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Final Project

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY
The Enduring Legacy of the American Revolution

Heroes in American History

Proposal Abstract

My proposal was to create a unit of five lessons that examined the role and principles of property ownership in the American Revolution. I used the creation of the state of Vermont as an example of these revolutionary ideas and as a discussion point in the unit. The unit dealt with primary documents and the organization of a chain of evidence. The unit culminated in a four-page paper and several directed class discussions. The class was to distinguish between the principles of the Revolution and the legacy that America has inherited from this event. Also, the students were encouraged to identify the elements of United States history that were influenced by the heroic men and women of the American Revolution.

Grade Level:

This unit will be taught in an AP U.S. History class that will consist of students in the 11th and 12th grades. These students are an upper level group.

Seminar Impact:

I have been greatly influenced by this year's seminar. The idea of teaching history using the promotion of the idea of Liberty through heroes is a provocative one. I thought that the keynote speakers in the summer seminar did an excellent job in crafting a framework for a detailed discussion of these issues. I felt that we as student participants didn't capitalize on that foundation as well as we should have during the summer session, but I feel that we engaged the topic during the rest of year. I was able to incorporate many such discussions in my AP classes. In fact I was able to use the theme throughout the year in all of my history classes. The theme of heroes in history also lent itself well to discussing and discovering the villains of history. My students were very engaged in this hunt so to speak. The seminar also stressed the use of primary documents and secondary sources in order to allow students to see, handle, and interpret their history. While I have endeavored to use these tools in my teaching before the seminar, I was able to focus and bring the documents into a more organized context for the students of my classes after the seminar. The discussions with Will Randall and Carol Berkin were very enjoyable and illuminating. I have been using the perspectives that I gained from them in my discussions in my classes and it has been very productive, even in units other than the American Revolution. By far the biggest impact the seminar has had on me is the time to collaborate with my peers. This time has been invaluable. The group that I am in has a

diverse set of views and I have benefited from the pleasant intellectual exchanges that we have had.

Central Questions:

- Were Vermonters in the right in seizing property from the New York grants? Which deeds were correct?
- Were the Revolutionaries in the right in fighting over taxation? If so, what does that mean in terms of property taxes today?
- What were the principles of property ownership of the Americans?
- What were the principles of property ownership of the British?

Challenge Questions:

- What is a hero? Can a person be heroic without conflict?
- Is freedom and liberty essential to heroism and how does that fit into the definition of being an American?
- Given the role of government to maintain order, can an individual actually own property?
- How revolutionary was the American Revolution in regard to property ownership?

Lesson Length:

This unit will take about a week of class time. It will use five lesson periods of approximately 42 minutes apiece. The unit will culminate in a class debate on the issues discussed. Also, students will write a four-page paper on one of the founding fathers of their choice in which they will discuss the principles of property ownership that their choice held.

- Lesson 1 – Introduction lecture and presentation of key ideas
- Lesson 2 – Discussion of land charters and central questions
- Lesson 3 – Notes (SOAPSTONE) on primary documents
- Lesson 4 – Research in library on Founders/Heroes
- Lesson 5 – Discussion/Debate of challenge questions

SOAPSTONE is a tool that gives the student a methodology for breaking down and understanding primary documents and secondary articles and books.

This will further aid in a student's individual research.

S – The *Subject* of the Writing

O – The *Occasion* of the Writing of the Piece

A – The *Audience* that the Piece is intended for

P – The *Purpose* of the Piece

S – The *Speaker*

Tone – The *Attitude* of the Writing

Key Ideas:

- The American character was defined by property ownership.
- The frontier's expanse was irresistible to the colonists and this created tension with the British.

- Benign neglect by the British fostered revolutionary spirit in the American colonies.
- Liberty, freedom, and equality are heroic principles. The American colonists believe this to be true.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

- Identify the founding fathers were and explain their beliefs.
- Interpret primary documents successfully.
- Create a chain of evidence and organize with logic.
- Identify the enduring legacy of the American Revolution.

National History Standards:

The National History Standards that will be addressed in this unit will be as follows.

- Historical Thinking:
- Standard 1: Chronological Thinking
 - Standard 2: Historical Comprehension
 - Standard 3: Historical Analysis & Interpretation
 - Standard 4: Historical Research Capabilities
 - Standard 5: Historical Issues- Analysis & Decision making

Content Standards - Era 3: Revolution and the New Nation (1754-1820's)

- Standard 1
- Standard 2
- Standard 3

Vermont Standards:

The Vermont Standards that will be addressed in this unit will be as follows.

- Vital Results:
- 1.3 – Reading Comprehension
 - 1.7 – Responses to Literature
 - 1.8 – Reports
 - 1.10 – Procedures
 - 1.11 – Persuasive Writing
 - 1.18 – Information Technology
 - 1.19 – Research
 - 3.1 – Goal Setting

- Fields of Knowledge
- 6.1 – Causes and Effects in Human Societies
 - 6.3 – Analyzing Knowledge
 - 6.4 – Historical Connections
 - 6.6 – Being a Historian
 - 6.8 – Movements and Settlements
 - 6.10 – Types of Government
 - 6.14 – Forces of Unity & Disunity

Preparation for Teaching:

In preparation of this unit I will develop the five individual lesson plans needed. I will coordinate at least one library session with the Library staff at FHUHS. The students will be assigned the relevant textbook reading so as to foster familiarity with the material being covered. The students will have studied the history of the American colonies up to the Revolution. This will give them the context to be able to discuss the issues of the conflict and independence as a whole. I will have examined the subject within the time constraints that I have. Also I will have planned out the questions that the class will be discussing.

Primary Sources:

In terms of materials, I will create a bibliography of primary and secondary sources that are available for my students. We will be looking specifically at the New York and New Hampshire grants for area of Vermont in relation to the creation of the independent state of Vermont. We will also use a variety of other period writings that will aid our study of the central questions.

Jefferson, Thomas. *The Declaration Of Independence*

Madison, James. *The Constitution of the United States*

Colonial Charters, Grants, and Related Articles

Constitution of Vermont – July 8, 1777

Constitution of Vermont – July 4, 1786

All primary documents used can be found at the Avalon Project at Yale Law School website for Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy.

<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm>

In order to teach about the Revolutionary era one must use the Declaration of the Independence. It is the culmination of the spirit that existed within the colonies for self- rule. The revolutionary spirit led to the Constitution on the nation wide stage. On a smaller scale was the quest for independence of the state of Vermont. The claims of the colonial charters for the states of New Hampshire and New York were answered by the Constitution of Vermont in 1777. This constitution is as much a religious document as an organization of government. It is a Declaration of Independence of the Green Mountain Boys. All of these documents were and are concerned with property ownership. They are obviously documents in the public domain and thus have purpose, reliability, authority, currency, and are designed to be easy to use and hard to change. These documents are the foundation of this study.

Secondary Sources:

Berkin, Carol, *Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the Struggle for America's Independence* New York: Vintage Press, 2005.

This excellent small book opens the dialogue about the role that women played in the American Revolution and in society at large. Berkin deals with an ignored segment of history in a way that makes readers want to know more about the subject. The author deals with the “gender amnesia” (xi) of the professional historians of the past 150 years. This book was extremely relevant in discussing heroes of the American Revolution and

the legacy that they left to posterity. The book was well researched by a known authority in the field. This recent scholarship is easy to read and fun to boot. It is provocative without any inherent bitterness.

This book was assigned as a part of the seminar and was very useful in revealing the hidden gender history of the American Revolution. Obviously women were involved in a home front war such as the American Revolution and Berkin brings this to light rather well.

Brookhiser, Richard, *What Would the Founders Do?: Our Questions Their Answers* New York: Basic Books, 2006.

This book is an extremely fun read conducted along the lines of a Socratic dialogue. The chapters are laid out as independent essays dealing with subjects such as taxation, arms ownership, money and business, gender, race, and politics to name a few. In each essay the author uses the words of the Founding Fathers to make his points or rather his interpretation of what the Founders were saying at the time about the issues. It was useful in my class's examination of the principles of property ownership in the American Revolution. Brookhiser is a well-known columnist for *American Heritage* and the *New York Times Book Review*. He has written extensively on the Founding Fathers. The book was timely in both its scholarship and when I acquired it. General readers and academics will find much here to enjoy.

I found this book in a second hand bookstore and got it for a dollar even though it is relatively new, just as I was attending the seminar and it tied in wonderfully.

Butterfield, Herbert, *The Whig Interpretation of History* New York: W.W. Norton, 1965.

As a fan of historiography I found this to be a very insightful read. Butterfield makes the case that the interpretation of history is not the actual history, but in fact is the making of myth. Since the seminar was dealing with the legacy of the heroes of the American Revolution in the development of liberty, the book was very relevant to our discussion and the study at hand. I was able to use the perspective gained from reading the book in presenting the primary documents. Butterfield was a well-respected historian and this work is his most noteworthy. Most readers will find this piece to be a bit boring as the style is extremely logical and not given to dramatics.

This book was assigned as a part of the seminar and is well known to historians.

Mitchell, John Hanson, *Trespassing: An Inquiry Into the Private Ownership of Land* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1998.

Appealing to a broad audience, this book deals with an evolving attitude towards the private ownership of land and property. Mitchell reveals the human aspect of having and not having with a singular wit. Also, the book deals with the issue chronologically from Native Americans to British colonists to citizens of the United States. Philosophical in nature, the book asks more questions than it answers and forces the reader to be introspective. For this alone the piece is valuable, but it is also readable. The author won the John Burroughs Essay Award and has written much dealing with property.

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

Reading this biography was very pleasant in many ways. After having met Professor Randall at the seminar, it was interesting to read his work about Alexander Hamilton. The book read like a novel and thus is appropriate for all audiences, both general and academic. The piece is a detailed account of one of the most significant Founders. It is well researched and relevant to both the seminar and my project. Hamilton was very interested in the principles of property ownership throughout his life and he helped create the economic framework that the United States uses to this date. Randall is a renowned expert in the field and his scholarship is cutting edge.

This book was assigned as a part of the seminar and was very useful. This book provided the foundation for many class discussions with my students and helped bring about a great understanding of the time of the American Revolution.

Wood, Gordon, *The Radicalism of The American Revolution* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992.

This book states in no uncertain terms that the American Revolution was a dramatic event that changed the world. Wood holds this to be the case due to the impact that the United States has had since its inception in regard to the world. The book charts the course from a monarchy to an egalitarian republic and democracy. The author feels that the commercial society that was born out of the creation of the United States was the most democratic society ever to exist. With this thesis Wood was very useful to my project and to my students in theirs. Gordon Wood is one of the preeminent historians in the United States and is a recognized authority in the field. The work is understandable and flows well and is appropriate to general and academic audiences equally.

I was introduced to Gordon Wood's work as an undergraduate student and have never been disappointed.

Activities:

The five lessons will include a lecture, group discussion of the questions, a session in the library, presentations in class of research, and a debate where the students will have to defend and oppose a chosen position.

Assessment:

I will utilize a rubric for the four-page paper and for the class debate. A checklist will also be utilized to aid the students in staying on schedule. This will ensure clear understanding of deadlines and expectations. This will also clearly explain the value of the assessments in conjunction with the aforementioned rubrics.

CHECKLIST

1. Pick a topic – (DUE 9/28) 10 points
2. Prepare working bibliography – (DUE 10/4) 10 points
3. Present written outline – (DUE 10/11) 10 points
4. First draft – (DUE 10/17) 10 points
5. Final draft – (DUE 10/26) 10 points

SCORING GUIDE

<hr/>		
Content (40%)		
Exceeds expectations 20	Meets expectations 17	Does not meet expectations 10
<hr/>		
Grammar, Usage, Mechanics (20%)		
Exceeds expectations 10	Meets expectations 8	Does not meet expectations 5
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Clarity (20%)		
Exceeds expectations 10	Meets expectations 8	Does not meet expectations 5
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Organization (20%)		
Exceeds expectations 10	Meets expectations 8	Does not meet expectations 5

RUBRIC

50 points - You should teach me. These will be rare.

40-45 points essay:

- Contains a well developed thesis that both identifies and evaluates an issue
- Discusses several aspects of the issue along with analyzing it's relevancy
- Effectively uses and cites a substantial number of sources
- Supports thesis with substantial & relevant outside information
- Is clearly organized and well written

25-35 points essay:

- Contains a thesis that identifies the issue
- Discusses some aspects of the issue; may have limited analysis & may focus on one part of the issue rather than the whole
- Uses some sources acceptably
- Shows evidence of acceptable organization & writing

10-20 points essay:

- Deals with the issue in a general manner
- May cite one source
- Has problems in organization and information is inaccurate

0-10 points essay:

- Contains no thesis
- Contains no reference to a source
- Is completely off the topic or blank

Accommodations:

All accommodations that are required by law and decorum will be met in accordance with school policy.