

English Language Learners- History

What Can Art Tell Us About the United States During the American Revolution?

ELL ESOL ESL Lesson Plan

Sidney Storey-Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences
Inspired by: Whit Hendon, Cambridge Community Learning Center

Mixed level-Beginner to Advanced

Estimated Lesson Time: Total 8-9 hours

3 classroom activities and assessment activity: 4-5 hours

Field trip to the art museum: 4 hours

Overview:

History textbooks are filled with paintings of famous historical events. In this lesson, students can analyze famous paintings online and at a museum and learn the history of the time.

Student Objectives:

Students will be able to interpret the events of history through art.

Students will be able to understand paintings (art) as a primary source.

Activity I

Time-1.5 hours

Resources-

Boston Museum of Fine Arts website www.mfa.org

Admission to the museum

Materials

Computer with internet access

Send the students to the computer with instructions about how to access paintings of the American Revolution on the MFA website. Once there, they can look at many paintings. Ask each student to choose a painting that interests them for some reason.

Ask more advanced students to read about the painter. This will provide clues to deciding if it is a primary source.

Ask them to answer these questions:

1. Why is it interesting to you?
2. What does it make you think?
3. What does it make you feel?
4. Do you think the artist felt the way you do when she/he made the work of art?
5. Do you think the artist was there at the time? Do you think we can consider the painting a primary source? How might they know what happened? Why?
6. What are the people wearing? What are they eating? What can we learn from their clothing and food about their lives?
7. Who is who? Who are the colonists? Who are the British?
8. What are the weapons of the battle?
9. Do you recognize the flags?
10. Which army has the most money?

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Activity II-

Time-4 hours

Take a trip to an art museum. The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston arranged a tour for my students. Volunteers at the MLF have been kind enough to do it for free. They show the students the piece of art they chose on the internet hanging in the museum. The students can ask questions and learn more about the artwork. Or try a local museum; there are many excellent examples of Massachusetts historical art on display throughout the state.

Activity III-

Time - 2 hours

At the computer:

Ask students to research these questions:

1. When was their selected artwork painted or made? What was happening in the United States at that time?
2. What was happening in your home country at that time? What was happening in the world at that time?
3. How are these historical events reflected in the work of art? Is the painting literal, or is the artist guessing?
4. Can you find other works of art from that time from another part of the world on the website?

Assessment

Time- 1 hour

In the classroom:

Ask students to write at least one page about one of the following:

1. My trip to the Museum of Fine Arts.
2. The most interesting painting for me and why.
3. How my chosen painting reflects what was happening in the United States at that time. (Historically or culturally or both)
4. How my favorite painting reflects what was happening in the United States and my home country or other places in the world at that time.
5. Tell why you think your painting is a primary source.

Reflection - If you cannot make it to the museum, students can do this activity online. Or, you can print one or two paintings and have the students analyze them in class.

Because this is for a mixed level class, the expectations of the students in the computer room and in the assessment are at different levels.

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