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**Connersville Middle School**  
**8<sup>th</sup> Grade History**  
**Benedict Arnold Persuasive Essay**

**Overview:**

Benedict Arnold continues to be one of the most controversial characters in American History. He contributed greatly to early victories, especially the Battle of Saratoga. However, Arnold's later actions at West Point led most people to condemn him and permanently label him as a traitor.

It is important for students to understand that there always two sides to every story – especially in history. Our interpretations are generally based on the perspective of the writer. For this reason, the writing assignment attached to Benedict Arnold will give students the opportunity to look at both sides of Arnold, evaluate his actions, and create an opinion from the perspective of a character of their choice. They may take the role of a fellow soldier, a commanding officer, a close friend, a representative in the Continental Congress, an editorialist in New York City, or either a concerned American or British citizen. If students request a different character (i.e. George Washington, Sir Henry Clinton, Horatio Gates) teachers may give individual permission based on student interest and/or ability. This opinion will be the basis of a five paragraph essay to defend their position – was Benedict Arnold a hero or a traitor?

**Description:**

Students will use the internet; the media center; power point presentations; primary documents; video clips and their textbooks to research Benedict Arnold. Students will explore multiple historical references. After research, students will determine which character they would like to portray. The essay should begin with the outline format; complete with self-edit, peer edit, and teacher edit. The final product will be a typed five paragraph persuasive essay to fulfill the criteria on the Persuasive Essay Rubric.

**Objectives:**

Students will demonstrate research skills as they develop background information to support their opinion of Benedict Arnold. Students will take a position and support their opinions with facts and evidence in a five paragraph persuasive essay.

**Indiana State Standards: 8.1.3, 8.1.9, 8.1.28, 8.1.30**

**Anticipatory Set:** Post the following question in the classroom for students to respond in their own words:

**What is a hero? a traitor?**

**Materials Needed:**

Textbooks and Ipads

Access to the Media Center to locate: biographical dictionaries and the internet to gain additional biographical information about Benedict Arnold.

**Prior Knowledge:**

Students will have been introduced to Benedict Arnold via reading, discussion and power point presentations.

**Lesson:**

Following the initial introduction to Benedict Arnold, students will be introduced to the assignment by reviewing the elements in a five paragraph essay. In addition, students should be reminded that their goal is to

express the opinion of the character they choose and persuade the audience by providing facts and evidence to support their position.

Students will be introduced to the Benedict Arnold Persuasive Essay Rubric to assure they understand the necessary elements of their essay. The process will follow the following schedule:

- Introduction
- Mechanics and Requirements
- Research
- Outline
- First Draft according to Persuasive Essay Rubric
- Self Edit with corrections
- Peer Edit
- Rewrite
- Teacher Edit
- Final Submission

Before students begin research, go over the outline and stress the importance of constructing the outline (which will also be graded) before beginning to write the essay.

Students should contemplate and consider some of these factors that may have contributed to Arnold's actions:

- Money
- Family
- Power
- Social Status
- Military Assignments
- Leadership (or lack thereof)
- Physical and Mental State
- Loyalty
- Patriotism
- Contributions
- Discontent/Dissatisfaction
- Personality

Students will use available resources (books, internet sites, primary documents, video clips and power points) to research/learn about Benedict Arnold. Then students must "put on the hat of the character of their choice", who lived at the same time as Arnold, to create the essay.

**Extra Activities:**

Students who complete the assignment before the deadline may earn extra credit by writing an obituary for Benedict Arnold from an unbiased perspective.

**Assessment:**

Students will demonstrate their knowledge of historical perspective, persuasion and Benedict Arnold by completing a well composed five paragraph essay to be scored according to the Benedict Arnold Persuasive Essay Rubric.

**Closure:**

Students may complete a discussion in which each student reveals his or her perspective of Arnold with the class.

**Final Wrap Up:**

**VOTE: Could you have been a friend to Benedict Arnold?**



**Benedict  
Arnold:  
Hero or  
Traitor?  
YOU  
DECIDE!!**

**By May 1779, Benedict Arnold had become unhappy with his experiences in the American Army and disillusioned with the Patriot cause. He began corresponding with Major John Andre, the chief intelligence officer for General Clinton in New York. This secret correspondence continued even after Arnold's appointment as commander of West Point in August of 1780. On September 21, 1780, Arnold agreed to provide information critical for the capitulation of the fort for a sum of 20,000 British pounds. John André was later captured by three American militiamen and the papers concerning West Point were found in one of his boots. André was found guilty of spying and condemned to death. In the meantime, Arnold had escaped to the safety of the British Navy off the coast of North America. General Clinton refused to exchange André for Arnold and thus John André was hung as a spy.**

**Your assignment: You are attempting to present your view on Benedict Arnold as either a hero who was ultimately responsible for the American victory over England in the Revolutionary War or as a worthless traitor who turned his back on the American Cause.**

**In this persuasive essay, you may take the role of a fellow soldier, a commanding officer, a close friend, a representative in the Continental Congress, an editorialist in New York City, or either a concerned American or British citizen.**

**Write a FIVE paragraph persuasive essay on the view of Benedict Arnold from the role of your choice.**

**You may utilize the collection of available power point presentations, primary source documents, your textbook, video clips and other related internet sites to make your case.**

**Use the outline provided to construct your essay in the appropriate format.**

**As you write your essay, it is important for you to think and respond to these questions:**

**Was Benedict Arnold truly passed over and denied the credit he was due?**

**Were his actions justified? Is anyone to blame for Arnold's decisions?**

**Should Arnold have remained loyal to the end and sacrificed his own personal gain to further the Patriot Cause?**

**Benedict Arnold**

**Persuasive Essay  
Outline Format**

**I. Introduction**

- Opening Topic Sentence (grab readers attention)
- Background information (who you are and the stand you are taking)
- Thesis (statement you intend to prove/ focus of the paper)

**II. Argument 1**

- Supporting Fact(s)
- Conclude Argument

**III. Argument 2**

- Supporting Fact(s)
- Conclude Argument

**IV. Argument 3**

- Supporting Fact(s)
- Conclude Argument

**V. Conclusion**

- Restate Thesis In Different Words
- Make a personal statement
- Tie it all together

# BENEDICT ARNOLD

## Persuasive Essay Rubric

	Exceeds Standard (A)	Meets Standard (B)	Almost to Standard MAY REWRITE	Below Standard MUST REWRITE
<b>Thesis Statement</b>	Thesis/Claim is precise, knowledgeable and clear	Thesis/Claim is precise and knowledgeable	Thesis/Claim may be unclear or irrelevant, and/or may not answer prompt	Thesis/Claim is missing
<b>Use of Evidence</b>	<p>Develops the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples from the text(s)</p> <p>Skillfully integrates information into the text <u>sel</u> to maintain the flow of ideas and advance the thesis</p> <p>Assesses the strengths and limitations of each source</p>	<p>Develops the topic by selecting significant and relevant facts, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples from the text(s)</p> <p>Integrates information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas and advance the thesis (WS)</p> <p>Assesses the strengths and limitations of each source</p>	<p>Attempts to develop the topic using facts and other information, but evidence is inaccurate, irrelevant, and/or insufficient</p> <p>Attempts to integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas and advance the thesis, but information is insufficient or irrelevant</p> <p>Attempts to assess the strengths and limitations of each source, but misinterprets information</p>	<p>Does not develop the topic by selecting information and examples from the text(s)</p> <p>Does not integrate information from the text</p> <p>Does not assess the strengths and limitations of each source</p>
<b>Analysis</b>	<p>Skillfully draws evidence from informational texts to support analysis and thesis/claim</p> <p>Adequately identifies false statements</p>	<p>Draws evidence from informational texts to support analysis and thesis/claim (W9)</p> <p>Identifies false statements</p>	<p>Attempts to draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis and thesis/claim but evidence is insufficient and/or irrelevant</p> <p>Attempts to identify false statements, but argument is incomplete or insufficient</p>	<p>Does not use evidence from the informational texts to support analysis and/or thesis/claim</p> <p>Does not identify false claims</p>
<b>Organization, Writing Style and Conventions</b>	<p>Skillfully sequences the claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.</p> <p>Provides a concluding statement/paragraph</p> <p>Skillfully produces clear, coherent, sophisticated writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience</p>	<p>Logically sequences the claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence</p> <p>Provides a concluding statement/paragraph</p> <p>Produces clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience</p>	<p>Attempts to create a logical organization, but may be missing some elements of the assignment, such as a counterclaim</p> <p>Attempts to provide a concluding statement/paragraph, but statement does not support thesis</p> <p>Attempts to produce clear and coherent writing, but errors in conventions and writing style detract from understanding</p>	<p>Does not provide logical organization</p> <p>Does not provide a concluding statement/paragraph</p> <p>Does not produce clear and coherent writing</p>

Score for this draft: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher notes and additional comments: