

Primary Source:

Lord Dunmore's Proclamation, 1775

- How did African Americans participate in the Revolutionary War?
- How did their actions reflect a desire to enjoy their natural rights?

- I can connect actions taken by African Americans during the Revolutionary War to an understanding of natural rights of equality and justice.
- I can summarize the main ideas of historical text.
- I can create an argument supported by evidence from primary sources.

Building Context

Lord Dunmore (John Murray, Earl of Dunmore) was the royal governor of Virginia. Dunmore had fled Williamsburg, the state capital, in June 1775 for his own safety as Patriots gathered in the city. Dunmore issued this proclamation in early November from a British ship, hoping to increase the size of his army and threaten the Patriots at the same time. Virginia Patriots were outraged at the proclamation.

Lord Dunmore's Proclamation, 1775

<https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/lord-dunmores-proclamation-1775/>

“...I do, in Virtue of the Power and Authority to ME given, by his MAJESTY [King George III, King of Great Britain and Ireland]...require every Person capable of bearing Arms to resort to his MAJESTY’S STANDARD [battle flag or side of the fight], or be looked upon as Traitors to his MAJESTY’S Crown and Government, and thereby become liable to the Penalty the Law inflicts upon such Offences; such as **forfeiture** [loss]of Life, confiscation of Lands, &c. &c. And I do hereby farther declare all indentured Servants, Negroes, or others, (appertaining to Rebels,) free that are able and willing to bear Arms, they

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joining his MAJESTY’S Troops as soon as may be, for the more speedily reducing this Colony to a proper Sense of their Duty, to his MAJESTY’S Crown and Dignity...”

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

1. What did Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation promise to indentured servants and African Americans?

2. Why would Lord Dunmore issue this proclamation?

3. What evidence does this document provide about the role of African Americans in the Revolutionary War?

4. Does this document provide any evidence of an understanding of natural rights by the author or its intended audience? Explain.