

**ACTIVITY**

# Supporting Question 2: Founding Ideals Versus Realities

## Overview

### About This Activity

Students explore Supporting Question 2 through a series of activities that help them examine the contradictions between the ideals and realities of the US founding. They consider how the founding impacted Native American nations, watch a clip from the film *Race: The Power of an Illusion*, and analyze a primary source from Pequot minister William Apess. They conclude with a Formative Task that uses the Graffiti Boards teaching strategy.

<b>Supporting Question</b>	What contradictions existed between the ideals and the reality of the founding of the United States?
<b>Formative Task</b>	Students hold a silent discussion using the Graffiti Boards teaching strategy to explore the contradictions that existed between the ideals and the reality of the founding of the United States.
<b>Featured Sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video: The Future of America's Past: The Revolutions</li> <li>• Video: The Invasion of America</li> <li>• Video: "The Story We Tell" (from the film <i>Race: The Power of an Illusion</i>)</li> <li>• Reading: An Indian's Looking Glass for the White Man, 1833</li> <li>• Reading: An Indian's Looking Glass for the White Man, 1833 (Abridged)</li> <li>• Reading: An Indian's Looking Glass for the White Man, 1833 (Heavily Abridged)</li> </ul>

## Procedure

### Day 1

#### Activity 1: Consider How the Founding of the United States Impacted Native American Nations

Explain to students that in this activity, they will be watching a clip from the PBS series [The Future](#)

## Supporting Question 2 | We the People Inquiry

[of America's Past](#) (0:50–8:00). The episode “The Revolutions” explores what the founding of the new nation meant to people excluded from political and social power during that period. This clip explains that Native American tribal nations had different reactions to the American Revolution, with some fighting on the side of the colonists and others fighting on the side of the British in order to protect their lands and sovereignty. It also describes how the founding of the new nation accelerated colonists’ theft of Native American land, already well underway in the British colonies by 1776.

As you watch the clip, pause at the following time stamps and ask students to discuss these question with a partner in a turn-and-talk format:

1. (3:27): What was the purpose of the line designating the western boundary of the American colonies? How did this line contribute to the outbreak of war during the American Revolution?
2. (6:11): Why did some Native American tribal nations fight on the side of the British during the American Revolution?
3. (8:00): How were the Mohawk impacted by the founding of the United States?

Once students have discussed the questions, provide a further opportunity for them to reflect on how the founding of the United States impacted Native American nations from 1776 to 2010. Play this additional video clip from [Invasion of America](#), which is based on an interactive map from eHistory.org. (Time permitting, you may want to have students explore the [digital map](#) either at home or in class. Note that students will need access to a computer to analyze the map.)

As students watch the video, have them take notes using the following prompt: *How did the founding of the United States impact Native American nations and their homelands?*

### Day 2

#### Activity 1: Watch “The Story We Tell”

Play clip 0:43–5:34 of [“The Story We Tell.”](#) from the film *Race: The Power of an Illusion*. As they watch, students should jot down information that helps them answer the following question: *How did the founders explain the contradiction between their ideals of freedom and liberty and the creation and maintenance of the system of slavery in early America?* (You may need to play the clip twice for students to have enough time to process the information in the video and jot down their notes.)

Debrief students’ answers to the question, making sure they understand that the egalitarian ideals of the American Revolution compelled the country’s slaveholding leaders (such as Thomas Jefferson) to attempt to justify the institution of slavery, as well as dispossession of and state violence against Native Americans, and to explain why certain groups should be barred from enjoying the liberty and equality that were supposedly accorded to “all men.” Some of these founders further embraced a theory of racial difference and hierarchy that, while fully discredited by scientists today, nonetheless persists in contemporary American society and still powerfully shapes racial inequality and the lived experiences of people of color.

#### Activity 2: Read an Essay from Pequot Thinker William Apess

Next, give students the opportunity to hear the voice of someone who actively resisted the era’s theories of racial inequality. Explain to students that they will be reading a source from a Native

## Supporting Question 2 | We the People Inquiry

American (Pequot) minister named William Apess, an advocate for racial equality and the rights of Native Americans.

Before reading the source with students, explain that the author’s use of the term “black” is outdated. In this essay, the author uses it to describe both skin color and immorality. Explain that in our place and time, the word “black” does not mean “immoral” or “wrong.” It is important for students to understand that you, as the teacher, are not endorsing a negative association with blackness, which is harmful to all students and may be especially harmful to students of color.

Students will read the source three times, using the Three Reads Protocol from ElevatED Learning Services. The point of the Three Reads Protocol is to help students comprehend difficult texts in a scaffolded manner, progressing through the following stages:

- **First read:** Students read a heavily abridged text for meaning in order to gain a basic understanding of the person/place/historical event depicted in the source.
- **Second read:** Students read an abridged version of the text with the most difficult aspects edited out; they read with an eye toward understanding the author’s perspective through analysis of word choice, the sequence of ideas, and the intended audience.
- **Third read:** Students read the unabridged text for meaning in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the person/place/historical event depicted in the source.

To begin the process, divide the class into small groups of three to five students. Explain to students that they will be reading different versions of a primary source three times to help them fully comprehend the text. Pass out **An Indian’s Looking Glass for the White Man, 1833 (Heavily Abridged)**. Have students read this heavily abridged version of the text and answer the guided reading questions as a group. Then repeat the process with **An Indian’s Looking Glass for the White Man, 1833 (Abridged)**, which is a version with the most difficult aspects of the text edited out. Students should also answer the accompanying guided reading questions for this text. Finally, pass out the unabridged **An Indian’s Looking Glass for the White Man, 1833**, which is the original version of the text. Read it aloud as a class. Then discuss one or more of the following questions:

- What does this source tell you about nineteenth-century ideas about race? How does the author respond to those ideas?
- In what ways can this essay be understood as a work of resistance or protest? What is the author resisting or protesting?
- Why do you think Apess chose to title his essay “An Indian’s Looking Glass for the White Man”? How does the idea of a looking glass or mirror connect to the essay’s purpose or central ideas?

### Formative Task

#### Silent Discussion

Give students the opportunity to respond to the supporting question, “What contradictions existed between the ideals and the reality of the founding of the United States?” by posting the question on the board or on a piece of chart paper. Ask students to silently respond to the question using the [Graffiti Boards](#) teaching strategy.