

Lesson Plan: Exploring *Patriot Ink*

Time Needed: 2–3 class periods (45 minutes each)

Subjects: ELA, Social Studies, Theatre

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify and explain the **central themes** of the play, including liberty, independence, protest, and equality.
- Describe the contributions of **John Dunlap** and **Mary Katharine Goddard** to the American Revolution.
- Summarize **key historical events** referenced in the play (Stamp Act, Boston Massacre, Declaration of Independence, etc.)
- Analyze how characters show their beliefs through **dialogue and actions**.

Materials

- Teacher-selected excerpts from *Patriot Ink*
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Student notebooks

Introducing the Play & Its Historical Setting

Warm-Up Discussion

Ask:

- *What does it mean to stand up for something you believe in?*
- *How do ordinary people help shape big historical moments?*

Connect responses to the fact that the main characters, **John Dunlap** and **Mary Katharine Goddard**, were real printers who risked their livelihoods to spread revolutionary ideas.

Teacher Narrative: Setting the Scene

Explain that the play takes place in:

- **John Dunlap’s printing shop on July 4, 1776**, when he receives Thomas Jefferson’s “fair copy” of the Declaration of Independence to print.
- **Mary Katharine Goddard’s print shop in Baltimore in January 1777**, when she prints the first Declaration that included the names of all the delegates.

Highlight key events referenced in the play:

- **Stamp Act** and colonists' protests.
- **Boston Massacre** and rising tensions.
- **Boston Tea Party**.

Reflection

Prompt:

What did John Dunlap and Mary Katherin Goddard risk by printing the Declaration of Independence? Why were they willing to do it?

Character Study

1. Character Analysis Groups

Assign groups either **John Dunlap** or **Mary Katharine Goddard**.

Students complete a chart:

- **What the character says** (e.g., Dunlap's frustrations about taxes or Goddard's commitment to liberty).
- **What the character does** (e.g., stays up all night printing 200 broadsides; Goddard prints and signs her name on the 1777 edition).
- **Inferences** about personality (courageous, determined, patriotic).

Reflection

Ask:

How did printers like Dunlap and Goddard help shape the American Revolution even though they weren't Delegates?

Discussion, and Writing

Whole-Class Discussion

Prompt questions:

- *Why was printing such an important job during the Revolution?*
- *What challenges did Goddard face as a woman in the 1700s? (She couldn't own property if married, was removed from her post after years of service.)*
- *How does the play show that revolutions depend on both well-known leaders and everyday workers?*

Writing Assignment

Prompt:

Choose either John Dunlap or Mary Katharine Goddard. Explain how this character helped shape America and what personal risks they took. Use evidence from the play.

Assessment Options

- Participation in discussion
- Character chart
- Written response demonstrating understanding

Optional Extensions

- **Social Studies tie-in:** Compare broadsides with modern news media.
- **Art extension:** Students design their own “broadside” about an issue important to them, in the style of Dunlap or Goddard.

Excerpts from *Patriot Ink* by Brian Cox

*For classroom use only

DUNLAP

Isn't that always the way. I've been in the printing business since I was a wee lad and no one's ever said, "No need to rush, John." "Relax, it's not urgent, John." "Take your time, John." Not once, I tell you, in all my nearly 20 years as a printer.

Thomas Jefferson takes 17 days to write it, the Continental Congress takes two whole days to debate it and make revisions, and then everyone wants John Dunlap to hurry up and print copies of their Declaration of Independence right this minute. As though I can just snap my fingers and it's done.

Of course, I've been the congress' official printer for awhile now and I believe in the cause, to be sure, so I'll work late into the night to get it done. (back over his shoulder) Just don't ask a man to go faster than humanly possible is all I ask!

(considers the document in his hand)

Look at this, will you. (reading the headline of the Declaration of Independence) "In Congress, July 4, 1776." -- That's just today -- "A declaration by the representatives of the United States of America, in general Congress assembled, When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another ..." (reads silently for a beat or two, maybe his lips move) Isn't that something? Isn't that *something*? This is it. Right here in my own two hands. Will you look at that! A declaration of independence from Britain and that ol' tyrant, King George III. I can't hardly believe my eyes. After all these years, here it is. What so many of us have been agitating and praying for. All the protests, boycotts, hardship, and plenty of bloodshed, to be sure, have finally come to this. Sakes alive, it's a wonder.

Why, for more than ten years - nearly since I took over this print shop from my Uncle William when I was but 20 years old -- the thirteen colonies

have been fired up with a great sense of injustice. We haven't been happy for a long time with ol' King George, and it's been getting worse as time goes on. It's become intolerable, that's the truth.

I'd say it was the Stamp Act of 1765 that really set things off. Oh, people were furious. Myself included. See, the Stamp Act required us American colonists to purchase a special British stamp and affix it to all official documents, newspapers, pamphlets - like the ones I was printing, mind you! -- playing cards, and even dice to show the tax had been paid. The tax was supposed to raise money to pay for the cost of the French and Indian War, which started in 1756 and didn't end until 1763. As you can imagine, a war that long is expensive, and it left Britain deep in debt. To fix that problem, ol' King George thought it would be a good idea for the colonies to chip in and help pay the bill.

Only that idea didn't sit well with many of us. Here we are working hard and trying to build successful businesses and such and the king demands we send some of our money straight back to Britain - 3,000 miles away! Where's the fairness in that, I ask you? What made it even more infuriating is we had no say in the matter in the British Parliament. We don't have a representative *over there* to vote for our interests *over here*. That's when people first started proclaiming "taxation without representation is tyranny." What we meant was that Parliament can't legally tax us without our consent, which can only be given through elected representatives. No, sir. We'll tax ourselves, thank you very much.

It was right around then that I remember hearing people first talk about revolution and independence here on the streets of Philadelphia. That was when I first knew something was brewing.

A secret society even formed to protest the Stamp Act. Called themselves the Sons of Liberty. They could be a rough bunch, that's the truth. They weren't opposed to a bit of vandalism or violence to express their objection to British taxes, but I probably shouldn't talk too loudly about that. (whispers) Mr. Hancock waiting out there was one of the group's leaders.

Now, the Stamp Act was repealed the following year in 1766, because of all the protesting that went on -- which shows you what a strong protest can do -- but ol' King George kept on thinking he had a right to tax us in order to solve his debt problem. So he came up with the Townshend Acts in 1767, which put taxes on imported products we relied on, including glass, lead, paint, paper, and tea. That's right, even our precious tea! The crown said it was to pay the salaries of colonial officials, but we didn't like that tax anymore than the first one. There were more protests and boycotts. Even riots. It got so bad that the British decided to occupy Boston to quell all the trouble - Can you imagine? British soldiers - Redcoats! -- on the streets of Boston. 4,000 of them! It was another act of oppression as far as many of us were concerned, and one step closer to this document I now hold in my hands - and that I should be preparing to print!

Oh, I suppose Hancock and company can wait a bit longer. I can hear them pacing and murmuring out there. Ah, that'd be John Adams - I recognize his New England accent and irascible tone. He's not a likeable fellow, that one. He's an impatient sort. Learning to wait a bit might do him some good.

So, where was I? Oh, right. British soldiers on the streets of Boston. Well, tensions were running high, for sure. Everyone was on edge, even here in Philadelphia. I suppose it was only a matter of time before an angry word or a rash act sparked deadly violence. It happened March 5, 1770. A large crowd of unruly colonists were taunting British soldiers outside of the Customs House. Jeering at them and throwing snowballs and rocks. Nothing terrible, really, but suddenly, a shot rang out, and then several of the soldiers fired their muskets. Before anyone knew it, five colonists were shot dead - one of whom was only 17-years-old! -- and six others were wounded. Those that were there say the first colonist to fall was a Black merchant sailor named Crispus Attucks. Well, the incident's become known as the Boston Massacre, and it made colonists more enraged with the king than ever before. None other than John Adams out there said that the "foundation of American independence was laid" on the day of the Boston Massacre; that's how important it was.

And there was more to come, mind you.

A few years later, in 1773, there was the Boston Tea Party where the Sons of Liberty dumped 342 chests of tea into Boston Harbor to protest against another tax called the Tea Act. It was clear to anyone who was reading the news that our conflict with the British was continuing to grow more serious.

By that point I'd started the *Pennsylvania Packet and the General Advertiser*, a weekly newspaper that provided coverage of political events, debates, and all manner of announcements.

It also provided a steady stream of revenue, of course. You can't run a thriving business without profit, you know. I'm all for high ideals and whatnot, but this revolution is over economics as much as it is principles. A man has a right to make and keep a shilling without some king putting a hand in his pocket.

It was through my newspaper that I let Philadelphians know about the Battles of Lexington and Concord last June. I published the reports of patriot militias known as Minutemen fighting in a bloody battle with British soldiers who were looking to seize colonial military supplies. More than a hundred civilian farmers, tradesmen, and shopkeepers came out to fight the Redcoats, ready to risk their lives for liberty. We were fed up with King George and his army in our towns and his taxes on our tea. We simply can't imagine that being American should deprive us of the benefits of British subjects. The very idea!

After Lexington and Concord, the Second Continental Congress formed the Continental Army and made George Washington its general. A finer choice they couldn't have made, that's the truth. We've been preparing for a war with Britain - the greatest army and navy in the world, mind you, - ever since.

Patriots like me believe our way of life, our liberty, and our property are at stake, and we're ready to lay everything on the line to defend it. Better to have our liberties wrested from us by force than to have it said we surrendered them.

GODDARD

While Mr. Dunlap fled to Lancaster, the Continental Congress came here, to Baltimore, in December 1776, where I had my print shop on Market Street. My printing office was a hub of constant activity. A printer, after all, is an important and influential person in the community, and my position as postmaster of Baltimore brought with it additional importance and responsibility.

I was well known as a patriot publisher. Oh, there was a fair share of Loyalist newspapers in Pennsylvania, New York, Georgia and elsewhere, of course, that advocated for reconciling with the Crown, but my *Maryland Journal* was dedicated to the cause of independence. I was not shy about where my allegiances lie. I editorialized against British brutality and promoted ideas that fomented revolution.

After the battles of Lexington and Concord in April 1775, I wrote an editorial that the "British behaved with savage barbarity." And I added, "The ever memorable 19th of April gave a conclusive answer to the questions of American freedom. What think ye of Congress now? That day. . . evidenced that Americans would rather die than live slaves!" I'm particularly pleased with that bit of sharp writing.

Despite desperate shortages of paper and ink, I'm proud to say that I never missed printing an edition of the *Maryland Journal*. With great determination and industry, I kept Baltimoreans informed about developments in politics and war.

I even published copies of Thomas Paine's "Common Sense," a pamphlet that persuaded colonists of the necessity of separation from Britain. I wholeheartedly believed Mr. Paine when he wrote, "We have it within our power to begin the world over again."

I leaped at that promise with my whole being. I was impassioned by the notion that now was the opportunity to remake the rules and conventions of our time. To grant liberty to all people who wanted to live free.

One needs to understand that in the 18th Century, a woman's world was determined by her husband's position in the community. This was the way of it. We were considered domestic beings who should keep our attention

solely on our families and households. Our voices were not to be heard outside the home. Married women could not even own property, make contracts, sue or be sued in court. Married women were legally invisible.

Well, I was not of a mind to be invisible. The people of Baltimore can assure you of that. There's little doubt that they know where Mary Katharine Goddard stands.

Mr. Paine also wrote, "Oh ye that love mankind, ye that dare oppose not only tyranny but the tyrant, stand forth." And stand forth, I have. I have ever after defined myself in terms of self-sacrifice and work on behalf of the revolutionary republic.

I believe now that even as a young woman I was contemplating a life of independence and business rather than one of marriage, which so many of my friends chose. If I were to marry, I couldn't own this print shop. I couldn't be the publisher of a newspaper. I couldn't be a bookseller or postmaster. All of my accomplishments would be stripped away from me. I could only be one thing -- a wife.

But I'm tired of being told that as a woman I shouldn't bother myself with the world beyond the walls of my home. Men say we have no business with politics. That it is not in our sphere. I reject that old-fashioned notion. I see the Revolution as promising a greater role for women in business and politics. The language of liberty, after all, is contagious! Women have become political players and active citizens fighting for our rights. We are no longer silent in the sphere of politics, and I say it's about time we made our voices heard outside of the home.

Our first political act was to say no - no to British cloth we'd been buying for years. No to luxury items imported from England. It was known as the "Nonconsumption Movement" or the "Nonimportation Movement." The idea was that the way to bring Britain around to our way of thinking was to hit their pocketbooks by refusing to buy British goods. Women even picketed shops that continued to sell British products.



Patriot Ink by Brian Cox

Directed by D.B. Schroeder

Featuring Brady Jacot and Jeannine Coughlin

Stage Manager Joseph Sfair

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