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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2008 Volume III: Democracy in Theory and Practice

Taxes, Rebellion, and the Birth of a New Nation

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by Valerie Schwarz

This unit is written for a fourth grade Virginia studies class, but large parts of it could be used or adapted for middle and even high school classes. It is designed to be taught for 45 minute periods for 20 days. The unit spans from the causes of the American Revolutionary War through the adoption of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The students experience taxation in a token economy until a rebellion ensues. The students write their own Declaration of Independence and use a primary resource as their declaration is compared to parts of the actual document. The main emphasis is on the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. It has numerous simulation activities designed to teach the Proclamation of 1763, forms of government, James Madison's fear of tyranny of the majority, equal representation vs. representation by population, the three-fifths compromise, and the freedom of religion clause of the Bill of Rights. The activities are engaging and involve discussion and debate to recreate what the founding fathers went through at the Constitutional Convention.

(Developed for Virginia Studies and Social Studies, grade 4; recommended for U.S. History Middle School grades, and Elementary School grades 4-5)

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