

Benjamin Rush: Statesman and Scientist

GATHERING THE INFO: As you watch the webisode, complete this sheet. You may need to pause the webisode and/or watch it more than once to get all of the information.

Rush the Statesman

Hero -evidence that Rush had admirable ideas and performed positive actions	Hypocrite -evidence that Rush's actions did not always follow his stated beliefs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrote pamphlets on liberty and abolition • Told Thomas Paine to name pamphlet <i>Common Sense</i> • Signed Declaration of Independence • Active in abolitionist community; member of Pennsylvania Abolition Society • Financial supporter of free black community • Dedicated to improving Philadelphia and America 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchased a slave in 1776; kept him for 10 years • Thought dark skin was a form of leprosy

Rush the Scientist

Genius -evidence that Rush was a doctor ahead of his time	Quack -evidence that Rush was a doctor who caused much suffering and death
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Went to med school in Edinburgh, Scotland—best in the world • Resigned from position as head of army hospitals because of bad conditions; criticized George Washington • Became chief of mental ward at Pennsylvania Hospital • Emphasized occupational therapy to cure mental disorders • Wrote first American textbook on mental illness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used bloodletting, laxatives etc. ("heroic treatment") • Refused to alter his methods of bleeding and purging

EXPLORING PRIMARY SOURCES:

1. *Why do you think Rush decided to write AN ACCOUNT OF THE Bilious remitting Yellow Fever, AS IT APPEARED IN THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA IN THE YEAR 1793 (shown at 6 minutes, 6 seconds)?*

He probably wanted to defend his controversial views about the treatment of yellow fever.

2. *Pause at 6:23. Based on what you have learned about Rush's approach to medicine, how do you think the "tranquilizing chair" was meant to work? Do you think it would have been a successful medical innovation?*

Answers will vary, but students can infer that it would not have been a gentle method.

3. *Pause at 6:25. What message was Rush trying to convey with his MORAL AND PHYSICAL THERMOMETER (note: "temperance" means abstaining from the drinking of alcohol)?*

Rush was trying to show that people who drank less alcohol are better, healthier people.

ANALYZING THE INFO: *Professor Richard Newman says that Dr. Rush was "profoundly wrong in a way that permits others to be right". Do you agree with this assessment? Why or why not?*

Answers will vary.

