

Student Publications

John F. Reed Honors Program

Fort Lewis College

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A Literary Exploration of Liberty: Using
Young Adult Literature to Teach the
American Revolution

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Lesson Plans

Day 1

Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Know how various societies were affected by contacts and exchanges among diverse peoples (3.1)
- Understand how democratic ideas and institutions in the U.S. have developed, changed, and/or been maintained (5.1 and 5.2)
- Students understand the history of social organization in various societies (3.2)

Activities:

- 1) The teacher will introduce the Revolutionary War and hand out blank timelines for the students to fill out throughout the unit. This introduction will incorporate the events that led up to the Revolution (i.e. the Stamp Act, the Boston Massacre, the Boston Tea Party, British troop occupation, Declaration of Independence) and the different views toward the war (Loyalists, Patriots, Quakers). (15 minutes)
- 2) The teacher will ask students to get into small groups and discuss at what point can you say a lawful government has gone too far? The teacher will then ask for volunteers to offer what their group came up with. (10 minutes)
- 3) The teacher will then go into further detail on the Declaration of Independence. The lecture will incorporate where the idea of a democracy originated and how the founding fathers perceived it. The teacher will then move into the formation and understanding of the Declaration, including the establishment of the Continental Congress. (15 minutes)
- 4) The teacher will assign the reading project for the class. The teacher will introduce the five books to the class and then place students in groups based on reading level. A timeline for the project will be given to the students so they can start thinking about the project. Students will then get into their groups and figure out how much of their books they have to read by the following class period. (10 minutes)

Assessment:

The teacher will monitor small group discussions and class discussions to make sure key ideas are understood.

Materials:

Copies of the assigned book for each group

Blank timelines for each student

Copy of Declaration of Independence for each student

Day 2

Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Use chronology to organize historical events and people (1.2)
- Understand how economic factors have influenced historical events (4.2)
- Understand the historical development and characteristics of various economic systems (4.3)

Activities:

- 1) The teacher will hand out a worksheet that defines basic literary terms that the students will fill out while reading their novels (see attached worksheet). The teacher will have students get into their book groups to discuss their first impressions of their books and begin to fill out the worksheet. Each student will also place their novel on their individual timelines so they can visually place the characters and events within their books within the events of the war. (30 minutes)
- 2) The teacher will lecture on the economic factors of Revolutionary America. This lecture will focus on how money affected the Patriot and British forces (Patriot troops lacked funding for bullets, uniforms, food, etc.- running out of ammo at Bunker Hill, Valley Forge, etc.) The teacher will also speak about how access to resources changed over the course of the war, how Britain cut off trade to American ports and how the Patriots were forced to become self reliant. This is the perfect opportunity for the teacher to speak about the rise of the middle and mercantile class, the birth of corporation, and how indentured servants and slaves played into the sustenance of the American economy. (20 minutes)

Assessment:

The teacher will monitor the small group discussions to make sure students are moving in the right direction with their projects and comprehending the books they are reading.

Materials:

Worksheet on literary tools

Day 3

Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Students know how to interpret and evaluate primary and secondary sources of historical information (2.2)

Activities:

- 1) Teacher will set up stations for small groups of students. Each station will have several primary and secondary sources about aspects of life during Revolutionary America. Stations will be devoted to minority groups, women, children, religious groups, and Tory vs. Patriot philosophies. When students arrive, the teacher will have students rotate around the different stations, taking notes. They will also have discussions about the different material they are finding. (45 minutes)

Assessment:

The teacher will monitor students at each station to make sure they comprehend how different groups were treated in Revolutionary America.

Materials:

Primary sources on Revolutionary War

Secondary sources on documents written during the Revolutionary War

Day 4

Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand the impact of scientific and technological developments on individuals and societies (4.1)

Activities:

- 1) To begin class the teacher will play the song "Johnny Has Gone for a Soldier" and ask for students' initial reactions. (10 Minutes)
- 2) The teacher will lecture on the technology of Revolutionary America. This lecture will incorporate the difference between rural and urban life and how the war was affected by technology of the lack thereof (medicine, weapons, etc.). (15 minutes)

- 3) The teacher will assign students a small research project on inventions that revolutionized warfare or daily life during the time. The class will be broken into five groups with a student from each novel in every group. Each of these groups will be assigned a topic and each student will have to write a complete paragraph on that source of technology as homework (they'll be required to use a minimum of 3 sources). The following day each student will read their paragraph to their book group. (10 minutes)
- 4) Students will get together in their groups to discuss their progress on their novels. They will discuss what types of technology they've run across in their books and what parts should be incorporated into their final presentations. (15 minutes)

Assessment:

By asking for student reactions to the song, the teacher will be able to assess the students' understandings of sacrifices made during a time of war. The teacher will monitor the student discussions regarding the role of technology in their novels to make sure students are pulling on key parts of their novels.

Materials:

The song "Johnny Has Gone for a Soldier"

Day 5

Objectives:

By the end of this class, students will be able to:

- Understand the impact of scientific and technological developments on individuals and societies (4.1)

Activities:

- 1) Students will gather in their book groups to present the item of technology they researched. When finished with the presentations, each student will turn in their paragraphs and the list of the 3 sources they utilized. (50 minutes)

Assessment:

This project is designed to familiarize students with research skills, as well as writing and presentation skills. The teacher will assess students based on these criteria.

Day 6

Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Apply knowledge of the past to analyze present day issues and events (2.3)
- Formulate questions and hypotheses regarding what happened in the past and to obtain and analyze historical data (2.1)

Activities:

- 1) The teacher will ask students to reflect back on the technology segment and review the role technology played in Revolutionary America. Students will gather in small groups to discuss how warfare has changed today due to major technological advances (weaponry, transportation, medical knowledge and practice, supplies, apparel, etc.). (30 minutes)
- 2) The teacher will lecture on some of the major battles/events during the war. This lecture will incorporate how the Patriots began strategizing and as a result turned the tables on British troops (i.e. Southern Campaign and surprise attacks like Trenton and Fort Ticonderoga). (15 minutes)
- 3) The teacher will assign each student a historical figure from their respective novels to research. The student will be expected to research their figure and be able to incorporate the information into their final group presentation on their book, as well as write a two page biography on the figure (due in class on day 10). (10 minutes)

Assessment:

The teacher will monitor small group discussions to make sure the students fully comprehend the influence of technology and science on warfare.

Day 7

Objectives:

By the end of this class, students will be able to:

- Recognize the historical development of religions and philosophies of the time and how societies were affected by them (6.1 and 6.2)
- Recognize how various forms of expression reflect religious and philosophical beliefs (6.3)

Activities:

- 1) The teacher will lecture on religion in Revolutionary America. This lecture will incorporate the different religions that had influence on society and how they influenced the formation of America as an independent country. The teacher will also review the religion of the founding fathers and how their view of religion influenced the formation of the Declaration of Independence. This lecture will incorporate the idea of freedom of religion and how important it was to the founding fathers, as well as the idea of deism and its influence on the colonists' view of religion. (10 minutes)
- 2) The teacher will ask students to contribute what signs of religion they see within the Declaration. (10 minutes)
- 3) The teacher will lecture on how religion was expressed by the colonists (ex. Church attendance, Quakers refusing to fight). (5 minutes)
- 4) The teacher will have the students meet with their groups to discuss how religion plays into their novels. (25 minutes)

Assessment:

The teacher will monitor group discussions to make sure that the students are recognizing the role of religion in their novels. This is an important connection for the students because they need to include such information in their presentations.

Materials:

Copy of the Declaration of Independence for the overhead

Day 8

Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Recognize how political power was acquired, maintained, used, and/or lost during the Revolution (5.3)
- Recognize the history of relationships among different political powers and the development of international relations (5.4)
- Understand the history of social organization in various societies (3.1 and 3.2)

Activities:

- 1) The teacher will ask the class to contribute evidence they've found in their novel regarding to how the war affected minorities, children, and women (30 minutes)

- 2) The teacher will lecture on America's alliance with France, England's use of German mercenaries, and then finally on the victory at Yorktown and the signing of the Treaty of Paris (10 minutes)
- 3) The teacher will ask students to contribute what sort of factors played into the Patriot's victory over England, and the teacher will write the list down on the blackboard (10 minutes)

Assessment:

The teacher will monitor small group discussions on how their books incorporate the role of minorities, women, and children, to make sure basic comprehension and connection skills are taking place. By asking the class to contribute the factors that led to victory, the teacher will be able to assess students' comprehension skills regarding the content presented over the last week and a half.

Materials:

Markers or chalk for writing on the board

Day 9 and 10

Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Use chronology to organize historical events and people (1.2)
- Use chronology to examine and explain historical relationships (1.3)

Activities:

- 1) Students will work with their book groups on their final presentations (by this point students are expected to have finished their books). (50 minutes)

Assessment:

The teacher will monitor small groups to make sure the key ideas are being incorporated into their presentations.

The teacher will collect the students' biographies on the historical figures and evaluate them based on the following criteria and point scale:

- Concise description of the person's life (20 pts)
- The impact the historical figure had on history (20 pts.)
- Grammar skills (10 pts)

Materials:

Craft supplies for students to use to create visual aids for their presentations (markers, colored pencils, rulers, colored paper, scissors, poster board, magazines)

Day 11**Objectives:**

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Recognize the general chronological order of events and people (1.1)

Activities:

- 1) Group 1 (The Winter of Red Snow) will present as the rest of the class takes notes and adds key historical information from the presentation to their individual timelines. (25 minutes)
- 2) Group 2 (My Brother Sam is Dead) will present as the rest of the class takes notes and adds key historical information from the presentation to their individual timelines. (25 minutes)

Assessment:

The teacher will observe each presentation and evaluate it based on the following criteria and point scale:

- Analysis of actual historical figures and events in the novel (15 pts)
- Analysis of evidence on how minorities, children, women, or religious groups were treated at the time and how their lives were affected by the war (15 pts)
- Description of what daily life looked like for the characters in their novel (15 pts)
- Summary of the novel and its characters (10 pts)
- Presentation on the setting and what about that setting was influential in the history of the American Revolution (15 pts)
- Addressing how their novel portrays the hardships of war (10 pts)
- Evaluation of the role of technology or science as portrayed in their novel (10 pts)
- Presentation skills (visual aids, public speaking skills, equal distribution of presentation time, preparedness, creativity, etc.) (10 pts)

Day 12

Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Recognize the general chronological order of events and people (1.1)

Activities:

- 1) Group 3 (Sarah Bishop) will present as the rest of the class takes notes and adds key historical information from the presentation to their individual timelines. (25 minutes)
- 2) Group 4 (Johnny Tremain) will present as the rest of the class takes notes and adds key historical information from the presentation to their individual timelines. (25 minutes)

Assessment:

The teacher will observe each presentation and evaluate it based on the following criteria and point scale:

- Analysis of actual historical figures and events in the novel (15 pts)
- Analysis of evidence on how minorities, children, women, or religious groups were treated at the time and how their lives were affected by the war (15 pts)
- Description of what daily life looked like for the characters in their novel (15 pts)
- Summary of the novel and its characters (10 pts)
- Presentation on the setting and what about that setting was influential in the history of the American Revolution (15 pts)
- Addressing how their novel portrays the hardships of war (10 pts)
- Evaluation of the role of technology or science as portrayed in their novel (10 pts)
- Presentation skills (visual aids, public speaking skills, equal distribution of presentation time, preparedness, creativity, etc.) (10 pts)

Day 13**Objectives:**

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Recognize the general chronological order of events and people (1.1)

Activities:

- 1) Group 5 (Finishing Becca) will present as the rest of the class takes notes and adds key historical information from the presentation to their individual timelines. (25 minutes)

- 2) The students will use the remaining class time to work on their individual timelines (to be turned in next class). (25 minutes)

Assessment:

The teacher will observe each presentation and evaluate it based on the following criteria and point scale:

- Analysis of actual historical figures and events in the novel (15 pts)
- Analysis of evidence on how minorities, children, women, or religious groups were treated at the time and how their lives were affected by the war (15 pts)
- Description of what daily life looked like for the characters in their novel (15 pts)
- Summary of the novel and its characters (10 pts)
- Presentation on the setting and what about that setting was influential in the history of the American Revolution (15 pts)
- Addressing how their novel portrays the hardships of war (10 pts)
- Evaluation of the role of technology or science as portrayed in their novel (10 pts)
- Presentation skills (visual aids, public speaking skills, equal distribution of presentation time, preparedness, creativity, etc.) (10 pts)

Day 14

Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand the general chronological order of the events and people of the Revolutionary War (1.1)

Activities:

- 1) The teacher will give a short lecture tying together the five books and their representation of Revolutionary America. This lecture will include the historical inaccuracies within each novel. (10 minutes)
- 2) The teacher will ask each book group to contribute inaccuracies they found while reading. (10 minutes)
- 3) The rest of class time will be devoted to studying for the test. Students can study on their own, but the teacher will be available for any questions. (30 minutes)

Assessment:

The teacher will collect the students' timelines and will evaluate them based on the following criteria and point scale:

- Historical accuracy/content (15 pts)
- Effort/creativity (10pts)

Materials:

Study Guides, including key terms, dates, events, and names (students will also be tested on comprehension questions regarding each presentation).

Day 15

Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand the general chronological order of the events and people of the Revolutionary War (1.1)

Activities:

- 1) The teacher will administer the end of unit test to the class. (50 minutes)

Assessment:

The teacher will gather the tests at the end of class and evaluate them. The test will be worth 100 points overall.

Index of Sample Materials

Literary Tools

Setting:

Characters:

Protagonists-

Antagonists-

Plot:

Exposition:

Rising Action:

Conflict:

Resolution:

Discussion Questions for Winter of Red Snow

1. What was it like to be a soldier at Valley Forge?
2. George and Martha Washington are important characters in this book. How does Abigail describe them?
3. Abigail wants to help the army and sympathizes with them, but at the same time wants them to leave. What are the things about the army that Abigail likes and doesn't like?
4. How did life change for the people who lived in Valley Forge once the Continental Army came to town?
5. Do you think the British Army was experiencing the same hardships? Why or why not?

Discussion Questions for My Brother Sam is Dead

1. What is the significance of the gun that Sam steals from his father?
2. Tim is torn throughout the novel between Patriot and Loyalist philosophies. Do you think Tim ever picks a side?
3. What does Mr. Heron want Tim to do and what is the result? Did Tim make the right choice?
4. What is the irony in both Sam and Tim's father's death?
5. What is the purpose of the epilogue?

Discussion Questions for Sarah Bishop

1. What happens to Sarah's father? Do you think he made the right choice by declaring himself a Tory?
2. What stance does The Lion and The Lamb Tavern take on the war?
3. Why do you think Sarah is happy when she finds out that her brother, Chad, might be a prisoner of war?
4. Do you think Sarah made the right choice by hiding in the woods? What would have happened to her if she refused to run and hide?
5. What can Isaac and his Quaker friends offer Sarah?

Discussion Questions for Johnny Tremain

1. Do you feel like Johnny had a good life living with the Laphams?
2. Indentured servants were important to life in the colonies. Do you think that the system was just?

3. How and why does Johnny become a Whig?
4. What influence do the Sons of Liberty have on Boston?
5. Why do you think that British soldier deserted their posts?

Discussion Questions for Finishing Becca

1. What is the “finishing” that Becca’s mother believes her daughter needs?
2. Why does Peggy chose Arnold over Andre?
3. What leads to Arnold’s betrayal? How big of a role do you think Peggy played in his decision?
4. What is the significance of Becca’s trip to Valley Forge?
5. Do you think Peggy’s family succeeded in acting neutral in a time of war, as was expected of Quakers?

Young adult literature has been growing in popularity over the last several years, but only more recently has it been gaining recognition as an influential and valuable genre of literature in today's society. Even adults have tuned into the market, devouring books such as J.K Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, Stephanie Meyer's *The Twilight Saga*, and Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* at almost as rapid a rate as their teenage children. It is only logical that many of these great reads are finding their way into classrooms across the country. Historical fiction is a genre of young adult literature that has proven itself a great addition to a social studies classroom. As the genre continues to grow in both quantity and quality, history teachers of all grades are looking to young adult literature to add to their class quest for historical inquiry.

In this paper, I have chosen to explore the use of young adult literature when teaching the American Revolution (including the events that led up to it) in a middle-school, social studies class. I have created a 15 lesson thematic unit integrating five young adult historical novels with lectures, class activities, projects, and discussions. The five novels are: *Winter of Red Snow* by Kristiana Gregory, *My Brother Sam is Dead* by Christopher and James Collier, *Sarah Bishop* by Scott O'Dell, *Johnny Tremain* by Esther Forbes, and *Finishing Becca* by Ann Rinaldi. The class will be divided into five groups based on reading level, and each group will be assigned one of the novels. Over the course of the first two weeks, students will take the history lessons learned in class and apply them while reading their novels. Toward the end of the unit, the groups will present their novels to the class. The presentations, in addition to covering the plot, setting, and characters, will include a timeline of the war. Students must also fit their novel into the timeline, while identifying historical figures within their book, the presence of technology and religion, and an overview of what daily life looked like for the

protagonist(s) in their book, including the roles of different classes, minorities, women, and children. By the conclusion of this unit, students will have met all of the expectations of the Colorado Model Content Standards for social studies, as set forth by the state's Board of Education.

In combination with this thematic unit, this paper is designed to illustrate how young adult literature can be included in the classroom to enrich learning opportunities. History textbooks are often dry and outdated, but historical fiction can provide the reader with an excellent catalyst for the exploration of events of the past. Through the unit plan I have developed, students will be exposed to our nation's history in a way that is designed to engage them both cognitively and affectively.

Many prominent educators have written on their experiences using young adult literature in the classroom, and these were the people whose research I turned to for support. Three of the most helpful authors I've drawn from are Terry Lindquist, Joyce Stallworth, and Anna Soter. Their documented experiences in the classroom were incredibly beneficial in my study. I also pulled from two articles out of *The ALAN Review*, *Revolutionary War and Contemporary Students: It Happened a L-O-N-G Time Ago!*, by Vivian Yenica-Agbaw, and *You Can't Change History, Can You?* by Debra Seely.

Terry Lindquist is a fifth-grade social studies teacher in Washington who was named "National Elementary Teacher of the Year" by the National Council for the Social Studies. His article *Why and How I Teach with Historical Fiction*, is about his own experience using young adult historical fiction in the classroom. In the article, he states seven reasons why he teaches

with historical fiction, listing “it piques kids’ curiosity” at the top of his list (2). Lindquist also suggests tips for picking good historical fiction novels, offering a few specific reading recommendations of his own based on reading level. Another aspect of this article that really helped with my research and lesson plans was his segment on dealing with “where history stops and the story starts” (5). Lindquist has experienced tremendous success teaching with historical fiction, and his article offers strong advice for any teacher or parent interested in enriching their students’ education.

In her article *The Relevance of Young Adult Literature*, author Joyce Stallworth discusses young adult literature’s ability to engage readers because of its applicability to a young adult’s life. Dr. Stallworth is the Senior Associate Dean and professor of the English Education Department at the University of Alabama. Among the courses she teaches is “The Modern Secondary School Program,” where she instructs on the integration of young adult and multicultural literature into a middle or high school curriculum. In the article, Stallworth insists that the young adult literature genre deserves a prominent standing among middle school cannon, describing several examples from the classroom that support how young adult novels can enhance education.

Anna Soter’s book, *Young Adult Literature and the New Literary Theories: Developing Critical Readers in Middle School*, is about how one can utilize young adult literature in a middle school classroom. Soter devotes an entire chapter to using *My Brother Sam is Dead* (one of the books I’ve focused on) when teaching history in relation to social, economic, and cultural developments. Soter is an education professor at Ohio State University, where she teaches

classes on incorporating children's and young adult literature into the classroom. In this book, Soter states "I am *not* recommending the elimination of adult classics from secondary school curricula. However, I do want to show that among young adult novels are selections that teacher can use to develop students' critical appreciation of literature. Additionally, these novels contain content that is more directly relevant to teenagers and their experiences. A *balance* of young adult fiction and the classics is what I propose" (3). Her arguments in support of using young adult literature in the classroom helped me significantly when addressing the genre's educational merits and applicability.

The first article I used from The ALAN Review was *You Can't Change History, Can You?* by Debra Seely. In this article, Seely discusses historical fiction as a creative and beneficial way of teaching history. She argues that historical fiction should be used as a means to engage young students and spark an interest in a certain historical occurrence. The article also addresses the issue of accuracy in such texts. Seely is a former teacher and professor who now writes young adult historical fiction for a middle school age group.

In Vivian Yenica-Agbaw's article, *Revolutionary War and Contemporary Students: It Happened a L-O-N-G Time Ago!*, she discusses how to integrate young adult historical fiction with more classic teaching approaches, such as lectures and original historical documents. The article also singles out *My Brother Sam is Dead* as a model for utilizing young adult literature. Yenica-Agbaw's specific guidance for using such readings when teaching the American Revolution was important in the foundations of my thematic unit. Yenica-Agbaw is an associate

professor of Language and Literacy Education at Penn State who has a diverse high school teaching background in both the United States and Cameroon.

Summary of Literature

I have found that selecting young adult historical fiction appropriate for my unit was challenging, but not for lack of materials. There are endless numbers of wonderful books set during the American Revolution that would lend value to the classroom material. The challenge became narrowing down my choice of novels based on their educational merit. I considered several books, but ultimately the five books I chose were (in order of reading level from easiest to most difficult): *Winter of Red Snow* by Kristiana Gregory, *My Brother Sam is Dead* by Christopher and James Collier, *Sarah Bishop* by Scott O'Dell, *Johnny Tremain* by Esther Forbes, and *Finishing Becca* by Ann Rinaldi. All five books take place during the Revolution and star protagonists who range in age from eleven to their mid-teens.

Winter of Red Snow is the journal of Abigail Stewart, a young girl who lives with her patriot family in Valley Forge. As the Continental Army comes to town to settle down for the winter, the hardships of war become increasingly apparent. Abby spends enough time in the camp to see firsthand the suffering the army must endure, but how much can one girl and her own needy family do to help the starving troops? I chose this book for a few reasons. One of the main things that drew me toward it is the reading level; this book is by far the easiest of the five and could be assigned to the lowest level readers. While being an easy book to read, it is quite educational; it portrays the hardships the Continental Army faced and introduces several key Revolutionary War figures such as General and Mrs. Washington and Baron Von Steuben.

My Brother Sam is Dead is about Tim Meeker, a boy living in a divided house. Tim's brother, Sam, has enlisted in the newly formed Continental Army, but their father is a devout loyalist. Tim knows he must pick a side, but as he witnesses the violence that accompanies war, he must ultimately decide, which is the right side? I chose this book because it illustrates the injustices enacted by both armies toward the enemy. Events in the book lead the reader to realize that the term "enemy" is used loosely and often inaccurately in times of war. This book also presents to young readers a character they can relate to; Tim is torn between honoring his parents and his peers and has to make difficult decisions regarding his future and the future of his country. Another positive aspect this book has to offer is that it is often used in both history and English classes at the middle school level, so there is a fair amount of literature available that deals with how to teach this novel. In terms of reading level- this book is only slightly more difficult than *Winter of Red Snow*, but it offers readers themes essential to understanding the effects the Revolution had on families.

Sarah Bishop is about a teenage girl, Sarah, whose father is killed because of his loyalty to the crown. She is forced to go into hiding and retreats to a camp in the woods. All Sarah wants is an end to the hate and violence, but with the war raging across the country, she wonders if a peaceful existence is even possible? I chose this book mainly because of its reading level. I was looking for a book right in the mid-range reading level, and this book fits that requirement. I would have liked to have used *Cast Two Shadows*, by Ann Rinaldi, but that would have been too difficult of a read. *Sarah Bishop* is valuable because it deals with how loyalist families were treated during the war. It is important for students to recognize that not

everyone in the colonies wanted independence, and this book will bring that knowledge to the classroom.

Johnny Tremain is the story of a young indentured servant who, after suffering a serious injury, gets caught up in the action of Revolutionary Boston. Johnny joins forces with the Sons of Liberty and plays his own part in the Boston Tea Party and the Battle of Lexington. But, Johnny soon learns that he must defend his own name before he can fight for his country. This book is ideal for my unit plan. It is set in Boston during all the key pre-war events and stretches into the beginning of the war. Key historical characters, such as Paul Revere, Joseph Warren, John Hancock, and Sam Adams all play a role in this novel. It also does a nice job of depicting life for children during the time as well as the life of an indentured servant. This novel would be assigned to the group of students with a higher reading level, but who aren't quite ready for the complexities presented in novel such as *Finishing Becca*.

Finishing Becca is one of my favorite young adult books set during the Revolution. The novel opens when young Becca Syng is sent to work for the Shippens, a respectable Philadelphia Quaker family. As Quakers, the family is supposed to remain neutral during the war, but Becca quickly learns that her young mistress, Peggy, has quite different intentions. First Peggy sets her eyes on British Captain John Andre, but soon moves on to American General Benedict Arnold. As Peggy begins to manipulate Arnold, Becca must decide where her loyalties lie. I chose this book because it depicts life of the working class during the Revolution and does a nice job touching on the economics of the war. It also deals with the role of women and how the war changed the daily lives of many women. Another key theme within this book

that would be important to teach in a classroom is the role of religion. This book specifically deals with Quakers and how they were affected by the war.

Two last books that I would like to mention are Joy Hakim's *A History of US: From Colonies to Country 1735-1791* and Albert Marrin's book, *The War for Independence: The Story of the American Revolution*. These books are important because they provide a concise summary of the American Revolution at a middle school level. These are books that, in addition to being helpful to the teacher, would be great resources for the students to use when researching for their projects. Books that can serve both the teacher and the student are worth their weight in gold.

The Value of Using Young Adult Literature in the Classroom

The use of young adult literature as an educational tool is becoming increasingly common. More and more teachers are utilizing literature geared toward the specific age group of their students. Successfully reaching out to reluctant readers is one outcome these educators can attest to when young adult literature is employed in the classroom setting: "Besides energizing the class and enriching group discussion, the right young adult novel can provide teachers with a way to reach an individual student struggling with the standard curriculum" (Stallworth 62). By presenting young readers with characters, themes, plots, and language that is more consistent with their own experiences, teachers are often able to engage unenthusiastic learners. Teachers will find reluctant learners in all classrooms, and young adult literature gives teachers a way to reach out not only to those reluctant learners, but to every student in the class. This literature is often employed as a way for teachers to deal with the

numerous emotional, social, developmental, and physical changes students experience. “Integrating such works into the curriculum increases ‘life literacy’ by helping adolescents develop the reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills they need to succeed in school and by increasing their capacity to manage life problems” (Stallworth 59). By introducing young adult literature to the classroom, teachers are able to reach out to a diverse group of adolescent learners and engage them in their lessons.

While the use of young adult literature is most common in English classes, historical fiction is gaining grounds in social studies classes as well. In her article *The Relevance of Young Adult Literature*, Joyce Stallworth cites one teacher supporting the use of historical fiction because “‘young adult novels stimulate conversation about different historical periods in a way that textbooks can’t’” (Stallworth 63). It is important to note here that the use of historical fiction does not require we discard traditional approaches; as educator Tarry Lindquist states in his article *Why & How I Teach with Historical Fiction*, “even the best literature cannot address skills and processes unique to social studies that kids must learn. I have students balance fiction with fact, validate historical hypotheses with research” (1). For example, while a textbook might effectively communicate factual information about the tensions and or violence between patriot and loyalist communities, the material becomes more meaningful when the student reads about young Sarah, the protagonist in *Sarah Bishop*, witnessing her father’s brutal murder as a result of his loyalist stance. As Lindquist points out, “social studies texts are often devoted to coverage rather than depth. Too often, individuals-- no matter how famous or important-- are reduced to a few sentences. Children have difficulty converting these cryptic descriptions and snapshots into complex individuals who often had difficult choices to make”

(1). By combining textbooks with period documents and historical fiction, an educator can teach the American Revolution to a young audience in both a creative and effective manner.

In his article, Lindquist lists seven reasons he teaches with historical fiction: 1) it piques kids' curiosity. 2) It levels the playing field in that reading historical fiction promotes academic equity because comparing books from one unit to the next provides kids with equal opportunities to develop historical analogies. 3) It hammers home everyday details by presenting to students a past group's approach to things such as diet, dress, and language. 4) It puts people back in history, presenting "individuals as they are, neither all good nor all bad." 5) It presents the complexity of issues because history needs to be taught as multi-dimensional. 6) It promotes multiple perspectives through introducing characters who have different points of view on a given issue. And finally, 7) it connects social studies learning to the rest of the school day by aiding in the integration of history across the curriculum (2). By introducing historical fiction to his class, Lindquist has developed a successful approach to educating his students about the past, a technique that has gained him national recognition.

Meeting Standards

The Colorado Model Content Standards for History provide Colorado teachers for grades K-12 with clear guidelines for their lesson plans. There are six specific standards, each with several benchmarks that students must meet:

- 1) Students understand the chronological organization of history and know how to organize events and people into major eras to identify and explain historical relationships.

- 2) Students know how to use the processes and resources of historical inquiry.
- 3) Students understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time.
- 4) Students understand how science, technology, and economic activity have developed, changed, and affected societies throughout history.
- 5) Students understand political institutions and theories that have developed and changed over time.
- 6) Students know that religious and philosophical ideas have been powerful forces throughout history.

I have shaped my unit plan around these standards, making sure that each standard will be met over the course of my 15 day unit. However, in addition to meeting these guidelines through class assignments and lectures, the five novels I've chosen lend themselves to teaching to the standards.

Standard 1, is concerned with understanding the chronological order of historical eras. The subcategories are devoted to teaching students the chronological order of events and people in order to examine and explain historical relationships. All three of the sub-standards are met over the course of the entire unit plan, specifically through class assignments like timelines. A great example of how one of the novels teaches to this specific standard can be found in *Johnny Tremain*, by Esther Forbes. This story covers the span of events that contributed to the outbreak of the war. While reading this story, students will be able to understand the relationship between the Boston Tea Party and the Battle of Lexington. Forbes also incorporates several key historical figures into her story, so readers are introduced to the likes

of Paul Revere, John Hancock, and Sam Adams and witness their role in the events that took place. Through reading this story, students will be able to develop a clear connection between the colonists and the events that transpired.

Standard 2 is concerned with using resources to ask and answer questions about the past and present. This standard is met in my unit plan by the integration of primary sources, such as the Declaration of Independence and excerpts from Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, with non-fiction texts such as *A History of US*. The novel that most lends itself to this standard is James and Christopher Collier's novel *My Brother Sam Is Dead*. Though it is set during the Revolution, this novel was written as a reflection on the Vietnam War and could be applied to any war. The major question the authors pose in their story is 'could the United States have made its way without all that agony and killing?' Through reading this novel, students are able to analyze events of the past and then apply their knowledge to consider current events.

Standard 3 is concerned with teaching students about the diverse groups that played an influential role in societies of the past. The subject of diversity is influential in all five novels. Both *Finishing Becca* and *Sarah Bishop* deal with the role of Quakers in Revolutionary America, and *Johnny Tremain* and *Winter of Red Snow* offer readers a lot of information about the roles of women and children in society. *Winter of Red Snow* as well as *Finishing Becca* convey the contrast between rural and urban lifestyles. *Sarah Bishop* and *My Brother Sam Is Dead* present the politics of both Loyalists and Patriots. *Finishing Becca* and *Johnny Tremain* offer readers insight into the different economic classes. Essentially, among the five novels, a very diverse cast of characters present readers with many different insights on Revolutionary America.

Standard 4 is dedicated to the role science, technology and economics played in past events, as well as how the different systems have evolved. Again, all five novels have much to offer when teaching this standard. *Johnny Tremain* goes into great detail about the process of silver smithing as well as medical knowledge of the time, while the protagonist in *Sarah Bishop* is utterly reliant on her father's rifle. *Winter of Red Snow* teaches the reader about the common technology used in everyday life, from washing laundry to cooking supper, as well as dwelling on the problems presented by the limited medical knowledge of the time. *My Brother Sam Is Dead* and *Finishing Becca* star protagonists who are struggling to support their families at a very young age, and thus present to the reader the influence different economic systems had on the colonists. *Winter of Red Snow* is set at Valley Forge during the winter when Washington's army was camped there, and thus the book deals in great detail with how the Continental Army was affected by the economic conditions of the time. During my unit plan, students will be presenting to the class how their novels deal with such issues. Consequently, my class will be exposed to the many facets of knowledge covered by Standard 4.

Standard 5 is concerned with the influence of political institutions and theories on societies and how those institutions have developed and evolved throughout history. This is a standard that will primarily be met during class time when discussing the evolution of the concept of Democracy and how it was established as the basis for our government. While none of the novels deal directly with Democracy per se, they all handle different political institutions and theories in their own ways. For example, the conflict between Loyalist and Patriot interests is a major theme in both *My Brother Sam Is Dead* and *Sarah Bishop*. These were two major political voices in the colonies, and it is important to represent both when teaching this unit.

Johnny Tremain also deals with the idea of Democracy in that Johnny realizes he is fighting for this newly established country so that he, a poor indentured servant, could have a voice in society. The book ends with the statement, "True, Rab had died. Hundreds would die, but not the thing they died for. 'A man can stand up...'" (Forbes 322). This novel really stresses the concept of freedom, and how the Patriots saw the war as their struggle against the crown so that they could have a say in their own lives, the reason why our country was established on Democratic ideals. Through all five novels, students will become acquainted with the different political theories that motivated so many to fight.

Standard 6 is dedicated to the understanding of religious and philosophical ideas and their influence on societies throughout history. This standard will be met in class through lectures and discussions regarding topics such as deism. All the novels have something to offer for this standard as well. For example, *Finishing Becca* offers a detailed account of the Quaker faith and the influence its followers had on American society.

While all of these standards are met during class time through lectures, activities, and discussions, it is important to note that the ability for each student to comprehend the information set forth by the standards is greatly aided by the use of the young adult novels. Each novel contributes an accurate historical perspective that furthers the students' comprehension of such information. The five novels bring life to the six standards, and help students better appreciate the role of religion, politics, technologies, and other influential forces throughout history, thereby allowing them to more effectively connect such aspects to their understanding of history.

Complications of Fictionalized History

An important consideration when using fiction to teach history is the issue of how the author might have twisted historical events to better fit their story. I am well aware that this is an important consideration one must take into account when using young adult fiction in a history class. I feel it is important to acknowledge to students that this approach can be problematic, and that history should not be over-simplified. I would stress to my class the importance of reading each story with an objective mindset; these books are fiction and must be treated as such. I set aside an entire day in my lesson plans for the teacher to discuss with his or her class the accuracy of the five novels. I also took this dilemma into consideration when choosing the five novels. I wanted books that were entertaining but had true historical basis as the backbone of the story. Several of the novels also include a section at the end of the book where the author informs the reader of the historical basis behind their story.

Having said this, it is clear that I don't feel this issue carries enough weight to strip historical fiction of its importance in schools. "Historical fiction can take the reader into the world of the past through the imagination. Well-written historical fiction can be authoritative, too, because it must be accurate to be believable... yet readers should expect the historical novel to serve only as a springboard into the study of history" (Seely 20). I think "springboard" is the perfect word to use when describing the function of the five young adult novels I chose. They are the springboard for my class's study of the American Revolution. For example, *Johnny Tremain* gives us an account of the Boston Tea Party. The reader can take that account and further study the event as an influential episode that led to outright warfare. Historical fiction

can also be valuable because “it may be an apt vehicle through which to present a revisionist view of that past event at a time when it might not be considered patriotic to do so,” (Soter 47). For example, *My Brother Sam is Dead* presents the reader with a look at the Revolutionary War in which no side is the right side. For a long time, such an approach to the American Revolution would have been considered unpatriotic. Now a teacher can play off that approach and encourage their students to consider the motivations for either side as well as the repercussions of each side’s actions.

Furthermore, by using young adult literature in the classroom, teachers are directly dealing with Standard 2; students know how to use the processes and resources of historical inquiry. By teaching students the art of reading objectively, they are clearly applying Standard 2 while reading. Students are expected to consider the accuracy of their stories and analyze the material accordingly. By enacting this concept, students are applying historical inquiry to their novels and thus efficiently adapting their learning to incorporate the standard. Additionally, as Lindquist writes, “historical fiction, while enhancing understanding of the past, can help you integrate social studies across the curriculum” (1). Thus, by introducing historical fiction to the classroom, teachers are able to meet Standard 2 while also linking lessons from class to the wider middle-school curriculum.

The novels I have chosen achieve such principles while still being designed to intrigue young readers. Oftentimes, history is considered by our youth to be dry and boring. I initially chose this study because I wanted to design a curriculum in which the students would find history exciting, and the teacher could present a version of history that is alive and tangible. By

introducing young adult literature to the classroom, I intend to give the students characters they can relate to who will make them recognize the significance of the American Revolution in history. By integrating lectures and other strictly historical approaches to understanding the Revolution, students can consider their novels and then “maximize their use of prior knowledge to bear on their interpretations of events that take place in the fictional world they’ve read about” (Agbaw 6). Historical fiction works as more than an attention grabber though; looking at how one specific individual was influenced by history challenges readers to consider complex questions surrounding themes, such as how people can be effected by oppression, betrayal, starting anew, acting on one’s personal/political beliefs, and human suffering (Agbaw 3). Other themes (i.e. suffering within the community and/or family unit) are present in all five novels and are important in aiding a young reader’s comprehension of why the war happened.

Young adult historical fiction gives teachers the ability to achieve their greater purpose, presenting history complete with its complexities while still providing students with a fun approach to education. By integrating young adult novels with lectures and research assignments, one can illustrate to students that the America they are familiar with did not always exist and that people have, and still are making, great sacrifices to create this country we call home. When using young adult literature to teach the Revolutionary War it is important to remember that it is the job of both the teacher and the student to treat the novels as fiction; they are stories based on real historical occurrences and as such have both elements of truth and invention.

As educators strive to find innovative and effective ways of conveying curriculum material to their students, the use of young adult literature appears to offer promise as a valuable educational tool. Proof of this advantage has been asserted by numerous prominent educators. Teachers renowned within their profession refer to historical fiction as a powerful addition to the classroom. Tarry Lindquist writes, “here’s the story on historical fiction in my classroom: It illuminates time periods, helps me integrate the curriculum, and enriches social studies” (1). As an avid history buff, my young adult years found me consuming every age appropriate historical fiction novel I could get my hands on. As a result of the vast knowledge I acquired through these novels, I feel very strongly in favor of their use in an educational setting.

In this paper, I have demonstrated an approach to history education for middle-school students, incorporating five young adult novels that discuss the American Revolution and the events leading up to it. While traditional textbook material will always remain an integral part of any curriculum, subject matter can always be further enhanced with subject and age appropriate fiction. These books will bring the curriculum to life for the students, complementing their learning and further engaging their interest in the subject material at hand. Moreover, this approach will thoroughly succeed in meeting Colorado Model Content Standards for Social Studies. In summary, I have attempted to demonstrate that young adult fiction offers certain promise in teaching history, though I am confident that the potential scope of the approach I have presented goes far beyond any one subject area.

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