

Process Paper

Choosing a topic

I chose the topic of Benedict Arnold and his legacy to dig deeper into the way our bias and the things we have been taught can skew our way of viewing historical figures. Living in Vermont, I have had connections to the lake and Revolutionary War history my whole life, especially with my father working at the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum. Prior to this project, I had never given much thought to the topic of Benedict Arnold, but after my dad recently did some conservation work near Arnold Bay, I began considering the way he was remembered. After doing some preliminary research, I discovered that there were two sides to his life and legacy, which intrigued me.

Conducting research

I began by reading a bit about Arnold's life and important events. I took extensive notes and narrowed in on the most important pieces to include in my project. I also found primary source material from letters between Arnold and his colleagues in the National Archives and the Library of Congress. These letters offered a look from Arnold's point of view and gave me a better understanding of his feelings. I also interviewed Chris Sabick to find out how his archaeological work connected to Arnold's life. This gave me an opportunity to find out how Chris felt about the controversy of his legacy.

Creating my project

I initially constructed many paragraphs summarizing my notes on Arnold's early life and military career, but ultimately was able to consolidate that information into a timeline as to allow for more explanation of the legacy Arnold left behind. I kept track of every source I used and created citations for every site, image, and article. I also visited Arnold Bay in Panton, Vermont to take some photographs, one of which is included on my site. Creating my site went smoothly and I didn't run into any significant problems using the software.

How my topic relates to the theme: Debate and Diplomacy

Though it might not be the first topic you think of when discussing debate and diplomacy, the legacy of Benedict Arnold is a great example of the intellectual debates that often occur between historians over how we should remember important events and figures. Though there is no right or wrong answer when it comes to the question of hero or traitor. Arnold's legacy is a subject that can be interpreted in many different ways.