

Helen Fields, Middle School Teacher
Mount Anthony Union Middle School
Bennington, Vermont

Castleton College HIS-6710
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FINAL PROJECT

Homespun Heroes: Colonial Women in the Time of the American Revolution
An Integrative 8th Grade History and Mathematics Unit

ABSTRACT

Middle School students are best served when educated in a small, team setting. They learn best when the curriculum is mostly *integrative*: most (but not necessarily all) ‘subjects’ are not just *integrated* into each other, but are proactively designed as one, by a unified team of educators who meet daily to create concept-based learning. With this lofty goal in mind, I propose to design an *integrative* Unit Plan based on the concept of **power**. Because the Teaching American History Project is focused this year on “American Revolutionary heroes,” and because I am a mathematics teacher of seventh and eighth grade students, I hope to facilitate students’ discovery of the economic power issues which undergirded the events which led to the Revolution and eventually to nation-building. Using race, class, age, national identity and especially gender as categories of analysis, I hope that students will begin to unravel many misconceptions, and build a stronger sense of personal identification with so many of our American Heroes.

This Unit Plan will necessarily attempt to meet both the National History Standards as well as the Vermont State Grade Expectations (i.e. State Standards) in History and Mathematics. In addition, the Unit Plan will meet several Vermont State Grade Expectations (GEs) in English, Art and Technology.

There are still common misconceptions held by students (and teachers) of social studies in our culture and educational institutions today. Many of them are misconceptions about what constitutes history: is one person’s ‘official’ story the truth, or are there other possible ‘truths’? Who writes history? Which people are able to read history over time, and rewrite it? What is missing from our stories, and how do we find primary and secondary sources to grow our historical understandings? Where are the *rest* of the people who made our history possible? Finally, I hope students will learn that an understanding of economics in our history will lead to a better understanding of our world today, and that knowing mathematics can really help us understand and solve today’s real problems.

In attempting to address many of the common misconceptions, I propose this mathematics and history unit so that students are, themselves, empowered to believe in themselves, and become proactive learners, researchers and active citizens.

GRADE LEVEL: Eighth Grade

SEMINAR IMPACT

Reading “Alexander Hamilton: A Life” by Willard Sterne Randall revealed to me the intricate web of economic factors that propelled colonists into the American Revolution. Randall’s details of the domestic lives of the characters led me to better understand the daily and general impact of economic decisions and circumstances in these times. Randall is also adept at explaining the evolution of our social and political system, in the context of economic decision-making, including an understanding of taxation, financial management and the invention of corporations.

Following Randall, we (in the Teaching American History Project in Vermont, 2008) read “Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the Struggle for America’s Independency” by Carol Berkin. Realizing the necessary roles of women in various classes, races and cultures, Berkin grants us insight into both the domestic as well as the political and economic impacts which colonial women, as well as Native, English and even French women may have had in the formation of this fledgling nation.

A third reading for this course, “A Whig Interpretation of History” by Butterfield (originally written in 1931), provided us with a classic review of the myopic lens through which many (most?) historians view history. The author reminds us that we have looked back on history with standards, expectations and what we might today call ‘20/20 hindsight.’ The victor has been the historian in our case, and the loser is depicted as ‘other’ than ‘us.’ It is my hope to remember this lesson from Butterfield, as I attempt to weave into the curriculum the multiple experiences, views, objectives and outcomes of the many faces of our true heroes.

It is my hope that combining information from these readings, as well as others, can inform a unit designed to teach students the important economic advances and declines as our government and nation emerged. I shall focus attention on economic survival and subversion, in the context of the Revolutionary War, which was fought to eliminate economic oppression. In so doing, students will learn that the domestic sphere of society has significant power to affect change, both within and beyond a military struggle, and across gender, race, age, class, geographic location and nationality.

In addition to these and other readings which informed my learning in the TAHVT Project, seminars were very useful and enjoyable. Guest speakers included several authors, who were able to answer questions and provide further insight into their work as it applies to our particular curricula foci. Berkin helped me find resources that would address economic issues of Revolutionary times. Curriculum advisors were able to guide my thinking about how this course could address the common misconceptions in social studies held by middle school students (and by all of us). Periodically presenting project drafts and listening to classmates’ proposals helped me focus better on pedagogy, and I was better able to hone in on my topic.

CENTRAL QUESTIONS

1. Essential Question: Can ordinary people change the world?
2. Enduring Understandings:
 - a. How did American colonists respond to the economic injustices imparted by the British government?
 - b. How did American colonists gain economic freedom from British control?
 - c. Do we Americans today have freedom from economic injustice today?

CHALLENGE QUESTIONS: Because this course is written for a heterogeneous, differentiated middle school classroom, all questions are written so that students can answer them according to a Depth of Knowledge (DoK) relevant to their personal learning profile. All students will answer the four Central Questions according to their own abilities.

LESSON LENGTH: Twenty-four 80-minute class Blocks (Blocks (consists of Social Studies and Mathematics schedule plus occasional English, Science and Art class blocks)

✓ LESSON PROTOTYPE

- Ø Entrance Ticket: pre-assessment or mini-quiz follow-up from previous day
- Ø Fifteen minute teacher-directed learning
- Ø Group research, study or practice of lesson
- Ø Exit Ticket: post-assessment or check-for-understanding in last 5 minutes of class
- Ø Homework: 20 minutes each night: reading for understanding and/or math practice
- Ø Weekly written formal assessment (vocabulary, mathematical concepts and skills, and historical concepts)

✓ KEY IDEAS

- Ø Economic injustice was a key influence in decision-making and action by people involved in the American Revolution
- Ø Women were a powerful influence on the outcomes of the struggle
- Ø Today's economic struggles can be overcome by everyday people (like us) if we better understand our own power in the system (i.e. sustainable development, purchasing power, lifestyle choices)

✓ INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Ø Students will understand the economic factors that influenced the outcomes of the American Revolution
- Ø Students will learn to apply mathematical concepts and skills to assist them in better understanding how economics affects and can be affected by their lives
- Ø Students will gain political, social and economic empowerment and be motivated to participate in a community issue or concern

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR HISTORY ADDRESSED IN THIS UNIT: (pages 86-89)

Era 2: Colonization and Settlement

1. Standard 3A The student understands colonial economic life and labor systems in the Americas.
 - 7-12: Explain mercantilism and evaluate how it influenced patterns of economic activity.
 - 5-12: Identify the major economic regions in the Americas and explain how labor systems shaped them.
2. Standard 3B: The student understands economic life and the development of labor systems in the English colonies.
 - 5-12: Explain how environmental and human factors accounted for differences in economies that developed in the colonies of New England, mid-Atlantic, Chesapeake, and lower South.
 - 7-12: Analyze how the early Navigation Acts affected economic life in the colonies.

Era 3: Revolution and the New Nation

1. Standard 1a: The student understands the causes of the American Revolution
 - 7-12: Analyze political, ideological, religious, and economic origins of the Revolution
2. Standard 1c: The student understands the factors affecting the course of the war and contributing to the American victory
 - 7-12: Compare and explain the different roles and perspectives in the war of men and women, including white settlers, free and enslaved African Americans, and native Americans.
 - 7-12: Explain how the Americans won the war against superior British resources.
3. Standard 2B: The student understands the economic issues arising out of the Revolution.
4. Standard 2C: The student understands the Revolution's effects on different social groups.
 - 5-12: Compare the revolutionary goals of different groups—for example, rural farmers and urban craftsmen, northern merchants and southern planters—and how the Revolution altered social, political, and economic relations among them.
 - 7-12: Analyze the ideas put forth arguing for new women's roles and rights and explain the customs of the 18th century that limited women's aspirations and achievements.

VERMONT STATE HISTORY STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS UNIT:

H&SS7-8:5 Students develop reasonable explanations that support the research statement by...

- Organizing and display information in a manner appropriate to the research statement through tables, graphs, maps, dioramas, charts, narratives, posters, timelines, models, simulations, and/or dramatizations.
- Determine the validity and reliability of the document or information.
- Choosing and using appropriate methods for interpreting information, such as comparing and contrasting, summarizing, illustrating, generalizing, sequencing, synthesizing, analyzing, and/or justifying (e.g., analyzing information to determine why two historical accounts of the same event might differ
- Revising explanations as necessary based on personal reflection, peer critique, expert opinion, etc.

H&SS7-8:8 Students connect the past with the present by...

- Describing ways that life in the United States and/or the world has both changed and stayed the same over time; and explaining why these changes have occurred (e.g., In what ways would the life of a teenager during the American Revolution be different from the life of a teenager today?

H&SS7-8:9 Students show understanding of how humans interpret history by...

- Evaluating the credibility of differing accounts of the same event(s)

H&SS7-8:10 Students show understanding of past, present, and future time by...

- Identifying the beginning, middle, and end of an historical narrative or story.
- Making predictions and/or decisions based on an understanding of the past and the present (e.g., after analyzing past events, determining what steps can impact the future).
- Identifying important events in the United States and/or world, and describing multiple causes and effects of those events.

H&SS7-8:11 Students interpret geography and solve geographic problems by...

- Identifying and using basic elements of a variety of maps.
- Using grid systems to locate places on maps and globes (e.g., longitude and latitude).

H&SS7-8:14 Students act as citizens by...

- Demonstrating positive interaction with group members (e.g., working with a group to design a lesson teaching younger students about rights and responsibilities). Identifying problems, proposing solutions, and considering the effects of a course of action in the local community, state, nation, or world.
- Explaining and defending their own point of view on issues that affect themselves and society, using information gained from reputable sources (e.g. communism vs. democracy; war vs. economic sanctions).
- Illustrating how individuals and groups have brought about change locally, nationally, or internationally (e.g., interview someone involved in civil union legislation).
- Demonstrating how identity stems from beliefs in and allegiance to shared political values and principles, and how these are similar and different to other peoples (e.g. Northern Ireland/Republic; socialism; capitalism).

H&SS7-8:18 Students show an understanding of the interaction/interdependence between humans, the environment, and the economy by...

- Explaining how goods and services around the world create economic interdependence between people in different places (e.g., writing a persuasive essay about the effects of importing oil, exporting labor, etc.).
- Examining how producers in the U.S. and/or world have used natural, human, and capital resources to produce goods and services, and predicting the long term effects of these.
- Drawing conclusions about how choices within an economic system affect the environment in the state, nation, and/or world

H&SS7-8:19 Students show understanding of the interconnectedness between government and the economy by...

- Identifying goods and services provided by local, state, national, and international governmental and/or nongovernmental organizations (e.g., Red Cross, UN peacekeeping efforts, etc.).
- Evaluating the costs and benefits of government economic programs to both individuals and groups (e.g., debate the pros and cons of welfare programs).
- Explaining the relationship between taxation and governmental goods and services in the U.S. and/or world (e.g., how much of the federal budget is devoted to international aid?).
- Recognizing that governments around the world create their own currency for use as money (e.g., examining foreign currency for cultural and political symbols).

- Recognizing that a change in exchange rates changes the relative price of goods and services between two countries (e.g., track the cost in dollars of ordering a Big Mac in Paris over a three week period).

H&SS7-8:20 Students make economic decisions as a consumer, producer, saver, investor, and citizen by...

- Define and apply basic economic concepts such as supply and demand, price, market and/or opportunity cost in an investigation of a regional, national, or international economic question or problem
- Examining the causes and long-term effects of people's needs and/or wants exceeding their available resources, and proposing possible solutions
- Comparing price, quality, and features of goods and services.
- Analyzing influences on buying and saving (e.g., media, peers).
- Analyzing factors involved in the production of a product or service (e.g., developing a business plan for community fundraising).

VERMONT MATHEMATICS STANDARDS

M7: 1 Demonstrates conceptual understanding of rational numbers with respect to percents as a means of comparing the same or different parts of the whole when the wholes vary in magnitude (e.g., 8 girls in a classroom of 16 students compared to 8 girls in a classroom of 20 students, or 20% of 400 compared to 50% of 100); and percents as a way of expressing multiples of a number (e.g., 200% of 50) using models, explanations, or other representations.*

M7: 14 Demonstrates conceptual understanding of the area of circles or the area or perimeter of composite figures (quadrilaterals, triangles, or parts of circles), and the surface area of rectangular prisms, or volume of rectangular prisms, triangular prisms, or cylinders using models, formulas, or by solving related problems. Expresses all measures using appropriate units.

M7: 15 Measures and uses units of measures appropriately and consistently when solving problems across the content strands. Makes conversions within systems. (See Appendix B for benchmark units and equivalences for each grade.)

M7: 25 Identifies or describes representations or elements of representations that best display a given set of data or situation, consistent with the representations required in M7: 23.

M8: 1 Demonstrates conceptual understanding of rational numbers with respect to percents as a way of describing change (percent increase and decrease) using explanations, models, or other representations.

M8: 4 Accurately solves problems involving proportional reasoning (percent increase or decrease, interest rates, markups, or rates); and squares, cubes and taking square or cube roots.

M8: 13 Applies concepts of similarity to determine the impact of scaling on the volume or surface area of three- dimensional figures when linear dimensions are multiplied by a constant factor; to determine the length of sides of similar triangles, or to solve problems involving growth and rate and makes scale drawings.

M8: 14 Demonstrates conceptual understanding of surface area or volume by solving problems involving surface area and volume of rectangular prisms, cylinders, or pyramids. Expresses all measures using appropriate units.

M8: 15 Measures and uses units of measures appropriately and consistently when solving problems across the content strands. Makes conversions within or across systems. (See Appendix B for benchmark units and equivalences for each grade.

M8: 25 Organizes and displays data using scatter plots to answer questions related to the data, to analyze the data to formulate or justify conclusions, to make predictions, or to solve problems; or identifies representations or elements of representations that best display a given set of data or situation, consistent with the representations required in M8: 23.

Additionally, Vermont Standards and Grade Expectations shall be addressed in the subject areas of: Art, English and Technology.

PREPARATION FOR TEACHING

- ü Rewrite several excerpts from secondary resources, utilizing “Read, Write, Gold” program to create access to literature for various reading abilities, and to generate vocabulary practice sheets.
- ü Laminate enlarged copies of primary documents and create scaffold for student-managed bulletin boards
- ü Make weekly study packets for each student, differentiated and tiered according to ability and skills
- ü Create heterogeneous groupings of students based on project interest and Learning Style
- ü Purchase and frame pertinent artwork replicas of Boston Tea Party and other American Revolutionary classics
- ü Display several maps: colonial America, and an economic map of the world nations

See Attached Unit Plans

PRIMARY SOURCES

SECONDARY SOURCES

ACTIVITIES

✓

ASSESSMENT

ACCOMMODATIONS