

Analyzing the impact of Lord Dunmore's Proclamation

Created By: Freedom on the Move Team - September 20, 2023

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Edited and adapted by RunawayProject.info – September 05, 2024

Suitable for History Classes Adaptable for Grades 6 - 8

Lesson Overview

Students will use primary and secondary sources to analyze the impact of Lord Dunmore's proclamation on the enslaved communities of Colonial America. The students will analyze ads from the RunawayProject.info website to learn more about the people who self-liberated during the American Revolution, joining in the fight on both the British and American sides of the conflict.

Objectives

Slavery is a consistent subject taught in every unit in my 6th grade history class. My objective is for students to understand the important contributions made by enslaved people from the very beginning of American history and throughout the time periods we study in my class. I'd like for students to make a human connection with the people described in the ads.

Number of Class Periods

This lesson plan was developed to take 2 - 3 fifty minute class periods.

Grade Levels

This lesson is suitable for 6th through 8th grade.

Materials

- [RunawayProject.info](https://runawayproject.info)
- [National Archives Document Analysis Worksheet](#)
- [Africans in America](#)
- [Lord Dunmore Image](#)
- [Lord Dunmore Transcript](#)
- [Virginia Declaration](#)
- [Virginia Declaration Transcript](#)
- [Runaway Ad for Titus](#)

- [Runaway Ad Narration #1](#)
- [Runaway Ad Narration #2](#)

Teacher Background

During the Revolutionary War, freedom, liberty, and equality were words frequently heard in the British colonies. When enslaved people heard the promise, “All men are created equal.” Many dreamed of a country where these Enlightenment ideals might be realized. Joining the Revolutionary War effort seemed like a natural way to ensure freedom. However, as early as 1639 colonies restricted blacks’ military service. Fearing slave rebellions or the killing of enslavers, colonies like Virginia and Massachusetts had laws outlawing black military service, gun ownership, and combat fighting. Even with the laws on the books, blacks fought in the French and Indian War, the Battles of Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill. Under George Washington’s command and the leadership of the Continental Congress, by 1775 blacks were banned from the Continental Army. The reasoning was that blacks might use guns against their masters, that enslaved men might run away to join the army, and that laborers were needed in the fields to harvest crops. However, due to manpower shortages, in January of 1777, Washington changed his mind and allowed free blacks to enlist in the Continental Army. Around 1778, in New England, enslaved men were allowed to serve in the army in place of their master, with the promise of freedom after three years of service. In November of 1775, John Murray, the Lord Dunmore and Royal Governor of Virginia issued a proclamation stating that any able-bodied enslaved man could join the British Army and receive freedom at the end of the contest and a British victory. Dunmore created a separate black regiment called the “Ethiopian Regiment” who wore the slogan “Liberty to Slaves” on their uniforms. Colonial planters were furious and responded in December with the Virginia Resolution which stated, “...all negro or other slaves, conspiring to rebel or make insurrection, shall suffer death. It has been estimated that approximately 5-8,000 blacks served on the side of the Continental Army and around 20,000 joined the British Redcoats.

Procedures

- Give a mini-lecture / introduction of black participation in the American Revolution.
- Show the segment of PBS series “African’s in America”, Disc 1, Chapter 8 - “His Majesty’s Troops” Time: 38:13-48:27 Or “Slavery and the Making of America” - Liberty in the Air episode
- Show a copy of Lord Dunmore’s proclamation and talk about primary and secondary sources
- Use the National Archives document analysis to analyze the Proclamation
- Show the Virginia Declaration and analyze the document using the National Archives document analysis
- To introduce the subject of the self-liberating ads, I use the example of Titus, a 22 year old who fled his enslaver to join the British forces. Captain Tye, as he was known, fought in Dunmore’s Ethiopian Regiment.
- Students will be introduced to the RunawayProject.info database to research ads of self-liberating people during the American Revolution. I talk about how there are thousands of ads just like the one for Titus. They can even search on the database for other enslaved men named Titus who escaped around the same time period. Students will use the date range to narrow the search for this time period. Students will view at least 10 ads and collect data on a Google Doc graphic organizer.

Assessments

- My students write a “missing” chapter of historical fiction to add to the book *Chains* by Laurie Hales Anderson. One option for the assignment is to write their chapter about a black soldier.
- What would you have done? Write 5-7 journal articles using the different perspectives below or the student may choose their own.
- Write a newspaper editorial from different perspectives:
 - A 21 year-old enslaved man. You have heard that Colonel Tye's band of renegades is in the neighborhood.
 - A slave-owner in Monmouth County, New Jersey during the American Revolution. You have heard that Colonel Tye's band of renegades is in the neighborhood.
 - One of Colonel Tye's guerilla soldiers in Monmouth County, New Jersey during the American Revolution.
 - A slave in New Jersey in 1774. Because you tried to run away, your owner has put an iron collar with four-foot long poles attached to it around your neck.
 - An enslaved man or woman. One of your close friends has recently run away to join the British army or the American forces.

This lesson aligns to key concepts [4](#), [5](#), [6](#) and [10](#) of Teaching Tolerance’s [Teaching Hard History Framework](#).

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