

# “The Great Awakening” in the South and Social Change

“Resistance to Tyrants is Obedience to God”  
---American Revolution Flag

Grade Level: 11<sup>th</sup> grade

National Standards:

- Time, Continuity, and Change
- People, Places, and Environment
- Power, Authority, and Governance

Virginia State Standards of Learning:

The student will describe how the Great Awakening in the South contributed to changes in society in culture. [VUS.3]

Time required: approximately two hours

Overview: Colonists in Hanover County, Virginia invited Samuel Davies to minister to them in 1747. While the Anglican Church was the only sanctioned church at the time, Davies did acquire a license which allowed him to preach as an itinerant minister. This eventually became known as the start of the Presbyterian Church in the South. Those who were exposed to itinerant preaching began to call for religious freedom. They especially did not want to pay the required taxes in support of the Anglican Church. Revolutionary documents, such as Virginia Declaration of Rights and the Declaration of Independence, both written in 1776, echo the sentiments of those who valued the freedom of religion and rights of the individual.

Learning Objectives:

- To describe the main ideas of Samuel Davies and the Hanover Dissenters Movement
- To summarize the social characteristics of the southern colonies:
  - Virginia and the other southern colonies had a social structure based on family status and the ownership of land.

- Large landowners in the eastern lowlands dominated colonial government and society and maintained an allegiance to the Church of England.
- To identify the conflicts between the existing social system and the ideas of Davies and the Movement
- To identify these ideas as the social foundation for the American Revolution

#### Materials Needed:

- Access to a computer or hard copies of the following:
  - “Samuel Davies: An Apostle to America by Reggie Weems”, <http://1689.us/documents/SamuelDavies.pdf>
  - The Polegreen Story, <http://www.historicpolegreen.org/story/>
  - “Samuel Davies on Behalf of Dissenters in Virginia” (1752) from Church and State in American History by John Frederick Wilson and Donald L. Drakeman, pp. 42-46  
[http://books.google.com/books?id=a3al.dX9PrzKC&pg=PA42&lpg=PA42&dq=samuel+davies+hanover+dissenters&source=bl&ots=DBdbcWJcgG&sig=L\\_AmdSdYYBnK-T2\\_PgAuExkcbY&hl=en&ei=n6FUSvS-04uoMbzFnOYI&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=5](http://books.google.com/books?id=a3al.dX9PrzKC&pg=PA42&lpg=PA42&dq=samuel+davies+hanover+dissenters&source=bl&ots=DBdbcWJcgG&sig=L_AmdSdYYBnK-T2_PgAuExkcbY&hl=en&ei=n6FUSvS-04uoMbzFnOYI&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=5)
  - The Great Awakening in Virginia, [http://www.nvrpa.org/view\\_published\\_article.php?id=92](http://www.nvrpa.org/view_published_article.php?id=92)
- Copies of **The Great Awakening Learning Grid**
- Access to the Settlement of Virginia Map 1770-1775: <http://www.virginiaplaces.org/graphics/settwo.jpg>

#### Learning Activities:

1. Introduction. Have students read “The Polegreen Story”. To start today’s lesson, ask them: What was the Hanover Dissenter Movement all about? What were the dissenters hoping to accomplish? What role did Samuel Davies have in this movement?
2. Instruct students about the Great Awakening and the role it played in the South. Informative resources for the Great Awakening:
  - a. The First Great Awakening  
<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/eighteen/ekeyinfo/gawaken.htm>
  - b. The Great Awakening  
<http://www.wfu.edu/~matthetl/perspectives/four.html>
  - c. Jefferson and Religious Freedom (author Merrill D. Peterson writes that “In Virginia, as Jefferson remarked, perhaps as many

as two thirds of the citizens were dissenters from the established Church. The Revolution rendered this conflict intolerable.”)

<http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/96oct/obrien/peterson.htm>

3. Pair students together and pass out the “Great Awakening Learning Grid”. Instruct them to first read the concepts listed in the left column and write down questions to assist them in researching evidence of the concept. Then, using the resources listed above, students are to document how each concept applies and/or is mentioned in each of the resources. It may prove beneficial to first discuss the concepts as a class before assigning the documentation grid. Suggestions for questions regarding culture and change in Hanover County are as follows:
  - a. SOCIAL: Where did the settlers come from? What is the background of these new colonists? Why did they settle in Hanover County? What were they hoping to accomplish?
  - b. GEOGRAPHIC: How did the land affect their settlement? How did their location affect their lives and where they settled? Refer to the map listed in the materials section.
  - c. RELIGIOUS: What religious beliefs did they bring with them? What did they value regarding their religion? How did their religion change when they came to Hanover? What was the center of the conflict between the Hanover Dissenters and the Church of England?
4. When the grid is complete, instruct students to rely on it to help support their answers as you continue with class discussion. Use the questions generated in the concept column as suggested above for the discussion. Follow up with these questions:
  - a. What was the most significant area of change the dissenters encountered and why? Was this area of change a reflection of their social structure, geography, or religious beliefs and why?
  - b. What role did Samuel Davies have regarding the social, geographical and religious changes the county experienced?
  - c. Do you think that Samuel Davies was aware of the role he played regarding the Great Awakening in Hanover County? Why or why not?
  - d. Take a look at this flag from the American Revolution:  
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/f0307s.jpg> What does the phrase “Resistance to Tyrants is Obedience to God” mean? In

what ways would the Hanover Dissenters connect with this statement?

5. Extension Activity: Provide students with a copy of Thomas Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia: Religion, <http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccer-new2?id=JefVirg.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=17&division=div1>

After reading Jefferson's notes about religion in Virginia, have students compare and contrast his notes with the Hanover Dissenter Movement from today's discussion. Students should write an essay about their findings. Encourage students to answer: How did the Great Awakening in Hanover County echo Jefferson's notes on religion in Virginia? What were some of the injustices Jefferson mentions? Why is this time called "The Great Awakening"? What needed awakening? What happened to cause the need for this wake-up call?

6. Closure. Final question: In what ways, if any, did religion play a role in the American Revolution? Use any of the materials and notes from today's lesson to support your answer.