

U.S. Independence Revisited through Puppetry

Rationale: Students will gain an understanding of the conflict over governance in the US British colonies during the 1760s and 70s. They will then convey through puppetry how the Colonial and British factions dealing with new British legislation and taxation during the 1760s and 70s might have used active listening and mediation to reach a solution without resorting to war.

Objectives:

- Use the art of puppetry to engage their creativity, empathize with historical characters with varying perspectives, and deepen their emotional understanding of events.
- Learn active listening techniques can help negotiations move from superficial positions to deeper interests.
- Learn mediation techniques for overcoming differences
- Become familiar with the changes taking place in Colonial America.
- Understand key personalities and opinions involved

Standards: This unit aligns with International Baccalaureate MYP standards dealing with:

- *Knowing and Understanding*
- *Communicating*
- *Critical Thinking*

Materials:

Handouts:

Thomas Paine's "Common Sense"

[Argument Positions of Patriots and Loyalists – from Interact Simulations "Independence" Unit](#)

Choices "Independence" Package (selected pages on the history of the US Independence movement)– Watson Institute of International Studies – Brown University.

"Active Listening" [Lesson from the USIP Peacebuilding Toolkit for Educators](#)

"Mediating Conflict" [Lesson from the USIP Peacebuilding Toolkit for Educators](#)

"Negotiation Preparation" [Lesson from the USIP Peacebuilding Toolkit for Educators](#)

"Non-verbal Communication" [Lesson from the USIP Peacebuilding Toolkit for Educators](#)

[Human Behaviors in History – from Facing History and Ourselves](#)

Puppet stage:

There are directions on the web for making puppet stages. I prefer one made from 2 pieces of 4'x8' ½" plywood – One piece becomes a 4' wide x 8' tall front piece (it has a 3'x2.5' cut-out for the opening at the top). The other 4'x8' board is split lengthwise then each half is attached with hinges on each side of the stage for concealing and supporting the stage. Attachable small 2"x4" pieces that extend a bit forward can supply forward stability.

A curtain rod and curtain can be attached and the whole stage folds up easily for storage.

Scripts pinned back stage with a flashlite source serve the readers well.

A microphone/speaker set-up helps with voice projection.

Puppet making:

Choose a 'How to make "sock puppet"' video on YouTube – (the puppet mouths tend to work better when 2.5" diameter round piece of folded thin cardboard is glued to the inside of the heel.)

Puppet - making Materials:

Fruit of the Loom Men's Crew Socks, 10 Pack – \$9.48 (\$20 for 2 packs)

Mini Glue Pack, 11-Piece (Glue guns with glue sticks) - \$4.85

[All Purpose Stik Mini Glue Sticks, .27" x 4", 100/Pkg](#)

\$6.95 per package (**\$21 for 3 packages**)

[Chenille Kraft Felt Sheet Pack, Rectangular, 9" x 12", Assorted Colors, 12 Pack](#)

\$4.08 (**\$20 for 5 packages**)

Paste-On Wiggle Eyes, 20mm, 56pk, Black - Price \$2.00 (\$4.00 for 2 packs)

A variety of colored yarns, pipe cleaners, etc for decorating puppets

Time: To prepare all of the lessons, make puppets, rehearse, and perform is likely to take about 20 hours. (Adaptations can be made to reduce the time required)

Procedures:

Initial Preparation:

1. Background Reading on events taking place in the British North American colonies, including Paine's "Common Sense".
2. Interpretation of original source material (perspectives on independence from the CHOICES unit).
3. Form teams and review the Positions and Arguments of each faction (Patriots and Loyalists) – these can be further divided into *staunch and patient* segments of each faction.
4. Discuss Patriot proposals for dealing with British taxation and legislative initiatives.
5. Learn definitions of terms that drive human behaviors
6. Conduct USIP Active Listening lesson
7. Conduct USIP Mediation lesson
8. Conduct USIP Lessons on Negotiation and Non-verbal communication

Scripting and Puppet Creation

9. Create a draft script to show emotionally charged characters demonstrating outrage and demanding action. As actions by the Sons of Liberty and reactions by the British get out of hand the groups are called in to a mediation session with amplified use of "active listening" to draw out deeply felt interests and illicit empathy. Key ideas to slow down

and “frame” for the audience involve the interpretation of human behaviors as well as the benefits of active listening and mediation. Active listening phrases should be accentuated. A concluding statement should contrast the peaceful results of the mediation portrayed vs. the impacts of the war that actually occurred.

- a. Characters, event portrayal, and outcomes are left to groups to decide.
- b. Teams design and construct sock puppets (other puppet forms possible). Teams practice using the puppet stage, then perform for an audience.

References:

1. Choices Independence Unit – Watson Institute of International Studies – Brown University.
2. Interact Simulations “Independence” Unit
3. USIP Peacebuilding Toolkit for Educators
4. Facing History and Ourselves - Human Behavior Definitions

Assessment: *The student scripts and performances may be assessed for:*

- Clear depiction of 3 Patriot and 3 Loyalist arguments
- A mediation process
- Active listening dialogue
- Interpretation of human behaviors using at least 2 concepts
- Clear and well sequenced scenes
- Energetic and creative puppetry (both movements and voices)
- Teamwork