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# The American Revolution: Experiences of Rebellion



THE  
CHOICES  
PROGRAM  
BROWN UNIVERSITY

## The Choices Program

[www.choices.edu](http://www.choices.edu)

The Choices Program is a program of the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs and the School of Professional Studies at Brown University. Choices was established to help citizens think constructively about foreign policy issues, to improve participatory citizenship skills, and to encourage public judgement on policy issues.

The Choices Program develops curricula on current and historical international issues and offers workshops, institutes, and in-service programs for high school teachers. Course materials place special emphasis on the importance of educating students in their participatory role as citizens.

Focusing on three main areas—development, security, and governance—the Watson Institute is a community of scholars whose policy-relevant research aims to help us understand and address the world's great challenges. Its mission is to promote a just and peaceful world through research, teaching, and public engagement.



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*The American Revolution:  
Experiences of Rebellion*

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# The American Revolution: Experiences of Rebellion

## Teacher Resource Book



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# Art History and the American Revolution

## Objectives:

**Students will:** Analyze a print's portrayal of patriot rebellion.

Explore how characters, symbols, labels, and marketing are used in art.

Consider how a piece of art can provide insight into different historical perspectives.

## Required Reading:

Students should have read Part II in the student text and completed “Study Guide—Part II” (TRB 16-17) or “Advanced Study Guide—Part II” (TRB 18).

## Handouts:

“Tarring & Feathering” (TRB-30)

“Analyzing the Print” (TRB 31-32)

“Later Version of the Print” (TRB-33)

A slideshow is available to project in your classroom at <<http://www.choices.edu/revolutionmaterials>>

## Videos:

Short, free videos to accompany this lesson are available at <<http://www.choices.edu/revolutionmaterials>>.

## In the Classroom:

**1. Focus Question**—Write the question “What happened in 1774?” on the board. Invite students to recall major events from the reading. You may wish to ask them how these events were influenced by what happened in years prior to 1774. Remind students that, at this time, there was not a widespread desire among the colonists for independence. What motivated the colonists to rebel?

**2. Analysis**—Distribute “Tarring & Feathering” and “Analyzing the Print” to students. The image, “Tarring & Feathering” (also known as “The Bostonian’s Paying the Excise-Man”), was a print sold by publishers Sayer and Bennett in 1774 and for many years afterwards.

Tell students that excise is another word for tax. Have students answer the questions about the print on the worksheet. This can be done as a class, in groups, or as individuals.

**3. Speculating about the Print**—What struck students about the print? How does it depict the colonists? What labels and symbols do they see? What might these represent? Who do they think would buy this print and why?

Explain to the class that the publishers reproduced this print so many times that the plate used to print it was damaged. (You may wish to show or distribute “Later Version of the Print” and invite students to observe how much of the detail was lost.) What does this imply about the sales of the print? About people’s views of it? Does this information make them reconsider their answers to question 4? Inform students that the print was published in London. Is this surprising or expected? Considering that it was published in England, are there any elements that are unexpected?

Show the video “Why are historical objects and art important for understanding the American Revolution?” by Amy Torbert. Ask students how they think “Tarring & Feathering” might be used to better understand the events leading up to the American Revolution. What other kinds of objects do they think could be used to learn more about the Revolution?

## Extra Challenge:

Students could research art and historical objects related to the American Revolution and curate a digital exhibit. The video by Ian Alden Russell, “How do you choose art for an exhibit?” can provide guidance.

## Homework:

Students should read “The People in the Colonies Decide Their Future” in the student text.

## Tarring & Feathering



National Gallery of Art. Paul Mellon Collection. 1985. 64.165.

## Analyzing the Print

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1. **Characters:** *Some artists use exaggerated depictions of people in their work.*

a. Describe two of the people in the print. For example, you may include descriptions of their facial expressions, body language, or clothing. Are they Englishmen or colonists?

b. Describe the actions taking place in the print.

2. **Symbols:** *Artists use simple objects to represent or symbolize larger ideas or concepts in their art.*

a. Describe two places in the print in which tea is shown.

b. What do you think tea symbolizes in the print? (It may be useful to refer to events from the reading.)

3. **Labels:** *Artists use labels to identify or name certain things in their work so that it is apparent what the things represent.*

a. How has the tree been labeled in the print?

b. Why do you think the artist chose to use this label?

c. Do you think the label aligns or contrasts with the actions depicted in this scene?

4. **Marketing:** *Prints like “Tarring & Feathering” were produced to be sold. Because of this, commercial prints often tell us more about the people who buy them than the artists who create them. In fact, historians do not know for certain who the artist of “Tarring & Feathering” is, although the print was sold widely for many years.*

a. What might have been the political viewpoint, nationality, ethnicity, or other characteristics of a person who bought this print? Explain your reasoning.

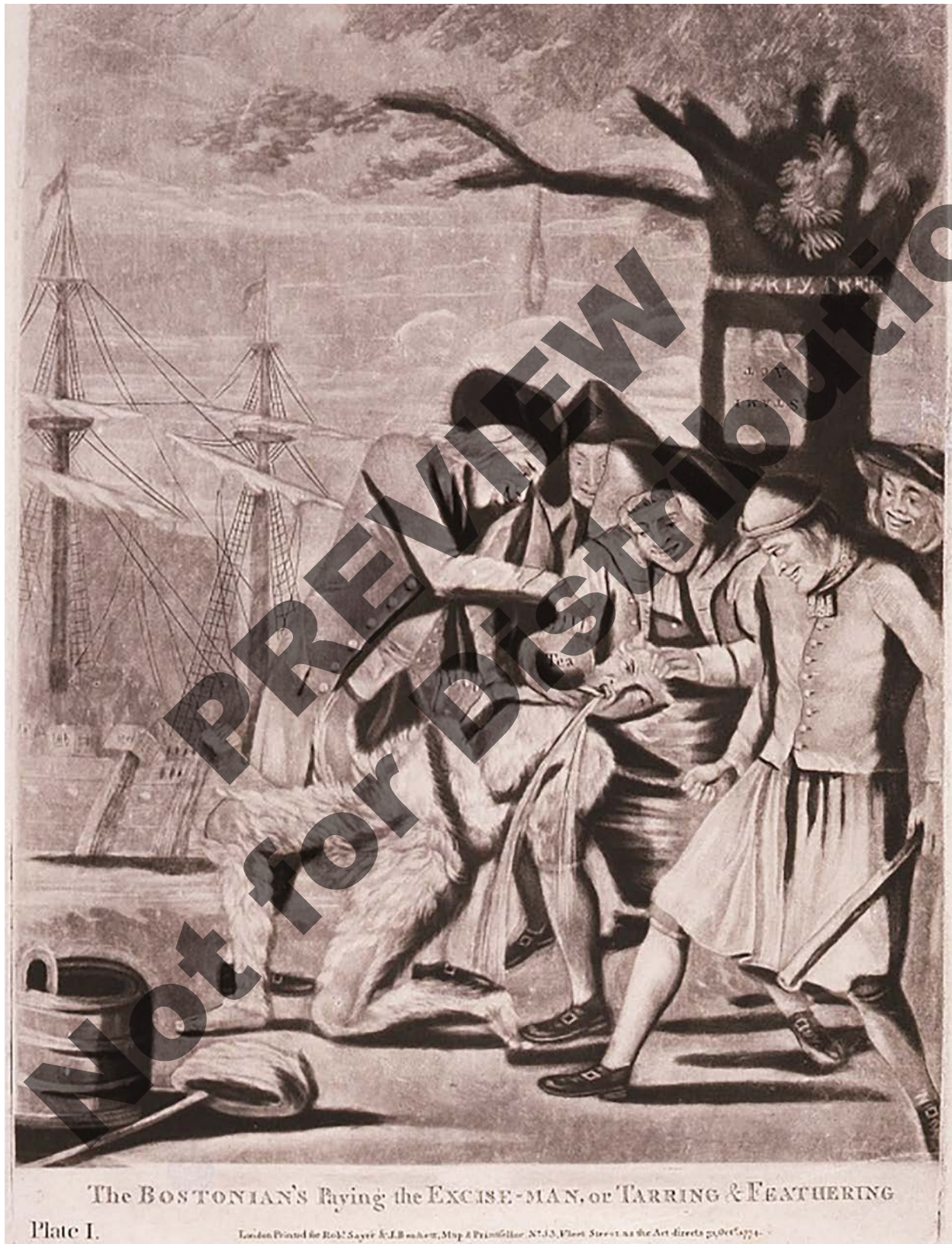
b. How do you think the buyer of this print would interpret the portrayal of the colonists at the front of the picture?

c. How do you think the buyer of this print would interpret the portrayal of the colonists on the ship?

d. How do you think the buyer of this print would interpret the portrayal of the person being tarred and feathered in this picture?



## Later Version of the Print



Library of Congress. LC-USZC4-14078.



# Prepare Students for College, Career, and Civic Life

Choices' inquiry-based approach to real-world issues promotes the skills required by the C3 Framework.



## Critical Thinking

Guided by compelling questions, students examine historical context, analyze case studies, consider contrasting policy options, and explore the underlying values and interests that drive different perspectives.



## Textual Analysis

Students examine primary and secondary sources and evaluate evidence to understand multiple perspectives on complex international issues.



## Creativity and Innovation

Students form original ideas and express them creatively through writing, drawing, and role play.



## Communication

Students construct, present, and critique arguments using written, oral, and digital communication.



## Collaboration

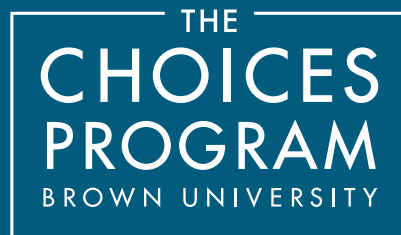
Students engage in deliberative discussions, build on each other's ideas, formulate persuasive arguments, and express their own views.

## The American Revolution: Experiences of Rebellion

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*The American Revolution: Experiences of Rebellion* draws students into the promise and the uncertainty that characterized British North America in the eighteenth century. Considering the perspectives of various stakeholders—English colonial men and women, enslaved Africans, and native peoples—students explore the complex factors that led to rebellion, war, and, ultimately, the independence of the United States.

*The American Revolution: Experiences of Rebellion* is part of a continuing series on current and historical international issues published by the Choices Program at Brown University. Choices materials place special emphasis on the importance of educating students in their participatory role as citizens.



*Explore the Past...Shape the Future*  
History and Current Issues for the Classroom