

Unit 6

How Did the French and Indian War Set the Stage for the American Revolution?

“They know not the character of Americans.”
—John Adams, reflecting on the negative reaction by the colonists to the passage of the Stamp Act⁷

Background for the Teacher

Read the “How Did the French and Indian War Set the Stage for the American Revolution?” section of the Teacher Background on the French and Indian War, page 27.

The French and Indian War changed the relationship between the British colonies and the mother country. After the 1763 Treaty of Paris, the British had a huge new empire to manage. The British began to enact policies that set the stage for the American Revolution.

Students who begin their study of American history with the Revolutionary War are left with many questions. Why did the British pass so many taxes in the 1760s? Why were the colonists able to come together? In this unit students will learn how the end of the French and Indian war affected the Revolution.

Key Teaching Points

- Britain was in debt and had a huge new empire to manage
- To cover costs of troops, the colonists were taxed
- The colonists rebelled
- After the American Revolution began, many colonists used their military training and experience from the French and Indian War
- France allied with the Americans during the Revolution in part to get revenge on Britain after losing the French and Indian War
- Pontiac’s War was the last war in which the American Indians had enough resources to change the outcome of the wars they waged against the British and Americans

Activities in This Unit

“The French and Indian War Sets the Stage for the American Revolution”

- This reading outlines four ways the French and Indian War set the stage for the American Revolution.

“Join or Die”

- This helps students learn to interpret primary source documents that are visual. Students will examine Benjamin Franklin’s cartoon to see if they can “read” its message.



Spanish dollar and two British coins

⁷Fred Anderson. *Crucible of War*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 656.



The French and Indian War Sets the Stage for the American Revolution

Standards

National History Standards

K-4 Topic 3: 4A, 4B, 4C

US Era 3: 1A, 1C

World Era 6:

4A

Materials You'll Need

- 1 copy of the student reading "The French and Indian War Sets the Stage for the American Revolution" for each student



George III, King of Great Britain during the American Revolution

The French and Indian War set the stage for the American Revolution and influenced its outcome. This lesson plan explores four ways the French and Indian War was influential.

The reading is broken up into short passages followed by questions. Having students reflect on what they have read is one good way to increase their comprehension. The questions ask the students their opinions and don't necessarily have right or wrong answers.

Procedure

1. Hand out the Student Reading. Have the students read "The French and Indian War Sets the Stage for the American Revolution."
2. Have the students answer the questions in the reading and discuss. The questions are opinion questions; however, the students should support their opinions.
3. Ask the students if they can name four ways the French and Indian War helped set the stage for the American Revolution or influenced the outcome of the war.
 - The British gain a large amount of land from the French at the end of the French and Indian War. Since it was expensive to have soldiers in North America the British government began taxing the colonists to pay for these soldiers. The American colonists were upset by the taxes.
 - The American colonists had worked together during the French and Indian War making it easier to work together against the British government.
 - Many Americans gained military experience during the French and Indian War.
 - The French joined the American Revolution to get revenge on the British. They were bitter about losing the French and Indian War.



Student Reading

The French and Indian War Sets the Stage for the American Revolution

The end of The French and Indian War influenced both the colonial Americans as well as the officials in the British government. In many ways, it led them on a path to the American Revolution. Then it continued to influence people and their actions even after the Revolution began.

Fighting the French and Indian War was very expensive for the British government. It had borrowed money and needed to pay it back. The British had gained a lot of land from the French in North America, including many forts. After the war, they stationed British soldiers in the former French forts, which was expensive. In order to help pay for the soldiers, the British government decided to start taxing the American colonists, which they had never done before. The colonists had only been taxed by their own colonial governments. The first taxes were the Sugar Act of 1763 and the Stamp Act of 1764. The Americans didn't think the taxes were fair because they had no elected representatives in the British government.

Question: Do you think it was fair for the British government to tax the Americans in order to pay for soldiers who were protecting the American colonies?

The American colonists protested the taxes and the British government did away with them; however, the British government thought it had the power to tax the colonists, so they voted for another tax. After the American colonists protested, they did away with that one, too. This went on for about ten years. When some Massachusetts colonists dumped chests of tea into the harbor to protest the tax on tea, the British government became angry. They decided to punish the colony. Among other things, they closed the port of Boston and took away much of Massachusetts' power to govern itself. Many American colonists were upset by this. They didn't think the British government had the right to do these things to any colony. Twelve of the colonies decided to send representatives to a meeting of the first Continental Congress in the fall of 1774 so that they could coordinate their opposition to the British government's actions.

Most of the time the colonies acted independently, but things were changing. During the French and Indian War, the American colonists had acted together under the command of the British military to fight the American Indians and the French. Now the colonists were coming together to protest how the British government was treating them.

Student Reading - The French and Indian War
Sets the Stage for the American Revolution



Question: When you have a disagreement, does everyone have the same ideas about how to resolve it?

The first shots of the American Revolution were fired six months later, in April 1775. The second Continental Congress met and appointed George Washington as the commander of the American army, which was called the Continental Army.

The Americans tried to resolve their disagreement with the British government, but they could not find a solution. Finally, on July 4, 1776, they issued the Declaration of Independence, stating that they planned to break away from the British and form their own government.

Washington and many other soldiers in the Continental Army had gained experience by fighting as British soldiers in the French and Indian War. This knowledge and experience would help the Americans fight against the very powerful British army.

Question: If the French and Indian War had not occurred, do you think the Continental Army would have been experienced enough to fight the British army?



Student Reading - The French and Indian War Sets the Stage for the American Revolution

The Continental Army had some great victories and some terrible defeats. In 1778, the French decided to recognize America as an independent country and send money, weapons, ships and soldiers. The French helped in the final major battle of the war, at Yorktown, Virginia, that allowed the Americans to win. After that victory, the British were ready to make peace with the Americans and allow the United States of America to be an independent country.

What made the French join the Americans? Mainly, it was revenge that drove the French into helping the Americans. The king of France did not support colonies revolting against him. At the end of the French and Indian War, the French resented their loss. They wanted to get back at Britain and make sure that the British did not get too powerful.

Question: Do you think revenge is a good reason for the French to join the American Revolution?

Shortly after winning the French and Indian War, the British government decided to reserve all the land between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River for American Indians. The American colonists were very angry at that decision. They wanted to settle that land, even though it was where the American Indians lived.

Twenty years later, at the end of the American Revolution, the Americans no longer had to pay attention to the British decision and began to settle the area. As more Americans moved into the Ohio River Valley, the American Indians needed to decide whether to fight, move out of the area or change their way of life and become like the American settlers.

Question: Should the United States government have kept the area between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River reserved for the American Indians?



Join or Die

Standards

National History Standards

K-4 Topic 2: 3B, 3D, 3E

K-4 Topic 3: 4B

US Era 2: 1B, 2A

US Era 3: 1A

World Era 6:

4A

Materials You'll Need

- 1 copy of the Activity Worksheet "Join or Die" for each student

In 1754, Benjamin Franklin created a political cartoon that conveyed a powerful message. It was a drawing of a snake cut into eight parts. Each of the parts represented one or more of the 13 colonies (South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and New England). The cartoon's simple message was "Join or Die."

At the time the colonists didn't think they needed to join together. They thought the British government would take care of them. The cartoon did not become popular until after the rebellion against the British started and the colonists began to see the need to unite. It was during the French and Indian War that the colonists saw how effective and powerful they could be when they worked together.

This worksheet will help your students learn how to interpret this critically important American history document.

Procedure

1. Pass out the Activity Worksheet.
2. Have students work alone or in small groups to answer the questions.



1754 Join or Die political cartoon



Activity Worksheet

Join or Die

There's an old saying that a picture is worth a thousand words. Benjamin Franklin understood that saying.

Here is a drawing that he created in 1754, during the French and Indian War. It was not popular at that time. However, it became popular later, during the American Revolution.



Look at the drawing. What do you see?

Look carefully at the sections of the snake's body. How many sections are there? Do you see letters by each section? What could those letters represent?

What do you suppose Franklin is saying with this picture?

Why do you suppose it wasn't popular at first and became popular later?

What was one thing the colonists learned from the French and Indian War?