

*Tech Tools is a column that appears in each issue of Idiom. Contact column editor Karen Gilmartin at [columns@idiom.nystesol.org](mailto:columns@idiom.nystesol.org)*

## Mission US

by Ravneet Parmar

According to its website, [Mission US](#) is a multimedia project that immerses players in U.S. history content through free interactive games. Currently, there are four different mission game chapters on the site, with more planned for release. The Mission US games are designed to improve the learning of American history by students in Grades 5 through 8, but can also be used as a great lesson for ELLs studying social studies in a content-based classroom. The Educator's section includes a variety of materials to support use of the missions (video game), including overview and background information, a guide for the teachers, standards alignments, activities, and primary sources.

Each mission in the game represents individual eras in U.S. history. As players progress through each period, they learn the story of those times through the viewpoint of various characters. The decisions you make in conversation affect which side of the story you hear, giving players the opportunity to discover history from all angles.

- Mission 1, *For Crown or Colony?*, puts players in the shoes of Nat Wheeler, a printer's apprentice in 1770 Boston. They encounter both Patriots and Loyalists, and when rising tensions result in the Boston Massacre, they must choose where their loyalties lie.
- Mission 2, *Flight to Freedom*, presents the role of Lucy, a 14-year-old slave in Kentucky. As the players navigate her escape and journey to Ohio, they discover that life in the "free" North is dangerous and difficult. In 1850, the Fugitive Slave Act brings disaster. Will Lucy ever truly be free?
- Mission 3, *A Cheyenne Odyssey*, focuses on westward expansion from the perspective of one Plains Indian tribe. The player's role is Little Fox, a northern Cheyenne boy whose life is changed by the encroachment of White settlers, railroad builders, and U.S. military expeditions. As the buffalo herds diminish and the U.S. government enforces the reservation system, players will learn about the persistence of the Cheyenne tribe amid national transformations at the end of the 19th century.
- In Mission 4, *City of Immigrants*, players can become Lena Brodsky, a young Jewish girl from Russia, as learns to find her way in 1907 New York City, enduring the hardships and dangers that await all coming to this melting pot environment in search of a better life.

Although no game is without flaws, these games provide a good starting point for both teaching students history and keeping them entertained—or in that gaming mode; they can also be used to end a history lesson already being taught in the class. The lesson plans accompanying the games are very helpful for the teacher, as they cut down on the instructional workload—and who doesn't like that?

These games are also available in iTunes to download, which makes them more versatile and able to be used as an out-of-class assignment if the teacher wishes.

**References**

<http://www.mission-us.org/>

<http://wfsu.org/education/missionus.php>

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