

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT

A Small Connecticut Town's Reaction to the Coercive/Intolerable Acts From Maureen Festi

Grade – 5+

Length of class period – one or two 45- 60 minute sessions

Inquiry – To what degree should one person's opinion influence the opinions and actions of an entire group?

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Infer reasons for reactions to the Coercive/Intolerable Acts.
2. Discuss the process of creating and passing political resolves in a small colonial town in the fall of 1774.
3. Evaluate both Isaac Foster's reasons for writing to the editor of the Connecticut Courant and the reactions to his resolves.

Materials:

1. Intolerable Acts Organizer: Support or Opposition?
2. Isaac Foster's letter to the editor of *The Connecticut Courant and Hartford Weekly Intelligencer, Monday October 31, 1774. (NUMBER 514)*
3. Transcription of Isaac Foster's Letter
4. Vocabulary Sheet

Activities:

1. *This lesson should follow the study of the Intolerable Acts.*
In small groups, ask students to complete the Intolerable Acts Organizer by providing reasons why some people would support or oppose the acts. Then share and briefly discuss reasons for the different points of view.
2. Provide students with the original newspaper article, the transcription, and the vocabulary sheet. Students work in small groups to answer the following questions, which are later shared and discussed with the whole class.
 - According to Isaac Foster, what sequence of events led to his decision to write a letter to the editor?
 - According to Isaac Foster, why didn't the town accept his resolves?
 - Focus on the 4th, 6th, 7th, 9th, 10th and 12th resolves. Is there anything in these resolves that would cause some people in the town to reject them?
 - Since everyone is a British citizen at this time, is there evidence in Foster's letter to the editor that he is a traitor to England?
 - *"They will hurt the cause of Liberty, which we are seeking."* Explain why you agree or disagree with this statement about the resolves?
 - Explain why you think the town should have, or should not have, held another

meeting to accept the resolves?

Assessment:

1. Student participation in activities and discussions.
2. Student's written response: Defend three reasons why the town should have accepted Isaac Foster's resolves and three reasons why the town should not have accepted the resolves.

Connecticut Framework Performance Standards :

1. Explain the connections between local, state and national events.
2. Compare the perspectives of England and the Colonies relative to the events preceding the American Revolution.
3. Identify and explain different points of view about a historical event.

Handouts and Worksheets follow this lesson.

Isaac Foster's Letter to the Editor of *The Connecticut Currant and Hartford Weekly Intelligencer*, Oct.31, 1774

Mr. Watson

SIR,

As the late Doings of the town of Stafford have caused much speculation; and reports to my disadvantage, are industriously spread and propagated by some persons----I seem in justice to myself obliged to give the public a true account of theses matters.---- Please therefore to give the following account and resolves a place in your text.

A MEETING of the inhabitants of the town of Stafford, being warned to be held on the 7th of September last; one of the Select-Men desired me to write some Resolves suitable for the town to come into on the occasion; which I did, and attended the Meeting. Where I found that two others had wrote on the same occasion. The Moderator desired each of us to read to the town what we had wrote; and we did so. Upon which, the town very unanimously made choice of my composition. But two or three persons after the Meeting, discovered a good deal of chagrine, & gave out, that those resolves were like to be hurtful to the liberties of America, which they said they were zealously, engaged to defend. Nevertheless, they were recorded by the Town-Clerk and an attested copy by some of the people was sent to the Printer. Whereupon, ('tis said) two or three persons signed a letter directed to the Printer, desiring him to delay printing the said resolves, 'till the pleasure of this town was further known. A meeting was warned to be held on the fifth of October, to see if the town would reconsider and set aside the whole, or part of those Resolves adopted on the 7th of September: I attended the meeting and publicly told the Moderator that those Resolves were a production of mine, and by some were said to contain *Heresy* and *Treason*: and be destructive of the Liberties of America, &c. by which means my character suffered, I begged leave therefore to offer a defense of the Resolves and myself, before the Town: and desired the Moderator to lead the Town, to vote me leave to make my defense, if they saw fit. But this was strenuously opposed, and in fine, could not be obtained, though urged by many. The town then produced by their vote, to reconsider and set aside the whole of said Resolves. No other reason in public being given therefore but this general one: "*They will hurt the cause of Liberty, which we are seeking.*"

There were two persons (as I am told,) in the society to which I belong, that voted to set aside said Resolves; and there were more in the society I belong to, that did not attend the meeting, than there was in the majority for setting the Resolves aside: several being out of town, others necessarily detained at home--- that had the second society been all present, ('tis said) they would have carried the vote by a considerable majority, in favour of the Resolves---Which I here present to the candid public, and shall take it kindly from any one that shall point out to me the iniquity, that some sagacious Sons of Liberty (as they would be called) in the first society in *Stafford*, pretend they are fraught withal.

RESOLVE 1st. That we ought to be sensible of the hand of God in all this evil that is come upon us; and acknowledge the divine righteousness therein, repent all our sins that have provoked a holy God; and do our first works, strengthening the things which remain, that are ready to die among us, and return to God with all our hearts.

2d. That since civil government is the effect of human free compacts, and not of divine institution; the produce of man's reason, of human and rational combinations, and not from any direct orders of infinite wisdom in any positive law: that therefore the first human subject and original of civil power is the people.

3d. That the constitution of government as settled by free human compacts, and that only; which makes rulers what they are as rulers, and gives Kings a title to their crowns.

4th. That where the constitution of a nation is such, that the laws of the land are measures both of the Sovereign's command, and the obedience of the subjects; the Prince who strives to subvert the fundamental laws of the society, is the traitor and the rebel; not the people who endeavor to preserve them.

5th. That tho' we are obliged to be subjects to the powers *that be*, yet not to the powers *that be not*: the powers *that be*, are those that govern according to constitution. If the higher powers for the administration, rule not according to the constitution, they are not the powers *that be*, but pretended powers, so no subjection is due to them.

6th. That several late acts of the British Parliament relative to the colonies, and particularly respecting *Massachusetts*; are utterly unconstitutional, and contrary to the Great Charter of English Liberty, and destructive of the most sacred and darling rights of the colonists as men and christians; and must & will be to the eternal shame of Great-Britain.

7th. That 'tis our duty with the greatest firmness, union and resolution, to oppose the growing usurpations of the British Parliament: and stand fast in that Liberty which our Fathers purchased for us, with the loss of so much blood and treasure.

8th. We approve of, and rejoice in, the unanimity of sentiment that appears in the colonists, as in other things, so in particular respecting the Congress; and look upon it as our duty to all addresses to heaven, to beg wisdom from above for that body.

9th. We sincerely lament, that among those gentlemen lately appointed by the King's mandate, for the council in the province of Massachusetts-Bay, there appeared so many willing to take the necessary oaths to qualify themselves to enslave their country; but rejoice that so many of them have been obliged to recant, and hope providence will soon deliver the rest into the hands of the good people of the province.

10th. That we will heartily concur in any salutary measures that may or shall be devised and come into, or recommend by the General Congress, for the preservation of the Rights of British Americans. And 'tis the opinion of this town, that everyone among us, who shall counteract these measures, ought to be esteemed a traitor to his country, and treated with neglect and disrespect that such a character deserves; excepting violence on his person and property.

11th. That we hereby return our thanks to the Members of the Honorable House of Representatives of this colony, for their patriotic and loyal Resolutions, passed and published in the last Assembly on this occasion, and order them to be entered at large on the public records of this town, that succeeding ages may be faithfully furnished with authentic credentials of our inflexible attachment to those

inestimable privileges which we and every honest American glory in esteeming our unalienable birthright and inheritance.

12th. That 'tis our duty to sympathize with, and according to our ability contribute to the relief of our brethren in the town of Boston, who are now suffering from the hard hand of tyranny, in the glorious cause of Liberty: and accordingly do appoint, that Lt. Elijah Robinson, Lt. Joshua Fuller, Capt. Ames Wallbridge, Isaac Pinney, and Deac. Sherebiah Ballard, be a committee to correspond with the towns of this and neighboring colonies; and to promote and forward such contributions as shall be made in this town for the relief of the poor of Boston in their present distress.

These are the Resolves once adopted by the town of Stafford, since reconsidered, and presented as treasonable; now adopted by me, and submitted to the candid public.

ISAAC FOSTER

Stafford, October 15, 1774.

The account above given of the Doings of the Town of Stafford, is true. Test,

Nathan Johnson, Jesse Cady, Silas Blodget

Vocabulary Sheet for Isaac Foster's Letter

1. warned to be held – planned and announced to be held
2. unanimously - everyone agrees
3. chagrine (chagrin) – embarrassment caused by failure or disappointment
4. resolves - decisions
5. zealously – devoted to a purpose, enthusiastic
6. attested – confirmed to be correct
7. heresy – rejection of an established religious belief
8. treason - betrayal of one's country
9. begged leave – asked permission
10. strenuously – requiring great effort or energy
11. obtained – to get, to gain possession of
12. set aside – to make a decision at a later date
13. detained – delay progress
14. first society – first settlement in Stafford around Stafford Street
15. second society – later settlement in Stafford around Hampden Road
16. candid - honest
17. iniquity – injustice or wickedness
18. sagacious – showing sound judgment and farsightedness
19. fraught withal – full of, as well
20. usurpations – wrongful seizure of something by force
21. recant – to withdraw
22. concur- agree

23. salutary- useful, beneficial
24. subvert- to cause the ruin of
25. sovereign – supreme ruler, king