The American Revolution: Rebel or Hero

The Continental Navy

**Before Reading**

# Who were the heroes of the American War of Independence?

# Who were the villains? What criteria are used to determine heroes and villains?

# Do you think the 18th century British would agree?

**Key Vocabulary**

Privateer Pirate Nation

State Self-Determination

*Note: In the primary source documents, lower case “ss” looks like an “ff”- For example the word “vessel” appears as “veffels”*

**Essential Question**

How does the international community perceive a militant group fighting for self-determination? Is one man’s terrorist another man’s freedom fighter?

**Supporting Questions**

What was Great Britain’s perception of the American Revolutionaries?

What is significant about the terms used to refer to the American Revolutionaires?

How did France and other countries show their support of the American Revolutionaries?

Did the support from France and other countries legitimize the American Revolutionaries?

**Document Analysis**

English Letter from 4th August 1776

1. From where does the letter originate?
2. What was the name of the pirate ship?
3. Why did the author believe the pirate was not “lawful”? Cite evidence from the letter.
4. Why is it significant that the author refers to the American sailors as “pirates?”
5. Why did the author make the reference to “the offensive war”?
6. Are armed vessels and trading vessels treated differently?
7. Why is important to the author that French officials in St. Pierre not trade with the Americans?

English Letter from 7th August 1776

1. What happened to the Midshipman Mr. James Stokes?
2. Why would the assistance of the French be referred to as “shameful?”

English Letter from 1st August 1777

1. What is the nationality of most of “The Captains and Crews” of the Privateers ships?
2. What is the French policy towards American privateers?

English Letter from December 2, 1777

1. Where were the privateers imprisoned?
2. What offense will result in the offenders being “severely punished”?

English Letter from May 26, 1781

1. Who did Cornwallis consent to send to Henry Clinton in New York?
2. What term is used by Cornwallis to refer to the American sailors?
3. What is the “evil” which must have “some remedy”?

English Letter from 11th October 1781

1. Who wrote the letter? What was his role in the American Revolution?
2. In the author’s opinion, what is his the only move that could save him and his army? Cite evidence from the letter.
3. What term does Cornwallis use when referring to the American Revolutionaries?

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