



## NSDAR Educational Resources Committee

“Tyranny: Perspectives on the Overthrow of the  
Hawaiian Kingdom & US Annexation”

**Contributor:** Margaret Russo **Grade Level:** 6-8

**1. Identify the standards to be addressed:**

CSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2.

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

Inquiry Standards SS.6-8.4.2 Present arguments and explanations using a variety of print and oral technologies (e.g., posters, essays, letters, debates, speeches, reports, maps) and digital technologies (e.g., Internet, social media, digital documentary)

Content Standard SS.7HHK.4.12.1 Evaluate the political and economic developments leading to the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom

Content Standard SS.7HI-IK.4.18.2 Compare and contrast perspectives of proponents and opponents of the 1893 overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom

**2. Statement of the objective and lesson outcomes:**

Students will demonstrate understanding of the political and economic developments that lead to the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawai'i and its incorporation into the United States. Students will compare/contrast viewpoints of the proponents and opponents of the 1893 overthrow of the Kingdom.

**3. Materials, resources, and technology to be used by teacher/students:**

Materials, resources, and technology to be used by teacher/students: Documentary "Hawai'i's Last Queen" from PBS's The American Experience: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xt2kg>

Documentary "Act of War"

<https://oiwi.tv/oiwiv/act-war/>

Contemporary Hawai'i newspapers (for and against annexation):

<https://sites.google.com/a/hawaii.edu/ndnp-hawaii/Home/historical-feature-articles/overthrow>

Contemporary US Political Cartoons (Pro-Annexation) about Hawai'i:

<https://sites.google.com/a/hawaii.edu/ndnp-hawaii/Home/historical-feature-articles/political-cartoons>

**4. Introduction of the topic:**

Introduction of Topic: By the late 1880's, the Hawaiian Kingdom was a constitutional monarchy, an amalgamation of indigenous and European-American culture and government. Events in the United States--tariffs to protect the sugar industry in the United States---negatively impacted Hawai'i's economy and the profits of non-native, pro-annexation businessmen. The Bayonet Constitution of July 6, 1887, which had been forced upon the previous Hawaiian monarch at gunpoint, had disenfranchised the native Hawaiian people, who could no longer vote, and restricted the monarch's powers to that of a figurehead. On one hand, native Hawaiians viewed the Bayonet Constitution as a form of tyranny; on the other hand, pro-American businessmen saw the monarchy's attempt to overturn the Bayonet Constitution as a form of tyranny. These businessmen wanted to eliminate sugar tariffs forever by making Hawai'i part of the United States. The conflict came to a head on January 17, 1893 when US marines landed to support a coup d'état in progress. The pro-annexation non-native businessmen took over the government and forced Hawai'i's Queen, Lili'uokalani, to abdicate.

5. **Procedure for instruction:**

Prewriting/Discussion Prompt: Do you think it is tyrannical for schools to ban cellphones or enforce a dress code? Why or why not? What does "tyranny" mean to you?

Over several days, have students to view the documentaries, take notes, and address the following questions:

Questions for reflection / discussion / writing:

Why did Queen Liliu'okalani and native Hawaiians view the so-called "Bayonet Constitution" as tyrannical to native Hawaiians? How did the Hawaiian people and their sovereign view the monarchy? How did the Queen view her responsibility as sovereign?

Why did the pro-annexation businessmen view the Queen and constitutional monarchy as tyrannical? Many of the businessmen were Americans or descendants of Americans. How did the American Revolution of 1776 influence their view of the Hawaiian monarchy?

6. **Lesson closure:**

Divide the students into two groups-one for the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom and its eventual annexation by the United States and another against the overthrow of the Kingdom. Students should become familiar with these historical figures/groups using internet resources.

Opponents of overthrow:

Hui Aloha 'Aina, James Blount, Joseph Nawahi, President Grover Cleveland, Queen Lili'uokalani, Robert Wilcox

Proponents of overthrow: foreigner-led groups (Committee of Safety, Hawaiian League, Honolulu Rifles), John Stevens, Lorrin Thurston, Sanford Dole

Have students work together to brainstorm ideas and present them on trifold displays, either for the overthrow/annexation or against it. When finished, have students share their displays with the class / school.

7. **Assessment of Understanding:**

Final writing project: What were the causes (political and economic) of the 1893 overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom? Compare/contrast the perspectives of the proponents and opponents the overthrow? How might Hawai'i and the United States be different today if the Hawai'i had remained an independent sovereign nation?