

Session Notes

American Revolution and American People: A Comparative Inquiry

March 2, 2002: Liberty with Neil Salisbury and Bob Handsbury.

Discussion: What does Liberty mean? –Early 21st century definition.

- Freedom- considering 9/11- confusion of what is or isn't what we are.
- Individual Choice
- Freedom to choose without impairing others
- Pursuit of goals
- Responsibility of self
- Freedom to disagree
- Rule of law and due process

To boil this down- look at the above as cause and effect or management & content. People have an assumption of the meaning, however, it means different to different people at different times. Liberty is not an absolute and is relative to time and place.

{Side Note: A student asked in class one day: "What would it be like if the founding fathers could take a field trip to America today? What would they think? When would we take them? Who would they talk to? How much would they miss if it were only for a day?}

Group work: class was split up into 4 group- each representing one person from the readings and discussion. "What liberty means to me?"

Groups: Caesar Sarter- African American petitioner from Boston

Judith Sargent Murray-Women's Rights activist

Joseph Bryant- Mohawk, Iroquois Political leader

William Manning- Farmer from Billerica, MA- thought deeply about issues of the time and published pamphlets to small audience.

Discussion evolved with a role-play of these individuals. The setting was a forum, were these people are meeting to talk with Thomas Jefferson (played by Neal) to discuss the Declaration of Independence and how it is an unfair statement that does not apply to them. The role-play became intense and very fun.

British Perspectives on Liberty with Christine Cooper, Umass (portions of this lecture was missed)

In the movement these events take place before the American Revolution:

British ideas of Liberty- "Rule Britannia" by James Thompson (1700-1748)

Tree- Symbol of Oak = strong Tree- Family tree?

The liberty Tree- Jefferson-"Nourish the tree of Liberty"; "Chop the diseased portions of the Liberty tree".

"Britains never will be slaves"

Freedom from being imposed by anyone and freedom to impose on others.

Irony of British to say you can be free if you fight British. The British want the Colonies to keep accepting slaves. Freedom of the few.

Slaves breathe the free air of Britain.

Lots of hypocrisy at work in British idea of Liberty. British are trying to enslave the colonies. Poor man education schools in 1700's pictorial trying to teach those who can't read the principles of the laws in England.

In the Classroom with Bob Handsbury

Bob began with a clip of the movie "Revolution" with Al Pacino. The scene was NYC rioting about getting rid of British. The streets were depicted as dirty, chaos, smashing of windows. The elite sees the people as scum. To relate to an earlier conversation today- the elite don't want the "rif raf" to have power because it would result in chaos like that in the movie.

Propaganda- people being manipulated by "the sons on liberty". The movie also depicted many men being **forced** to join the army for the revolution rather than volunteering.

Resources for the Classroom

Films:

"Revolution" available at Amazon.com for \$9.95

"April Morning"- Hallmark hall of fame (Disney) {Before I show the film I tell the kids that this is not entertainment it is educational. The danger of movies is that we get away from reading.

"Lexington Green"- Used for 5th and HS.

Books:

"Minute man and His World"- 6th chapter

"Winter Hero"- Set in Amherst

"Cole Mountain"

Web: PBS "Liberty"- A 7 part series.