

Heroes of Liberty Action Figures

Heroes of America's Revolutionary Era

CRAIG W. WILLEY
GRADE 7 LESSON PLAN

INTRODUCTION

This Lesson plan is a U.S. History lesson that is meant to be taught in middle school, but could be taught in any grade 5th grade and up. I designed it for a 7th grade class.

The lesson will involve student investigation of historical figures from the revolutionary era of American history. Students will follow guidelines for the research, production, and exhibition of a historical figure action figure. Students will demonstrate biographical research skills, the ability to follow directions, creativity and ingenuity, the ability to retell history, and students will have to demonstrate report-writing skills. Each action figure will be in costume with accessories and will be presented in a package with biographical information that illustrates how the historical figure is a hero.

GRADE LEVEL Grades 5-12

SEMINAR IMPACT

The seminar has impacted me in several ways. The trips to Hubbarton and Saratoga and the presentations of Dr. Randall, Kraig Hannum, and Michael Dwyer all affected my choosing of a proposal.

Dr. Randall shared many interesting perspectives on founding fathers and told anecdotes of many less know sides of the founding fathers. Dr. Randall especially helped me see a more positive side to George Washington than I originally had. Michael Dwyer reminded me about the importance of using symbols in teaching, and educated me extensively on many symbols I hadn't thought of. I will definitely use the Great Seal in my teaching now. Kraig Hannum gave me the idea that I eventually transformed into the idea for my lesson activity.

The trips reminded me of how alive history really is and of how close and connected the history of the American Revolution is to this region.

CENTRAL QUESTIONS

- How does one define and characterize a historical hero?
- How can historical documents and artifacts tell us about the past?
- What significant contributions did various people make during the Era of the American Revolution and the Constitutional Convention?
- In what ways did heroes either help create, represent, or exemplify the Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, or Bill of rights?
- Were there any heroes who fought to suppress the revolution?

CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

- Were the rebels of the American Revolution heroes or traitors?
- Do you think that the British, King George, German mercenaries, etc. acted as villains in the American Revolution?

LESSON LENGTH

Five 45 minutes class periods. The research assignment will be given to the students on a Friday. Students will work on the research on Monday and Tuesday in the library. Students will attend a block day on either Wednesday or Thursday for class time with teacher and peer help available. Students will present the exhibitions on Friday.

KEY IDEAS

There were heroes on both the American side and the British side of the American Revolution.

Many heroes of the era were not soldiers, and many were not men although most of the heroes of the war were soldiers.

Some of the people we view as heroes from that era were not seen as heroes during the time of their lives.

Many people contributed to the American Revolution and our independence, from the Declaration of Independence, through the war, to the passing of the Bill of Rights.

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will learn biographical research skills

-Students will learn how to follow a rubric and set of guidelines in order to research and create a project.

-Students will learn how to retell history using creative writing.

-Students will learn how to connect the primary sources of the era to the research of their historical figures.

NATIONAL HISTORY STANDARDS

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

STANDARD 3

The student engages in historical analysis and interpretation:

Therefore, the student is able to:

- A. Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas, values, personalities, behaviors, and institutions by identifying likenesses and differences.
- B. Consider multiple perspectives of various peoples in the past by demonstrating their differing motives, beliefs, interests, hopes, and fears.
- E. Distinguish between unsupported expressions of opinion and informed hypotheses grounded in historical evidence.
- G. Challenge arguments of historical inevitability by formulating examples of historical contingency, of how different choices could have led to different consequences.
- H. Hold interpretations of history as tentative, subject to changes as new information is uncovered, new voices heard, and new interpretations broached.
- I. Evaluate major debates among historians concerning alternative interpretations of the past.
- J. Hypothesize the influence of the past, including both the limitations and opportunities made possible by past decisions.

VERMONT STANDARDS

Conflict and Conflict Resolution:

6.18.aa. Explain a conflict (e.g. Labor Issues, Revolutionary War) by recognizing the interests, values, perspectives, and points of view of those directly and indirectly involved in the conflict.

Being a Historian:

6.6.c. Collect and use primary resources (e.g., letters, diaries, artifacts, artwork, documents) in building original historical interpretations; and

6.6.d. Use oral history methods and data to understand the ways in which people assign meaning to their own historical experiences.

Analyzing Knowledge:

6.3.c. Recognize and evaluate the human tendencies to categorize, romanticize, or vilify individuals and groups through selected facts and interpretations; and

6.3.d. Analyze interpretations of events from the perspective of various groups, and evaluate the credibility of differing accounts.

PREPARATION FOR TEACHING

Students will have already studied the Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, and Bill of Rights in this class prior to this lesson. A brief review of the American Revolution, and Constitutional Convention will have been presented in this class. Students were taught about this era in 5th or 6th grade depending on their sending elementary school.

I will need to make copies of the rubric and objectives and I will be presenting a Power Point presentation to prepare students for this lesson.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Students will all be using at least one primary source of independent choice.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Creating America, Beginnings Through WWII by McDougal Littell

ACTIVITIES

Students will view a Power Point presented by me, spend two class periods in the library, and work on the project in class with teacher facilitation for one class, and present on the fifth day. I also have a model action figure of Ethan Allen to help students plan their project and I will bring in an action figure currently selling in toy stores for students to get ideas.

ASSESSMENT

I have designed a simple rubric (below) for the project creation and I will design an assessment piece for the Vermont and National Standards.

ACCOMODATIONS

Some of my students needed one on one assistance for the biographical writing aspect and the research of a primary source. Constructed Response writing guidelines were furnished by the English teachers.

Historical Hero	The figure meets all visual requirements for size, includes accessories, and uses at least four colors and two symbols	The figure meets all C requirements with exceptional neatness. The figure shows good planning and historical accuracy.	The figure meets all B requirements plus demonstrates excellent historical accuracy. The symbols, colors, and accessories show a high level of student historical understanding.
Packaging	The packaging meets color and symbol requirements and has a title, the figure's name, and an alias.	In addition to C requirements the packaging is exceptionally neat, well organized, and good G.U.M. is demonstrated.	The packaging is also innovative and demonstrates that the student has also learned how to make historical connections.
Bio Info.	The biography includes an Intro., body, and conclusion. An accurate bibliography is displayed and a primary source and 2 secondary sources were used. Acceptable G.U.M. is demonstrated.	All of the C requirements plus few G.U.M. errors. Creative writing is present in the report, and it is apparent that the portfolio rubric for report writing was utilized.	All of the B requirements plus exceptional G.U.M.. Innovative report writing that demonstrates a good understanding of the report writing rubric is demonstrated. The writing shows that the student understands how to become a historian.
Presentation	The student is able to share his or her project with the class and clearly represent the historical hero.	The student also demonstrates a planned and thought out presentation with enthusiasm.	The student demonstrates excellent public speaking skills, is enthusiastic, clear, and teaches the class about the historical hero. The student is also persuasive.

Annotated Bibliography

Berkin, Carol. *Revolutionary Mothers*. New York: Vintage Books, 2005.

Revolutionary Mothers tells the often overlooked history of the participation of women during the American Revolution. Carol Berkin gives several examples of roles that women played during the revolutionary era of America. I felt myself wanting more historical detail in the anecdotes she wrote, but I believe this is representative of the overshadowing of women that has occurred in our country's telling of this history.

This book was very useful for my project because I was able to gather names of female heroes for my students to investigate.

McCullough, David. *1776*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005.

McCullough's book was fantastic. I felt as if I was experiencing the first year of the American Revolution and the defeats and frustration that Washington and his men experienced before finally gaining a victory. *1776* brilliantly illustrates the fragility of the war in this first year.

The colorful descriptions of the personalities such as Henry Knox and John Glover were priceless for examples of "Heroes of Liberty."

Randall, Willard Sterne. *Alexander Hamilton: A Life*. New York: Perennial, 2003.

Alexander Hamilton: A Life was a book about one of the unsung heroes of our country. No one debates that Alexander Hamilton is a founding father of the United States of America, but few know of his other deeds. Whether it was the complicated events of his childhood, the non-typical path he was forced to travel due to his lineage, or the heroic soldier he was, many only know of Hamilton's academic contributions to such works as the Federalist Papers and American finances.

This book was less useful as a resource for my project, but it was a great example of a hero that had many angles to explore. This was useful for designing the project expectations.