Colonial Period and Revolutionary Period Lesson Plan
American Literature: Colonial and Revolutionary Period

Colonial Literature brought us some of the world's most important documents

Teaching Colonial Literature and instructing students to find aspects of Colonial Literature in the works they read cover the following ELA Common Core Standards.

1. **RL.9-10.1** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
2. **RL.9-10.2** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
3. **RL.9-10.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).
4. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
5. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
6. **W.9-10.9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**Procedures**
1. Hand out notes or take notes on the Colonial Period. You may want students to annotate or you can just discuss. The Colonial Period notes page can be printed and copied as is.
2. Read “The Declaration of Independence” (or any other Colonial work) and identify aspects of the period.

**Evaluation** (For those requiring remediation/redoing, simply repeat the assignment with another story)

- **Formative Assessment:** The chart should be thoroughly completed with insights that go beyond the obvious.
- **Summative Assignment:** The aforementioned optional essay should be a summative assignment.
Colonial Period Overview

Colonial literature is the body of creative work produced by the early American colonists. These works include the personal, emotional poetry of Anne Bradstreet, the jeremiads produced by preachers like Increase Mather and Jonathan Edwards, and the popular Indian captivity narratives. Puritans wrote poetry and sermons in the service of God, and explorers and adventurers wrote tracts on their discoveries in hopes of obtaining funding and political support. Colonial leaders, aware that they were creating a new land with a new history, carefully recorded everything that occurred in their new homes. When printing presses arrived, their owners published broadsides, pamphlets and sermons. The high-selling Indian captivity narratives perhaps represent the first wholly American genre of writing.

Colonial American literature emerged from the original U.S. colonies during the period from 1607 to the late 1700s and was largely influenced by British writers. Many of the characteristics of colonial American literature can be found in the poems, journals, letters, narratives, histories and teaching materials written by settlers and religious and historic figures of the period. Most of the literary works of this genre are composed of letters, journals, biographies and memoirs.

The Enlightenment and the American Revolution

In the 18th century, the Enlightenment showed a great shift in colonial American literature from a religious foundation to scientific reasoning applied to human nature, society, culture and political awareness. Many texts were written in pamphlet or narrative form and challenged the role of God and religious life, seeking to replace them with reason. Rational thought and science were the new themes. “The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin” and the pamphlet “Common Sense” by Thomas Paine explored many of these new ideas. Similar texts also led the way to more awareness of social, economic and scientific issues. The American Revolution played a large part in this shifting of ideas.

Colonial Literature Characteristics

1. Writing had a practical purpose: to educate readers and inspire personal action
2. Writing professed the belief that hard work was necessary for happiness
3. Contained religious perspectives and undertones: convictions that Americans were God’s chosen people

Enlightenment and Revolutionary Literature Characteristics

1. Belief in natural law
2. Interest in human nature and its potential
3. Logic-based approach to world issues

Important Works from the American Literature Colonial Period and Revolutionary Period

- William Bradford’s *Of Plymouth Plantation*
- The poetry of Anne Bradstreet
- "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" by Jonathan Edwards
- *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* by Olaudah Equiano
- Mary Rowlandson’s account of being imprisoned by Indians
- *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*
- Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*
- "Speech in the House of the Virginia Convention" by Patrick Henry
- "The Declaration of Independence" by Thomas Jefferson
American Literature: The Colonial Period and Age of Enlightenment

**Directions**: As you read the *Declaration of Independence* identify elements of Colonial Literature and the Age of Enlightenment. In the left column, write the specific passage that exemplifies the period. In the middle column, write which aspect of the period it exemplifies. In the right column, write how the specific passage adds to the overall meaning of the work. Use your notes for help.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Passage from the Selection</th>
<th>Aspect of American Romanticism</th>
<th>Interpretation of Passage</th>
</tr>
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<td>“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights…”</td>
<td>Belief in Natural Law</td>
<td>Natural Law refers to the notion that individuals have certain rights that cannot be taken away. Jefferson and his committee establish natural law as the foundation of the colonist’s argument by claiming that the King of England had taken away these “unalienable rights,” which, according to natural law, he had no right to do.</td>
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<td>“When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.”</td>
<td>Practical Purpose, Natural Law, Logical Approach</td>
<td>And so begins the most important persuasive essay ever written. And it begins with a matter of fact declaration for the document’s purpose. In other words: Hey world, here’s our purpose in writing this…</td>
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<td>“…whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government…”</td>
<td>Interest in Human Nature and human potential</td>
<td>This is a pretty bold statement. The framers of the Declaration are directly stating that the King of England no longer has the right to govern the people of the colonies and that it’s the right of the colonists to overthrow the current instituted government.</td>
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<td>“The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.”</td>
<td>The Use of Logic</td>
<td>Here we have a straightforward claim backed by an extensive amount of evidence as to why the colonists are just in overthrowing the government.</td>
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For a complete list of lesson plans, check out the ELA Common Core Lesson Plans catalogue.

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