

Massachusetts and the Revolution



How was Massachusetts important to the American Revolution?

Framing the Unit

The unit is organized into three clusters of lessons. The first cluster focuses on Massachusetts in the 1760s, when the relationship between Britain and the colonies began to change. Students explore primary and secondary sources to understand the reasons for rising tensions between the two groups.

The second cluster focuses on increasing tensions in Boston between British soldiers and Patriot colonists during the years 1770–1775. Students use a variety of sources to examine the cause-and-effect nature of historical events.

The third cluster focuses on life during the Revolutionary War and the creation of the U.S. Constitution. The experiences and perspectives of Indigenous people, African Americans, and women, who are typically left out of the discussions about the American Revolution, are centered in this cluster.

The Summative Assessment asks students to write an answer statement to the unit's Essential Question: *How was Massachusetts important to the American Revolution?* and support their response with evidence from the unit. They then create a poster with their writing and illustrations and have the option to share their work with the class or the greater school community.

Prepare to teach this unit by exploring the [Background Brief: Massachusetts and the Revolution](#), which was designed to help you build content knowledge through a variety of resources. The brief also highlights current perspectives and research—along with potential misconceptions and any debates you should know about—so you can present this unit with confidence.

Enduring Understandings

1. Governments make laws and decisions that impact people differently. When people disagree with a government's actions, they can protest in different ways.

Unit Overview

2. People can have different opinions and priorities during conflict with the government, which can push them toward revolution.
3. People have to consider their beliefs, needs, and safety during times of conflict and war. These events often force people to make difficult decisions and choices.

Connections to Current Events and Issues

Connections to today's world and students' lives are built into this unit. Other contemporary connections could be added or developed for various topics of study within this unit, and we encourage you to take advantage of opportunities to connect students' learning to contemporary local, national, and global developments that may arise as you teach this unit. Some ideas for linking this unit to current events and issues include:

- This unit on Massachusetts and the American Revolution focuses on many stories and voices that are not typically included in the history. For an even deeper understanding of the role of Black and Nipmuc people during this time, teachers and students can explore the Massachusetts 250 article [Untold Local Stories Behind American Revolution to Take Spotlight in 2026 Celebration](#).
- Hands-on and experiential learning are highly effective ways to connect students to historical events and perspectives. Boston's [Freedom Trail](#) is a great resource both for information about each site and its role in Revolutionary America.
- The core aspects of having a voice and being part of decision-making in the American Revolution are still important today. The *M-A Chronicle*'s article [Students Write Letters to Political Representatives](#) shares some examples of this for students in Massachusetts. Unit 5 will also address other forms of civic engagement for students and communities.

*Vocabulary (in order of appearance)***Tier 3 Vocabulary**

congress
militia

minutemen
independence

constitution

Priority Tier 2 Vocabulary

government
law

protest
tax

conflict
declaration

Lesson Clusters*Cluster 1: Massachusetts in the 1760s (Lessons 1-7)*

Unit Overview**How did British rule affect the people of Massachusetts in the 1760s?**

Focus Standards: 3.T6.2, 3.T6.5, PS 4, PS 6, PS 6, RI.3.1, RI.3.2, SL.3.1, W.3.2, W.3.4

In the first cluster, students are introduced to the period that led to the American Revolution (about 1763–1774) and work to answer the Supporting Question: *How did British rule affect the people of Massachusetts in the 1760s?* Students begin by considering the purpose of rules, laws, and government and possible responses in the face of injustice. They then investigate primary sources and read informational articles to examine why British soldiers were stationed in North America, how the British government began passing laws that taxed the colonies, and the tensions that began to rise as a result.

Cluster 2: Conflict in Massachusetts (Lessons 8-16)**How did the people of Massachusetts respond to conflict with Britain?**

Focus Standards: 3.T6.2, 3.T6.2a, 3.T6.2b, 3.T6.2c, 3.T6.2d, 3.T6.2e, 3.T6.2g, PS 4, PS 6, PS 6, RI.3.2, RI.3.3, SL.3.1, SL.3.2, W.3.7

The second cluster opens with an exploration of how the conflict between Britain and Massachusetts became more serious with the Boston Massacre. Students then conduct a short research project on one very important person (VIP) of Revolutionary history using articles and videos. Lastly, students examine secondary sources of artwork, video clips, and informative texts to expand their understanding of the Supporting Question: *How did the people of Massachusetts respond to conflict with Britain?*

Cluster 3: Massachusetts During the Revolutionary War (Lessons 17-24)**How did different groups of people respond to the Revolutionary War?**

Focus Standards: 3.T6.2, 3.T6.2a, 3.T6.2b, 3.T6.2c, 3.T6.2d, 3.T6.2e, 3.T6.2f, 3.T6.2g, 3.T6.3, 3.T6.4, 3.T6.5, PS 4, PS 6, PS 6, RI.3.2, SL.3.1, W.3.4

In the third cluster, students work to answer the Supporting Question: *How did different groups of people respond to the Revolutionary War?* Students first explore the Declaration of Independence and analyze videos and informational articles that describe the difficult decisions of Indigenous people and African Americans when war broke out in America. Students also analyze secondary sources about the experiences of Loyalist and Patriot women during the Revolutionary War. Finally, students analyze an informational text about the purpose and the writing of the Massachusetts and U.S. Constitutions.

Summative Assessment: Massachusetts and the American Revolution (Lessons 25-26)

Focus Standards: 3.T6.2, 3.T6.2e, 3.T6.2f, 3.T6.2g, 3.T6.3, 3.T6.4, 3.T6.5, PS 4, PS 6, PS 6, W.3.4

Unit Overview

For Unit 4's Summative Assessment, students create a poster that answers a chosen core inquiry question related to the unit's Essential Question: *How was Massachusetts important to the American Revolution?*

On Day 1, students build off the source work and topic selection done in the Unit Synthesis lesson and complete the Summative Assessment Task Poster Organizer. They work in pairs or small groups to form an answer statement, gather supporting evidence from each cluster, and record evidence that supports their statement.

On Day 2, students use the information they recorded on Day 1 to design a poster that reflects their work on Day 1. Students illustrate their ideas and place their writing on a poster in an engaging design. There is then the option to have students share their work with one another and reflect on their experiences in the unit.

Unit Focus Standards

Content Standards

- **3.T6.2:** Analyze the connection between events, locations, and individuals in Massachusetts in the early 1770s and the beginning of the American Revolution, using sources such as historical maps, paintings, and texts of the period.
 - **3.T6.2a:** the Boston Massacre (1770), including the role of the British Army soldiers, Crispus Attucks, Paul Revere, and John Adams
 - **3.T6.2b:** the Boston Tea Party (1773), a political protest against taxes on tea by patriots who called themselves the Sons of Liberty, dressed as Native Peoples
 - **3.T6.2c:** the Intolerable Acts (1774), laws passed by the British Parliament as a result of the Boston Tea Party, designed to punish colonists
 - **3.T6.2d:** the First Continental Congress (1774), a meeting of representatives from the 13 colonies in response to the Intolerable Acts
 - **3.T6.2e:** the beginning of the Revolution at Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts (April, 1775) and the Battle of Bunker Hill in Charlestown, Massachusetts (June, 1775) and the roles of Revolutionary leaders such as Paul Revere, John Hancock, John and Abigail Adams, Samuel Adams, and Peter Salem
 - **3.T6.2f:** the roles of Native Peoples and African Americans in the American Revolution, some serving as Loyalists, some as Patriots
 - **3.T6.2g:** the roles of colonial women in keeping households and farms, providing education for children, and, during the Revolution, boycotting English goods
- **3.T6.3:** Analyze how the colonists' sense of justice denied led to declaring independence, and what the words of the Declaration of Independence say about what its writers believed.
- **3.T6.4:** Explain how, after the Revolution, the leaders of the new United States had to write a plan for how to govern the nation, and that this plan is called the Constitution.

Unit Overview

Explain that the rights of citizens are spelled out in the Constitution's first ten Amendments, known as the Bill of Rights; explain that full citizenship rights were restricted to white male property owners over the age of 21 in the new Republic.

- **3.T6.5:** Explain that states as well as nations have plans of government; recognize that the Constitution of Massachusetts (1780) is the oldest functioning constitution in the world, that its primary author was John Adams, and that, in addition to outlining government, it gives basic rights to citizens of the Commonwealth.

Practice Standards

- **PS 4:** With prompting and support, use knowledge of relevant topics or events to identify individuals and/or groups whose voices are represented and not represented in a given source or sources.
- **PS 6:** Identify evidence from a source that is relevant to an inquiry question.
- **PS 6:** Provide reasons to support a claim.

Literacy Standards

- **RI.3.1:** Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.
- **RI.3.2:** Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.
- **RI.3.3:** Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, mathematical ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language pertaining to time, sequence, or cause/effect.
- **SL.3.1:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **SL.3.2:** Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
- **W.3.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- **W.3.4:** Produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- **W.3.7:** Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

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