



#8905

# SOCIAL CLASS IN REVOLUTIONARY AMERICA

Grade Levels: 7-13+

19 minutes

NEW DIMENSION MEDIA 1997

## DESCRIPTION

The availability of land gave American colonists more self-determination than Europeans had, but there were still social class divisions. Outlines the qualities and lifestyles of the gentlemen/gentry, common, working people, and slaves during the mid-1700s in colonial America. However, because the classes mingled at social, political, and religious events and held common values, they were able to join together, overcome differences, and fight for independence.

## ACADEMIC STANDARDS

### Subject Area: United States History

- ◆ Standard: Understands the impact of the American Revolution on politics, economy, and society
  - Benchmark: Understands the social, political, and economic effects of the American revolutionary victory on different groups
  - Benchmark: Understands how the ideals of the American Revolution influenced the goals of various groups of people during and after the war



## INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To describe major qualities, similarities and differences of the various classes that existed in revolutionary America.
2. To explain the common beliefs that allowed the colonists from all social ranks to work together in protest and rebellion against British rule and for American independence.

## VOCABULARY

1. aristocracy
2. debtor's prison
3. gentry
4. indentured servant
5. royalty
6. slavery
7. Tories



## BEFORE SHOWING

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1. Tell the population of America in the 1770s and the separate populations of the four major cities: New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Charleston, SC. Make comparisons in a unit such as percentages, fractions.
2. On a map, show the normally accepted boundaries of the colonies and the location of each of the cities. Explain that the land in between was sparsely settled.
3. Define the vocabulary words from the list.

## AFTER SHOWING

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### Discussion Items and Questions

1. Name the main industry or business of each of the four major cities of revolutionary America. Name the industry or business that occurred in the remaining areas of the colonies.
2. What class divisions existed in revolutionary America? What occupations did the well-to-do follow? What occupations were available to the more common people?
3. Name the qualities of a gentleman as described in the video. Compare it to the qualities named for the common person or farmer.
4. What was seen as the role of the gentry in society? What was seen as the role of the common people? How did these two groups feel about each other? In what areas did the two classes come together?
5. What economic or legal fact gave common America colonists an advantage over their counterparts in England or Europe? What was unique about America that allowed any person to own land?
6. What beliefs drew the gentry and the common people together to protest against British rule? What helped spread these beliefs? Why do you suppose each group held these beliefs?



### Applications and Activities

1. Research the history of any one of those three groups (slaves, Native Americans, and women) from the 1770s to contemporary times. Note when, or if, the particular group achieved equality, parity or acceptance in general society. If the group has not yet achieved equality, parity or acceptance, have the student note changes that have occurred, and explain why.
2. Describe the role of a gentleman in contemporary society.
3. Research the beliefs of Sam Adams and John Dickinson and how they contributed to the American Revolution.

## SUMMARY

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Using dramatic reenactments and voice-over narration, this presentation describes the social classes existing in revolutionary America circa 1770. In detail, it outlines the

qualities and lifestyles of each class: the gentry, the common people, and the slave. It explains how the key concepts of land ownership and higher wages made the common class in America a very different entity from its counterpart in England and Europe. In showing how the classes intermingled at times in social and religious events and how the classes held similar beliefs, this presentation helps the student understand how the colonists were able to join together and fight for independence in the new land.

## RELATED RESOURCES

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### Captioned Media Program

- Breaking the Colonial Ties: Declaration of Independence #3014
- Countdown to Independence: Causes of the American Revolution #3114
- Values in Revolutionary America #8940

### World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and “kid-safe” sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **A HYPERTEXT ON AMERICAN HISTORY**

<http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/index.html>

Provides an outline of American history, an index to primary sources, essays, biographies, and presidents.

- **AMERICAN REVOLUTION NAVIGATION TOOLS**

<http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/k12/history/aha/arnav.html>

Provides a keyword search, subject search, time line of the American Revolutionary War, and regional maps of American Revolutionary War battles.

- **AMERICA'S FREEDOM DOCUMENTS**

<http://earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/freedom/index.html>

The Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and the Constitution are shown as they first appeared to the public at that time.