



Student Reading 2: Taking Sides

1. The Voice of Balance

Your goal is to simply present the facts of this event. Most likely your classmates have already studied all three, but you want to reacquaint them with the basic information in as *balanced* a manner as possible. You might use sentences such as:

While the national government believed that the best way to resolve the issue of taxation was to levy an excise on a "luxury item," on the other hand, the whiskey producers felt they were being punished for producing the only thing portable enough to get to market over the terrible roads of the western states.

2. The Voice of the National Government

Your goal is to convincingly present the side of the national government. You are firm in your conviction that the law that has been passed is the most reasonable, the most justifiable means of handling this issue. Keep in mind that you believe that compliance with this law is non-negotiable. Here are some ideas for language:

You say you refuse to pay the whiskey tax, and furthermore, you intend to beat the tax collector to within an inch of his life? Do you know the implications of that for an orderly government? Do you think we can tolerate anarchy? You say you are not going to collect the tariff from ships bringing goods into Charleston harbor? Impossible!

3. The Voice of Protest

Your voice is the strongest of all because you believe you have been terribly wronged! The government has perpetrated such an injustice against you that you are willing to resort to unconventional means to get your point across. Remember, you are the voice of "righteous indignation," but you still want to back your arguments with logic and fact.

How can you make us pay this tax when you know we can barely survive as it is? Why are we being taxed when other people pay nothing? Whiskey is a luxury you say? Well, tell that to the sailors who spend a month at sea: it's a luxury, boys, so this trip we're leaving off your ration of rum!

After you choose your point of view, do some further research to shape your position. Then prepare a presentation. The *Voice of Balance* is the "fact-giver," so the student presenting this part may simply present a straightforward report or provide a printed set

of facts that others can use as they listen to the more "biased" viewpoints. Those taking the *National Government* and *Protest* positions can use various methods, such as:

A Broadside

This is a sheet of paper for posting information on the "broadside" of a building. Think of old circus posters to get an idea of how one might look. Design a colorful, language-rich broadside, using "propaganda techniques" to get your point across. You could be inviting protesters to a meeting to plan strategies or to a "town meeting" to think of ways to legally counter certain government actions.

A Ballad

A ballad employs a simple tune to tell a story, sometimes a romantic one, but why not the "The Whiskey Boys of '94" or "Jackson's Answer"? If you are musically inclined and find that medium more comfortable than other kinds of presentations, try it. Be sure your ballad has enough verses so that other students get a clear understanding of the issues, and do provide paper copies of the words so your listeners can follow along.

Travel Talk

In the late 1700s and early 1800s, travel accommodations were often poor. People traveling the countryside hoped to find lodging at a wayside inn where they could get an evening meal and a relatively clean bed. Travelers of many walks of life might find themselves talking to each other at the common table where supper was served. Consider a setting where the *Voice of National Government* ends up at the same table with a *Voice of Protest*. To make it more interesting, have the "innkeeper" chime in from time to time as the *Voice of Balance* referee. In this way, all three points of view are heard.

Follow-Up

After each group presents, ask classmates to write down which side of the issue they most agreed with, then to write down one argument from *each* side that they found most convincing. Think about how these situations were resolved, and compare them to the actions taken by South Carolina which led to the Civil War. As a whole group activity, generate at least six compare-and-contrast statements and post them in the classroom. Display the statements with the broadsides and copies of the ballads.