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## *Chapter 10 U.S. History Film: “The Patriot”*

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### **The Patriot (2000) Rated “R”: 170 Minutes**

#### **Related Class Units of Study:**

- Causes of the American Revolution
- Conflict between the Tories and the Patriots (Debate Skills)
- The impact of the battles of the Revolution on the colonists

#### **Film Synopsis:**

*The Patriot*, starring Mel Gibson, is the story of a Revolutionary era South Carolinian widowed farmer who had fought years before in the French and Indian War. Benjamin Martin initially wants no part of the American Revolution and prefers to concentrate on raising his seven children. His opinion regarding the war changes drastically when one of his sons is taken prisoner and the other killed by a sadistic British officer. Martin becomes the leader of a colonial militia, not only fighting for independence for his fellow countrymen but also seeking revenge for the tragedies that have befallen his family.

#### **Related Class Activities:**

This film came under attack by some, who felt that Gibson’s production of the film greatly demonized the British and exaggerated some of the atrocities they supposedly committed. The film is meant for entertainment but does provide a vehicle for grabbing the students’ attention and will afford them the opportunity of discussing the dilemma facing many in the colonies who fought against the Mother Country. The film will also form the basis for an original creative writing assignment for the class, a “primary source” diary.

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1. I would recommend using this film toward the end of the unit of study on the American Revolution and after the students have had an opportunity to read and discuss the topic at home and in class. I would begin with lecture / discussion on the causes of the Revolution. Remind the students that only 1/3 of the colonists were in favor of fighting for independence (Patriots), 1/3 were opposed (Tories / Loyalists) and 1/3 were ambivalent.
2. Using the same method employed in Chapter 4 (Debate), the students should be assigned to one of two teams – either Tories or Patriots. Distribute **10:1 Debate Worksheet** and review the basic directions with them. Students should be given at least one class period in the library to conduct research and 1-2 additional class periods to prepare their arguments for the debate.
3. Using **10:2 Debate Point Sheet** facilitate the debate and score the students on their arguments and opening/closing statements.
4. Review with the students the difference between primary and secondary sources, as well as various types of these sources. For the next part of this unit, the students will complete a creative writing assignment based on the film *The Patriot*. They will take on the role of a colonial Patriot or Tory/Loyalist living during the American Revolution and write a 15-entry diary, using incidents from the film.
5. Review the directions in **10:3 Film Note sheet: The Patriot**. Instruct the students to take notes during the film, assigning the diary as homework. If time permits, you might want to have the students share their work in class.