

If These Monuments Could Talk:

The Whiskey Rebellion, Popular Rights, and the Meaning of the First Amendment

Overview

Using Library of Congress and local primary sources related to Whiskey Rebellion historic sites, this inquiry unit will focus on the Essential Question: "What can Whiskey Rebellion monuments tell us?" The traditional textbook account that George Washington defeated the Whiskey Rebels and maintained a strong federal government will be compared to some local myths and memories about Washington, Hamilton, Neville, Tom the Tinker, Oliver Miller, McFarland, Bradford, Gallatin, and Brackenridge. Shadows of these people still linger near Espy House, Mingo Creek, Whiskey Point, Miller Homestead, Bradford House, Woodville, and Washington and Jefferson College.

The primary sources on this topic are extensive and such an inquiry unit can best be accomplished with cooperative learning teams that research different sources and share their evidence findings with their classmates. The sources are organized chronologically into five topics that will support the students in answering the Essential Question. Each topic includes an investigative question to focus the inquiry task and a list of key individuals and historic places that played significant roles in the Whiskey Rebellion.

Objectives

1. Analyze primary sources from both sides of the 1794 excise tax issue.
2. Write an argumentative essay to support either side of the tax issue.
3. Compare the Oliver Miller Homestead and Woodville Plantation historic sites.
4. Create a Google Doc news report of the incidents of mid-July at the Miller Homestead and Bower Hill.
5. Create an "instrument of insurrection" (a speech, a handbill, a Tom the Tinker note, or a flag) that uses digital graphics or traditional 3D art media.
6. Create a digital timeline of the federal response to the unrest in Western Pennsylvania.
7. Create an epitaph for one of the individuals discussed in the Whiskey Rebellion focusing on their participation and how the Rebellion affected them.
8. Rewrite the textbook description of the Whiskey Rebellion to more accurately reflect the primary sources analyzed.

Time Required

This unit was designed as a cooperative learning unit dividing the extensive list of primary sources among small groups of students in a ten-day timeframe of 40-minute periods.

Recommended for Grades 8th -11th

Subject/Topic

American History: The New Nation 1783 - 1815

Standards (Pennsylvania State)

Arts and Humanities

9.2.3. A. Explain the historical, cultural, and social context of an individual work in the arts.

Civics and Government

5.2.9. C. Analyze skills used to resolve conflicts in society and government.

History

8.1.9. D. Analyze and interpret historical research using primary sources.

8.2.9. A. Analyze the political and cultural contributions of individuals and groups to Pennsylvania history from 1787 to 1914.

8.2.9. B. Identify and analyze primary documents, material artifacts and historic sites important in Pennsylvania history from 1787 to 1914.

8.2.9. D. Identify and analyze conflict and cooperation among social groups and organizations in Pennsylvania history.

8.3.9. D. Identify and analyze conflict and cooperation among social groups and organizations in United States history from 1787 to 1914.

Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening

1.2.8. A. Read and understand essential content of informational texts and documents in all academic areas.

1.4.3. C. Write an opinion and support it with facts.

1.5.8. C. Write with controlled and/or subtle organization.

1.5.8. B. Write using well-developed content appropriate for the topic.

1.5.8. G. Present and/or defend written work for publication when appropriate.

1.6.8. A. Listen to others.

1.6.8. C. Speak using skills appropriate to formal speech situations.

1.6.8. D. Contribute to discussions.

1.6.8. E. Participate in small and large group discussions and presentations.

Credits

Written by Greg Giardina, 8th Grade Social Studies Teacher with support from the Teaching with Primary Sources Eastern Region coordinated by Waynesburg University (<http://tps.waynesburg.edu/tpseasternregion>).

PREPARATION

Materials

- Library of Congress Analysis Tool: [Teacher Guide](#)
- [Slide Presentations](#)
 - Introduction: What is a Monument?
 - Topic 1: The Tax (Was the excise tax on whiskey fair?)
 - Topic 2: The Spark (What were the differences between John Neville and Oliver Miller?)
 - Topic 3: The Rebellion (Were the actions of the Whiskey Rebels protected by the First Amendment?)
 - Topic 4: The Reaction (What was the significance of the different Federal reactions to the Whiskey Rebellion?)
 - Topic 5: Winners? (What role did individuals play in the Whiskey Rebellion?)
- Student Worksheets
 - Standard T-Chart
 - [Primary Source Analysis Tool](#)
 - Newspaper Template (attached)
 - Blank PowerPoint (for Timeline Activity)

Resources

- [Primary Source Set](#)
 - Textbook Excerpt on Whiskey Rebellion (attached)
 - Secondary Sources (attached)
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PROCEDURE: Description of Inquiry Process

Connect

To set the stage for this inquiry, brainstorm a list of historic monuments that students have seen in their town or on vacations. After they have generated a list, share the teacher Introduction Presentation that gives a definition and some examples from the Whiskey Rebellion Primary Source Set.

Wonder and Investigate: Using featured primary sources

- Divide class into teams of 3 - 5. Ask them to name their team with an acronym that uses the initials of the team members.
- Introduce the 5 topics in this unit using the Teacher Presentations. Allow approximately 2 days per topic.
- For each topic, give each team a different primary source from the presentation to analyze using the Primary Source Analysis Student Worksheet.
- Post team worksheets in Google folders for future reference and collaboration.

Construct: Formative Performance Tasks

- **Topic 1 The Tax:** Individual students will write an argumentative essay to support either side of the tax issue.

- **Topic 2 The Spark:** Teams will create a Google Doc news report of the incidents of mid-July at the Miller Homestead and Bower Hill. (Newspaper Template)
- **Topic 3 The Rebellion:** Teams will create an “instrument of insurrection” (a speech, a handbill, a Tom the Tinker note, or a flag) that uses digital graphics or traditional 3D art media.
- **Topic 4 The Reaction:** Teams will create a timeline of the federal response to the unrest in Western Pennsylvania.

Construct: Summative Performance Task

- **Topic 5 The Winners:** Create an epitaph for one of the individuals discussed in the Whiskey Rebellion focusing on their participation and how the Rebellion affected them.

Reflect and Express

Rewrite a middle school [textbook description](#) of the Whiskey Rebellion to more accurately reflect the primary sources analyzed in this unit. Each team will write a paragraph depicting what happened during one of the five topics or phases of the Whiskey Rebellion (The Tax, The Spark, The Rebellion, The Reaction and The Winners).

EXTENSION: Taking Informed Action

Nominating a Local Historic Place: Ask each student or teams of students to select a site, building, monument, or structure in their community that could be nominated for a local, state, or national register of historic places. Have them complete the action steps needed to create a narrative about the historic significance of that place. This activity could be extended to a large, cooperative project for a nomination to have the place listed in a local, state, or national register, or for a history fair, term paper, classroom display, or videotape.

OR

Access to Power: Have students choose a current issue they wish to express an opinion about to their mayor, state governor or congressional representative, and have students show their support or disapproval by petition, letter, fax, email, telephone, or the news media.

EVALUATION

The Formative Performance Tasks listed under the Construct, Express, and Reflect sections of the Inquiry Process above can be used as formative evaluation products.

Examples of Individual Student Essays are included in the The Tax (*Presentation*). Examples of 8th grade student teamwork for creating Articles of Insurrection are included in the The Rebellion (*Presentation*). A composite class textbook revision with all team paragraphs is shown below.

The
Pittsburgh Gazette

Price Six Pence

Saturday, July 19, 1794

Volume VIII Number 29

*** Original Textbook Excerpt ***

The Whiskey Rebellion

More conflicts arose on the frontier when Congress passed a tax on American-made whiskey in March 1791. Farmers who produced small amounts of whiskey for trade argued that they could not afford the tax. After being fined for not paying the tax, farmer William Smith wrote, "I felt my blood boil." What began as the complaints of a few turned into the **Whiskey Rebellion** in 1794. Protesters refused to pay the tax and even tarred and feathered tax collectors. Some called themselves the new Sons of Liberty.

President Washington saw the rebels as a threat to federal authority. Under the Constitution, Congress had the power to pass the tax. He assembled some 13,000 men from state militias. The army approached western Pennsylvania in November of 1794. By this time, most of the rebels had fled, and the Whiskey Rebellion ended without a battle.

Stuckey, Sterling and Salvucci, Linda Kerrigan. (2003) *Call to Freedom Beginning to 1877*. Austin, TX: Holt.