



Day 12 American Revolution  
65 Minutes

John Hancock

## Lesson Overview

This lesson introduces students to John Hancock, one of the most influential Patriot leaders of the American Revolution. Using a teacher-led PowerPoint presentation as the anchor, students explore Hancock's rise to wealth, his political leadership, his role in the resistance movement, and the real story behind his famous signature on the Declaration of Independence.

Students then deepen understanding through a differentiated article, creative engagement with Hancock's signature, and multiple reading comprehension activities designed to support literacy and historical thinking.

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## Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe John Hancock's background and rise to prominence
- Explain how Hancock used wealth and influence to support independence
- Identify why the British targeted Hancock for arrest
- Explain Hancock's role in the Second Continental Congress
- Distinguish between legend and historical evidence regarding Hancock's signature

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## Essential Question

Why is John Hancock remembered as both a political leader and a powerful symbol of independence?

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## Materials

- PowerPoint presentation: *John Hancock*
- Differentiated article on John Hancock
- Printable or online signature activity (Declaration of Independence)
- Differentiated reading comprehension activities

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## Lesson Sequence

### 1. Hook and Engagement (5 minutes)

Begin with the prompt:

Why do some symbols become more famous than the events themselves?

Display an image of John Hancock's signature or write the name "John Hancock" on the board. Explain that today, his name is often used to mean "signature," but his importance went far beyond handwriting.

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### 2. PowerPoint Anchor Instruction (20 minutes)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/revwar/hancock.pptx>

Use the PowerPoint presentation as the instructional anchor.

Key ideas to emphasize while presenting:

- Hancock's upbringing by a wealthy uncle in Boston
- Education at Harvard and entry into the shipping business
- Opposition to British taxes and involvement with the Sons of Liberty
- Smuggling and financial support for resistance
- British attempts to arrest Hancock
- Leadership as president of the Second Continental Congress
- Commissioning of George Washington
- The truth behind the famous signature

Teacher emphasis:

Hancock risked wealth, reputation, and life by openly opposing British authority.

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### 3. Core Reading Activity (15 minutes)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/revolutionary-war/people-of-the-revolutionary-war/john-hancock>

Students read the **John Hancock differentiated article**, selecting an appropriate reading level.

Guided reading focus:

- Why Hancock's wealth mattered to the Patriot cause
- How political leadership differs from military leadership
- Why Hancock became a symbol of resistance

Students complete the corresponding differentiated reading comprehension activity.

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### 4. Creative Engagement: The Signature Activity (10–15 minutes)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/revolutionary-war/revolutionary-war-online-games/the-john-hancock-challenge>

In this interactive activity, students design their own signature in the bold spirit of John Hancock using different pen styles, effects, and Revolutionary War stamps. After creating their masterpiece, they can “publish” it by placing their signature directly onto a section of the Declaration of Independence—just like Hancock did. The challenge blends creativity with history, helping students connect personally to the courage and symbolism of signing the Declaration.

[Printable version of this activity](#)

Purpose of the activity:

- Reinforce historical symbolism
- Encourage discussion about risk and boldness
- Connect personal expression with historical action

Discussion prompts during or after the activity:

- What message does a bold signature send?
- Why might signing the Declaration have been frightening?

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## 5. Literacy Reinforcement and Differentiation (Optional / Ongoing)

Students complete additional **differentiated reading comprehension activities**:

- [John Hancock Printable Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 800
- [John Hancock Printable Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 1000
- [Sons of Liberty Printable Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 1100
- [Sons of Liberty Online Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 1100

### Optional

#### [John Hancock Super Paralauh](#)

These interactive Mad-Lib games let students fill in missing words about historical figures like John Hancock, Paul Revere, and the Statue of Liberty using specific parts of speech. After completing the story, students receive a score report, can print or save their results, and enjoy the read-aloud!

These activities may be used for centers, homework, or independent practice.

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### Closure (5 minutes)

Discussion prompt:

Why do people still remember John Hancock's name today?

Exit ticket options:

- One way Hancock supported independence
- One reason his signature became symbolic