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Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness: The History of Democracy in America

Title: An American Colonial Dilemma

Possible Subject Area(s); United States History

Overview: Using the strategies developed by Yohuru Rashied Williams, the students will have an opportunity to explore the idea that many colonial North American blacks of the late eighteenth century, seen by some as the foundation on which a substantial part of the American economy, and therefore it's fledgling democracy, rested, viewed the British Army as the 'liberators' of the revolutionary period rather than oppressors. Many of the colonial American blacks chose to leave the country, often via the British naval fleet, to world-wide destinations such as Nova Scotia, Canada. Why would these Americans (escaping slaves and freedmen, both native and foreign born) leave a system promoting liberty, equality, and justice as strongly as were the thirteen colonies? Why would these North American blacks of the period literally run from the many agriculturalists (with substantial labor needs) of the time? This three day unit explores this aspect of the contradiction which so dramatically impacted the young democracy.

Essential Understanding: Populations leave areas of the world for many reasons, generally either 'pushed or pulled'. Many black colonial Americans did so late in the eighteenth century, leaving for Nova Scotia and other parts of the world, seeking a more humane environment. Their story merits study to help contemporary students understand some of the inherent risks involved with such geographical changes, and an example of economic, social, or political circumstances that might drive such mass population moves. It highlights factors driving many colonial Loyalists of the Revolutionary period to work against the Continentals. It also exhibits an example of one driving force behind the British Abolitionist Movement and its' origins.

Essential Questions:

1. If the thirteen colonies of the fledgling United States were as preoccupied with liberty, justice, and equality, as stated and written by many of the American founding fathers and their peers, why were American blacks, and others, racing to leave such a place?
2. Has Britain always been the 'oppressor' as frequently presented in many American History texts?
3. What would drive American colonial Loyalists and Tories of the Revolutionary period, often presented as the weaker and sometimes treasonous group, to fight as vigorously against the Continentals as they did?

CT Standards:

- Strand 1.3- Explain examples of conflict and cooperation in world affairs.
- Strand 1.5- Analyze how a specific environment has influenced historical developments in a region/nation of the world.
- Strand 1.6- Explain environmental factors that cause human movement.
- Strand 1.6- Analyze patterns of migration both within and among nations.
- Strand 1.6- Analyze man-made factors that cause human movement.
- Strand 3.1- Evaluate primary and secondary interpretations of a historical event.

Objectives:

- The student will be able to describe in writing actions taken by free and enslaved American colonial blacks when faced with opposing sides in the American Revolution.
- The student will investigate and report on the actions of specific persons participating in an actual American historic event.
- The student will explain in writing, or orally, the experiences of specific person's choosing to leave the American colonies for other lands during the 18th century as well as possible motivating factors.

Materials Needed: Access to the internet, search engine, the text "Rough Crossings" by Simon Schama, LCD projector, keyboard, computer, white projection screen, ESP handouts, reading handouts.

Suggested Activities/Procedures:

Day 1

- Details of the activity
(0 minute mark)
After spending several days working on the slavery issue and its' potential impact on the early Colonial American democracy, the students will be asked to "place themselves in the shoes" of an enslaved or bonded person, being held, through threat of violent force, to labor or provide services for their captors. They will be asked to imagine themselves, laboring under threat of severe physical punishment in a land 'enraptured' with the concepts of liberty, equality, and justice, as espoused by Jefferson and many of the founding figures. When the students think they have "put themselves there" psychologically, they will be asked to develop a dialogue that might have taken place between two enslaved persons, in their cabin for the night, or any place of their choice, after they have heard that the British Army is in their colony with large numbers, in pursuit of Washington and the Continentals. The students must treat the following questions in their dialogue: What might have been said between the two of the advancing group? What other possible questions may have arisen between the two enslaved conversationalists? What thoughts may have passed through their minds as this foreign army approached that they might or might not have expressed? The students will put the dialogue into writing so that it might be read if they are chosen to do so. Their goal is at least a two minute reading.
(5 minute mark)
They will take ten minutes to develop the dialogue, exactly, a timed writing activity that might also serve as a pre-assessment on the topic of *Potential Slave Responses to the British Army in Revolutionary Colonial America*.

(15 minutes mark)

When done, the students will get into their groups and decide whose writing is the strongest of their group members. They will then prepare to share that sample for a group score. Give them 2-3 more minutes to make editorial adjustments that might be needed.

(20 minute mark)

Have each group share their selection using the classroom LCD to brainstorm the terms and concepts that arise as they present. When done with the presentations have the students share their thoughts on what made a strong group oral. Ask for volunteers to share the reasoning behind their thoughts.

(35 minute mark)

Spend several minutes explaining the phenomena of escaping slaves to the British Army of the time, and the possible reasons for such an escape. This serves as review and instruction to connect student dialogue responses with possible historic scenarios.

45 minutes

- Homework:

Be sure all students have the *Haunted History ESP Evidence Review Worksheet*¹ developed by Yohuru Rashied Williams as represented below:

- Who is the person or what was the event?
- What was the economic influence of the person or what were the economic consequences of the episode or event?
- What was the political influence of the person or what were the political consequences of the episode or event?
- What was the social significance of the person or what were the social consequences of the episode or event?
- What is the relationship of the person or event to your community and/or state?

Using this formatted response, have the students read the first eighteen pages of “Rough Crossings” by Simon Schama, (Harper Collins, 2006) and complete the ESP worksheet developed by Yohuru Williams. This should be ready for class on day two.

¹ Material taken from “Teaching U.S. History Beyond the Textbook” by Yohuru Williams, Corwin Press, CA. 2009.

Day 2

- Details of the activity:

(0 Minute mark)

The second session takes place in the computer lab. Using Rashied Williams's formats of *Constructing Cold Cases*, and the worksheet completed for homework, ask the students in whole group to identify the "person or event of local or national import." The students will respond 'British Freedom.' In a modification of Williams work, ask the students "if British Freedom were to haunt this world today, who and where would it be?" The answers will vary from the British, to the British King, the people of Nova Scotia, and others. Ask the students to think about reasons why they chose that person or place and ask them to be prepared to share their thoughts. Further modifying the Williams approach ask the students where they would begin a search for data, either primary or secondary, for information regarding the experience of British Freedom. This would take the form of a WebQuest. The students are told they are the investigator who is trying to confirm or disprove the findings of "Rough Crossings" author Simon Schama, the student's only source to date. They might use their thoughts on whom British Freedom would haunt as a starting point, if applicable. Did British Freedom exist? Is there evidence of him to be found on the net, or others of his peer group? Where would they begin? Why that place? Or search? What did you find? The students must have answers to these questions.

(10 minute mark)

Allow the students at least 15 minutes to research material from their homework reading on British Freedom. The students will create a graphic organizer of their findings with British Freedom in the center. The organizer has to be done in Word or PowerPoint format and saved in their files. They should be able to develop a least five 'leads' or areas for further research.

(25 minute mark)

Ask volunteers to exhibit their findings at the teacher's station to help model for those struggling to find leads. This can be done as the others continue their research. Items that come up in a simple search include the Black Cultural Society of Nova Scotia; the Augusta Chronicle of February 14, 1999, did an article on Carmelita Robertson, a woman researching her South Carolinian slave roots in Tracadie, Nova Scotia. These are two examples of potential starting points. Ask several students to share their findings on the LCD in the lab. Lead a discussion on where these potential leads might take an investigator.

(35 minute mark)

Check in with the students as they work and get a count on the number of possible leads they have found during their WebQuest. Check in to see if a graphic organizer has been started, or notes. Allow students time to follow up any leads they have found and to continue their attempt to confirm or deny the writings of Mr. Schama.

(40 minute)

- Homework: Pass out readings of pages 21 through 39 of Mr. Schama's "Rough Crossings." The students will apply Mr. William's *ESP Evidence Review Sheet* to tonight's reading centered on several historic characters' that provide substantial instructional material. The William's approach and the *ESP Outline* can be used for day three in the computer lab for research centered on Britain, the dilemma of human ownership versus liberties built into English Common Law. The treatment and plight of Jonathan Strong serves as a starting point for a discussion of the reasoning of British Freedom, and other colonial North American blacks running from their owners to the British lines. The students will complete Mr. William's *ESP Review Sheet* and have that ready for session three in the morning. It will be applied to pages 21 through 39 of "Rough Crossings."

Day 3

- Details of the activity:

(0 minute mark)

Day three takes place in the computer lab. The students bring in their ESP Review Sheets ready to share what they have developed from last night's reading. Once the students have signed on with their organizers, notes, and pertinent files, a short discussion will be centered on who they chose for their person of interest, or event, on the ESP sheet. Have several students share their findings.

(10 minute mark)

Today they will follow again Mr. William's approach to historic investigation trying to find information on their character, or event, of choice. They will develop a graphic organizer on their findings with the same goal of five leads. They will take 15 minutes to develop these notes and the organizer.

(25 minute mark)

Success will be dependent upon who is researched. Granville Sharp will produce hundreds of web sites and leads. Searches on Jonathan Strong and Granville Sharp combined will produce sites such as the Guildhall Library of London, and one site that claims material from the "Granville Sharp Papers." A search on Lord Chief Justice Holt of Britain, as another example, produced a copy of "A Report of Divers Cases in Pleas of the Crown" dating back to the period. Have select students share their findings on the LCD to model for those having difficulty finding information.

(35 minute mark)

Have all students stop their research and begin to develop a response to Mr. William's question of "what case or argument can be made that any of the character's you have either read about or researched in the last three days have had an impact on the young democracy we refer to as "early colonial America?" Be specific and use the rubric as a guide.

- Homework: Finish the short essay response to the question above and have this ready for class on day 4. The rubric below will be used to assess the writing for an overall three day score.

Suggested Assessment/Evaluation

- Selected Response
- Open-ended Questions

- Rubric:

History Writing Rubric²

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Introduction/Conclusion	Introduction/conclusion missing or inadequate.	The introduction either brings in background information or addresses the topic.	The introduction brings in background information and addresses the topic.	The writer introduces the topic highly effectively. Brings in relevant background information, addresses the topic, creates interest.
Objective/Thesis/Position	No statement of thesis or objective for research.	Partial statement of thesis or objective for research.	Clear statement of thesis or objective for research.	Superior statement of thesis or objective for research.
Organization/Body	The information appears to be disorganized.	Information is organized but paragraphs are not well constructed.	Information is organized with well-constructed paragraphs.	Information is effectively organized with well-constructed paragraphs.
Content	Information has little to do with the main topic.	Information relates to the main topic, but no details and/or examples are given.	Information clearly relates to the main topic. It provides 1-2 supporting details and/or examples.	Information clearly relates to the main topic. It includes several supporting details and/or examples.
Clarity/Mechanics/ Grammar/Spelling	Not typed or neat. Difficult to understand or follow, very simple or very complicated. Many English errors.	Typed. Mostly understandable. Somewhat too complicated or simple. Some English errors.	Neatly typed. Understandable. Slightly too complex or slightly too simple. Few English errors.	Neatly typed. Understandable. No spelling, grammar, or punctuation errors.
Citations	There are no citations or bibliography.	There are citations but it they are not in the correct format or there are fewer than required.	Generally meets the criteria, with minor errors.	Correct citation according to MLA guidelines.
TOTAL				

Possible Extensions/Resources: To be determined.

² Rubric developed by mvrhs.org, Martha's Vineyard Regional High School, June 8, 2009.