James Hutchinson - Revolutionary Quaker

Introduction

James Hutchinson was a surgeon and Quaker living in Philadelphia during the American Revolution. From 1778-1784, he served as Surgeon General of Pennsylvania. He treated soldiers injured at the Battle of Germantown in 1777 and helped with the Smallpox inoculation of 3,000 Continental soldiers at Valley Forge in the winter of 1777-78. He was disowned by the Society of Friends in 1779 for his involvement in the American Revolution. He died as a result of working with victims of the Yellow Fever epidemic in 1793.

Israel Pemberton was known as “King of the Quakers”. He was committed to both opposing the Stamp Act and his membership in the Quaker community. Certain individuals in Philadelphia at the time of the Revolution believed that because Quakers, due to their beliefs in pacifism, were not participating in the war they must have been aiding the British. As a result, he and 19 others were exiled to Virginia during the American Revolution.

Objective

This lesson plan will examine a letter written by James Hutchinson to his uncle Israel Pemberton. Students will also look at the Journals of the Confederation Congress which legislated the removal of Quakers to Virginia. Through analysis of these documents students will gain an understanding of the impact that the American Revolution had on the lives of Philadelphians living in the city at that time. Students will think about religious freedoms during this time period and unpack the unintended consequences of having an army occupy one's region and property.

Hook Activity

1. Journal Activity: The teacher will write the word “quaker” on the board and students will record everything that comes to mind when they hear the word and include all previous knowledge of quakers as well. A whole class discussion will then take place.

2. Students will then watch a short video clip providing an overview of the quakers.
   
   🎥 Quakers

3. Students will watch the explainer video discussing The Revolutionary City followed by the tutorial on how to navigate the portal.

Essential Question

What impact did the American Revolution have on citizens of Philadelphia?
Procedure

1. Whole group activity: Teachers will read through short bios of both Hutchinson and Pemberton with students so they will have a better understanding of who these men were. Links to the bios are here:

   Students will also be guided through finding the primary source document that will be used in this lesson by completing the following steps:
   1. Go to https://therevolutionarycity.org/
   2. In search bar type “James Hutchinson to Israel Pemberton”
   3. Scroll down to last entry on page 1 of results titled “Hutchinson, James to Israel Pemberton, 1777 September 15, page 3”

2. Small group activity: Students will now work in small groups to transcribe the letter and complete the Document Analysis Guided Questions which will be provided.

3. Whole group activity: Teacher will now debrief with students on major themes within the letter that may include the following topics: habeas corpus, army encampment, Battles of Brandywine and Germantown.

4. Small group activity: After the discussion on habeas corpus and the reason why Israel Pemberton would have required it, students will analyze the Journals of the Continental Congress which shows the origins of the decision to exile the group of Quakers to Virginia. A Document Analysis worksheet will be provided. Here is a link to the journal. Students should read pgs. 694-95. https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=lljc&fileName=008/lljc008.db&recNum=320&itemLink=r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DOCLD+@lit(jc00885)):%230080322&linkText=1

5. Whole group activity: Debrief on the context of the exile of Quakers to Virginia.

Closing/Assessment

Students will write about the different ways in which the letter depicts an impact that the American Revolution had on ordinary Philadelphians. They will be asked to give their opinion as to whether they agree or disagree with the decisions made by the Continental Army as well as the Continental Congress.
Transcript of Letter from James Hutchinson to Israel Pemberton

Philadelphia September 15th, 1777

Dear Uncle,

We were all made happy this morning by the arrival of Levi Hollingsworth who informed us of your success in obtaining a Habeus Corpus and hope that we shall soon have the pleasure of seeing you again with your family and friends.

I should have wrote thee by several opportunities, but the army being encamped at and near Germantown made it necessary for me to go up there; thy house was General Sullivan’s headquarters. I remained there with him till yesterday when the army crossed the Schuylkill and returned to Philadelphia. Thy house, garden, and orchard have not sustained any damage but about 150 panels of thy fence is destroyed and burnt. Most of the neighbors shared the same and many of them a much worse fate, particularly G. Bensel, several cornfields are entirely destroyed.

Aunt, little Molly, Polly Plesants with her children are well and more composed than could be expected considering yours and their situations. Numbers of the inhabitants are removing from the city, but the confusion and tumult is much less that I could have supposed considering the very critical situation of affairs. I must however refer thee to the bearer for news, as accounts and reports are too various and different that nothing could be said with certainty.

We all sincerely sympathize with you in your trials and anxiously hope that you may be supported through them by Divine power. Remember one to all thy fellow prisoners particularly to James and John Pemberton and Samuel Pleasants. I flatter myself we shall soon hear of your being discharged with honour and your enemies put to confession; however whatever may be thy lot, I shall always with a heart filled with gratitude for the numberless marks of regard and favours received from thee remain dear Uncle thy most affectionate kinsman

James Hutchinson
Document Analysis Guided Questions

James Hutchinson to Israel Pemberton 9/15/1777

1. Within your group transcribe the letter and discuss its meaning.

2. What is a Habeus Corpus? Why do you think Pemberton may have required one?

3. Why do you think the Continental Army would have been encamped at Hutchinson’s residence near Germantown? (Hint: Consider the date in the overall context of the American Revolution)

4. What damage was caused by the army to Hutchinson’s farm as well as his neighbors?

5. Why would inhabitants of Philadelphia remove themselves from the city and what does Hutchinson mean when he writes “critical state of affairs”?

Journals of the Continental Congress

1. What does Congress mean to say when it writes that Quakers are “disaffected to the American cause”?

2. What does Congress fear that the Quakers may do?

3. What source does Congress use to validate their fear and opinions of the Quakers in Philadelphia? Do they have any evidence of Quakers aiding the British?

4. What does Congress resolve to do to the Quakers?