

Were the Whiskey Rebels champions of the common man or treasonous traitors?



Whiskey Rebellion Monument. Sculptor Alan Coltrill. Erected 2009. Washington, PA. Depicting unnamed rebels from 1791-95.

Photo by Wintermantle, Mike. The Whiskey Rebellion Monument. The Historical Marker Database.

<https://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=40412>

Supporting Questions

1. What caused the Whiskey Rebellion?
2. Were the protest actions of the Whiskey Rebels in 1791-1794 protected by the First Amendment?
3. Did the Federal Government treat the rebels justly according to the 6th and 8th Amendments?

9-12 Grade Inquiry with Library of Congress Resources Hub The Whiskey Rebellion and the Bill of Rights Inquiry by Ann Canning and Greg Giardina

Were the Whiskey Rebels champions of the common man or treasonous traitors?

Inquiry Standard	<p>C3 Framework</p> <p>D2.His.16.9-12. Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.</p> <p>D2.Civ.14.9-12. Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.</p>
Staging the Compelling Question	Engage students in a QFT exercise to activate prior knowledge about the Whiskey Rebellion.

Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3
What caused the Whiskey Rebellion?	Were the protest actions of the Whiskey Rebels in 1791-1794 protected by the First Amendment?	Did the Federal Government treat the rebels justly according to the 6th and 8th Amendments?
Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
List the viewpoints of the Federal Government and the Western Pennsylvania Farmers about the Whiskey Tax of 1791.	Record observations, reflections, and questions about the protest actions of the Whiskey Rebels.	Complete Library of Congress Analysis Tool organizer for each of the featured primary sources.
Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources
Source A: Primary Sources for Supporting Question #1	Source A: Primary Sources for Supporting Question #2	Source A: Primary Source Set for Supporting Question #3

Summative Performance Task	<p>ARGUMENT</p> <p>Were the Whiskey Rebels champions of the common man or treasonous traitors? Write an argument taking a position on this compelling question consisting of a series of claims with supporting evidence that draws from all three formative tasks.</p>
	<p>EXTENSION</p> <p>Rewrite a textbook description of the Whiskey Rebellion to more accurately reflect multiple perspectives and the primary sources analyzed in this inquiry.</p>
Taking Informed Action	<p>UNDERSTAND</p> <p>Ask each student or teams of students to select a person from their neighborhood, city, or state that they think deserves a historic monument.</p> <p>ASSESS</p> <p>Create a persuasive proposal.</p> <p>ACTION</p> <p>Send your proposal to the major, governor or a preservation organization.</p>

Inquiry Description

Historic Monuments reflect the collective memory that surrounds a person or event at the time the monument was erected. In this sense monuments are primary sources and corroborate or refute written historical accounts of past events. This inquiry starts with a monument erected in 2009 in memory of three unnamed rebels who fought in the Whiskey Rebellion. These working class poor frontiersmen have not been included by mainstream historians who recall this event in a nostalgic tribute to our first president. This inquiry will use primary source documents from both time and place to recreate the untold story of the Western Pennsylvania frontiersmen who felt oppressed by the Eastern wealthy elite class in power in 1791.

The Whiskey Rebellion was a reaction to the passing of the Excise Tax on March 3, 1791. On December 15, 1791, the Bill of Rights was ratified and became part of our country's constitution. This inquiry will ask students to interpret the actions of both the rebels and the federal government in the context of the Bill of Rights. In looking at both perspectives they will discover the influence each group had in defining government authority and individual freedom.

Structure

After opening the inquiry with the examination of a historic monument that represents a contemporary interpretation of the Whiskey Rebellion, students will investigate a series of primary sources created at the time (1791-5) and place (Western Pennsylvania) of the event. These primary sources include newspaper articles, court proceedings, presidential proclamations, and state petitions. There are also works of art created in Western Pennsylvania by an artist/historian who interviewed descendants of the Whiskey Rebels.

The sources have been divided into 3 topics with related supporting questions and formative tasks. The topics will focus on 1) the causes of the rebellion, 2) the rebel acts of protest and 3) the government reaction to the rebellion. The topics are organized chronologically. The tasks are arranged in a logical sequential manner beginning with students observing, reflecting and questioning to gather evidence they can use in writing an argument that takes a position to answer the compelling question.

The premise of this inquiry was that history is most often written by the victors who do not tell the stories of those who lost. We have suggested an Extension Activity to the Summative Performance Task that encourages students to rewrite a textbook account of the Whiskey Rebellion reflecting the point of view of the working class poor on the 1794 American Frontier.

Staging the Compelling Question

Compelling Question	Were the Whiskey Rebels champions of the common man or treasonous traitors?
Featured Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Source A: Whiskey Rebellion Textbook Account• Source B: Whiskey Rebellion Monument

Staging the compelling question

Use photos of the Whiskey Rebellion Statue as the Question Focus in a [QFT](#) activity ([Right Question Institute](#)) Give the location (Washington, Pa), the date it was erected (2009) and the historic era it represents (1791-95) for context. The questions students raise can then be posted in the classroom and used to guide the inquiry in directions they think are important.

After questions have been generated but not yet prioritized, read a textbook version of the Whiskey Rebellion and have students add to their list of questions. This exercise will indicate what prior knowledge students have and what new information they are interested in finding. This will provide valuable information for making this inquiry relatable to students.

Compelling Question

Featured Source A

Whiskey Rebellion Textbook Account

Excerpt

The Whiskey Rebellion

More conflicts arose on the frontier when Congress passed a tax on American-made whiskey in March 1791. Farmers who produced small amounts of whiskey for trade argued that they could not afford the tax. After being fined for not paying the tax, farmer William Smith wrote, "I felt my blood boil." What began as the complaints of a few turned into the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794. Protesters refused to pay the tax and even tarred and feathered tax collectors. Some called themselves the new Sons of Liberty.

President Washington saw the rebels as a threat to federal authority. Under the Constitution, Congress had the power to pass the tax. He assembled some 13,000 men from state militias. The army approached western Pennsylvania in November of 1794. By this time, most of the rebels had fled, and the Whiskey Rebellion ended without a battle.

Source:

Stuckey, Sterling and Salvucci, Linda Kerrigan. (2003) *Call to Freedom Beginning to 1877*. Austin, TX: Holt.

Compelling Question

Featured Source B

Whiskey Rebellion Monument



Whiskey Rebellion Monument. Erected 2009. Washington, PA. Historic Era, 1791-95
Center photo by Wintermantle, Mike. The Whiskey Rebellion Monument. The Historical Marker Database.

<https://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=40412>

Corner photos by Ann Canning, May 26, 2018

Supporting Question 1

Supporting Question	What caused the Whiskey Rebellion?
Formative Performance Task	List the viewpoints of the Federal Government and the Western Pennsylvania Farmers about the Whiskey Tax of 1791.
Featured Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Source A: Primary Sources for Supporting Question #1

This question and the related primary sources were chosen to begin the inquiry with an investigation of the political and economic landscape of the United States in 1791.

Formative Performance Task

To complete this task, students will read an excerpt of the Excise Tax, Alexander Hamilton quotes on taxation, and Albert Gallatin's Petition to the Federal Government from the citizens of Pennsylvania. They will then list the different viewpoints on a T-Chart graphic organizer for reference in answering the compelling question at the end of the inquiry.

Supporting Question 1

Featured Source A

Primary Sources for Supporting Question #1

Excerpt

The following primary sources are linked to the original sources found on the Internet. Printable pdfs of these sources may be downloaded from the Primary Source Set link in the citation. The Primary Source set includes transcripts of hard to read newspaper articles. The newspaper articles themselves have been clipped in the Primary Source Set so students can focus on the small section that relates to this inquiry.

1. [The Excise Tax of 1791](#)
2. [Alexander Hamilton and the Whiskey Tax](#)
3. [Petition against the Excise Tax By Inhabitants of Western Pennsylvania \[Penned by Albert Gallatin\], 1792](#)

Source:

[PrimarySourceSet.pdf](#)

Supporting Question 2

Supporting Question	Were the protest actions of the Whiskey Rebels in 1791-1794 protected by the First Amendment?
Formative Performance Task	Record observations, reflections, and questions about the protest actions of the Whiskey Rebels.
Featured Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Source A: Primary Sources for Supporting Question #2

This question will help students make the connection between the 1791-4 protests in Western Pennsylvania to the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights which was ratified in March of 1791. It is important to recognize that many of the frontiersmen had fought in the revolution for the individual freedoms and the right to govern themselves. Many of their protest actions which seem violent to us today had been common practice during the American Revolution. At the time the Bill of Rights was ratified, the definition of those individual rights was unclear. The Whiskey Rebellion brought some compromise and clarity to those who ruled in Philadelphia and those who were ruled on the frontier.

Formative Performance Task

Chalk Talk: Silently and individually record observations, reflections, and questions about the protest actions of the Whiskey Rebels posted on charts around the room. Return to the charts to see what others wrote. Comment and ask questions related to the comments of others. Then decide which protest actions were protected by the First Amendment. ([Bill of Rights](#))

Supporting Question 2

Featured Source A

Primary Sources for Supporting Question #2

Excerpt

The following primary sources are linked to the original sources found on the Internet. Printable pdfs of these sources may be downloaded from the Primary Source Set link in the citation. The Primary Source set includes transcripts of hard to read newspaper articles. The newspaper articles themselves have been clipped in the Primary Source Set so students can focus on the small section that relates to this inquiry.

1. [1792 Meeting in Pittsburgh](#)
2. [Raising the Liberty Pole](#)
3. [Fort Gaddis Liberty Pole](#)
4. [Tarring and Feathering](#)
5. [Burning Cabin](#)
6. [Tom The Tinker Note](#)
7. [Parkinson Ferry Meeting](#)
8. [Postal Theft](#)
9. [Counsel Before the Attack](#)

Source:

[PrimarySourceSet.pdf](#)

Supporting Question 3

Supporting Question	Did the Federal Government treat the rebels justly according to the 6th and 8th Amendments?
Formative Performance Task	Complete Library of Congress Analysis Tool organizer for each of the featured primary sources.
Featured Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Source A: Primary Source Set for Supporting Question #3

This question was designed to investigate the Federal Government's reaction to the Whiskey Rebellion and determine if these actions were constitutional. A copy of the Bill of Rights is included so students may reference the 6th and 8th amendments specifically.

Formative Performance Task

[Library of Congress Analysis Tool](#): Divide class into small groups and use the Analysis Tool prompts to observe, reflect, and question the featured primary sources. Each small group will report back to the total class as to the constitutionality of the Federal reactions to the Whiskey Rebellion. ([Bill of Rights](#)) Note: In the Appendix, you will find printable pdfs of the Library of Congress Analysis tool customized with prompts for newspapers, photos and prints, books and other printed materials. The link above takes you to an online interactive form with prompts for numerous formats.

Supporting Question 3

Featured Source A

Primary Source Set for Supporting Question #3

Excerpt

The following primary sources are linked to the original sources found on the Internet. Printable pdfs of these sources may be downloaded from the Primary Source Set link in the citation. The Primary Source set includes transcripts of hard to read newspaper articles. The newspaper articles themselves have been clipped in the Primary Source Set so students can focus on the small section that relates to this inquiry.

1. [The Terrible Night](#)
2. [The Dreadful Night](#) (Brackenridge Text p.316-18)
3. [Calling Out the Militia](#)
4. [Philip Vigol's Trial](#)
5. [Vegol and Mitchell Sentencing](#)
6. [Presidential Pardons](#) (Mitchell and Vigol)
7. [Bradford Wanted Poster](#) (Devens, R.M. p. 164)
8. [Presidential Pardon \(Bradford\)](#)

Source:

[PrimarySourceSet.pdf](#)

Summative Performance Task

Compelling Question	Were the Whiskey Rebels champions of the common man or treasonous traitors?
Argument	Were the Whiskey Rebels champions of the common man or treasonous traitors? Write an argument taking a position on this compelling question consisting of a series of claims with supporting evidence that draws from all three formative tasks
Extension	Rewrite a textbook description of the Whiskey Rebellion to more accurately reflect multiple perspectives and the primary sources analyzed in this inquiry.
Additional Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whiskey Rebellion Primary Source Set.pdf (https://s3.amazonaws.com/idm-dev/u/0/a/0/a/5493/0a0a3c8ff2619d1b39980fac20874237dc81c35c.pdf)

Argument

The argument should consist of a series of claims with supporting evidence that draws from all three formative tasks. Students' claims should be representative of all three topics that they examined in the formative tasks: the Excise Tax, the Whiskey Rebels' protest actions and the Federal Government's reactions.

Extension

Textbook entries about the Whiskey Rebellion are short and one sided. This writing exercise will broaden the scope and tell some of the untold stories of the Whiskey Rebels.

Taking Informed Action

Understand	Ask each student or teams of students to select a person from their neighborhood, city, or state that they think deserves a historic monument.
Assess	Create a persuasive proposal.
Action	Send your proposal to the major, governor or a preservation organization.

Nominating a person to be honored by a historic monument: This activity is an opportunity for students to apply what they have learned about historic monuments to a local personality who has not yet been recognized for their significant legacy. It took 215 years for the Whiskey Rebels to be recognized for their positive contributions in Western Pennsylvania. By taking this type of action, students will understand the importance of honoring citizens who have contributed to the common good of American society.

- [Analyzing Newspapers.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/idm-dev/u/e/f/c/0/5493/efc01da78d3af0560957f5be8845d72d1c1791c4.pdf) (https://s3.amazonaws.com/idm-dev/u/e/f/c/0/5493/efc01da78d3af0560957f5be8845d72d1c1791c4.pdf)
- [Analyzing Photographs and Prints.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/idm-dev/u/1/6/2/a/5493/162a124a85cc675962554141f71006729e339841.pdf) (https://s3.amazonaws.com/idm-dev/u/1/6/2/a/5493/162a124a85cc675962554141f71006729e339841.pdf)
- [Analyzing Books and Other Printed Texts.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/idm-dev/u/2/1/e/1/5493/21e1e720d653436ab3cb5ac4d5ad23c09e82caf5.pdf) (https://s3.amazonaws.com/idm-dev/u/2/1/e/1/5493/21e1e720d653436ab3cb5ac4d5ad23c09e82caf5.pdf)
- [Whiskey Rebellion Primary Source Set.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/idm-dev/u/0/a/0/a/5493/0a0a3c8ff2619d1b39980fac20874237dc81c35c.pdf) (https://s3.amazonaws.com/idm-dev/u/0/a/0/a/5493/0a0a3c8ff2619d1b39980fac20874237dc81c35c.pdf)

