

Strengths Versus Weaknesses/American Versus British

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I. Lesson Summary

Summary

This lesson plan will concentrate on strengths and weaknesses exhibited by the opposing forces during the Revolutionary War. While exposing the students to the historical implications of these material/motivational differences, the activities associated will help to build/perfect their individual analytical skills, reading skills, and their persuasive writing skills.

Objectives

The activities utilized within this lesson relate to the following Florida Sunshine State Standards: SSA 1.3.1; SSA 2.3.2; SSA 2.3.6; SSA 4.3.2; and SSB 1.3.2 for the Social Studies components. This lesson also incorporates numerous elements of Language Arts: LAB 1.3.1; LAB 2.3.1; LAB 2.3.3; and LAD 2.3.3. The lesson also connects to the Polk County Curriculum Maps for the 8th Grade Social Studies unit of the American Revolution.

U.S. History Event or Era

This lesson plan spotlights the time period of The Revolutionary War from 1775-1783.

Grade Level

Although the individual teacher may adjust this lesson to their student levels or grades taught, I have created this lesson with an 8th grade class in mind.

Materials Needed

The materials needed for this assignment/lesson will vary according to the wishes of the individual teacher. First, the teacher will need to locate a good, overall reading resource that highlights the contrasting strengths and weaknesses between the British and Patriot forces during the Revolutionary War. I utilized the "**History Alive! The United States**" textbook published by Teachers' Curriculum Institute from Palo Alto, CA (visual representation on page 86, and reading sections on pages 88-89). Secondly, the teacher may want to create a worksheet representing four columns of the opposing armies and strengths/weaknesses (as for myself, I allowed my students to create their own "Compare and Contrast" guides using their own paper).

*Another suggestion; the classroom teacher may want to use an overhead example of a Compare/Contrast chart if the students have not utilized this type of activity for some time.

Lesson Time

This lesson required two 45-minute periods to complete quality work. At the discretion of the teacher, some students were allowed more time to complete the assignment as homework.

II. Lesson Procedures

Procedures:

- 1.) *If necessary*, the teacher should introduce the concept of “Compare and Contrast” to rejuvenate student comprehension. Possibly use a pop culture (sports/movies/celebrities) theme and so forth that may be familiar to many of your students.
- 2.) Discuss the possible difficulties of the life of a soldier during a war.
- 3.) As a class discuss the similarities/differences visibly noticeable based upon the contrasting pictures on page 86 of the “**History Alive! The United States**” textbook.
- 4.) Initiate the reading assignment, pages 88-89 of the “**History Alive! The United States**” textbook, highlighting American strengths/weaknesses and the British strengths/weaknesses. Possibly have student volunteers read the first two or three paragraphs before allowing the students to read individually.
- 5.) **Assignment #1:** Students will create a chart listing “American Strengths” and “American Weaknesses” along with “British Strengths” and “British Weaknesses,” four columns in all. *A fifth column could be utilized, possibly focusing on the difficulties faced by soldiers during wartime conditions. It may be useful to designate the number of facts expected for each column as some resources may contain different information.* I personally found this to be very helpful to provide my students with an established level of expectation for the completion of this reading analysis assignment. Hopefully, the assignment can be completed in the allotted time of one 45-minute class period.
- 6.) On the second day of the activity, the students will plan and write a persuasive essay in the form of a personal letter written in the time period of study.
- 7.) **Assignment #2:** This writing activity will require the students to utilize their individually prepared charts to write a persuasive letter to their best friend (an imaginary friend from the Revolutionary War time period). The student writer is trying to convince or persuade his/her best friend not to join the American Patriot army by pointing out the American weaknesses and the supposed British strengths. The students should first plan or plot out their points of argument and then write a heartfelt persuasive letter as instructed to convince their best friend of the supposed foolishness of joining the Patriot Army. They should use the information from the associated reading and they may subsidize this information with tales from the suffering at Valley Forge, the terrible conditions facing the sick and wounded soldiers or even the tales of some of the early battles of the Revolutionary War. **It may be helpful to point out to the students that this writing assignment, to be persuasive, should focus on the American Weaknesses and the British Strengths, as they are trying to convince their best friend not to join the American forces.**

III. Activities

- 1.) Teacher introduction to the topic of "Compare and Contrast" (if necessary). This could even be done the day before as a preview of the upcoming activities.
- 2.) Brief class discussion concerning the difficulties of life as a soldier during a war, and the contrasting pictures of British soldiers and Patriot soldiers (page 86 of the "**History Alive!**" text or from another source of the teacher's choosing). In the interest of time constraints, this discussion should be kept relatively short and concise.
- 3.) Reading from pages 88-89 of the "**History Alive! The United States**" will begin first as a class and then the students will continue individually, during which time they will create their charts (Assignment #1) of the Strengths and Weaknesses between the British and American armies.
- 4.) On the second day the students are to plan their persuasive essay/letter and compose a heartfelt (even if fictional) and fact-filled letter to convince/persuade their friend not to join the American Patriot forces.
- 5.) FCAT Skills include:
 - A. Reading Comprehension/Interpretation;
 - B. Reading Analysis;
 - C. Compare and Contrast Research and Response;
 - D. Planning of a Persuasive Essay, and;
 - E. Persuasive Essay Writing
- 6.) No worksheet handout has been created for this assignment, as the creation of a comparison/contrast chart by the students themselves is a simple enough endeavor. I had my students create two columns, front and back, on a sheet of notebook paper. They then headed the columns simply enough; "British Strengths" and "British Weaknesses," as well as "American Strengths" and "American Weaknesses."
- 7.) **A possible counterpoint assignment could be a return letter from the friend who wants to join the Patriot Army pointing out the reasons for optimism in the Patriot cause.**

IV. Assessment

- 1.) For the first assignment, the Comparison/Contrast chart, I simply graded the students based on whether they located and provided the specified number of informative facts based on the reading, and if the actual facts applied to the designated column for accuracy of Reading Comprehension. **I graded this assignment as a 25-point class assignment.**
- 2.) The Persuasive Writing Assignment was graded on a larger scale. First, did the student properly pre-plan their letter of persuasion? Second, was the persuasive letter equal to the assigned 4-5 paragraphs in length? Thirdly, did the students utilize acquired knowledge from the assigned reading to write a convincing, persuasive letter? The final consideration in grading the letter was whether the student was able to adequately prepare a cohesive, comprehensive letter that stayed on topic. **The grading of this Writing Assignment will of course vary from teacher to teacher, but I graded it on a 100 point scale, equivalent to a test grade.**

V. Resources

- The resources utilized for the creation of this lesson plan consist simply of the "**History Alive! The United States**" middle school textbook.
- Visual pictures include the contrasting pictures on page 86, and there are also contrasting pictures of two Revolutionary War soldiers (one American and one British) on the pages 88-89 of "**History Alive! The United States**".
- Reading materials consisted of pages 88-89 of the "**History Alive! The United States**" textbook.
- Possible suggestions for alternate material would include associated web pages or even class notes created by the classroom teacher.