



Grade 5 Lesson Plan #11: Loyalists and the American Revolution

Teacher Notes

This lesson builds upon Lesson 10, where students explored the political philosophy of American Patriots and why many colonists believed independence from Britain was necessary. In Lesson 11, students examine the perspectives of Loyalists—colonists who remained loyal to Britain during the American Revolution.

The focus of this lesson is understanding why many colonists chose not to support independence and how their beliefs differed from those of Patriots.

Students learn that:

- Colonists disagreed deeply about independence.
- Loyalists believed Britain provided stability, protection, and economic opportunity.
- Many Loyalists feared that independence would create disorder and violence.
- Some Loyalists remained loyal because of personal or economic connections.
- Reasonable people sometimes reach different conclusions about important political questions.

This lesson is organized into two phases. Phase 1 builds meaning through vocabulary, reading, and text coding. Phase 2 builds argument through gathering evidence and using it to engage in writing. The lesson culminates in a structured Revolutionary Writers essay comparing Patriot and Loyalist perspectives through Thomas Lynch Jr. and William Franklin.

Competition Note: For teachers participating in the FIREWORKS250 year 2 cohort, this essay is one of nine potential essays students may select for the Revolutionary Writers Essay Competition. Each lesson introduces a key Founding Father or revolutionary while integrating civics standards. Teachers will introduce these individuals to students with a biography and video before students write their essay.

Materials

- Highlighters or pencils for text coding
- Handout #1: Loyalists—Why Some Colonists Chose to Stay with Britain
- Handout #2: Essay Writing Organizer
- Handout #3: Directed Note-Taking Graphic Organizer
- Handout #4: Video Notes Organizer

Note: Students may use any notes from any handout (text coding, video notes, or graphic organizer) when writing their essay. These are not separate tasks but support tools for the final essay.

Preparation

- Number paragraphs in the reading text.
- Review vocabulary: Loyalists, Patriots, Neutrals, Stability, Independence, Revolution
- Before class, locate and read the biography from the White House Freedom 250 Founders Museum for Thomas Lynch Jr.: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/freedom250/founders-museum/signers/profiles>.
- Load the video Thomas Lynch Jr. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w3MekOz7sNA> and, if selected, The Franklins Choose Opposing Sides in the Revolution before class: <https://www.pbs.org/video/franklins-choose-opposing-sides-revolution-pg11qh/>.
- Prepare essay writing model. See sample paragraph in Essay Writing section.
- Be prepared to connect this lesson to: Lesson 10 (Patriot political philosophy).

Standards Alignment

Florida Grade 5 Civics Literacy Standard **SS.5.CG.2.1**: Discuss the political ideas of Patriots, Loyalists and other colonists about the American Revolution. *Clarification*: Students explain why some colonists chose to remain loyal to Britain during the American Revolution.

Essential Question

Why did some colonists choose to remain loyal to Britain during the American Revolution?

Phase 1: Make Meaning (Input → Interpretation)

Purpose: Students understand why many colonists remained loyal to Britain and how Loyalist beliefs differed from Patriot beliefs.

Hook—Open Response (5 minutes)

- *Teacher prompt:* “What would make someone stay loyal to a government when many of their neighbors wanted to break away from it?” Accept all reasonable responses.
- *Quick pair share:* Students briefly discuss. Do not correct yet. Students will return to these questions at the end of the lesson.

- What might people worry about if a major government suddenly changed? (Possible student ideas: safety, jobs, stability, family traditions, economic concerns, fear of conflict.)

Vocabulary Instruction (10–12 minutes)

- *Introduce and clarify the following terms:*
 - **Loyalists:** Colonists who remained loyal to Britain and the king.
 - **Patriots:** Colonists who wanted independence from Britain.
 - **Neutrals:** Colonists who tried not to take sides.
 - **Stability:** A condition in which things remain orderly and predictable.
 - **Independence:** Freedom from control by another country.
 - **Revolution:** A major change in government or political power.
- *Teacher prompts:*
 - “Why might people disagree about major political changes?”
 - “Why would some colonists support Britain?”
 - “Why might others support independence?”
 - “Can reasonable people disagree about what is best for their country?”

Note: Students should understand that the colonies were deeply divided. Not all colonists supported independence. This lesson focuses primarily on the ideas that motivated Loyalists and students should recognize that these disagreements affected families, communities, and friendships.

Reading and Text Coding (25–30 minutes)

- *Teacher prompt:* “As you read today, pay attention to the reasons Loyalists chose to remain loyal to Britain.”
- *Students read:* Loyalists—Why Some Colonists Chose to Stay with Britain (Handout #1)
- *Students use three codes to mark sections:*
 - L (Loyalist Beliefs) Reasons people remained loyal to Britain.
 - P (Patriot Arguments): Arguments supporting independence.
 - I (Important Information): Important background or context that does not clearly fit L or P.

Note: The “I” code is intentionally open. Students who disagree about coding are engaging in strong historical thinking. Use discussion prompts such as: “Why did you choose I instead of P?” “Could this paragraph fit more than one code?” “What evidence supports your thinking?”

Teacher Modeling—I Do (5 minutes)

- *Think aloud:*
 - “This paragraph explains why some colonists feared independence would create chaos. That’s why I’d code it L.”
 - “This section describes Patriot arguments about rights and independence, so I’d code it P.”
 - “This paragraph provides historical context without clearly supporting either side. It’s important background information, so I might code it I.”

- Model uncertainty and evidence-based reasoning. Not every paragraph fits neatly into one category. Encourage students to explain and defend their thinking.

Guided Practice—We Do (5 minutes)

- *Read the next paragraph together.* Celebrate productive disagreement. There is no single correct answer for every paragraph.
 - “What is this section mostly explaining?”
 - “Is this describing Loyalist beliefs, Patriot arguments, or important background information?”
 - “Could more than one answer make sense?”
 - “What evidence supports your thinking?”
 - Celebrate productive disagreement.

Independent Practice—You Do (15–20 minutes)

- *Students continue coding independently.*
- *Teacher prompts:*
 - “Why did some colonists remain loyal?”
 - “What concerns did Loyalists have?”
 - “How did personal experiences shape people’s choices?”
 - “What evidence supports your code?”

Phase 2: Build Argument (Synthesis → Evidence → Writing)

Purpose: Students gather and use evidence to explain why some colonists remained loyal to Britain.

- *Teacher prompt:* “Now that we’ve learned about the Loyalists, gather evidence that explains why some colonists believed remaining part of Britain was the best choice.”

Directed Note-Taking (15–20 minutes, Handout #3)

Guiding Question:

Why did some colonists choose to remain loyal to Britain during the American Revolution?

- *Teacher prompt:* “Today you are gathering evidence to explain why many colonists believed that remaining part of Britain was the best choice. Think carefully about both the ideas and concerns that influenced them.” Remind students to use paragraph numbers when citing text evidence. Students may draw on notes from any handout when writing their essay.

Concern	Evidence (paragraph #)	What this shows about Loyalist beliefs
Disloyalty to existing government		
Disruption to economic stability and trade		
Fear of chaos and violence		
Personal circumstances and connections		

- *Teacher prompts:*
 - “Why might stability matter to people?”
 - “Why were some people afraid of revolution?”
 - “How did family and careers influence decisions?”
 - “Which concern seems most important to you?”

Meet a Founding Father: Thomas Lynch Jr. (10 minutes)

- *Teacher prompt:* “In the last lesson, we met Samuel Adams, a Patriot leader. Today we’ll compare two men who made very different choices during the American Revolution: Thomas Lynch Jr. and William Franklin. As you listen to the biography of Thomas Lynch Jr. and watch the video, think about why two father and son pairs living in the same time period might reach very different conclusions. Both Thomas Lynch Jr. and his father were Patriots, but the Franklin father and son pair chose opposite sides, with Benjamin Franklin choosing to be a Patriot and his son, William, choosing to be a Loyalist.”
- **Read** the Thomas Lynch Jr. biography aloud to the class from:
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/freedom250/founders-museum/signers/profiles>
- **Show** the Thomas Lynch Jr. video to the class from:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w3MekOz7sNA>
- **[Optional]** You may choose to also show the video included in the teacher resources—The Franklins Choose Opposing Sides in the Revolution, <https://www.pbs.org/video/franklins-choose-opposing-sides-revolution-pg11qh/>—if you believe it would support your students’ understanding of Loyalist perspectives and how the Revolution affected families.

Note: The video may help students connect emotionally and personally to Loyalist William Franklin and the choice he made in opposition to his father. The text remains the primary source for understanding Loyalist political philosophy.

- *Students complete Handout #4 while watching.*
- *Teacher prompts (after video):*
 - “What influenced Thomas Lynch Jr.’s decision?”
 - “What influenced William Franklin’s decision?”
 - “How did their careers affect their choices?”
 - “What risks did each man face?”

Interpretive Discussion (10 minutes)

- *Teacher prompt:* “Why did some colonists remain loyal to Britain?”
- *Students discuss:*
 - Were Loyalists simply afraid of change?
 - What benefits did Britain provide?
 - Why might revolution seem risky?
 - Can people disagree while still wanting what is best for their country?
- *Teacher prompt (after students talk):* “Many Loyalists believed Britain provided stability, protection, and opportunity. They worried that independence could create uncertainty and conflict.” Let this synthesis emerge from student responses rather than leading with it.

Debate: Why did the Loyalists continue to support Britain? (10–12 minutes)

Teacher Setup: Display the debate question and the four concerns:

The Debate Question

Which concern best explains why many Loyalists remained loyal to Britain?

Loyalist concerns:

- Disloyalty to existing government
- Disruption to economic stability and trade
- Fear of chaos and violence
- Personal circumstances and connections

Note: These are different ways the text helps explain Loyalist decisions.

Debate Directions

Choose one concern and explain why it best explains Loyalist support for Britain. Students must support their thinking using evidence from the text or video.

Structured Discussion

- Call on students who chose different ideas. *Prompts include:*
 - “What evidence supports your position?”
 - “Does another group disagree?”
 - “Which concern would have mattered most to colonists?”
 - “Would all Loyalists have agreed with each other? Why or why not?”
 - “If you lived in 1776, what might have influenced your choice? Explain.”
 - There is no single correct answer. The goal is for students to use evidence to defend a position—exactly the thinking the essay requires. Teachers may shorten discussion or combine steps depending on class time.

Bridge to Essay

- *Teacher prompt:* “Today you explored why colonists made different choices during the Revolution. Your essay will ask you to compare two individuals who reached very different conclusions.”

Primary Assessment Task (20–25 minutes, Handout #2)

Revolutionary Writers Essay: Thomas Lynch Jr. and William Franklin

Important: This essay is the primary assessment for Lesson 11 and also serves as one of nine potential student essays for the FIREWORKS250 Revolutionary Writers Essay Competition for students with teachers participating in cohort 2. Participating teachers should save all student essays. Students will select their best essay at the end of the year to submit for the competition.

- *Teacher prompt:* “If you were living in 1776, would you have chosen to stay loyal like William Franklin or become a Patriot like Thomas Lynch Jr.? Explain your choice and how their different jobs and family situations influenced their decisions. Use details from the text and video. Use Handout #2 to plan and write your essay.”

Writing Prompt

If you were living in 1776, would you have chosen to stay loyal like William Franklin or become a Patriot like Thomas Lynch Jr.?

Explain your answer using details from the text and the video.

Students should write a paragraph that:

- explains which perspective they would have supported.
- describes Thomas Lynch Jr.'s perspective.
- describes William Franklin's perspective.
- explains how family, career, and beliefs influenced each man.
- uses evidence from the text and video.

Sentence starters to share with students (optional):

If I lived in 1776, I would have...

Thomas Lynch Jr. believed...

William Franklin believed...

One reason Loyalists remained loyal was...

One reason Patriots supported independence was...

Their different experiences influenced them because...

I would have made this choice because...

Sample paragraph:

If I lived in 1776, I would have chosen to become a Patriot like Thomas Lynch Jr. Thomas Lynch Jr. believed the colonies should govern themselves and protect their rights. William Franklin remained loyal to Britain because he believed independence could lead to conflict and instability. While both men cared about their country, I would have supported independence because I believe people should have a voice in their government. Their different jobs, experiences, and beliefs helped them reach different conclusions about the Revolution.

Closure (5 minutes)

- **Teacher prompt:** “Today we learned that not all colonists agreed about independence. Patriots and Loyalists looked at many of the same events but reached different conclusions, even within families.”
- **Turn-and-Talk teacher prompt:** “Which Loyalist concern do you think was most understandable—and why?”
- **Exit Ticket prompt:** “What was the strongest reason some colonists remained loyal to Britain?”

Handout #1

Loyalists—Why Some Colonists Chose to Stay with Britain

In the 1770s, the 13 American colonies were part of the British Empire. People who lived here had to decide whose side they were on when trouble started between the colonies and Britain. Historians say the colonists split into three main groups:

- **Patriots**—They wanted independence from Britain and were ready to fight for it.
- **Loyalists (also called Tories)**—They stayed loyal to King George III and the British government.
- **Neutrals**—They tried to stay out of the fight and not pick a side.

This split turned neighbors against neighbors and even tore families apart. It made the American Revolution feel like America's first civil war—a war not just against Britain, but between Americans who disagreed about the future. This story is about the **Loyalists** and why they chose to side with Britain instead of joining the Patriots in revolution.

What Did Loyalists Believe? Their Political Philosophy

Loyalists believed the British government was the best way to keep order and protect people's lives and property. They saw King George III and Parliament as a stable system that had protected the colonies for many years. They believed the king had the right to rule and that Parliament could make laws for the entire empire.

Many Loyalists worried that breaking away would lead to chaos, fighting among Americans, or even a new kind of tyranny from Patriot leaders. They believed loyalty to Britain was safer than risking everything on a new government. Loyalists often said the king was far away and didn't interfere much, while a revolution could bring angry crowds, mob rule, and loss of rights.

Why Did Some Colonists Choose to Be Loyalists?

Loyalists had many reasons for staying with Britain—some political, some economic, some personal, and some out of fear.

- **Political and Philosophical Reasons.** Many Loyalists believed in loyalty to the king as the rightful ruler. They thought the colonies were part of a big empire that worked well overall. Crown officials (like governors) and people with government jobs depended on Britain for their positions. Some worried that independence would cause anarchy and misery.
- **Economic Reasons.** Trade with Britain was very important. Merchants who sold goods to England feared losing their business if the colonies broke away. Farmers and shopkeepers

who benefited from British markets or protection also preferred to stay. In places like New York, some tenants supported Britain because they hoped the king would help them against high rents from Patriot landlords.

- **Fear and Safety.** Many Loyalists were afraid of Patriot mobs, boycotts, or forced loyalty oaths. They saw Patriots using violence (like tar-and-feathering) against anyone who disagreed. Staying neutral or quiet became hard, so some chose the British side to feel safer. During the war, British armies controlled cities like New York, where Loyalists could live with less harassment.
- **Special Groups.** Enslaved people sometimes joined the British because they promised freedom (like in Lord Dunmore's Proclamation). About 20,000 enslaved people fled to British lines hoping for a better life. Native Americans, such as some Iroquois nations, trusted Britain more to respect their lands than colonists who wanted to take more territory.

A Famous Loyalist Example: William Franklin

William Franklin, the son of Patriot leader Benjamin Franklin, was a strong Loyalist. As the royal governor of New Jersey, his job and authority came directly from the king. Politically, he believed in British rule and thought rebellion would bring chaos and civil war. He urged people to stay loyal and warned that independence would lead to disorder.

Personally, William had built a good life under British rule. He improved roads, supported schools, and felt connected to British traditions. When the war began, he refused to switch sides, even when his father begged him to join the Patriots. Their deep differences split the family forever. William was arrested by Patriots, spent years in prison, and later led Loyalist efforts from British-held New York. After the war, he lived in exile in London, never reconciling with his father. William's story shows how some colonists saw loyalty to Britain as the path to stability and order, even when it cost them family ties.

Another Famous Loyalist: Joseph Galloway

Joseph Galloway was a wealthy Pennsylvania lawyer and politician who had been friends with Benjamin Franklin and even served as speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly. Politically, he believed in a strong connection to Britain. He proposed a plan at the First Continental Congress in 1774 for a union between the colonies and Britain, with an American parliament that could work with the king and British Parliament. When the other delegates rejected his idea and moved toward independence, Galloway felt the Patriots were going too far and risking everything on rebellion.

Personally, Galloway feared chaos and violence from Patriot crowds. He thought British rule provided law and protection that a new government could not guarantee. During the war, he helped the British when they occupied Philadelphia, acting as a superintendent to keep order. After the Patriots took back the city, Galloway fled to Britain in 1778, where he lived in exile and never returned. Like many Loyalists, he lost his home and property, but he believed he had chosen the side of reason and stability over dangerous revolution.

Many Loyalists faced hard times. Patriots took their property, forced them out of homes, or attacked them. After the war, about 60,000 to 80,000 Loyalists left America as refugees, moving to Canada, Britain, or other places. They often lost everything but felt they had chosen the side of law and safety.

The Revolution was a trying and difficult time. It divided Americans deeply because not everyone saw independence as the best answer. Some believed staying with Britain would protect their rights, jobs, and way of life better than starting over with an uncertain new government. The Patriots won, but Loyalists' reasons help us understand why history is so complicated and why people sometimes disagree strongly.

Handout #2: Essay Writing Organizer

Writing Prompt

If you were living in 1776, would you have chosen to stay loyal like William Franklin or become a Patriot like Thomas Lynch Jr.?

Explain your answer using details from the text and the video.

Remember: Use what you learned about Thomas Lynch Jr. and William Franklin from the lesson materials and video and what you read in the text about Loyalist concerns and actions.

Step 1: Choose a Loyalist Concern

Which concern do you think best explains why Loyalists remained loyal to Britain?

☐ Disloyalty to existing government ☐ Disruption to economic stability and trade ☐ Fear of chaos and violence ☐ Personal circumstances and connections

Step 2: Plan Your Essay

Which of these two people (Franklin or Lynch Jr.) would you have supported?

I would have supported _____

Why did Thomas Lynch Jr. support independence?

Thomas Lynch Jr. believed _____

Why did William Franklin remain loyal to Britain?

William Franklin believed _____

How did family, career, or personal experiences influence their decisions?

Their decisions were influenced by _____

Would you have made the same choice?

I would have chosen this side because _____

Step 3: Gather Your Evidence

Evidence from the text (include paragraph number):

Paragraph ____: _____

Evidence from the video or biographies:

Step 4: Write Your Essay

Use the space below to write your essay paragraph.

[illegible]

Sentence Starters (optional)

If I lived in 1776, I would have...

Thomas Lynch Jr. believed...

William Franklin believed...

One reason Loyalists remained loyal was...

One reason Patriots supported independence was...

Their different experiences influenced them because...

I would have made this choice because...

Handout #3: Directed Note-Taking Graphic Organizer

Guiding Question:

Why did some colonists choose to remain loyal to Britain during the American Revolution?

Directions: As you read the text, record evidence below. Find evidence for each concern Loyalists had about independence and revolution. Include paragraph numbers for text evidence.

Concern	Evidence (paragraph #)	What this shows about Loyalist beliefs
Disloyalty to existing government		
Disruption to economic stability and trade		
Fear of chaos and violence		
Personal circumstances and connections		

Think About It:

What were Loyalists most concerned about during the Revolution?

Which Loyalist concern do you think mattered most? Why?

Handout #4: Video Notes Organizer

Video: Thomas Lynch Jr.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w3MekOz7sNA>

Directions: Listen as your teacher reads the biography of Thomas Lynch Jr. and then watch the video. Think about why Thomas Lynch Jr. and William Franklin reached very different conclusions about the American Revolution. Answer the questions below.

1. What influenced Thomas Lynch Jr.'s decision to support independence?

2. What influenced William Franklin's decision to remain loyal to Britain?

3. How did their careers, families, or personal experiences affect their choices?

4. After watching the video, which choice do you think would have been more difficult: becoming a Patriot or remaining a Loyalist? Explain your thinking.
