouds?
 3. How do these two clouds simplify your understanding of revolution in America?
 4. How do these two clouds complicate your understanding of revolution in America?
 5. What questions arise as you consider the information in these two clouds? Be sure to ask your teacher.