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5th grade 2 day lesson plan

Ray Raphael: Founding Myths, Stories That Hide Our Patriotic Past  
Chapter 7, "The Greatest Generation"

Theme: Great leaders cannot lead effectively without widespread popular support.

**National Standards:**

**Standard 1: The causes of the American Revolution, the ideas and interests involved in forging the revolutionary movement, and the reasons for the American victory.**

- (A) Reconstruct the chronology of the critical events leading to the out-break of armed conflict between the American colonies and England. (Consider multiple perspectives.)**
- (B) Explain...intellectual origin of major ideas in the Declaration of Independence. (Marshall evidence of antecedent circumstances. Evaluate the influence of ideas.**
- (C) Appraise George Washington's military and political leadership.. (Assess the importance of the individual).**

**Standard 2: The impact of the American Revolution on politics, economy, and society.**

- (A) The student understands revolutionary government-making at National and state levels. (Examine the influence of ideas.)**

**Standard 3: The institutions and practices of government created during the Revolution and how they were revised between 1787 and 1815 to create the foundation of the American political system based on the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.**

- (D) The student understands the development of the first American Party system by comparing leaders and social and economic composition of each party. (Compare and contrast different sets of ideas.)**

**California Standards:**

**Standard 5.5: Students explain the causes of the American Revolution.**

- (1) Understand how political, religious, and economic ideas and interests brought about the Revolution.**
- (3) Understand the people....associated with the drafting and signing of the Declaration of Independence....**
- (4) Describe the views, lives, and impact of key individuals during this period.**

**Standard 5.6: Students understand the course and consequences of the**

### **American Revolution.**

- (1) Identify roles of the American leaders....and the allied Indian leaders...
- (3) Identify the different roles women played during the Revolution.

**Standard 5.7: Students describe the people and events associated with the development of the U.S. Constitution.....**

- (3) Understand the fundamental principles of American Constitutional democracy, including how the government derives its power from the people and the primacy of individual liberty.
- (5) Discuss the meaning of the American creed that calls on citizens to safeguard the liberty of individual Americans within a unified nation, to respect the rule of law, and to preserve the Constitution.

**Prior Content Knowledge and Skills:** This lesson should be done after the students have been introduced to an overview of the Revolutionary Era (from the end of the Seven Years War to the ratification of the Constitution) with one or two good videos. Many district or county media centers have excellent ones, such as The Making of a Revolution PBS (1 hr.), The Fight for Freedom (PBS,2003, 1 hr.), The American Revolution for Students, ( a series of five 23 minute videos made in 2002), The American Revolution (1997, 30 min.), The Revolutionary War, (1996, 30 min.).

**Timeline:** If possible, using a social studies, language arts block of ninety minutes for two days would give the students ample time for brainstorming and making charts, before sharing, and analyzing their findings. If less time is available, the brainstorming can be shortened and the charts can be prepared beforehand so all the students need do is fill in information.

**Day One: Scavenger Hunt for "The Greatest Generation"**

#### **Materials:**

Textbooks containing the chapters that cover the Seven Years War through the signing of the Constitution. Usually this amounts to three to four chapters consisting of three lessons each. Each lesson is usually four to five pages in length. (The teacher may wish to copy the lessons for each group so they can underline or highlight the information they want.)

Butcher paper, meter sticks, marking pens

#### **Introductory Activity:**

Refer students to the video(s) they previously watched on the Revolutionary Era. Have them brainstorm a list of people mentioned in

the video(s) for having key roles in the Revolutionary Era.....especially if they were presented in any way that could be interpreted as being "Great".

**Lesson Activity:**

Explain that leaders from the Revolutionary Era are sometimes called "The Greatest Generation" and that they are going to have a scavenger hunt in their textbook to search for people from "The Greatest Generation".

(Make sure they understand that the Revolutionary Era includes from just after the Seven Years War leading up to and through the Revolutionary War on through the formation of our government after the war. Refer to any material already covered on this subject.)

Post the butcher paper with the list of names brainstormed from the Revolutionary Era videos where it can easily be referred to. Make sure The students know they can add names from the text that weren't mentioned in the video if it seems the person is considered great by the textbook.

Have students work in teams of two or three students with one lesson to read per team. Each team will need a meter stick, pens, and a large sheet of paper to make a chart divided into three sections (1. name of person; 2. what they did; 3. why the team chose them), one lesson from the 3 chapter section. (Often these three chapters make up a complete unit in the text.)

**Task guidelines:**

Do a shared reading of the lesson watching for clues for and names of people who the students think are presented as great Revolutionary Era people. (If the students are using copies of the text they can underline or highlight as they read.)

As great people are found, their names, what they did, and why the team chose them should be listed on the large chart prepared beforehand. When the chart is finished, each team needs to plan how they will present it to the class the following day (or that day if time permits).

**Day Two: Profiling "The Greatest Generations".**

**Materials:**

- (1) Three to four teacher made charts for combined teams from the previous day to use in comparing/contrasting members of the "Greatest Generation".

The charts should have these column headings:  
Name, Ethnic Group, Gender, Age in 1776, Religion, Economic Status, Occupation(s), Slave Holder, Education, Residence (explain this means colony, territory, or foreign country they are from), Land Speculator, (explain that this has to do with their involvement in land companies that wanted to survey and sell Indian lands west of the Appalachians.)

- (2) A large U.S. map showing the colonies and territories between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mississippi River in 1776 should be projected from an overhead and traced onto a large sheet of butcher paper before this lesson begins. ( A good map can be found at <http://www.eduplace.com> titled Colonial America, 1776.)
- (3) A list of questions for each student prepared by the teacher to help the students analyze the results on their charts. (See Analytical Questions)

#### Lesson Activity:

After individual teams share their charts from the previous day, two or three teams should combine to put their information on the charts prepared by the teacher. The task of finding the necessary information on each great person can be divided up among the members of the group. Once information about the great people has been entered on the chart, the students will need to draw some conclusions about the information and report back to the whole class.

#### Analytical Questions prepared by teacher:

Quantative Comparisons: How many "great" people were white, English, Scotch, or Irish decent, other racial or ethnic groups, male, female, upper class, middle class, lower class, plantation owners, small farmers, merchants, lawyers, teachers, artisans, old, middle aged, young, classic education, self educated, uneducated, etc.? Where did most of "The Greatest Generation" come from? (These questions can be tallied, put into tables, etc. to analyze them more easily. The MAP should be used here to show where each great person resides. Students could also add their plantations if they have one, and whether or not they owned slaves by showing slave quarters. If they live in a city, the city should be placed on the map with the person's name put next to it. Any college or university mentioned as part of a great person's education should also be placed on this map.) Encyclopedias can be used to gather any information not provided by the texts or videos.

Inferring from Comparisons: What do many of the great people you found have in common? List some possible reasons for that.

Making Judgements: Are these great people a fair sample of all the people in the colonies and nearby territories during the Revolutionary

**Era? Why or why not? What people do you think aren't fairly represented? Why aren't they?**

To answer the questions above, student groups will need to brainstorm a list of the types of people who were living in the colonies and lands next to the colonies at the time of the revolution. To do this they will need to draw on any prior information from the videos, infer from information in the textbook lessons, and skim the table of contents of Ray Raphael's new book, Founding Myths, Stories That Hide Our Patriotic Past. Mr. Raphael also sites other chapters from his book in this chapter, "The Greatest Generation", that provide ideas for researching the cast of thousands that were involved in the Revolutionary Era: Indians and blacks, both those who fought for the Americans, and against them, and why; loyalists; other ethnic groups; women; poor farmers; and working class men and boys.

Here are some chapters that are helpful:

Chapter 4, The Shot Heard Round the World: Lexington and Concord  
(The average New England small farmer's involvement)

Chapter 10: Patriotic Slaves

Chapter 13: March of the American People (Native Americans)

His previous book, A People's History of the American Revolution  
(ISBN 1-56584-653-2)

Other sources:

The American Revolutionaries by Milton Meltzer (ISBN 0-690-04641-3)  
Voices of the American Revolution by Kendall Haven  
( ISBN 1563088568).

These books are found in most libraries and contain primary source material as well as excellent sources listed in their notes and bibliographies which can be used for student research suggested at the end of this lesson.

A video titled Heroes Hispanos from A&E (2001) tells in part how people of Hispanic descent aided the American Revolution.

The MAP will be used again here as students come up with different groups of people who were in the colonies and surrounding territories. They should place different groups in the geographic region where they are most concentrated. Others, who, like women, were found throughout the colonies and territories, could be shown with specific population symbols students create that will show their concentration in the different regions. (i.e. More women would be found in the east as opposed to the frontier.)

Conclusion:

When students have had time to analyze the data, the groups should share their findings. Bring them back to the theme: Great leaders cannot effectively lead without widespread popular support. Get them to see leaders not as the source of ideas, but the organizers of people who already have ideas and want them to be heard. Without the energetic citizens the "Greatest Generation" responded to, the leaders would have no one to do the many tasks it took to organize resistance, raise an army, win a war, populate a country, heal the sick, bury the dead, raise the food, build homes, businesses, ships---build an economy--build a country. John Adam's statement that the revolution had first existed in the minds of the people implies that there were many anon-ymous great people behind our glorious experiment with independence and democracy.

With that in mind, finish by having the students create a definition for great that is more inclusive than the one generally presented in videos and text-books. Ask students what they think people mean when they say someone is or was a great person. Brainstorm definitions for great and record them on a large sheet of butcher paper. Get them to identify any problems they have in coming up with one definition for great.

Have them identify some different types of greatness and how each type would be defined. Help them understand that each "type" of greatness may require a different definition, i.e. great athlete, great musician, great actor or actress, great writer, great speaker, great leader, etc. Include ideas of local or common greatness, such as great friend, great mechanic, great storyteller, etc. (The definitions they already brainstormed may fit some of these types of greatness, if not, they need to brainstorm enough definitions to get the idea that there isn't one solid definition for great and that many people we could call great by some definition often remain anonymous in history.

The results from their findings can be used as a springboard to research both the roles played by groups that aren't well represented by the "Greatest Generation" and members of the "Greatest Generation" itself.

Ideas for follow up:

After looking at the profile of the Greatest Generation as framers of the Constitution, it is important to see that popular rebellion by the poor farmers in the north (Shay's Rebellion), over the government's inability to stabilize the economy had much to do with compelling them to form a stronger federal government. The spirit of the revolution lived on amongst those who felt they were being dealt with unjustly--and has to this day. The framers realized if a strong federal government was to survive it had to deal fairly with the causes for rebellion or suffer the consequences. The video A Little Rebellion Now and Then (Churchill, 1986, available in many

Educational media centers) is an excellent resource to show how the rebellion of disenfranchised citizens forces those we end up calling "great" to act---to do great things, ie, the framing of the Constitution.

The Civil Rights Movement is another example of the will of the people forcing the government to act. Even the "Great" leaders of that movement such as Martin Luther King Jr., would not have forced the government to act without the hundreds of thousands of marchers willing to put them-selves in harms way to get the nation to see the injustices of segregation.)

Mr. Raphael's main theme, thoughts spurring revolutionary fervor belonged to the common citizens and were not merely the ideas of a few great and learned men, can be researched a variety of ways. One is by looking through government documents online to find the variety of declarations of independence that were issued by various colonial governments before the Continental Congress came up with THE Declaration of Independence that is all too often credited almost solely to Thomas Jefferson. A Jefferson quote included in Mr. Raphael's book in chapter six, "Jefferson's Declaration of Independence", will lead students to other conclusions. The quote is from the companion book to the PBS special on the American Revolution, Liberty! Speaking about the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson states that it contained "no new principles or new arguments, .....it was intended to be an expression of the American mind."

The idea of certain unalienable rights can be researched back through various rebellions against oppressive power throughout human history: The Puritan Revolution in England; Quaker opposition to the control of one's individual beliefs by government, along with their insistence that all human beings are equal—seen in their refusal to bow to nobility; peasants' revolts in England, France, Germany, and Spain popping up over several centuries from mistreatment and over taxing by their landlords; every heretical movements across all of Europe holding that Christian peoples, men or women, should be equal before God and be free to commune with God as they choose---people who were persecuted and burned at the stake rather than give up their beliefs; slave rebellions in the Roman Empire. These ideas of certain individual rights for humanity did not die when rebellions were put down, or heretics burned, but was passed on and on, generation to generation, travelling from country to country, finally ending up in our Anglo-American government, for by that time the English had a well developed idea of established rights for their citizens.

Most colonies and colonial cities had some sort of Bill of Rights. That's what made the colonists so mad. Rights they had under English law were being taken away from them. Once the colonists won the war, they meant to establish a government that couldn't take rights away, and for the most part,

**our government has extended rights, rather than take them away because the Constitution was conceived in part to be a protector of minority rights.**

**From the Indian perspective, the idea of personal freedom had always been here in most of the native tribal governments. That brings up another good topic of research: Freedom and rights in native tribal governments and the form tribal governments take. Why did many European captives prefer native life to life in European settlements, especially female captives? There are a number of journals available to give students a look into this aspect of history. Lois Lenski wrote a novel called Indian Captive (ISBN 0-06-446162-9) based on the true experiences of Mary Jemison. It's a good read for fifth graders from the point of view of a captive who chose to stay with the Seneca rather than return to European colonial society.**