

American Revolution  
TEXT SET

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***My Brother Sam is Dead.* Collier, James Lincoln; Collier, Christopher. Macmillan Publishing, 1974**

When Sam Meeker returns home from college in the spring of 1775 and announces that he has decided to enlist in the Rebel army, his parents are appalled, but his younger brother, Tim, is wide-eyed with admiration. When the brothers are outside together doing chores around their family's tavern, Sam confides in Tim his plan to steal their father's gun in order to fight. Tim protests, but he can do nothing to stop Sam. That night, Mr. Meeker and Sam have an argument about the war and Sam runs away from home. The next morning after church, Tim visits Sam in a hut where he is hiding out. He tries to talk Sam out of going to war, but without success. In the hut, Sam's girlfriend Betsy Read asks Tim which side he supports, and Tim has trouble deciding between his Father's loyalty to the British government and his brother's loyalty to the idea of an independent nation. He does not answer. Sam leaves, and after several months Betsy notifies Tim that Sam has returned. Tim finds an excuse to visit his brother when Rebel soldiers enter his house and violently demand his father's gun, which is with Sam. Tim runs to Sam's hideout, steals the gun and runs, but is soon over taken by Sam. Together they return to the house and find that their parents have been spared.

I think this book can be used in several different ways in a classroom. First, I would introduce the book to the class and give them a basic overview of the plot. I would then have each of the write a "What do you know?" slip. On this slip I will have the give me their first impressions of the book, along with how they thought the plot would play out. Next, I would have the students read this book on their own as a homework assignment for the next several weeks. Then, after reading the book each student would be asked how they would feel in this situation. For example, if he or she were Tim who

would he or she side with, their father or their brother? They would explain their feelings in a one to two page creative writing assignment. Another example would be a letter from Tim to his brother explaining his feelings, or a dairy entry of Sam's explaining why he made the choice he did.

***Hope's Crossing.* Goldman, Joan Elizabeth. Houghton Mifflin. 1998**

This young adult historical novel begins when Hope Wakeman, the daughter of an American patriot fighting in the Revolution, is kidnapped by a group of British loyalists. When the British refuse to take her as a hostage, she is left to work as a servant in the home of one of the kidnapers. The only person who treats her kindly is the grandmother, and eventually the two of them try to travel back to Hope's family through dangerous territory. Historical details form the underpinnings of this novel, but they never slow the pace, as Hope and Mother Thomas make their courageous, grueling journey.

I feel that this book provides the students with a view of the American Revolution they may have never known existed. It is my feeling that far too many students do not understand that this was not Americans fighting the British army, in many cases those colonists that were still loyal to the British would attack the patriots or their families. I would use this book in a read aloud format. I would read a selected area of the book that shows the loyalist attacking Hope, and another that explains how poorly she was treated by these loyalists. After a short discussion of the reading as a class, I would bring the classroom into two teams and assign each team as either a loyalist or patriot and prepare a debate in support of their side. The students would be given time to conduct research on the topic using their textbooks and internet based research (assuming there are computers in the room). After a set amount of time, more than likely the remaining time in the class, a debate would be held. After this debate each student will be given a slip of paper and asked to vote in a secret ballot format, for either the loyalist or patriot cause. A discussion will follow the reading of the results. I feel this activity will be very helpful in showing the class the difficulty the colonist faced when deciding what to do during this time.

***Cast Two Shadows.* Rinaldi, Ann. Harcourt Books. 1998**

This novel set in 1780, the heart of the American Revolution, Camden, South Carolina tells the story of a girl named Caroline whose father is in prison and whose brother is off fighting for the Loyalist. Furthermore, her, her mother, and her sister are being confined to one room in their spacious plantation that is now being held by a British colonel. However, once she hears that her brother is injured there is nothing that can stand in her way, not even a British colonel. She takes off on a journey to find and help her brother, during this trip her “secret” grandmother, a slave from her family’s plantation, will come along with her as they make their way through deadly soldiers, and desperate rebels her life is forever changed.

I chose to include this novel in my text set because it was set in South Carolina, and I felt that for this reason my students would be especially interested in it. I think for this novel I would have the students read it at home over several weeks. Following this I would have all the girls in my class read a letter to Caroline’s brother explaining why she is coming to help him, and the amazing and terrible sights she sees on her journey to him. During this time I would have all of the boys in the class write a letter to Caroline explaining why he chose to fight for the Loyalist, the sights he had seen during his time fight, and either trying to convince her to not try and come help her or asking her to do so. After this I would pair each boy and girl up and have them read the others letter. They would be asked to decide if their partner’s letter convinced to change their mind. For example, did the boy’s letter convince the girl to stay at home and not come help him, or did the girl’s letter explain why she had to come help her brother.

***Sarah Bishop.* O'Dell, Scott. Houghton Mifflin. 1980.**

Fifteen-year-old Sarah lives on a little Long Island farm at the outbreak of the War for Independence. Her brother defies his Tory father and leaves to join the patriot army. Soon her father dies for his Tory sentiments. Finding herself a homeless orphan, Sarah goes to the crowded young city of New York. There she finds herself accused by the British of a crime she did not commit. Fleeing for her life, Sarah finds a cave in the wood about 50 miles north of the city. The cave becomes her wilderness refuge. Drawing on strengths and skills she had not known she possessed, she begins to shape a new life.

I think this would be a very interesting read aloud. By reading sections about her being wrongly accused of a crime, forced to live in the wilderness, and how she was about to survive this I feel this would be interesting to several students. This will easily turn into a class discussion on fairness, and more important how to survive a seemingly impossible situation. This will be a great chance to have the students understand that even at their age they are able to do amazing things. I would use this as an exit slip activity; I would have each student write a special skill they have that they feel makes them stand out. After each student had written a few sentences about his/her skill I would take up the slips and read them to the class without using the student's name. I feel this would be a great chance to increase the self-esteem of every member of the class.

***The Keeping Room.* Myers, Anna. Penguin Putnam Books. 1997**

A 13 year old boy is left behind to protect his family home in Camden, South Carolina when his father leaves help lead the rebel army against the British. The boy is put in an impossible situation when General Cornwallis and his troops turn his family's home into their headquarters, and if that wasn't enough they begin to hold public hangings in the family's garden. Angry about these events and having a strong desire to do his part to help the rebel cause, the young boy is willing to do anything to get revenge for what has been taking place.

This book would be another one I would use during a read aloud. I would read sections about the people being hung in the boy's garden. I would have students write the connections they see in this book as compared to the other books we had read. For example, how did this boy respond to his situation compared to the characters in the other books we have read? Did he seem to handle it in a better way? I would again have them write how they think they would handle this situation. Each of these books involves children being left behind for one reason or the other, and them having to deal with a terrible situation. I wanted to use books like this to show students what it was like for a kid of around their age during this time. I also felt it was important to use both male and female characters to show that everyone was going through this not just one certain gender. I feel that by showing the students several times when a kid of their age range had to deal with a very difficult situation and how they overcame it would give the students an understanding of what they are capable of. Also high school students in today's society have to deal with parents leaving them behind not because of war, but because of things like divorce, and think some of the themes in these books could help students deal with their situation.

***Sam the Minuteman.* Benchley, Nathaniel. Harper Collins. 1969**

This picture book gives the reader a look at what it is like to be a minuteman during the American Revolution. I found the pictures to be very creative and help to move the story along. The pictures also show the basic items that a minuteman would carry while in the field. This book also deals with Sam, the main character, having to overcome his fears to be about to fight for his beliefs. This book is on a 2-4 grade reading level.

I would use this book in a read a loud at the end of class. I would ask the students to list the items they saw in the pictures such as, a musket, and why these items would important to a minuteman. I feel that this book would provide a very easy and creative why to introduce the students to some of the equipment that was being used by the minuteman. This can easily lead into a discussion on the items that these men did not have and how difficult it was to survive without them.

***Shh! We're Writing the Constitution.***” Fritz, Jean. Penguin Putnam Books. 1987.

This picture book tells the story of a hot summer in 1787, fifty-five delegates from thirteen states huddled in the strictest secrecy in the Philadelphia State House to draw up a plan of government for the collection of states, and after about four months of emotional outbursts and rousing debates, our Constitution was written.

I think using this book will be a fun way to introduce the Constitution part of a unit. I think the pictures in this book can very easily lead to discussions about some of the issues surrounding the writing of the Constitution. I would present this book to the class and then have them break up into pair squared. Each of these groups would come up with laws for our classroom that would be in the class constitution. Each group will also be told to decide on a leader who will defend the rules to the other members of the class. I feel that be doing the students can get a very personal understanding of how difficult it was to write this document.

***The Boston Coffee Party.* Rappaport, Doreen. Harper Collins. 1988.**

During the Revolutionary war times are hard in colonial Boston. Greedy Merchant Thomas is overcharging for sugar. Then he locks up all the coffee so he can overcharge for that too. Young Sarah Homans wants to teach him a lesson. Merchant Thomas is about to attend a party he won't soon forget, and this picture book provides the reader with creative pictures to enjoy as well as an interesting story.

I really liked this picture book. I thought the pictures were creative and funny. Furthermore I saw the story as a fun and simple way for the students to look at some of the basic problems that started the ideas of a revolution in the colonies. The topics covered in this book can also later be compared to the issues that led up to the start of the French Revolution. I would have the students do an exit slip with the key points of the story and than rank the points as causes of the American Revolution when compared to the other ideas that had been discussed in class.

***What's the Big Idea...Ben Franklin. Fritz, Jean. Putnman Books. 1976***

This picture book is a funny and factual look at the life and work of Ben Franklin. It shows how his curious nature about numerous things leads him to be such an amazing part of American history. This book also shows the reader the many different things that Ben Franklin contributed to the modern world in literature, science, and government. The fast moving story and creative pictures make this book a great learning tool at any level of education

I think this book is a must have when teaching American history. The story of Ben Franklin's life and his contributes to society is so creatively done I feel like any student would enjoy this book. With this book I would pass the book around the room having each student read a section and show the class the pictures that are on that page. After the book had made it completely around the room (it the entire story was not read I will finish it) I will have the students come up with a list of all the accomplishments mentioned in the book. Then I would lead the class in a discussion of which of Franklin's inventions was the most important to society today, and why. At the end of class the students would write a short half page explanation of why they thought a certain invention was the most important and give reasons why they felt this way.

***Victory or Death!*. Rappaport, Doreen; Verniero, Joan. Harper Collins. 2003.**

This book provides several of the true stories about important events and people from the American Revolutionary War. These events and people include such less well-known heroes as 16-year-old Sybil Ludington and James Armistead--a slave who spied for Lafayette and the Americans. The book goes on with several other stories of personal bravery during the American Revolution, as well as several important events that these people were a part of.

I think this book is very important to this text set. It provides stories of people that some of the students would have never heard of otherwise. It is also important because it continues my theme of young people having to deal with seemingly impossible situations during the Revolution. This book also brings up another interesting aspect for discussion, like the bravery of many slaves during the war. This easily leads into a discussion of why these people would be willing to give up their lives to fight alongside the very people that are enslaving them. I would have the students break up into groups of 3 or 4 to discuss two questions; were these slaves fighting because they believed in the patriotic ideas or were they fighting because they were being forced to by their masters? I would allow each group 10 to 15 minutes to discuss what they feel the reason is, and then at the conclusion of this time each group would present their feelings to the class. Finally, in the event that all groups come up with the same answer I will take the other side and provide them with reasons why this could also be a reason. I feel that this is an aspect of the Revolutionary war that is not really discussed at great length in many cases.

***American Revolution: Give me Liberty or Give me Death.* Kent, Deborah. Enslow Publishers. 1994.**

An agreeably unbiased presentation of both sides of the American Revolution. Kent maintains a balanced tone throughout, and in so doing describes aspects of the conflict that may surprise students. More than the litany of usual names and events (Jefferson, Paine, the Boston Tea Party, etc.), she discusses the estrangement between Benjamin Franklin and his Loyalist son William, and the atrocities committed by both sides.

Everything I read about this book suggests that minus a few shortcomings it is a wonderful tool when teaching the American Revolution. I think it is very important to try and provide the students with material that is as unbiased as possible. I think it is especially important because it discusses the difficulties between Ben and William Franklin. I think this is important because it gives another side of Ben Franklin after he was painted in a hero's light in the picture book previously mentioned in this text set. Also, it shows the difficult relationship between him and his son, which is another way to connect these event and people to the students' real lives. Every student has had difficulty with one or both parents (especially during this time) and I think this will really bring the subject alive for many of them. I believe I would have the students use this book along with others to do a short research writing assignment. In this assignment I would ask them to take either Ben's side (Patriot) or his son's side (Loyalist) and try and convince the other to consider their point of view. I think this will be an interesting way for the students to research the aspects of both arguments in a more creative way then just a simple formal essay about it.

*Those Remarkable Women of the American Revolution.* Zeinert, Karen. Millbrooks Press. 1996

As spies, political commentators, even as soldiers, colonial women of all kinds, both Patriot and Loyalist, played a significant role in what was considered a man's war—The American Revolution. Stirred by the patriotic mood of the day, women strove to contribute to the cause in any way they could, sometimes through their traditional roles, but often in ways that were thought to be inappropriate, even unnatural to women. In taking a stand, these darling women, who were as prominent as Abigail Adams and as common as the poorest campfollowers, changed forever women's perceptions of themselves.

This is a great book full of wonderful information. Once I looked at this book I knew exactly how I would use it in my text set. In a pre-reading activity the students will be asked to brainstorm the activities that women did during the American Revolution. Following this I will ask the class to provide some of their answers to be written on the board. After a good list has been made, I will pass out a handout containing different excerpts from the book showing women in several different non-traditional activities during the war. Then the students will be asked to find a student who has the same activity as them. (handouts would be numbered or lettered to make this easier) These students would get in a group to discuss the excerpt they had read. After a few minutes of discussion each group will be given a piece of post paper. The students will then be told to draw a line down the middle of the paper and to draw on the left side how they saw women of this time period before the reading, and to draw how they saw them after the reading on the right side, and of course after this each group would present their excerpt and their poster that went along with it.

***Fight for Freedom.* Bobrick, Benson. Simon and Schuster Children's Publishing.  
1974**

From the first stirrings of unrest under British rule at the Boston Tea Party, to the treachery of Benedict Arnold at West Point, to George Washington's Christmas eve special attack at the Battle of Trenton, to the British surrender at the Battle of Yorktown, this book explores the war that created one independent nation out of thirteen diverse colonies. This book also contains personal anecdotes from soldiers and civilians, as well as profiles of the many historical figures who were involved in America's fight for freedom.

This is another book that covers several of the major events during the duration of the American Revolution. I feel it is important to have as many general sources like this as possible available to the students for research purposes. Also, this book contains personal letters and diary entries of several of the major historical figures of the time. With this letters and diary entries there is provided a personal view of the war. These letters and diary entries can be used from several different activities and classroom discussions. For example, the students can continue a diary or letter to explain what happen during a major battle. Another I idea is that they can write back to the letters telling the historical figure what had happen after they wrote their letter.

***The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789.* Middlekauff, Robert.  
Oxford University Press. 1982.**

*The Glorious Cause* is a compelling account of the American colonies' struggle for independence. Middlekauff charts the growing conflict between England and America--the political and personal controversies within the halls of Parliament to establish a viable colonial policy--to the ultimate outbreak of military confrontation in 1775 and 1776.

I thought this would be a great non-fiction source. It gives another thorough view of the events leading up to, and the events of the revolution. It is part of the Oxford University American history series that I have found helpful when I have been doing research of my own. As I have said previously there are many different uses for a source like this, from research to read a louds.

**[http://www.nps.gov/revwar/about the revolution/overview.html](http://www.nps.gov/revwar/about_the_revolution/overview.html)**

This website would be very helpful for the students. It can be used in several different ways during research. This site provides the students with a timeline of major battles, as well as “Revolutionary Stories.” One activity I would use this site for is for the students to come up with a picture map of the major events during the time period. This site’s timeline feature, along with other parts of my text set, would be very helpful for this activity. Another activity would be to have students break into groups and read some of the “Revolutionary Stories” and provide a picture map of the story to be presented to the rest of the class.

**[http://www.kidinfo.com/American History/American Revolution.html](http://www.kidinfo.com/American_History/American_Revolution.html)**

I think the students would really enjoy using this site. It is set up in a very easy user friend way. A great activity with the site would be an “American Revolution Treasure Hunt.” During this activity students would be asked to find different aspects of information using the links on this site. I think this would be a fun way for the students to learn some of the important aspects of the American Revolution without having to read it out of their textbook. One way to make the activity a little more exciting is to break the students into groups and have the compete to see you can find the correct answer the quickest.

**<http://www.americanrevolution.org/nguyen.html>**

This website provides the students with another look at the role women played during the Revolution. Its homepage provides a short essay about the role of women during the war that could easily be printed and used as a read a loud activity. Furthermore this site has several links to other sites that discuss the impact of women on the war. I feel that using sites like this gives the students a more complete understanding of the actual events of the war, instead of the watered down version that is provided to them in their textbook.

**<http://www.isil.org/network/us/C1/T5/>**

This is the International Society for Individual Liberties website. It provides links to sites discussing the men who write the Declaration of Independence, the process of writing the document, and the reasons behind writing it. There are so many great links provided on this site. A site like this would be very helpful for a student who was looking for a wide range of information regarding many of the important people of this time period. This site would be very helpful for a project on any one of the American Founding Fathers. It even has a link to a site about Monticello that home of Thomas Jefferson!

<http://www.ushistory.org/>

This site is the “granddaddy of them all” so to speak. It provides the student with a jumping off point of any number of activities. It has maps of major battles, such as Valley Forge, or the Battle of Yorktown. It also provides a great deal of information regarding all of the major American figures of the time period. Again, this site could be used of a variety of reason or activities that would be helpful to the students. I would more than likely use this site for a web based assignment that involved the entire class. This would be a chance to get the students out of the classroom and into the media center or computer lab. This site can provide for all different kind of learners, with its many maps, timelines, articles, and even audio samples.

***The Patriot.* Directed by Roland Emmerich. Written by Robert Robat. Columbia Pictures. 2000**

This movie starring Mel Gibson can be very useful in a unit discussing the American Revolution. First, Mel Gibson's character, Benjamin "The Ghost" Martin is loosely based on Francis Marion, or the "Swamp Fox," who was an actual American military leader during the American Revolution. (He was also from South Carolina, another plus!) In the beginning of the movie Benjamin Martin is completely against the war, and even goes as far as to forbid his oldest son to join the revolutionary army. However, after his home is attacked and one of his sons is killed Martin decides to take action and join the American cause.

I would show three parts of this movie in my class. First, I would show the scene with Martin announcing in the courthouse that he would not fight and that he does not think that fighting the British is a just cause. Next, I would show the scene where one of his young sons is killed and he decides to take action against the British. Finally, I would show the final scene of the movie where he is fighting a large battle during the end of the war. I would ask the students to write their feelings about Martin after each scene, and then we would discuss their feelings and why they believed he chose to act. This will be a great way to show the students how difficult of a decision this was for many of the American men who fought for Freedom.

***The Declaration of Independence. Jefferson, Thomas. July 4, 1776.***

Anytime a teacher is going to conduct a lesson on the American Revolution I think it is important to have the students read the actual Declaration of Independence. For this activity, I would go around the room having each student read a portion of the document. After, the document had been read out loud the students would break up into pairs and attempt to translate their portion of the document into modern language. After each pair was given enough time the class would come back together to present their translation and discuss any problems they might have had. After the class was able to agree on a translation for the document, the class would combine their work to come up with a "modern" Declaration of Independence. I feel that this will really give the students ownership of the information in the document, and provide them the information in a way that could have a long lasting impact.

## **The American Flag**

For this activity each student would be given either a print out of the American flag or a small handheld version of the flag itself. The students would be asked to explain the reason for the different aspects of the flag. (the 50 stars for the 50 states, the 13 stripes for the 13 original colonies) Next, we will discuss why the American flag is such a strong symbol to Americans. For example, the soldiers who have fought for America in the many wars. After a discussion of the symbols on the flag and the meaning it has to Americans, the students will be asked to create a flag that represents them as a person. I will give each student a blank sheet of paper and markers and they will be asked to come up with a flag that can represent them in anyway they wanted. These personal flags would than be hung around the classroom.

**Letter by George Washington. Valley Forge April 21<sup>st</sup> 1778 (from**

**<http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/documents/revolution/banister.html>**)

This letter can be printed and turned into a handout. I will pass out the letter and have each student read and react to it. How is he feeling? Is he scared? What does in the outcome of the battle is going to be? I would then discuss what each student found in the letter that they felt was important. I think this activity would show the students that these people were real and they had feeling just like they do. Also, I know when I was a student and I got to read an actual letter from a person who lived in the time period I was always more interested then when I had to read an article or a section of the textbook telling me what happen.

*The American Revolution For Students Video Series.*

This five set volume covers all of the major events of this time period. I feel like it could be used in a number of ways that can be very useful in a classroom. I feel like with this series students who are audio visual learners will learn a great deal that may have missed otherwise. Also, those students who were learning the information in other ways would also benefit from these videos because they can serve as a reinforcement tool for the information they had already learned.