

A READER'S THEATER

French & Indian War **NEWS REPORT**

written by Dorothy Fairbanks

HOW IT WORKS...

1. Pass out scripts to class.
2. Assign students to read for characters listed below.
3. NOTE: Everyone in the class says the lines for "Colonists", AND the teacher reads all the notes written in parenthesis.
4. Provide a couple minutes for students to read through their lines.
5. GOING LIVE IN 5, 4, 3, 2, 1! (Read the script out loud as a class.)

LIST OF CHARACTERS (in order):

Anchor 1 =
Anchor 2 =
Ms. Fairpenny =
Reporter 1 =
Governor Dinwiddie =
French Fur Trader =
British Fur Trader =
Reporter 2 =
Major George Washington =
Reporter 3 =
Benjamin Franklin =
Colonists = EVERYONE IN CLASS
King George II =
Colonist 1 =

Colonist 2 =
Reporter 4 =
General George Braddock =
Daniel Boone =
English Reporter =
William Pitt =
Jacques Cousteau =
Delaware Chief =
Reporter 5 =
British General Wolfe =
British Reporter =
Captain de Villiers =
French Officer 1 =
French Officer 2 =

Anchor 1: Welcome to HAHN for our in-depth coverage of the late 1700's in Colonial America. Today we report to you about the French and Indian War.

Anchor 2: The French and Indian War is an important part of history and involved the British, French and Native Americans. Let's talk to Ms. Fairpenny who is our local expert on this fascinating war.

Ms. Fairpenny: Thank you, _____ I wouldn't say I was an expert- just a lowly 7th grade history teacher.

Anchor 1: Oh you are too modest Ms. Fairpenny. I know The French and Indian War confuses a lot of people, but you can make it crystal clear. What is the most common misconception?

Ms. Fairpenny: The first thing we need to understand is that this is not a war where the French were fighting the Indians. The French and the Indians were allies, working together to fight the British, and those who lived in the 13 English colonies in America. Understanding this war is very important to the eventual independence of America.

Anchor 1: So the French and Indian War came before the American Revolution?

Ms. Fairpenny: Oh yes, the French and Indian War started in 1753 and concluded with the Treaty of Paris 1763. Now _____ and _____ When did the colonies Declare Independence?

Anchor 1 and 2: 1776

Ms. Fairpenny: Very good. So as early as 20 years before the Revolution the British colonists were pretty happy being part of the Great British Empire. As a matter of fact, the population of the British colonies was constantly growing, with people coming for land and a better life than Europe had to offer. Therefore, they needed more land, which made both the French and some of the Native American tribes mad. It would be best if you could hear it directly from the participants, those individuals that lived this part of history.

Anchor 2: Well, because of our new sponsor, the Apple Time Touch we can. Yes! with this new phone we can skype with the past. I believe we have Governor Dinwiddie on the line with our roving reporter _____.

Reporter 1: Thank you_____. I am here in colonial Virginia with the Royal Governor. Thank you for being with us Governor Dinwiddie. How did this war get started?

Dinwiddie: As most people know the French and English have been at war with each other on and off for hundreds of years.

Reporter 1: Those wars were usually in Europe, with all the action on the other side of the Atlantic, right?

Dinwiddie: Yes, but occasionally they would spill over into the colonies as the French and British colonists showed their support for their mother countries with a battle or clash or two over here. The French and Indian War is different. This war began here in America and was started over who would control the land west of the Allegheny Mountains.

Anchor 2: The Ally Who Mountains???? I think we might have a bad connection _____.

Reporter 1: No, you heard the Governor correctly. The Allegheny Mountains are a part of the Appalachian Mountains. On your map we can see the Appalachians are just west of the 13 original colonies. (Shows on the map.)

Dinwiddie: Yes, the British Colonists desired to move west, and they wanted to find more land on the other side of the Allegheny Mountains. This was only natural as many of the original colonial charters were written to include no western boundary, and simply said, “to the western ocean.”

Reporter 1: Governor Dinwiddie the French certainly didn’t recognize any English colony boundaries extending over the Appalachians, did they?

Dinwiddie: No they did not. They claimed the land was theirs because of that greedy Robert De La Salle who came down the Mississippi in 1682 and claimed all the land that drained into it. La Salle had no idea how vast this claim was. And the French really never populated the area, that is how you hold on to land claims, you put people on the land.

Anchor 1: Sorry to interrupt the Governor, but we have a live feed from deep in the Ohio River Valley.

French Fur Trader: What a beautiful day here in the Ohio River Valley. The fur trading has been going well thanks to our relationship with the native people.

British Fur Trader: My name is William Colonist. I'm a British Fur Trader. I heard you French people have awesome beaver fur in the Ohio River Valley, so I left the British colonies and hiked across the Appalachian Mountains.

French Fur Trader: Well you can just hike right back over them.

British Fur Trader: I hiked across the Appalachians so I could hunt for some beaver fur to trade.

French Fur Trader: No way! Over my dead body, you crazy Englishman! We have formed alliances with the Native Americans so they could help us find the beavers. These beaver furs belong to me and my fellow Frenchman.

Reporter 1: Governor Dinwiddie what is your reaction to this heated exchange?

Dinwiddie: Incidents like this between the British colonists and the French were happening much too often. That is why I had to send Young Washington to warn the French to stay out of the Ohio River Valley.

Reporter 1: Thank you Governor for your time and insights. Back to you in the studio.

Ms. Fairpenny: Looking at this from the French perspective, they didn't need a lot of people on the land. The Native were already there, and the French were working, trading and sometimes living with them. Because of this relationship with the natives when the French needed more men to fight, they paid natives warriors to join them. The French also learned to fight like the natives. It is all about the fur trade to the French. And the Ohio River Valley was the real prize (shows on the map). From Ohio, you could float all the way to the Mississippi River and then New Orleans.

Anchor 2: We have a roving reporter who is with George Washington in a place called Fort Necessity. _____ are you there?

Reporter 2: Yes _____ I am here with 20 year old Virginia Ranger Major George Washington. Major, can you tell us where we are and what has been happening here?

Washington: Certainly. We are here at the forks of the Ohio. There are 3 great rivers that come together here, and it is the ideal place to build a fort. You can see the Alleghany and the Monongahela Rivers as they flow into the great Ohio.

Reporter2.: But why is a fort here so important?

Washington: Whoever controls the forks can control the traffic on all 3 rivers and therefore access to the Mississippi. I found this spot when Governor Dinwiddie sent me to tell the French to get out of the Ohio River Valley. Unfortunately, they did not listen. But I reported back to the governor that we should build a fort here.

Reporter 2: I heard about your trip back to Virginia. You were betrayed by a guide who almost killed you and left you to freeze in the dead of winter. (flirty) I imagine your wife was worried sick.

Washington: (oblivious to her flirting) I am not yet married ma'am. No, that was not a trip I would like to take again. But enough about me. As I said this is a strategic spot. We sent a crew to build a fort. Before I could arrive with my troops the French attacked and scattered our builders and started building their own fort. You can see it over there, they call it Fort Duquesne [do cane].

Reporter 2: So what is this fort we are standing in?

Washington: This is Fort Necessity, we built it in a hurry as we tried to prepare to attack Fort Duquesne. We won a skirmish against a small French force. But when the real battle came, we were forced to surrender. At least they are allowing me to take my men back to Virginia. I am sorry but we must leave.

Reporter 2: Thank you Major we have a feeling this will not be your last battle. According to my historical sources this battle is looked upon as the official start of the French and Indian War. Back to you

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Anchor 1: Things don't look good for the British. Let's go to our roving reporter in Albany, New York.

Reporter 3: Hi, _____ I am standing here with none other than Benjamin Franklin, famous inventor of the stove. Mr. Franklin you're a man from Pennsylvania what brings you here to New York?

Franklin: Leaders from 7 colonies and about 150 Iroquois natives have met to discuss how to improve the colonies' common defense, and how to keep the Iroquois happy so they won't join the French side of this war.

Reporter 3: You must have heard about Washington's defeat at Fort Duquesne.

Franklin: That is a perfect example of our problem. This conflict is too big for Virginia to handle by itself. Pennsylvania can't beat the French with their Indian allies alone. However, here is the plan I wrote: The Albany Plan of Union. My plan says that all the colonies should unite under one government. This government would have a Council where all the colonies would be represented, and a President General appointed by the King.

The Union would have power over war and peace, troops, Indian relations, and new lands. They would be able to write laws and lay taxes to pay for what was needed.

Reporter 3: That sounds like a great plan.

Franklin: The Albany Congress liked it, we are just waiting for acceptance from the colonies and the King.

Reporter 3: And here is the reaction from the colonists...

Colonists: NO WAY!

Reporter 3: That was unexpected. Here is the King's reaction.

King George II: The Crown will not give up any of its power to some colonial confederation.

Ben Franklin: But we will be stronger if all the colonies unite under one government.

Colonist 1: No Sir! My colony will lose power.

Colonist 2: Give up control to a central government. NO Thank you!

Ben Franklin: But if we are united, we can end this war NOW! And we can deal more fairly and efficiently with all the Native American issues that come up.

Colonists: Blah, Blah, Blah.

Ben Franklin: Well, here is a political cartoon of a snake. It is chopped into pieces, so the snake is now dead. Each piece has letters next to it that symbolize a colony, such as "V" for "Virginia." Who would ever fear a chopped-up snake? NO ONE.

Colonists: SSSSSSSS We don't care.

Reporter 3: I am so sorry Mr. Franklin. What will happen now?

Franklin: The King thinks he can solve all our problems by sending a “real army” over from England. He is sending General Edward Braddock with 2 regiments of British regulars.

Reporter 3: Will it work Mr. Franklin?

Franklin: Maybe? He is a brave and experienced General. I am hoping to meet with him before he begins his march to Fort Duquesne. He is at a disadvantage, he does not understand that the French and Indians do not fight in the disciplined European fashion. He needs to be prepared to fight like the Indians if he wants to defeat them.

Reporter 3: Back to you _____.

Anchor 1: Just think how different history might have been if the colonies had united as Franklin suggested?

Ms. Fairpenny: You get an A+. If the colonies had united and had a voice in their own affairs, we might all be having tea and crumpets right now.

Anchor 2: I don't get it.

Anchor 1: We might have been able to solve our problems with England through this Union council instead of fighting the Revolutionary War.

Anchor 2: Oh, or should I say, Jolly good show.

Anchor 1: Let's move on to our interview with General George Braddock. _____ is our reporter following General Braddock and his expedition to cut a road through the dense forest of western Pennsylvania.

Reporter 4: I am watching the backbreaking work Braddock's men are doing to create a road for the cannon, supply wagons, and troops through this rough and untouched forest. They plan to retake the forks of the Ohio. They have been at it for weeks and still have many miles to go. Excuse me General Braddock, might we have a word?

Braddock: Certainly, how can I be of service?

Reporter 4: General, our audience wants to know if you are going to adjust your battle plans in any way after meeting with Benjamin Franklin and his advice to fight like Indians?

Braddock: Let me think, now I remember. Mr. Franklin did say something along those lines. Even my volunteer aide, what is his name, oh yes, Washington also tried to tell me the same thing. What these well-meaning gentlemen don't understand is that His Majesties, George II's troops did not become the most deadly, feared and victorious army in the world by hiding behind trees and rocks. We are a well-oiled and disciplined war machine on the battlefield, and it is that discipline that will win this little skirmish and send us back to England having taught the French another lesson.

(Shouting and the sounds of attack are heard.)

Boone: (off stage) Get down General we're be'n ambushed.

(The General draws his sword and enters the fighting off stage.)

Reporter 4: (lots of background noise) Oh My Goodness! Braddock's forces have been surrounded. Suddenly from behind every tree and rock there is an Indian or a French soldier firing with deadly accuracy. I am seeing officer after officer falling to the ground. The British troops are in complete disarray. This is awful to watch, death at every turn. There is one man, I can just make him out through the smoke and the trees. His horse has been shot out from under him, but he grabs a new mount and rides into the remaining British troops trying to organize them into a retreat. The musket balls are flying all around him, but he continues to stand as a rallying point. A line is formed to cover the retreat. It is holding. What is left of the British force is taking cover, abandoning the road. The French and Indians are withdrawing. They seem proud of the work they have done today. You should hear the bloodcurdling native war yells.

(Noises die down)

Reporter 4: Sir, could you stop for a moment, what is your name?

Boone: I'm Daniel Boone, part of the colonial troops sent to help the British forces.

Reporter 4: Mr. Boone,

Boone: Just call me Daniel, ma'am

Reporter 4: OK Daniel, do you know what has happened to General Braddock?

Boone: He is dead, ma'am. We're gathering up those that fell, and his body's one of them. We'll bury him in this here road he was building and run the wagons over the grave to disguise it.

Reporter 4: But why?

Boone: When the Injuns find out they killed the General they'll want his scalp as a trophy. But we won't let it happen, don't you worry.

Reporter 4: Mr. Boone, I mean Daniel, who was that officer whose horse was shot out from under him but he still managed to rally the troops.

Boone: Are you meaning George Washington, General Braddock's aide? He had more than one horse shot today. You should see him, holes in his coat and in his hat as well.

Reporter 4: Oh no, how bad is he wounded? (she seems shaken)

Boone: He's fine ma'am. Not a scratch on him, not even a flesh wound. The French have taught the Injuns to pick off the officers, so the men get confused on who to follow. They had Washington pegged as a leader even though he wasn't in a British uniform. But they just kept missing him. Never heard of such a thing before. Ma'am do you need some water? You look kind a faint.

Reporter 4: (as she passes out) Back to you in the studio.

Anchor 2: I hope she is going to be alright.

Anchor 1: You know the famous saying, "War is.... not a very nice place to be".

Ms. Fairpenny: We all know that Washington lives to fight another day, many more days actually.

Anchor 1: I thought that the British won this war?

Ms. Fairpenny: Spoiler alert, they do, and mostly because of a new Prime Minister in England.

Anchor 2: That explains this note I just received saying we have a report coming in from London. Let's go to our over foreign correspondent, _____.

English Reporter: Thank you, _____. When William Pitt took over the French were beating our countrymen soundly, but he turned it around. Here he comes. Good day Mr. Pitt. Could we have a moment for our audience in the colonies?

William Pitt: Good day _____. What can I do for our citizens across the pond?

English Reporter: I am a little surprised to hear you refer to the American Colonists as citizens. Many of your ministers and British officers have treated the colonists as second-class subjects of the King. Calling them "provincials" and using the term "heroes" sarcastically.

Pitt: That is one of the things I am trying to change. If the British Empire is going to grow and remain strong, we should all be valued and respected. Every subject of his Royal Highness should share in all the rights and privileges of Englishmen.

English Reporter: What everyone wants to know is how have you been able to turn this war around?

Pitt: I have replaced several British officers stationed in the colonies because they were incompetent, as well as their superior attitudes. Our supply lines were disorganized and full of conflict between the colonies and the army. I feel we have corrected that problem. Finally, we have expanded the war around the world, to India, the West Indies, and Canada. The French are spread thin. Reports of British victories are already coming in. You know we have taken Louisburg at the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. That will dry up the supplies of wine and croissants throughout French North America.

English Reporter: The changes you made are smashing. Thank you, Mr. Pitt, we appreciate your valuable time. Someone should name a Fort after you.

Pitt: (laughs) (checks his pocket watch) Speaking of time I am sorry I must leave you, I am off to the House of Commons for a speech. Cheerio.

English Reporter: There you go _____ and _____ . This is _____ signing off from London.

Anchor 1: So how did Mr. Pitt changes work out?

Ms. Fairpenny: Splendidly. He sends General Forbes with the task of taking Fort Duquesne and the Forks of the Ohio. Wisely Forbes requests George Washington, his most experienced forest fighter, to take a force of 2,500 men to be the forward guard on a march to Fort Duquesne.

Anchor 2: Now is a good time to go on location again. This time we go to our secret reporter who is in Fort Duquesne with Captain de Villiers (day Vin your ease). His under-cover name is Jacques Cousteau. Jacques are you there?

Jacques: Oui (we)_____. Please be very quiet. We are listening in on Captain de Villiers war committee. I am using the translation app on my Apple Time Touch so you will hear them in English.

Capitan: What is the latest news?

French officer 1: The British are on their way, but we are not sure exactly where they are.

French officer 2: Why did we send so much of the garrison back to Canada? We should have kept them here until we were sure the British were done for the winter.

Capitan: We had no choice, they had to leave before the waterways to Canada were blocked with Ice. But with only 500 men and not enough to feed them- how can we defend the fort.

French officer 1: You have sent for our native allies, the Shawnee and the Delaware, certainly they will come and help us.

Capitan: I am not so sure. The British have sent out peace commissioners to many of Delaware and others.

French officer 2: It is worse than that sir. I have heard back from the men who delivered the war belt to the Delaware.

Capitan: What did they say, are they coming?

French officer 2: This is their message word for word.

(Off to one side)

Delaware Chief: “Give the war belt to the French Capitan. Let him go with his young men. He boasted much of his fighting. Now let us see his fighting. We have often ventured our lives for him and had hardly a loaf of bread. Now he thinks we should jump to serve him.”

Capitan: When we lost Louisburg, we lost our supply chain. Without food and gunpowder, we have lost the Indians as well. But I will not give the English Fort Duquesne. (noise outside the tent) What was that? Is someone listening?

Jacques: Woops! Got to run. This is Jacques Cousteau signing off from the Forks of the Ohio.

Ms. Fairpenny: What the French don't know is that Washington is already at Turtle Creek, just North of where General Braddock was defeated.

Anchor 2: Following Washington's camp is
-----, We join her now.

Reporter 2: Washington's men suffer another cold camp as they continue their march and road clearing toward Fort Duquesne. They have passed the field of bleached bones from Braddock's defeat which reminds them why camp and cooking fires can not be lit. They know it is just a matter of time before the French find out where they are and attack. No tents, no fires and they never let go of their muskets. Now ten miles from Fort Duquesne Washington's men are ready to..... (Distant but loud explosion). What was that?

Anchor 1: Jacque is back with us. Jacque, are the French about to attack Washington?

Jacque: No, not at all. Realizing he could not hold it. Captain de Villiers (day Vin your ease) has deserted Fort Duquesne, but not before he blew it up with 50 barrels of gunpowder.

Reporter 2: Using my Apple Time Touch we have moved ahead one day to see Washington and his men enter the burned ruins of the Fort. Major Washington may I have a word? How does it feel to have control of the Forks of the Ohio, and without firing a shot?

Washington: I am relieved ma'am, for my men, my commanding officer General Fobes who is quite ill, and for myself. I am delighted to think that I will soon return to my Martha.

Reporter 2: Some of us were under the impression you were not married. (she sounds disappointed)

Washington: That is true, but I have become engaged to the most eligible, and lovely widow in the colonies, Mrs. Martha Custis.

Reporter 2: (with no joy) Congratulations on your engagement and your victory. What will happen here at the forks?

Washington: The British will build a fort. My understanding is it will be named Fort Pitt.

Reporter 2: Thank you Major, back to the studio.

Anchor 1: Pitt deserves the honor, it is his plan that brought this victory about.

Ms. Fairpenny: Indeed he does. Of course it will not be known as Fort Pitt forever.

Anchor 2: Why not?

Ms. Fairpenny: Because it will become a booming city based on the making of steel. You know it as Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. There is one more part of Pitt's plan that must take place to preserve North America for the English.

Anchor 1: What is that?

Ms. Fairpenny: The British must take the stronghold of Quebec, the oldest French fort in America.

Anchor 2: Let's go to our reporter on the Plains of Abraham, just outside of Quebec.

Reporter 5: Thanks _____. It is very early in the morning. I am with British General Wolfe who is hoping to surprise the French in the city of Quebec. General Wolfe no one has ever attacked Quebec from the west, it looks like a great plain to use as a battlefield. How did you make this decision?

Wolfe: Everyone thought it was impossible to scale these cliffs. After weeks of searching we found a narrow trail from the beach below up here to the Plains of Abraham. For hours my men have been climbing, some single file, using handholds, rocks, and vegetation to pull themselves up to the top.(show picture) As French General Montcalm will find as he wakes this morning, he will have to fight us on this plain or surrender the fort.

Reporter 5: Which do you think he will do?

Wolfe: We are prepared for a fight. Here is my battle plan. (Show map) We have the element of surprise and a larger fighting force. But as you mentioned no one has ever taken Quebec before. The French will be fighting for their lives, their king, and the pride of their nation. I pray for a surrender, but prepare for a bloody battle. (Wolfe is handed a message) I was right it looks like they are preparing to fight. I must go.

Reporter 5: Certainly, good luck General. Back to you _____ and _____.

Anchor 1: Wait, can't you give us a blow by blow account.

Ms. Fairpenny: Don't make them do that. It is not going to be pleasant. Let me sum up what is happening. The English win after a fierce battle. Both Genera Wolfe and Montcalm lose their lives along with many of their brave men. Quebec is considered the last major battle of the war, though other fighting took place before official word got back and forth over the Atlantic.

Anchor 2: Sorry to interrupt, but our British reporter has been granted the honor of an audience with King George III.

British Reporter: Your Majesty, (bows) Thank you for graciously allowing us a few moments of your time.

King George III: It really is unheard of to grant such an interview, but when I understood you have a device that can allow my American subjects of 2022 to see and hear their sovereign King, their savior from this onslaught of the French and Native Savages, Well it seemed only fitting that I allow them this great honor to pay homage to their Crown. (he gives the royal wave)

British Reporter: Your majesty, The Treaty of Paris of 1763 officially ended the French and Indian War...

George III: You mean the Seven Years War.

British Reporter: I apologize no one told me of the name change.

George III: We name all these European Wars according to how long they lasted.

British Reporter: I apologize again, but wasn't this mostly a North American War and it lasted longer than seven years.

George III: Your ignorance is understandable. You are working with those provincials in the colonies who started this fuss, without royal permission, and then called on us to clean up their mess. That took seven years.

British Reporter: Perhaps we can put that aside and discuss the Treaty of Paris and the significant land gains for Great Britain.

George III: Well yes, that has turned out to be a lot of bother. We doubled our land holdings in America. France was forced to hand over all their territory in Canada and Louisiana east of the Mississippi, and we also gained Florida from the Spanish. We did allow the Spanish to have New Orleans and the Western part of Louisiana.

British Reporter: That sounds like a good thing.

George III: Of course, it does to you an untrained observer. We have just finished a very expensive war which doubled our national debt. We have strengthened our borders against the French and Spanish, but still have the protection of our colonies against the savages to contend with. I have just finished the Proclamation of 1763 forbidding my colonial subjects from crossing over the Appalachian Mountains. This will make a natural barrier against the Indians, so I don't have to spend any more money on that front.

British Reporter: (shocked) Many of those colonists were promised land as payment for fighting with your royal troops, others have already moved west and have farms and houses.

George III: Comme ci comme ça (Come see come saw.) These things are trivialities to those of use who rule.

British Reporter: Moving west of the Appalachians was the whole point of the war; farming and fur trading in the Ohio River Valley.

George III: Commoners do not inform their Sovereign Lord the point of anything. I was not on the throne when this bother started. I only know I had to clean it up and now find a way to pay for it. I think it is about time the colonies paid for their own expenses.

British Reporter: Your mercantilist policies already tie the colonies hands in trade and wealth. Now you have taken the land that could have expanded their economies and your royal coffers.

George III: I don't like your tone. This interview has ended.

British Reporter: Back to you in the Studio, I suppose.

Ms. Fairpenny: _____ and
_____ do you see what I mean by understanding
The French and Indian War helps you to understand the fight for
independence?

Anchor 1: Well he seems like a real jerk.

Anchor 2: I'm still not seeing it.

Ms. Fairpenny: The Proclamation of 1763 is going to be ignored by the colonists until more Redcoats show up to enforce it. New taxes are going to hit the colonies without any input from them at all. Basic rights practiced by all Englishmen are going to be usurped if the King doesn't get his way. And through it all I don't think the British will understand their biggest mistake.

Anchor 1: And what would that be?

Ms. Fairpenny: The training of our soon to be Commander in Chief by the most disciplined and victorious war machine in the world.

Anchor 2: Do you mean...

Ms. Fairpenny: Yes, George Washington is going to use all he has learned from the English, French and Indians and slowly, with the help and support of many others, create an army who can win that independence.

The End