



History vs. Hollywood: The Patriot ***Teacher's Guide***

For many Americans, Hollywood serves as the producer of history. The film industry has long offered its version of historic events, with varying results. Some of Hollywood's attempts at historical analysis have tried to stay true to the facts of the past, while others have been complete fabrications. The series ***History vs. Hollywood*** examines contemporary films with historical themes or topics and mines the archives to sort out fact from fiction. With insightful commentary from historians, the programs in this series encourage students to think critically about historical interpretations and to do their own research to determine what actually happened in the past. This episode, ***History vs. Hollywood: The Patriot*** examines a recent feature film about the American Revolutionary War, helping viewers decipher which aspects are drama and which are accurate reflections of the past.

OBJECTIVES

Students will learn to discern between media interpretations of history and the actual events. They will learn to distinguish and recognize poetic license in historical representation and explore the role of the media in creating popular history.

CURRICULUM LINKS

History vs. Hollywood: The Patriot would be useful for U.S. history, politics, journalism and media and civics courses. This program is appropriate for middle school and high school students.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Hollywood has a long history of bringing American wars to the big screen. Why do you think the drama of war make such popular topics for films? What are some examples?
2. Most films and novels about historical events use “poetic license”. What is poetic license? Should it be allowed in popular culture depictions of historical events?
3. ***History vs. Hollywood: The Patriot*** explores the facts behind the American Revolution through the lens of a feature film. Do you think feature films are a valid way to learn about history? Discuss.

4. When we think of the American Revolution, we tend to think of the northern campaign. But the war was fought in some southern areas as well. What was the strategic value of the southern campaign? Why does the northern campaign dominate the history books?
5. There were almost as many loyalists as there were patriots during the American Revolution. Who were loyalists? How did they differ from patriots? What happened to them after the war?
6. Technology has changed the ways in which wars are fought. Discuss how wars were fought in the 18th century and compare them with wars of the 20th century.
7. Both members of the militia and the Continental Army fought in the Revolutionary War. Compare and contrast the two different groups of fighters.
8. Many historical sites offer examples of "living history." What is "living history?" What are the advantages of "living history?"
9. Many places in America are designated as historic landmarks. What makes a place historic?
10. ***History vs. Hollywood: The Patriot*** explains that the lead character of ***The Patriot*** is a composite of different people. What is a composite? Why did the producers choose to model their leading character after more than one person?
11. Discuss the problems with the film's portrayal of the lives of African Americans during the Revolutionary era.

EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1. Filmmakers use a story board to show the narrative and sequence of the film before they shoot it. Story boards are similar to comic books in the ways they sketch out the details or framework of a story. Ask students to create a story board for one of the campaigns of the American Revolution. They should conduct research online or at the library to learn more about the campaign or battle they chose.
2. Ask students to write diary or journal entries that recreate a typical day in the life of a patriot fighting in the American Revolution. They can use information they learned from watching this documentary to flesh out details in their writings. Share these projects with the larger class or group

VIEWING CHART

What are some of the key events or individuals in this episode?	Where and When Did They Occur?	How do these events differ in the film from the way they "actually happened?"
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ADDITIONAL BOOKS AND WEBSITES

Hakim, Joy. *The Story of Us* (Volumes 2 and 3). Oxford University Press, 1993.

Wood, Gordon. *American Revolution: A History*. Random House, 2003.

The History Channel American Revolution Website:

<http://www.history.com/minisites/revolution/>

The National Archives Charters of Freedom Website:

<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/>

The American Memory Project of the Library of Congress:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>