

## **Year 1:**

## **Unit 3**

# **The Shot Heard 'Round the World - The American Revolution (1754 - 1783): Introduction**

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### **Unit Purpose: Why This Unit?**

Throughout the 18th century, the American colonies began to flourish. With the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the colonies grew in population and also became a part of a thriving global economy. At the same time, King George III felt the strain of commanding lands across the world in both power of influence, as well as financial strain, as Great Britain had just finished paying for the French and Indian War. In response, the king imposed stringent tax laws on the colonies. The harder he tightened his grip with tax acts (known to the colonists as the Intolerable Acts), the more resentment that colonists, many of whom had been born and raised in America, developed toward control of the crown. This resentment manifested itself in various forms of protest, boycotts, skirmishes, and even organized rebel groups like the Sons of Liberty. Through these tumultuous times, Thomas Jefferson and other members of the colonial aristocracy came together to codify their grievances against Great Britain in the Declaration of Independence. In this document, they established what they believed should be the ideals of a ruling government: to protect the inalienable natural rights of its citizens. On these beliefs, the 13 colonies united together — men, women, children, African, and Native American — in a revolution that created the United States of America.

The American Revolution is of singular importance in the study of American history. The revolutionary generation laid the political and institutional foundations for the system of government under which we live, a system inspired by truly “revolutionary” ideas concerning natural rights and political authority that have affected people and governments over a large part of the globe for many generations. As a result, it called into question long-established social and political relationships — between master and slave, man and woman, upper class and lower class, officeholder and constituent, and even parent and child — and gave birth to an agenda for political reform that still inspires the American story today.

Unit 3 is a Project-Based Learning unit, emphasizing interdisciplinary perspectives through projects and simulations. Scholars will use these creative endeavors to engage with complex and challenging historical themes. This unit demands reading critically, drawing upon evidence to create convincing projects, and expressing arguments creatively both in projects and in writing. Because this is a Project-Based Learning unit, there are 90 minutes dedicated to each lesson, rather than the usual 50 minutes.

To best invest your scholars in this unit, organize a showcase or presentation of scholar work at the end of the unit!

Note: We recommend teaching this unit concurrently with the novel *Chains* by Laurie Halse Anderson in your ELA classes.

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## Unit 3 Learning Goals

### Essential Question

If you are successful in this unit, your scholars will be able to answer the Unit 3 Essential Question: *To what extent was the American Revolution “revolutionary”?*

### Big Ideas

**Big Ideas:** The following historical concepts, adapted from the UCLA National History Standards United States History Era 3, reflect the essential ideas scholars must master by the end of this unit. As you teach Unit 3, connect every lesson back to the Big Idea(s) that the lesson helps illustrate.

- **Big Idea 1: As the American colonies began to flourish after the French and Indian War, Great Britain began to rule with new, overbearing imperial policies, causing tension that eventually resulted in the outbreak of the Revolutionary War.**
  - In order to pay for the the French and Indian War, King George III imposed new taxation policies on the colonists that were perceived by many as financially and morally oppressive due to their lack of political representation.
  - Colonists in America did not have any legal representation in the British government. Thus, they had no voice in the laws King George III imposed on them, which resulted in boycotts and protests in the colonies.
  - Resistance to imperial control and presence in the colonies escalated to unrest and violent skirmishes, such as the Boston Massacre, between Great Britain and the colonists and eventually to the outbreak of war.
- **Big Idea 2: Due to strong leadership, foreign aid, and an ability for diverse groups in the colonies to unite around a singular cause — the need for independence — American colonists succeeded against all odds in a revolution against the crown.**
  - Although there were some colonists who wished to remain loyal to the crown, the Revolutionary War was won by the unification and contribution of all groups of people in the colonies: men, women, Africans, and Native Americans.
  - The unification of these diverse groups was done under the guise of the idea that freedom from Great Britain would lead to freedom on the homefront. However, disenfranchised groups were only participatory in the war and never at the helm as leaders.

- Beyond the will of the common man and woman, the war was won with military aid from the French and the strong leadership of the colonial aristocracy (George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, etc.), many of whom later became known as the Founding Fathers.
- **Big Idea 3: The revolutionary movement was built upon the principles of liberty and freedom in opposition to imperial British rule, but these freedoms and liberties were not universally realized on the homefront.**
  - Colonists used propaganda to unify disjointed colonies of different religions, races, and economic interests around principles of natural rights and liberty.
  - Colonial aristocrats composed the Declaration of Independence around ideas of liberty and freedom that both fundamentally altered the social contract of society and also served as an act of treason against Great Britain.
  - Although the Declaration of Independence redefined the worth and power of the common person, its commitment to human rights was starkly contradicted by the realities of chattel slavery and oppression of women, Native Americans, and landless white men that remained pervasive issues in the colonies.

### Key Terms

The following people, places, and events are foundational to understanding the Big Ideas of this unit. As these words are introduced in each lesson, add them to your word wall and hold scholars accountable for using them in discussion and writing throughout the unit.

- French and Indian War
- King George III
- British Parliament
- Intolerable Acts
- Townshend Acts
- Stamp Act
- Declaratory Act
- Tea Act
- Boston Tea Party
- Sons and Daughters of Liberty
- Boston Massacre
- John Adams
- Loyalists/Tories
- Patriots
- Propaganda
- Declaration of Independence
- Thomas Jefferson
- Continental Congress
- George Washington
- Treaty of Paris

### Geography

The following places are foundational to understanding the geographical context of the unit. As you teach Unit 3, continually reference maps in class not only to build scholar fluency with geography, but also to develop scholars' geographic reasoning skills as they grapple with the Big Ideas of the unit.

- **The 13 Original Colonies:** Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina
- **The physical features of British North America:** the Appalachian Mountains, Chesapeake Bay, Delaware River, and Boston Harbor
- **The Proclamation Line of 1763**
- **The significant sites of the American Revolution:** the cities of Boston and Philadelphia, and the battles of Lexington and Concord, Bunker Hill, and Yorktown

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## Intellectual Preparation

**Class Materials** Once you have internalized the Big Ideas of the unit, to be successful, you must study all scholar documents and materials before you teach the first lesson:

- All documents in the [Unit 3 Sourcebook](#)
- All scholar and teacher materials in the [Unit 3 Workbook](#)

**Additional Resources** The resources below provide additional historical background for the content covered in Unit 3:

- Review the timeline "The American Revolution" and read the essays "The Road to Revolution" and "The War for Independence" on the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History\* website.
- Watch the videos Crash Course History's "Tea, Taxes, and the American Revolution" and [America: The Story of US](#), Episode 1 on YouTube; as well as "American Revolution: One Word" on the History Channel website.

\*To access these readings and more free American History content and resources, create an account on the Gilder Lehrman Institute website.

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## Unit 3 Lesson Sequence

**Essential Question:** To what extent was the American Revolution "revolutionary"?

The first five lessons set the stage for the eruption of the Revolutionary War. While Lesson 1 introduces scholars to the economic and legal tensions between the colonies and Great Britain, Lessons 2 through 5 show how that tension manifests itself: protests, boycotts, riots, violence, and political propaganda. By the end of these lessons, scholars will understand the motivations to protect the natural human rights of citizens from a corrupt government, as outlined in the Declaration of Independence. As scholars dive into the ideas behind those natural rights and trace the ways in which the war unfolds, they are able to make connections to the Essential Question as they understand the revolutionary actions of the colonists uniting to uprise against a global superpower.

**Lesson 1:** Starting a Movement for Independence (Source Analysis)

- **Central Question:** Why did colonial Americans begin a movement for independence?

**Lesson 2:** The Boston Massacre (Mock Trial)

- **Central Question:** Who caused the Boston Massacre?

**Lessons 3–5:** Colonial Propaganda (Writing Seminar, PBL)

- **Central Question:** Why should colonists support the movement for independence?

Lessons 6 through 9 allow scholars to explore the perspectives of the different colonial constituencies involved in the Revolutionary War. Lesson 6 focuses on the values that comprise the Declaration of Independence, including the contradictory notions of freedom at its core. In Lesson 7, scholars will explore how the ideals of the Declaration of Independence inspired and united colonists to join the Continental Army. In Lessons 8 and 9, scholars dig deeper into the perspectives of colonists at this time, learning how and why they both participated in and experienced the war. This includes the reasons why some colonists, especially enslaved Africans, remained loyal to Great Britain. By the end of Lesson 9, scholars will be able to explain the nuanced reasons why different groups of colonists did or did not support the war and further understand the juxtaposition between the revolutionary ideas of the Declaration of Independence and the reality that these ideals were not revolutionary for all Americans.

**Lesson 6:** Declaration of Independence (Source Analysis)

- **Central Question:** To what extent was the Declaration of Independence a call for liberty?

**Lesson 7:** Continental Army (Source Analysis)

- **Central Question:** How did the Continental Army unite American colonists against the British?

**Lessons 8–9:** The Loyalists (Writing Seminar)

- **Central Question:** Why did some Americans remain loyal to Great Britain?

Lessons 10 through 12 bring scholars to the victory of the colonists in the Revolutionary War. Beyond understanding how the victory was won due to strong leadership and the alliances of the 13 colonies, scholars also begin to question what this victory meant for the rights and liberties of colonists in the aftermath. Scholars will engage with the accounts and points of view of men, women, African Americans, and Native Americans to learn how the Revolutionary War did or did not “revolutionize” the lives of all Americans. By the end of these lessons, scholars must be able to connect the perspectives and experiences of the different demographics in the colonies back

to the “inalienable rights” outlined in the Declaration of Independence in Lesson 6 and articulate an argument about how revolutionary the war was to the American people long after the war ended.

#### **Lesson 10: Winning the War (PBL)**

- **Central Question:** Why did the American colonies win the Revolutionary War?

#### **Lesson 11–12: Freedom for All? (Source Analysis, PBL)**

- **Central Question:** To what extent did the American Revolution extend the freedoms of all Americans?

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## **Premortems and Solutions**

Facilitating meaningful project-based Learning is challenging because there are materials to manage and the work is open-ended. But this is the very reason why it is important and engaging for our scholars. The lessons in this unit are 90 minutes to ensure that you have enough time to fully engage in each project.

Your level of preparation and your clarity of purpose make all the difference. The purpose of every project should be clear in every lesson, and you must ensure that you connect these projects to the purpose of the lesson and the Unit Essential Question.

Guard against exploration without rigor! Whether in the classroom studying a text or crafting a project, scholars' experiences should spark questions and further investigation about the topic. Do not be fooled by beautiful projects that have little or no historical relevance. As with writing, PBL demands that scholars have an idea. Guard against project work that expresses details without an idea by constantly asking scholars what idea their project work is trying to prove and by having sky-high expectations for the quality of ideas in the projects. Similarly, all captions should first and foremost express the idea conveyed in the image rather than highlighting the details of the image. The point of these PBLs is to use creative means to convince the viewer of an idea. Therefore, scholar project work must always be grounded in accurate and compelling historical evidence to prove their ideas. Projects with strong historical arguments should be valorized, regardless of artistic talent.

Make sure that the goals of history class are not lost in the midst of project work. Continue to emphasize the Habits of Great Readers, Writers, and Historians in every class.

Scholars will work with a variety of materials as they create their projects. Develop a plan to manage the materials, but keep the focus on the content!