

Young Rebels for Liberty - 1776

American history taught through Language Arts

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HIS 6710
Legacy of the American Revolution:
Heroes of Liberty

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Introduction:

“But a Constitution of Government once changed from Freedom, can never be restored. Liberty once lost is lost forever.”

John Adams to Abigail Adams 1775

“Where liberty dwells there is my country.”

Benjamin Franklin

“The God who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time; the hand of force may destroy, but cannot disjoin them.”

Thomas Jefferson, Rights of British America 1774

Proposal:

This unit will embrace and build on the concept of liberty through the language arts. It will be comprised of diverse activities using children’s literature as the core of the American history lessons. How does this powerful word “liberty” impact the creation of our nation? Our classroom reading will be the historical fiction novel *Changes for Felicity* by Valerie Tripp. The book *Give Me Liberty: The Story of the Declaration of Independence* by Russell Freedman and *Liberty! How the Revolutionary War Began* by Lucille Penner will be used to provide background knowledge about the events leading up to the signing of the Declaration of Independence and American Revolution.

Grade Level: 3rd/4th grades

Seminar Impact:

Our summer seminar provided me with valuable historical content and ideas for lessons. Dr. Willard Sterne Randall enhanced my knowledge of the American Revolution with many new facts and insights. What stuck in my mind was a reference he made in regard to researching history properly. Dr. Randall stated that “it is difficult reviewing history using our ethics of today.” His point being that to understand the actions of that period, it is important to understand the thinking and beliefs of that period, and not contemporary logic.

Michael Dwyer’s presentation on iconography showed me the power in the use of visuals. His power point pictures were rich in content and explanation. I will integrate some of his symbols into my lessons on background knowledge.

Kraig Hannum gave an excellent lecture on “walking in the shoes of our forefathers.” He emphasized the importance of putting students in the role of important figures of the past. Mr. Hannum had us participate in an activity that pointed out the difficulties in coming to a consensus on mundane topics such as “one movie every family would have to own” He related this directly to the differing opinions while creating the Constitution. Mr. Hannum suggested that the illustrated book *Declaration of Independence – Words that Made America*, which would be appropriate for elementary as well as middle school students.

The trips to the Hubbardton Battlefield, Washington’s headquarters in Newburgh, and Saratoga offered an important visual experience that added greatly to my prior reading assignments.

While the institute offered great lectures, books, and field trips, it also gave me the opportunity of collegiality. I had time to converse, share knowledge, ideas books, and lessons with my peers and professors.

Central Questions:

- What does the word liberty mean?
- What do the terms Patriot and Loyalist mean?
- What events lead to the beginning of the American Revolution?
- Why did the colonists rebel against King George?
- Who was King George?
- Who was Thomas Jefferson?
- Why was the Declaration of Independence created, and what did it mean?

Challenge Questions:

- How does the Declaration of Independence relate to the general feeling of the colonists?
- Who are the important people of Vermont just before the revolution, and why were they important?

Lesson Length:

- 3 weeks
- 60 minutes each day

Key Ideas:

- The concept of liberty is the same now as it was 230 years ago.
- The Declaration of Independence was written to secure “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.”
- The colony was divided into Patriots and Loyalists. They both possessed strong differing feelings about who should rule in government.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

- Students will understand the concept of “liberty” as it existed in the 1700’s and in their lives today.
- Students will understand the social and economic conditions which led to the creation of the Declaration of Independence.
- Students will see the relationship of British imposed Acts and the colonists’ persistence to be free.

National Standards in History for Grades K-4:

Standard 3: The people, events, problems, and ideas that created the history of Vermont.

Standard 4: How democratic values came to be, and how they have been exemplified by people, events, and symbols.

Vermont Grade Expectations in History and Social Sciences:

H+SS 3-4:9

Students show understanding of how humans interpret history by identifying and using various sources for reconstructing the past, such as documents, letters, diaries, maps, textbooks, photos, and others.

H+SS 3-4:10

Students show understanding of past, present, and future time by constructing time lines of significant historical developments in the community and state, and identifying the dates at which each occurred.

Preparations for Teaching:

- Read and discuss events leading up to the American Revolution – French and Indian War, Intolerable Acts, Sugar Act, Stamp Act, Quartering Act, etc.
- Read *Give Me Liberty: The Story of the Declaration of Independence*

Material for Teaching

- HIS 6710
- Declaration of Independence
- Letters, journal entries
- Historical fiction novels
- Lessons for 3 weeks

Primary Sources:

- Declaration of Independence
- Letters, diary and journal entries, quotes

Secondary Sources:

- *Give Me Liberty: The Story of the Declaration of Independence*- Freedman
- *Liberty! How the Revolutionary War Began* – Penner
- *Peril At King’s Creek* – Jones
- *Changes for Felicity* – Tripp
- *Welcome to Felicity’s World*- Gourley
- *1776* – McCullough
- *10 Easy-to-Read American History Plays* – Glasscock

- *Revolutionary Mothers* – Berkin
- *Alexander Hamilton: A Life* – Randall
- Google - Colonial Williamsburg - <http://www.history.org/>
- Google - Spy letters American Revolution – <http://www.si.umich.edu/SPIES/index-lounge.html>
- DVD – Felicity 1774 An American Girl Adventure

Assessment: (refer to procedure)

- Rubric – writing journals
- Comprehension quizzes – questions requiring written responses for each chapter of historical fiction novels
- Friendly letter
- Debate
- Class participation

Accommodations:

- Hands-on activities
- Overhead/whiteboard
- Large print handouts

Activities:

- Reading historical fiction for comprehension and vocabulary building
- Writing constructive responses within chapter assessments
- 3 short plays
- Debate
- Journals
- Primary source letters
- DVD

The unit will be comprised of different activities using children’s literature as the heart of the history lessons. The activities will be challenging while offering a variety of learning opportunities using an interdisciplinary approach. My class will learn United States history at the time of the American Revolution. We will use the books *Liberty! How the Revolutionary War Began* and *Give Me Liberty: The Story of the Declaration of Independence* to lay the groundwork of events leading up to the American Revolution. I

will read aloud and discuss both books. They are well written and will give the students a working knowledge of the factors, people, places, Acts, and phrases of this volatile period.

Reading historical fiction for comprehension, vocabulary building... and pleasure

Procedure:

I will begin the project by reading *Meet Felicity* aloud to the class. This is the first book in the Felicity series. It establishes the time, 1774, and the main characters which remain in the following 5 books.

Students will be reading *Changes for Felicity* as an entire class. There are five chapters which total 77 pages. We will review the six or seven vocabulary words contained in the chapter before we read. We will then take turns reading aloud and discussing the chapter when needed. At the end of the chapter the students will answer the comprehension questions using the book. The questions require students to write complete sentences to answer. Each question has a page number which has the information to answer the question. There is an answer sheet for each chapter for the teacher.

We will read the last book in the series *Changes for Felicity* first. We will not read *Felicity's Surprise* because it is a holiday book and not pertinent to our Revolutionary War theme. The other three books *Felicity Learns a Lesson*, *Happy Birthday, Felicity!*, *Felicity Saves the Day* will be read in small groups. Through my "Teaching American History" grant money I will purchase multiple copies of these historical novels. In groups of four, students will read and discuss the books. Since the novels are around 60 pages each, it should take them 3 or 4 days to read and talk about them. Hopefully, I can have 2 or 3 rotations of groups. We will share the plots of each book and the historical events at the end of our reading.

The *Felicity- An American Girl Adventure* movie will be enjoyed as lunch theater in my room. It's a high quality Warner Brothers' movie which includes parts of all 6 books in its story. The movie, including special features of Williamsburg, Virginia, is about 2 hours.

We will also be performing 3 short plays from the book *10 Easy-to-Read American History Plays*. The plays are 4 pages each and have enough parts for a class of 20. The plays are *Tea Overboard!*, *The British are Coming!*, and *Molly Pitcher*.

The Patriot/Loyalist thread weaves its way through my unit. We will have a debate featuring individuals having either Rebel or Tory sentiments. I fear I will have to assign positions since I presently have only 2 Loyalists out of a class of 17. However, by explaining the theatrical benefits of being Loyalists (costumes, accents, pomp) maybe some students will acquiesce. It will require students to do some research, but the books I have will suffice. I have a feeling that the debate may become more of a costumed play.

Another goal of this project is for my class to understand primary source materials. Since we will be reading diary and journal entries of Patriots and Loyalists (Google - Spy letters of the American Revolution), I plan to have a hands-on primary source lesson. I will buy parchment paper, sealing wax and a stamp in the wedding section at *Michael's* craft store.

Our art teacher is providing calligraphy pens and ink. Each student will write a friendly letter assuming the part of a historical figure based on our research. We have letters from George Washington, Lord Howe, Rachel Revere, and many more. After a rough draft, students will use pen and ink for the final copy. They then will fold and seal their letters with red wax.

My third graders love to have personal journals, make entries in them, and draw illustrations involving other units this year. They will have the freedom to be soldiers, spies, or any person from this period. Our journals are standard fare – school composition books with 36 leaves. I will punch holes in them so yarn can be tied to lend it a touch of authenticity. We will make daily entries and/or illustrations, and share them in class often.

4) Draw and color Polly Merriman. When was she born? Page 7,
Felicity's Family and Friends (check the Table of Contents)

5) Why was Williamsburg, Virginia crowded with men? Page 9

6) Felicity loves her father's store. Use details to explain why she does.
Page 9

Name_____

Date_____

Chapter 2 Friends Divided

1) Mr. Pelham was the town jailer. What jobs do you think he had to do to be a jailer? Page 12

2) Why does Felicity dislike Mr. Nye? *Felicity's Family and Friends* (check the Table of Contents)

3) Jiggy Nye is very sick. How do you know? Page 15

4) Who in Williamsburg knew the most about animals? Page 15

5) What event made Mr. Nye drink too much alcohol? Page 15

6) Why does Elizabeth feel sorry for Mr. Nye? Page 17

7) What does Elizabeth convince Felicity to do? Pages 18-19

8) Elizabeth never came to Felicity's house the next day. Why? Pages 20-21

9) What bad thing had Mr. Cole done? Page 22

10) How did the fight between the Patriots and Loyalists hurt Felicity?
Pages 22-23

5) Why is 18 an important age for Ben? Page33

6) What made Grandfather sick? Page 28

7) Did Grandfather die a Patriot or Loyalist?

5) Bluebird blue cloak. What is happening? Page 46

6) Where is Mr. Cole going? Why? Page 47

7) Felicity and Elizabeth went to the jail because they were concerned about Mr. Nye. What is Mr. Nye doing, and why is Grandfather involved? Pages 49-50

4) Why did Mr. Nye decide to help Felicity who was his enemy? Page 54

5) Mr. Merriman is a Patriot who will not become a soldier. How will he fight the British? Pages 60-61

6) How will Felicity help the Patriots? Page 61

Changes for Felicity

Answer sheet for comprehension questions.

Chapter 1

- 1) Queen Charlotte, King George, England
- 2) Grandfather is a Loyalist and Felicity's father is a Patriot.
- 3) Penny will have a foal.
- 4) Polly is a month old, plump, blue eyes, hair as orange as carrots. Born December, 1775.
- 5) Men from all over the colony came to join the army and fight the King's soldiers.
- 6) It smelled of spices, soap, and wood smoke. The store was full of people, noise, and activity. Felicity was allowed to work there when it was busy.

Chapter 2

- 1) Examples: Make sure the prisoners are locked in and can't escape. Feeding and caring for the prisoners.
- 2) Jiggy Nye was once cruel to Penny.
- 3) His body sagged as if it had no bones. Nye's eyes were closed and his skin ghostly white. He was shrunken and thin. Nye looked like a lifeless lump.
- 4) Jiggy Nye knew the most about animals.
- 5) Mr. Nye's wife died.
- 6) The cell is terrible because it is dark and cold. Mr. Nye is also very sick.
- 7) Elizabeth convinces Felicity to go to the jail the next day with her to give Jiggy Nye a blanket and garlic syrup.
- 8) Mr. Cole, Elizabeth's father, was put in jail for treason.

- 9) He didn't do a bad thing. Mr. Cole was a Loyalist.
- 10) The fight was going to separate her from her friend Elizabeth. Elizabeth's family was Loyalists.

Chapter 3

- 1) Felicity gives Elizabeth a sampler with a bluebird on it. It said "Faithful Friends Forever Be".
- 2) Edmund Pendleton was in charge of the committee.
- 3) Grandfather arranged for Mr. Cole's release from jail. He talked to Mr. Pendleton who he knew for a long time.
- 4) An apprentice living with the Merrimans while learning to work in their store.
- 5) Ben promised Mr. Merriman he would stay at the store until he was 18. Ben will then fight with the Patriots.
- 6) Grandfather became soaked to the skin from the freezing rain on his errand.
- 7) Grandfather died a Loyalist.

Chapter 4

- 1) His plantation is near Yorktown.
- 2) Grandfather got her a small trunk with a green wool riding habit.
- 3) Mrs. Merriman thinks Felicity is now steady, thoughtful, although impatient.
- 4) Ben is in charge of the store.
- 5) Elizabeth finally talks to Felicity. They discuss Mr. Cole and Grandfather.
- 6) Mr. Cole went to New York because it is safer for Loyalists.
- 7) Jiggy Nye is caring for Mr. Pelham's horses. Grandfather had left money for Mr. Nye to pay off his debts.

Chapter 5

- 1) They came to tell her that Penny is about to have her foal
- 2) She went to get Jiggy Nye because he was the best person with animals.
- 3) Jiggy Nye had been cruel to Penny in the past, and he was Felicity's enemy.
- 4) He knew Felicity brought the blanket and medicine to him at the jail.
- 5) Mr. Merriman will be a commissary agent who will travel and collect supplies for the Patriot army.
- 6) Felicity will help Ben in the store and give Penny to her father to ride when he gathers supplies.

Vocabulary for *Changes for Felicity*

Chapter 1 Cardinal and a Bluebird

elegant – excellent in looks or manners

befriend – to help as a friend

skittish – excitable or nervous

foal – young horse under a year old

stout – bulky looking but strong

apprentice – a beginner who agrees to work for free to learn a trade

Chapter 2 Friends Divided

muffled – wrapped up to deaden a sound

shudder – tremble, shiver

transparent – easily seen, like through a window

flustered – confused, upset

impatient – unable to wait

eerie – weird, mysterious

Chapter 3 Grandfather's Errand

parlor – a special room to entertain visitors

treason – doing things against your country

sampler – piece of cloth stitched with designs

bustle – hurry with energy

apothecary – someone who prepares and sells medicines

plantation – large farm that has crops like tobacco or cotton

falter – hesitate

Chapter 4 Into the Valley

dreary – gloomy, boring

soar – to rise high, feel inspired

blustery – gusts of wind in a storm

headstrong – insist on having your own way, willful

lurch – to roll or move unbalanced

habit – costume worn by a horseback rider

Chapter 5 Patriot

forbidding – unfriendly, grim

craggy – having rugged ridges

gruff – harsh, stern

soothing – calming

gawky – awkward, clumsy

scoundrel – villain, bad guy

spindly – long or tall and very thin

“BEFORE WE READ” Knowledge

Williamsburg, Virginia

Declaration of Independence

King George

debtor’s prison

colony

tannery

Loyalist

taxes, acts, and friction with
England

Patriot

Boston Massacre

treason

Lexington and Concord

independence

Annotated Bibliographies

Tripp, Valerie. *Peril at King's Creek* Middleton, WI: Pleasant Company Publications, 2006

This is a children's book geared for grades 3-5. In this history/mystery, Felicity Merriman learns of the theft of a neighbor's horse and, more disturbingly, about the impending danger of British and Loyalist troops raiding nearby plantations. Felicity is a feisty 9 year old who takes it upon herself to safeguard her family, her home, and her horse by investigating rumors of violence. The setting is Williamsburg and Yorktown, Virginia at the onset of the American Revolution. There is a "Looking Back" section that provides history of this period.

This book is an excellent choice for advanced readers who are beyond the Felicity series. It has challenging vocabulary and possesses a history/mystery/nature slant.

Gourley, Catherine. *Welcome to Felicity's World* Middleton, WI: American Girl Publishing, Inc., 1999

This picture source book spans the ages of 8 to adult. It is a handsome companion book to the "Felicity" series which presents aspects of daily life in 1774. Each double-page spread shows a topic such as schooling, day to day life, and the American Revolution. There are real letters and diary entries of girls, boys, women, and men. Each page is covered with full-color photographs of authentic tools and personal items.

This book hooks young people and holds their attention. Of particular fascination are the colonial punishment, slave codes, and off to war sections. It is a terrific reference book for the Felicity books

Tripp, Valerie. *Changes for Felicity* Middleton, WI: Pleasant Company Publications, 2000

This book is intended for grades 3-5. It is set in Williamsburg, Virginia in 1776 where there is great friction between Patriots and Loyalists. *Changes for Felicity* has well crafted characters and a suspenseful plot. At the heart of the story is Felicity Merriman, a spunky nine year old. The outbreak of the Revolutionary War brings great changes to Felicity's life, affecting both her family and her friendship with best friend Elizabeth.

This story has a young female heroine who confronts a cruel nemesis while trying to sort out her feelings about Patriots and Loyalists. *Changes for Felicity* superbly presents the problems of family and friends who hold differing political positions at onset of the War for Independence.

Colonial Williamsburg Where History Lives: <http://www.history.org/>

This site offers a variety of activities that immerses the user in colonial history. It will interest young and old alike. The “kids” have offerings such as writing postcards, puzzles, games, toys, videos, and tours. The activities all have connections to colonial jobs, tools, dress, military, and other aspects of daily life in and around Williamsburg,, Virginia. The adults will be attracted to the museums, horticulture, shops of old, biographies of locals, and research. I find the original buildings and period costumes exhibited in gorgeous pictures and videos are the focal point of a terrific site.

I accessed this resource through Google.com. The search terms I used were history, kids, colonial, Williamsburg.

McCullough, David. *1776* New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005

The targeted audience is late teens to adults. McCullough uses personal letters and diaries to entice the reader into the tumultuous days of the year 1776. His thorough research presents the military side of this year in a powerful narrative. Our historical figures are portrayed with flair and honesty. McCullough is able to create empathy even for the enemy. King George, Loyalists and mercenaries are seen through a softer lens. This book is a short military history of George Washington’s American Army. From London to Boston to New York to Pennsylvania, we follow the highs and lows of this 1776 campaign. Washington lives up to his superb reputation in this book. His humbleness rang true as he acknowledged that good fortune enabled his ragtag army to survive that year, and that the Americans’ survival was due to God and not his own efforts.

This book grips you from the first page to the last. It reads like an embellished fiction novel, but you know McCullough painstakingly research 70 diaries and letters to write this terrific piece of nonfiction.

Freedman, Russell. *Give Me Liberty: The Story of the Declaration of Independence* New York: Holiday House, 2000

This book is intended for grades 3-8. The story follows a young Patriot who participates in events that lead to the American Revolution. Freedman has the ability to gently teach us about the occurrences that led to the drafting of the Declaration of Independence. In the last chapter the author explains the impact of the “Document” at the time it was written, as well as its continuing importance. Woven through the book are the important roles of women, slaves, freedmen, free blacks, and indentured servants.

This is an excellent book for young readers. It clearly tells of the importance of the Declaration of Independence while retaining the flavor and excitement of this period.

Penner, Lucille Recht. *Liberty! How the Revolutionary War Began* New York: Random House, 2002

The reading level for this book is for ages 8-12. Penner tells the story of the days leading up to America's uprising against Mother England. American colonists had tired of British taxes and laws. They boycotted English goods and formed a militia composed of tradesmen and farmers ready to fight at a "minute's" notice. The author does a great job through text and illustrations to explain how push came to shove and the revolution began. It is simply written so young people will understand each step of the road to revolution.

This is the only book available that presents the American Revolution and Declaration of Independence in a simple but interesting fashion. The illustrations are vivid and they have informative captions. This is an excellent book for novice readers.

Glasscock, Sarah. *10 Easy-to-Read American History Plays that reach All Kinds of Readers* New York: Scholastic, 2001

The plays are geared for children in grades 4-6. While the plays are tame in nature, they do inspire students to research the historical characters and events. The dialogue is well written and the plays are steeped in historical fiction. Each play allows each student in a class of up to 20 students to enjoy a part. Each play is about 4 pages and they are able to be reproduced on a copying machine. There are 3 plays that are about the Revolutionary War period: *Tea Overboard!*, *The British are Coming!*, and *Molly Pitcher*.

Children love to be actors and these plays provide that opportunity. Teachers have the choice of a simple read-the -lines-from-a-sheet or more involved plays with costumes and memorized lines. I recommend this book of plays because of the sparks of interest it will ignite in students.

Berkin, Carol. *Revolutionary Mothers* New York: Vintage Books, 2006

This book was written for the entertainment and enlightenment of high school students to adults. Berkin states that women's participation in the war was not just the celebrated few such as Betsy Ross, Martha Washington, Molly Pitcher, and Abigail Adams. The author tells how the creation of our new nation was not only achieved by the multitude of men but also by a diverse, courageous mass of women. Berkin gives the never-heard women's point of view on colonial times in the 1770's. From camp followers to Loyalist and Indian women, the author explains in detail the women's hardships, spirit, degradation, and triumphs. Primary source accounts lend to the impact of the women's description.

I highly recommend this book. Berkin gives a perspective of the war that little is written about – the females' perspective and involvement.

Randall, Willard Sterne. *Alexander Hamilton: A Life* Canada HarperCollins, 2004

This book is intended for high school age to adult. Randall writes a fascinating, attention-holding biography. You see Hamilton struggle in obscurity and poverty in the Caribbean only to become a formidable power in the federal government. The author describes Hamilton's rise and attributes it to hard work, intelligence, and charisma. The life story of the man who dueled Aaron Burr is competently written.

I listened to Randall lecture about the Founding Fathers. His delivery and knowledge were exceptional as the book itself is.