Name: Class:

## The Fight for Freedom and Independence of the First Nations of North America

By Shana Brown (Yakama), OSPI Indian Education Directions: Use the column on the right to summarize, make predictions, or ask questions.

We as a nation celebrate the Declaration	
of Independence with joy and pride, and	
rightly so! The freedoms all Americans	
enjoy were hard won and deserve to be	
celebrated and remembered. For native	
peoples, however, the Declaration of	
Independence has another meaning, too.	
The Declaration of Independence	
supported the <b>misperceptions</b> of	
Indians at that time. Because Indians	
were referred to as 'savages' in the	
Declaration, many thought that this gave	
them the right to take advantage of and	
destroy Indians. The Declaration of	
Independence, whether or not the	
Founding Fathers intended it, encouraged	
the destruction of the independence, or	
sovereignty, of tribal people.	
The Declaration says that Indians were	
"merciless Indian savages" who fought	
for the British Empire. This is only a	
small part of the whole truth.	
Stop reading here and respond to the	
following: How do you think an author's	
choice of words affects how we view history?	
Why might calling native people 'savages'	
make it okay to treat them poorly?	

Name: Colin Calloway, author of <i>The American</i>	Class:
Revolution in Indian Country, begins his	
book with a simple, yet powerful	
comparison:	
Indian people in revolutionary	
America, whether they sided with	
rebels, redcoats, neither, or both, were	
doing pretty much the same thing as	
the American colonists: fighting for their	
freedom in tumultuous times. The	
Revolution was an anti-colonial war of	
<b>liberation</b> for Indian peoples too, but	
the <b>threat</b> to their freedom often came	
from colonial neighbors rather than	
distant capitals [meaning England,	
France, or Spain], and their colonial	
experience did not end with American	
independence. (xiii)	
Mr. Calloway is saying that it did not	· -
matter which side tribes sided with.	
After the American Revolution, the	
Indian fight for independence was just	
beginning.	
Stop reading here and respond to the	
following: Why do you think Mr. Calloway	
says that Indians were fighting for their	
freedom, too? Why might they need to fight	
Americans to regain their freedom?	

For the first peoples of this continent,	Class:
the American Revolution was	
devastating. It destroyed their ways of	
life and eliminated entire tribes and	
their homelands.	
During the American Revolution, Tribes	
built <b>alliances</b> to preserve their own	
freedoms and homelands. Does this	
sound like the exact same goals as the	
colonists? Because the Revolution was	
about the control of Indian lands as	
much as it was about colonial	
independence, Indians lost freedom as	
Americans gained it. But loss of land	
was not the only price Indian nations	
paid.	
During times of war, violence crops up	
in many places other than on the	
battlefield. In <b>futile</b> attempts to	
preserve their tribal sovereignty,	
Tribal nations often waged war against	
each other. Many tribes sided with,	<del> </del>
battled, destroyed, and were destroyed	
by each other. Many challenged their	
own tribal traditional ways of life, and	
civil war was the result.	
Stop reading here and respond to the	
following: Why do you think war often	
causes people to fight among themselves?	

Name: Just as in any war, there was land lost	Class:
and gained, and some tribes forced other	
tribes to move from their traditional	
homelands. For example, the Shawnees	
of Ohio moved to Missouri, and the	
·	
Iroquois League split in two: one side	
lived in New York; the other in Ontario,	
Canada.	
The sad truth is that it did not matter	
who Indian nations fought for: the	
outcome of the American Revolution for	
the many independent Northeastern	
tribes was a massive destruction of	
tribal sovereignty—an end to the	
freedoms they had known since time	
immemorial.	
Stop reading here and respond to the	
following: Do you think that whoever lives in	
a place <u>first</u> should make a difference in	
their right to remain there? Why? In the	
case of the Indian Nations who lived in	
Colonial America long before anyone else,	
what do you think would have been fair for	
the Colonists to do—especially when they	
were fighting for their own freedom?	
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## **Study Questions:**

Directions: After reading the article "The Fight for Freedom for the First Nations of North America," answer the following questions as completely as you can. If you have questions, be sure to include them in your answers, too.

- 1. In addition to the fight for independence, what were the English, Americans, and the many Tribal Nations fighting for during the American Revolution? (Land)
- 2. Why might Indian nations in North America feel sad or angry about the Declaration of Independence—even today? (The document calls them "merciless Indian savages." The new Americans did not consider them people, and therefore Indians had no rightful claim to their homelands. Tribes lost their freedom to practice their lifeways and live where they wanted.)
- 3. Why did some Indian Nations side with the British? The Americans? (Tribes sided with whatever side gave them the best chance of maintaining their lifeways and homelands).
- 4. Why did tribes begin fighting with each other during the American Revolution? (From a behavioral perspective, the option available to Indian tribes was fight or flight. It is natural that desperate tribes would look for other ways to protect their people and homelands—even at the expense ofneighboring tribesand their own tribal members who did not agree with them. Remember that each tribe was a distinct nation who fought against other tribes well before colonization of North America. Just like countries in Europe, they had enemies, allies, and military strategy for the purposes of expansion as well as self-preservation.)
- 5. Why was the fight for independence just beginning after the American Revolution ended? (The American victory over the British ensured that borders would be secured for American, French, and British inhabitants alone. Though the US treated with individual tribes as sovereign nations after the war, most treaties were ignored. The Northwest Ordinance of 1789, for example, declared that no Indian land would be taken without consent.
- 6. Imagine that others are threatening your way of life. They want to force you and your family to leave your home and region forever. Friends and other family are being treated the same way. How would you feel? (Answers will vary and allow students to express emotions regarding fairness, disregard, etc.)

Name: Class:

- Vocabulary:
  1. Time Immemorial:

  - Tribal Sovereignty:
     Tumultuous (tumult):
  - 4. Liberation (liberate)
  - 5. Threat:
  - 6. Futile:
  - 7. Civil War:
  - 8. Alliances (ally):9. Misperception:

