



Day 2 French and Indian War
70 Minutes

Join or Die

Lesson Plan: Join, or Die — Symbols, Unity, and Persuasion

Grade Level: 6–8 (easily extendable to Grade 9)

Time: One class period (50–55 minutes)

Topic: Political symbolism, unity, and persuasive imagery

Anchor Artifact: *Join, or Die* woodcut

Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Explain the meaning and historical context of the *Join, or Die* symbol
 - Analyze how symbols communicate ideas quickly and powerfully
 - Compare historical political symbols to modern corporate logos
 - Demonstrate understanding through reading comprehension and symbolic analysis
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Essential Question

How can symbols influence people's thinking and actions—both in the past and today?

Materials

- **Join, or Die PowerPoint** (teacher-led anchor)
 - **Join, or Die article** (print or digital)
 - **Join, or Die differentiated reading comprehension activity**
 - **Join, or Die & Corporate Logos activity** (chart-based)
 - Optional: **Online Join, or Die jigsaw puzzle**
 - Colored pencils or crayons (for logo activity)
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Key Background for Teacher (Content Anchor)

The *Join, or Die* symbol remains one of the most iconic images of early American history. Originally created as a **woodcut** associated with **Benjamin Franklin**, it was intended to encourage unity among Britain's North American colonies during the **French and Indian War**.

At the time, a popular superstition suggested that a snake cut into pieces could come back to life if reassembled before sunset. Franklin used this imagery to argue that the colonies must unite quickly—or face defeat.

Lesson Procedure

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/french-and-indian-war/join-or-die>

1. Warm-Up / Do Now (5 minutes)

Prompt (on board or slide):

Look at the image of the snake cut into pieces. Without any explanation, what do you think this image is trying to say?

Students:

- Write 2–3 sentences or discuss briefly with a partner
- Share initial interpretations

Teacher Move:

Do **not** confirm answers yet—this primes students for symbolic thinking.

2. Anchor Instruction – PowerPoint Slideshow (10–12 minutes)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/fiwar/joinordie.pptx>

Use the **Join, or Die PowerPoint** as a guided mini-lesson.

Focus points:

- What *Join, or Die* is and when it was created
- Why unity mattered during the French and Indian War
- Why a snake was an effective symbol
- How symbols communicate ideas even to people who may struggle with reading

Checks for Understanding (oral):

- Why didn't Franklin just write an essay?
- Why might images be more powerful than words?

3. Guided Reading – Article + Differentiated Comprehension (15-25 minutes)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/french-and-indian-war/join-or-die>

Students read the **Join, or Die article**, then complete the **differentiated reading comprehension activity**. The comprehension activity can be completed online or printed out. Lexile level can be adjusted from 850 to 1050.

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/french-and-indian-war/comprehension-and-writing-activities/join-or-die-online-or-printable-reading-comprehension>

Teacher Role:

- Circulate
 - Prompt students to reference the image when answering questions
 - Encourage text-based evidence
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4. Activity 2 – Join, or Die & Corporate Logos (15 minutes)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/french-and-indian-war/join-or-die/join-or-die-and-corporate-logos>

Instructions:

The above symbol remains one of the iconic mages of the Revolutionary War. Originally made as a woodcut by Benjamin Franklin, it was intended to symbolize the need for unity among Britain's North American colonies toward the efforts in the French and Indian War. According to superstition at the time, a snake cut into pieces would become whole again if assembled before sunset.

Similarly, today's companies and corporations use symbols in their logos. Use the chart below to label and color three corporate logos that you are aware of and describe what you think each symbolizes.

Transition Statement:

"Franklin used a symbol to send a message quickly. Companies still do the same thing today."

Student Task

Using the provided chart, students:

1. Choose **three corporate logos** they recognize
2. Label each logo
3. Color the logos
4. Describe what they think each logo **symbolizes** (strength, speed, trust, fun, innovation, etc.)

Explicit Connection to History:

- Just as *Join, or Die* symbolized unity and urgency,
- Modern logos symbolize ideas companies want people to believe

Guiding Questions:

- Why do companies rely on images instead of long explanations?
 - How is this similar to Franklin's strategy?
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5. Optional Early-Finisher / Extension Activity

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/french-and-indian-war/join-or-die/join-or-die-online-jigsaw>

Online Join, or Die Jigsaw Puzzle

Purpose:

- Reinforces visual familiarity with the symbol
- Appeals to spatial and kinesthetic learners
- Low-stress reinforcement of historical content

This can also be:

- Homework
- A center station
- A reward-based activity in your dashboard system