

Name: _____

Date: _____

Primary & Secondary Sources of the American Revolution

SOURCE #1

Give Me Liberty Or Give Me Death (March 23, 1775) (Excerpt)

By- Patrick Henry

Historical Context

Patrick Henry gave this famous speech to a crowd in Virginia, urging the American colonists to risk their lives, if necessary, to gain independence from British rule. There was not an official transcriber in the audience recording each word, but enough notes were kept to offer this account of his history- altering message.

Excerpt

No man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as abilities, of the very worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the House. But different men often see the same subject in different lights; and, therefore, I hope it will not be thought disrespectful to those gentlemen if, entertaining as I do opinions of a character very opposite to theirs, I shall speak forth my sentiments freely and without reserve. This is no time for ceremony. The question before the House is one of awful moment to this country. For my own part, I consider it as nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery; and in proportion to the magnitude of the subject ought to be the freedom of the debate. It is only in this way that we can hope to arrive at truth, and fulfill the great responsibility which we hold to God and our country ...

Mr. President, it is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth, and listen to the song of that siren till she transforms us into beasts. Is this the part of wise men, engaged in a great and arduous struggle for liberty? Are we disposed to be of the number of those who, having eyes, see not, and, having ears, hear not, the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation? For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst, and to provide for it.

I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past. And judging by the past, I wish to know what there has been in the conduct of the British ministry for the last ten years to justify those hopes with which gentlemen have been pleased to solace themselves and the House. Is it that insidious smile with which our petition has been lately received? Trust it not, sir; it will prove a snare to your feet. Suffer not yourselves to be betrayed with a kiss. Ask yourselves how this gracious reception of our petition comports with those warlike preparations which cover our waters and darken our land. Are fleets and armies necessary to a work of love and reconciliation? Have we shown ourselves so unwilling to be reconciled that force must be called in to win back our love? Let us not deceive ourselves, sir. These are the implements of war and subjugation; the last arguments to which kings resort. I ask gentlemen, sir, what means this martial array, if its purpose be not to force us to submission? Can gentlemen assign any other possible motive for it? Has Great Britain any enemy, in this quarter of the world, to call for all this accumulation of navies and armies? No, sir, she has none. They are meant for us: they can be meant for no other. They are sent

over to bind and rivet upon us those chains which the British ministry have been so long forging. And what have we to oppose to them? Shall we try argument? Sir, we have been trying that for the last ten years. Have we anything new to offer upon the subject? Nothing. We have held the subject up in every light of which it is capable; but it has been all in vain. Shall we resort to entreaty and humble supplication? What terms shall we find which have not been already exhausted? Let us not, I beseech you, sir, deceive ourselves. Sir, we have done everything that could be done to avert the storm which is now coming on. We have petitioned; we have remonstrated; we have supplicated; we have prostrated ourselves before the throne, and have implored its interposition to arrest the tyrannical hands of the ministry and Parliament. Our petitions have been slighted; our remonstrances have produced additional violence and insult; our supplications have been disregarded; and we have been spurned, with contempt, from the foot of the throne! In vain, after these things, may we indulge the fond hope of peace and reconciliation. There is no longer any room for hope. If we wish to be free-- if we mean to preserve inviolate those inestimable privileges for which we have been so long contending--if we mean not basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained--we must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to the God of hosts is all that is left us!

They tell us, sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance by lying supinely on our backs and hugging the delusive phantom of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot? Sir, we are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power. The millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave ... There is no retreat but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged! Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston! The war is inevitable--and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come.

It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace--but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. What emotions come across in the speech? Which passages convey particularly powerful messages?
2. According to Henry, what is the likely reason that Britain is sending fleets and armies to America's shores?
3. Site examples of Henry's use of rhetorical questions in the speech? Are they effective?
4. Why do you think this speech is so often quoted? What is memorable about it?

SOURCE #2

Primary Source Analysis: The Female Combatants, 1776



The Female Combatants, 1776 Britain is symbolized as a lady of fashion her rebellious daughter, America, as an Indian princess. Their shields of Obedience and Liberty seem mutually exclusive standards.

1. Why do you think that America is portrayed as an Indian princess?
2. How does this cartoon illustrate the degree of aristocracy and hierarchy within the colonies?
3. Based on the captions, what is the relationship between the colonies and Britain depicted in this cartoon?

SOURCE #3

A British view of rebellious Boston, 1774

A Spotlight on a Primary Source by Philip Dawe



"The Bostonian's Paying the Excise-man, or Tarring & Feathering," Philip Dawe, London, October 31, 1774. (Gilder Lehrman Collection)

In the years leading up to the American Revolution, both the British and the colonists used broadsides to influence public opinion. This broadside, "The Bostonian's Paying the Excise-man, or Tarring & Feathering," printed in London in 1774, is a British depiction of the Bostonians' treatment of a British customs officer, John Malcom.

In Boston in January 1774, John Malcom argued with Bostonian George Hewes over Malcom's rough treatment of a boy in the street. Malcom struck Hewes with his cane and fled the scene. Word of the assault spread, and Bostonians congregated at Malcom's home, eventually dragging him outside. He was thrown into a cart and driven through the city streets. The crowd had Malcom stripped and covered first with tar and then feathers, giving him a "modern jacket." The riotous parade continued through the city, stopping periodically to demand Malcom renounce British authority, which he refused to do. The mob drove on past the Liberty Tree, where they

threatened to hang Malcom. They put a rope around his neck, tied him to the gallows, and beat him with clubs. Malcom, severely injured, was eventually driven back to his home and unceremoniously rolled off the cart.

In this depiction of the events, the artist portrays the Bostonians with menacing faces, violently pouring tea down Malcom's throat. Items representing events from the daylong assault are compressed into one scene, including the tar and feathers, a club, and a noose hanging from the Liberty Tree. The Boston Tea Party, which occurred a month before the attack on Malcom, appears in the background, linking the two events for the British audience. The Stamp Act is also depicted upside down on the Liberty Tree, serving as a reminder of the Stamp Act protests of 1765.

(<https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/british-view-rebellious-boston-1774>)

1. Why did a group of Bostonians attack John Malcom, a British customs officer? Explain how the artist has represented the political, economic, and social discord in Boston through specific images.
2. Using information in the introduction as well as clues from the broadside, explain the illustrator's point of view. Present evidence to support your answer.
3. Why is this image considered to be an effective example of propaganda?

SUMMARY- FINAL QUESTION

How do these primary sources help us to better understand the state of rebellion in the colonies? Explain your response with reference to the primary sources. Minimum of 4-5 sentences.