

Whites of their Eyes Lesson Plan

Spring 2004

Topic:

The Battle of Bunker Hill

Theme:

Battles of the Revolutionary War were impersonal killings.

Standards:

5.6.1

Identify and map the major military battles, campaigns, and turning points of the Revolutionary War, the roles of the American and British leaders, and the Indian leaders' alliances on both sides.

5.6.4

Understand the personal impact and economic hardships of the war on families, problems of financing the war, wartime inflation, and laws against hoarding goods and materials and profiteering.

Timeline:

This lesson will take two to three days to complete depending on the length of the class periods.

Materials Needed:

You will need an overhead of an eye exam chart, period maps of Bunker Hill, these are both easily found on the internet. You will also need chart paper and pens, tape measure, and yardsticks or other objects to use as muskets with bayonets.

Prior Content Knowledge and Skills:

Students should have a basic understanding of the events that brought about the Revolutionary War. They should also have a geographic knowledge of the thirteen colonies and especially Massachusetts.

Introductory Hook:

Students will be shown an overhead projection of an eye exam chart out of focus and asked to read lines from it. A class discussion would follow concerning the difficulty to accurately see the out of focus chart. The teacher will then pose the question "Is the study of history like the out of focus eye chart, blurred over time and retelling?" The teacher will give some examples like George Washington's wooden teeth and his chopping down of the cherry tree. Students will be encouraged to share any examples they know of with the class.

Day One Introduction:

The teacher will tell the students that the Battle of Bunker shares that same problem of impaired visibility in the actual battle and in the retelling of the story. At this time the theme, Battle of the Revolutionary War were impersonal killings, should be introduced. Students will next examine period maps of Bunker Hill, Breeds Hill, and the surrounding peninsula. The teacher will lead

the students in a discussion on the best location to defend in a battle. The students will discern from their use of maps that this battle occurred in Massachusetts. The students will also engage in a discussion of period weapons and their effectiveness. Emphasis will be placed on muskets without rifling, cannons, and bayonets.

Day One Activity Two:

The teacher will pose the question, What did Israel Putnam mean when he issued the command: “Don’t fire till you see the whites of their eyes!” As the students respond the teacher will record their responses on chart paper to be posted in the room and saved to reinforce a question to be posed at the culmination of day two.

Day Two Activity One:

The students will look at the text of three primary documents of the Battle of Bunker Hill. They can be found in chapter nine, page four of Whites of their Eyes in Ray Raphael’s book. The first quote from John Chester who stated the cannon shot “buzzed around us like hail” and “were incessantly whistling by us.” Secondly Peter Brown wrote, “From Boston and from ships the British were firing and throwing bombs, keeping us down till they got almost around us.” The last document is from William Prescott who complained of the “very heavy cannonading and bombardment” and the “very warm fire from the enemy’s artillery,” which the patriots had to endure while working on their fortifications.

The teacher will pose the following questions, “Does this sound like hand- to- hand battle?” Then the teacher will list the answers of the students on the board in one of two categories, yes it does and no it does not. After compiling the lists the students should realize that this battle was mainly fought at an impersonal distance. The second question, “ Do you think the patriots could see the whites of their enemy’s eyes?”

Day Two Activity Two

To further test the theory of waiting to fire until you could see the whites of your enemy’s eyes the teacher will conduct an experiment with the students. on the school’s dusty baseball field students will be divided into two opposing armies. They will be asked to step toward one another, creating as much dust as possible until they can see the whites of the others eyes. When they say they can other armies eyes the teacher will validate their claim. Then the distance will be measured and recorded. This will be repeated to get four other measurements. The students will be asked to calculate the mean, average, of the findings.

Then the students will be shown the procedure for loading a musket by the teacher. Then one student will be asked to time the teacher as he/she loads the musket. This will be done three times and the mean will be calculated.

Finally two students will be placed apart by the distance of the class average of the whites of their eyes part of the experiment with their yardstick muskets. The patriot will fire her musket and miss and then reload while the enemy continues to advance. The students will quickly understand that it would not have been possible to stay alive, let alone win a battle using this

strategy. Give other students an opportunity to participate in the experiment, as time will permit.

Day Two Assessment

Students will be asked to write a summary of the days' experiment and an essay supporting one of two historical views of Israel Putnam's command to his men "Don't shoot till you see the whites of their eyes."

1. This battle was fought in hand to hand combat.
2. This was an impersonal battle with most men being killed from great distances.

Day Two Alternate Assessment

Whites of their Eyes Quiz

Name _____

Date _____

1. What state did the Battle of Bunker Hill occur in? _____

2. What were the two armies involved in the Battle of Bunker Hill? _____

3. Which army suffered the most losses of human life? _____

4. Name two types of weapons used in the Battle of Bunker Hill. _____

5. The Battle of Bunker Hill was part of which war?

___ Civil War

___ Revolutionary War

___ French and Indian War

6. What is the geographic term for the land form Bunker Hill is located on?

___ isthmus

___ island

___ peninsula

7. Who gave the command “Don’t shoot till you see the whites of their eyes”?

___ Israel Putnam

___ George Washington

___ Patrick Henry

8. Why was the command “Don’t shoot till you see the whites of their eyes” given.?

9. How has warfare changed today from revolutionay times?

10. In your was this a battle of impersonal killings or a battle of hand to hand combat?
