



Olive Branch Petition Primary Source Questions – Teacher Answer Key

1. Examine the word choice and tone used by the colonists in this petition. What attitude are they using towards the King? Why do you think?

- The colonists are writing respectfully towards the King, honoring his position, and expressing their respect towards the Crown. Likely, in reassuring the King of their position, the colonists hoped to gain sympathy from the King in hopes that he would prevent further bloodshed. The petition continuously refers to the King's "loyal colonists," seemingly to reassure him that they are not trying to be hostile.

2. How did the colonists justify taking up defenses against the British?

- They explained that the King's men in the colonies have been forcefully enforcing the new measures passed by Parliament with hostility. Therefore, the colonists expressed their right to take up arms to defend themselves against these hostilities from these "enemies."

3. What do the colonists want the King to understand in terms of the conflict between the colonists and the British enforcers?

- They want to inform the King that the differences between the British enforcers and the colonists are thus far irreconcilable and that the colonists are justified in taking up defensive arms, but that they mean no disrespect to the King and still have utmost respect and support for their Mother Country.



Name: _____

Date: _____

4. What are the colonists petitioning the King to do?
- They are calling on the King to exert his influence over the British hostiles in the colonies and bring an end to the unrest. They want to King to restore peace to the colonies, end the harm caused to the colonists, and find some means of reconciliation.
5. Considering the fact that this petition was written after the Battles of Lexington and Concord, do you think the colonists were being genuine in their reverence towards Britain and the King? Why or Why not?
- Up to the student's interpretation. At this point, there had already been bloodshed. Perhaps the colonists were using reverent language trying to conceal their anger in order to justify their defenses, encourage reconciliation from the King, and bring about an end to the unfair taxation. Or perhaps the student believes that the petitioners genuinely believed that the colonists still thought highly of the King.

PRESERVE. EDUCATE. INSPIRE.