

**Topic:**

Where Was Patrick Henry  
On The 29<sup>th</sup> Of May?

**Time:**

2-3 class  
periods

**Grade:**

4-6

**Core:**

5: 6050-0601

**Objectives:** Students will:

1. Be introduced to one of America's Founding Fathers and will become acquainted with the life and contributions of Patrick Henry: a statesman, orator, governor, and lawyer.
2. Learn historical vocabulary.
3. Read and discuss a biography.

**Procedure:**

1. Introduce the students to the constitutional period by asking them to name as many important people (founding fathers and delegates to the Constitutional Convention) as they can. List them on the chalkboard.
2. Ask the students if they have ever heard of Patrick Henry if they do not include him in the list.
3. Review the difference between a biography and an autobiography and between fiction and non-fiction.
4. List on the chalkboard or pass out a sheet with important, key words from the story, Where Was Patrick Henry On The 29<sup>th</sup> of May?, and from that historical period. Include three key quotes of Patrick Henry's. (See Handout 1.)
5. Read the story, Where Was Patrick Henry On The 29<sup>th</sup> of May?, with students.
6. Discuss the period between 1760-1790 with students following the story. See Handouts 2 and 3.
7. Divide the class into 5 groups — 5-7 students — and have each group discuss the vocabulary words and quotes. Using library and classroom resource books, ask each group to develop a skit, presentation, or drawing depicting Patrick Henry in one of the following areas: statesman, orator, lawyer, governor, father.
8. Ask each group to make their presentation and give their explanation to the class.

**Additional Resources:**

1. Constitution First Books Patrick Henry-- Available from Law-Related Education.
2. The Delegates of 1787 (Playing cards of Constitutional delegates) available from Law-Related Education.
3. Textbooks on American History and library books on the Constitution, Constitutional Convention, and Founding Fathers.
4. Shh! We're Writing The Constitution by Jean Fritz available from the Utah Law-Related Education Project. Good teacher resource.

**Author:**

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## HANDOUT 1

### VOCABULARY

1. Federalist
2. Anti-Federalist
3. Treason
4. Stamp tax
5. Parson
6. House of Burgess
7. Virginia
8. Fighting words
9. May 29, 1736; May 29, 1777; May 29, 1796
10. Cupola
11. Orator

### PHRASES

1. “I am not a Virginian; I am an American.”
2. “Gentlemen may cry peace, peace, but there is no peace . . . Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery?”
3. Forbid it . . . I know not what course others may take but for me, give me liberty or give me death!”
4. I smell a rat!”

## HANDOUT 2

### A BRIEF OUTLINE OF AMERICAN HISTORY 1760 - 1790

- I. During the early and mid-1700's, England passed laws for the colonies, but generally left the individual colonies to run their own lives and solve their own problems.
  - A. Following the French and Indian War, the British felt the American colonies should help pay for the war and began to collect more and more tax money from the colonies.
  - B. American colonial protests increased and by 1775, some people were suggesting a break from England.
  
- II. The Stamp Act became law in 1765.
  - A. Colonists would have to buy stamps from the British — and usually expensive ones — for all important documents and papers.
  - B. The colonists objected to the cost and also to the fact that they could not print their own money, so they had little or no money with which to buy stamps from the British government.
  - C. Patrick Henry spoke against the Stamp Act in the Virginia Assembly. He suggested, politely, that the British Parliament should not have the power to tax the American colonies.
  - D. Americans began to boycott English products.
  - E. The Sons of Liberty kept people from buying English goods and burned all the stamps they could get.
  - F. The Stamp Act was repealed, but Parliament saved face by passing a law that said it could still tax the American colonies whenever it wished!
  
- III. In 1773, Parliament passed a law giving the British East India Company sole right to sell tea in the colonies.
  - A. In the American colonies, colonists reacted to this law by burning shipments of tea from the British East India Company or dumping them into the ocean.
  - B. While tea was aboard ships in Boston Harbor in the winter of 1773, the Sons of Liberty boarded the ships at night and dumped \$90 thousand worth of British tea into the water.
    1. The British blockaded Boston Harbor until the colonists paid for the tea.
    2. Other colonies sent food by road to keep Bostonians from starving and facing severe shortages.
  
- IV. In 1774, 56 people from 12 colonies met in Philadelphia to decide what to do about the British blockade of Boston Harbor.
  - A. Most wanted to be careful and not further anger Parliament.
  - B. A few hotheads, notably Patrick Henry and Sam Adams, said there was going to be war and nobody could stop it.
  
  - C. The Congress tried to be peaceful as it could. It voted:
    1. For a new boycott of English goods.
    2. To send a letter to King George asking for the release of Boston Harbor and listing colonial rights.

- V. British troops marched out of Boston to arrest Sam Adams and John Hancock, who were hiding in Concord, and to destroy gun powder stored by the colonists there.
  - A. Paul Revere (and William Davies) learned about the secret British attack and rode into the countryside warning people.
  - B. When the British reached Lexington, they were met by 70 colonists with muskets ready.
  - C. Someone fired a shot, and the war began.
  
- VI. Colonists fought the British at Fort Ticonderogah (in New York) and at Bunker Hill (in Boston).
  
- VII. The Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia three weeks after Lexington and Concord.
  - A. Flags flew everywhere proclaiming, “Liberty or Death”.
  - B. Only a few colonists wanted a new separate country.
  - C. This Congress sent another letter politely asking King George to take his troops out of Boston.
  - D. They also made it clear that they would not give up their rights without a fight.
  - E. They voted:
    - 1. To raise an army.
    - 2. To attack the British in Canada.
    - 3. To borrow two million dollars.
    - 4. To make George Washington Commander-in-Chief.
  - F. Thomas Paine, an Englishman, came to America and wrote an essay, “Common Sense,” urging Americans not to give up their chance for freedom.
  - G. In July, 1776, members of the Second Continental Congress voted that the colonies should become an independent nation.
    - 1. Thomas Jefferson was assigned to write the reason for independence in a declaration for all colonists and all the world to read.
    - 2. On July 4, 1776, the members of Congress signed the Declaration of Independence.
  
- VIII. The Revolutionary War was the second longest war in American history.
  - A. There wasn’t much hope that the colonists would win.
  - B. General Washington never had enough men or supplies.
  - C. Boston was freed when cannons brought from Fort Ticonderogah were positioned on a hill above the city. The British navy simply turned and fled.
  - D. Next the British pushed Washington across New York State until Washington won victories in Trenton and Princeton.
  
  - E. The colonists were different soldiers — many times after battles or when the weather turned cold, the soldiers simply went away.
  - F. The colonies paid little attention to the fighting unless they were directly involved. During the winter of 1777 - 78, soldiers spent five months in the snow without shoes at Valley Forge.
  - G. The Second Continental Congress was in charge of the war, but it didn’t have the powers of regular government.

1. It had to ask the colonies for food, clothing, and supplies.
  2. It had no power to draft soldiers.
  3. It had no power to tax the colonies.
- H. The weakness of the second Continental Congress was one of the main reasons why the war lasted so long.
- IX. After three important battles and victories for the colonists -- Oriskany, Bennington, and Saratoga -- the British were ready to give up the war and concede to the colonists' demands for rights.
- A. But now the French came into the war on the colonists' side and sent money, guns, and supplies.
  - B. The final great battle of the Revolutionary War was held at Yorktown. Colonists led by French General de Grasse marched from Rhode Island to help Washington and Lafayette in Virginia.
  - C. The British were trapped in Yorktown.
  - D. After Yorktown, the fighting stopped in the colonies.
    1. Members of the American, French, and the British governments came together in Paris, France to talk about peace.
    2. It took them six months to agree about everything.
    3. In 1783, the Treaty of Paris was signed.
    4. England gave up all its political power in the 13 colonies, and America became an independent nation.
- X. After the vote for independence in 1776, the Congress had begun writing rules for the 13 states.
- A. The set of rules was called the Articles of Confederation.
  - B. It took about five years for all the states to accept them.
  - C. They became law in 1781.
  - D. They were not a strong set of rules; Congress had no more power than before.
  - E. The country struggled along with a weak government for six more years after the Revolution.
  - F. After Shays' Rebellion -- a battle between Massachusetts farmers and the Massachusetts government -- the problem of how to change the government really came to a head.
  - G. In 1786, George Washington and James Madison, among others, suggested that the states send delegates to a Grand Convention, just to improve the existing form of government.

- XI. In May, 1787, on a rainy day in Philadelphia, the men began to write the Constitution.
- A. The men who wrote the Constitution came from 12 states.
  - B. George Washington, representing Virginia, was one of them and was elected president of the Convention.
  - C. It took 16 weeks to write the Constitution.
    1. Some delegates grew angry or suspicious and went home.
    2. There were many discussions and compromises.
    3. Finally, the Constitution was signed by most of the delegates.
    4. When it was ready, copies were printed and sent to the assemblies of the 13 states and to the Congress in New York City.
    5. Then it was printed in the newspapers, and people began to discuss it.
- XII. The United States had a new kind of government after nine states voted to accept the Constitution.
- A. The country was ruled by its citizens, not a king.
  - B. Women, slaves, or poor people could not vote — but in most countries, nobody could vote.
- XIII. George Washington became President of the United States on April 30, 1789. He swore before a large crowd in New York City to “preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.”

# GIVE ME LIBERTY, OR GIVE ME DEATH! ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

PATRICK HENRY  
*In the Second Virginia Convention*  
MARCH 23, 1775



The voice of Patrick Henry was the bugle call of American independence. Time and again the fiery eloquence of this backwoods lawyer had thrown Virginia's House of Burgesses into turmoil. The idea of liberty for the Colonies, of a complete break with the mother country, was a new, frightening one. Up and down the land, argument and debate raged. On one side were the men of substance -- wealthy planters, busy merchants, and King's officeholders -- fearful that war would endanger their prosperity. Opposing them were the small shopkeepers, the carpenters, shipwrights, farmers, lawyers, and the men of the frontier -- all the people to whom England was only a vague memory, and the King's laws unreasonable and intolerable.

Of this class, to whom independence was as dear as life itself, Patrick Henry was spokesman. Ten years before, his speech in the House of Burgesses opposing the Stamp Act had been interrupted by cries of "Treason," to which he had cried, "If this be treason, make the most of it."

Now in 1775, with war almost certain, the Second Revolutionary Convention, meeting in Saint John's Episcopal Church in Richmond, frittered the time away with fruitless bickering and endless debate.

Suddenly Patrick Henry burst forth in a speech that cut like a clear flame through the murk of doubts and indecisions. Demanding that the Virginia militia be armed, that steps be taken for actual war, he uttered those words that have thrilled the hearts of generations of Americans: "*Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me the liberty, or give me death!*"

★ From Watchwords of Liberty by Robert Lawson