



**This Freedom Could Kill Us:
Teaching Novels about the American Revolutionary War Era**

by Alexandra Kennedy Edwards, 2014 CTI Fellow
Bailey Middle School, Cornelius

This curriculum unit is recommended for:
8th grade US/NC History and Language Arts

Keywords: Close reading, American Revolution novels, slavery in Revolution, *Chains*, *Forge*, *My Brother Sam is Dead*, *The Year of the Hangman*, *The Old African*

Teaching Standards: See [Appendix](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

Synopsis: I believe that reading should be at the forefront of any History class. As students enter eighth grade they will be faced with many primary source readings such as speeches, journal entries, letters, and broadsides. They also have to examine political cartoons, works of art, drawings, music, and songs. In addition I wanted my students to read works of modern fiction that deal with a particular historic period of time. I think a combination of primary and secondary sources can support my students in their quest to unearth a certain era, such as the American Revolution, and validate that what they have discovered is actually true. I have developed a unit that gives my students an opportunity to read a novel of their choice about the American Revolutionary War era. The novels cover all the faces of the Revolutionary time period: Loyalists, Patriots, British at home in London, slaves, traitors on both sides, and families torn asunder by the war within their own family as the Revolution drags on for years. The unit combines the visual and textual sources and employs close reading techniques to truly unearth the time period in a more realistic method.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year in to 130 8th grade US/NC History students for six to eight weeks (four for novel read, four for projects)

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Rationale

“This freedom could kill us.”¹ This, uttered by one of the major characters in *Chains* and *Forge*, could be a proclamation from any of the characters in the novels my eight graders are reading. Whether it is a chunk of ice floating in the river towards Curzon’s head in *Chains*, cowboys stealing cattle and food in *My Brother Sam is Dead*, Patriot forces starving to death in *Forge*, or George Washington being hanged for treason in *The Year of the Hangman*, the business of revolution could indeed be deadly. The American Revolution would forever change the landscape and history of not only the United States but also many nations around the world. Tim Meeker, a character in *My Brother Sam is Dead*, questions the cost of the war some fifty years later, (as he questions the deaths of his Father and brother, Sam): “I keep thinking that there might have been another way, besides war, to achieve the same end: freedom.”² The American Revolution freed the US from British domination and served as a model for nations such as France, Haiti, Mexico and others in Latin America. The idea of freedom is one thing and the cost to gain it is another. Each one of the characters in *My Brother Sam is Dead* loses a loved one as part of that cost of freedom. I believe that my students will gain a better comprehension of what a revolution is and its impact on all sides of the fight. This also ties in to the new revolutions of the twenty-first century in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and other countries across the world. It is easy for us to judge because we were successful but it took 70,000 deaths (of US, British, French, Germans, and Spanish citizens) and years for us to learn to set up and maintain a successful democracy. Revolutions are being played out right now and in front of my students. The idea of the desire for freedom translated into the actual fight would cost many lives, as Curzon thinks in his struggle to stay alive in that icy river. I believe the close reading techniques I have included in my lessons will contribute to expanding my students’ reading experience and, comprehension, and foster engagement.

I will include four novels and a picture book for my students to read. These novels work particularly well because they articulate the story and mood of this Revolutionary War era and the viewpoints are so very diverse. I plan to teach this unit over a six to eight week period of time. I work hand-in-hand with my Language Arts teacher to support her in the Common Core reading goals. The novels engage my students and create an atmosphere that will become more student-driven in the end. These texts reflect the very diverse observations of American Patriots, Loyalists, British soldiers, and the British populace in England.

- *My Brother Sam is Dead* by James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier
- *Chains* by Laurie H. Anderson
- *Forge* by Laurie H. Anderson
- *Year of the Hangman* by Gary Blackwood
- *The Old African* by Julius Lester and Jerry Pinkney.

The novels deal with loyalty to country, king, parents, and slaveholders. Two of the books are from the perspectives of slaves faced with the decision of staying with their owners and possibly remaining slaves for the rest of their lives, or of joining with the British who are making fast and false promises of freedom when the British win the war. I also chose the novels under study to showcase diversity, as they display aspects of our culture that may not be reflected in our school or in our surrounding communities. Furthermore, this gives students a more global perspective. The last novel takes on a British viewpoint with a sixteen-year-old young man journeying from England to America in the midst of the Revolution. The novel was written by an American author but from a British view point and that it is a piece with an alternative historical ending, I think it answers the “what if?” question kids always ask. This is a significant way of grappling with big historical problems. I will also be utilizing primary sources, both visual and textual. I believe that the two combined can help to make this more student directed and satisfactory for my students’ learning processes. The reading of the novels and primary sources will employ close reading approaches. These approaches incorporate paying close attention to the texts, employ the reader’s experiences and memories, and note the responses and interpretations of the other readers.³ Students can, for example, study the climax of the novel by going back into passages of the book that may have foreshadowed that scene.⁴ I will use parts of *The Old African* with close reading techniques in one of my activities. The tie in will be the Middle Passage experienced by slaves on their journey to the Americas.

Background

I teach eighth-grade US/NC History in a suburban sixth-through eighth-grade middle school in Cornelius, outside Charlotte, North Carolina. The school is considered economically-advantaged in Charlotte-Mecklenburg but, nevertheless, the recent recession has impacted the school. Our free and reduced breakfast/lunch percentages have increased from the mid-teens to the mid-twenties. I have about 130 students this year and they are divided into four classes. Due to the above grade level and at grade level distinctions given to Language Arts Honors (at least one year above grade level in reading), Language Arts Standard (below or at grade level), Math 8 (at grade level), and Algebra I or Geometry (high school courses), my students will also mostly be leveled (not intentionally). I will have two classes of above grade level in both Math and Language Arts), one class of mixed levels (above grade level in one of the core classes),

and one class that is on or slightly below grade level. My on grade level class may have students who read two to three years below grade level. Scattered throughout these four classes are Exceptional Education (EC) students who may have processing disabilities in Math and Reading. I will also have several EC Resource children. These students are classified as EMH (Educable Mentally Handicapped), with IQs of 50 to 75. These students are main-streamed with their regular classmates for Science, History, and electives. In addition, I will also have ESL (Limited English Speakers) students. This particular group of students is growing rapidly. Charlotte's international student population numbers have changed dramatically over the last ten years. We started with a small but growing Latino population and are now seeing many students from China, Scandinavia, Russia and Poland. A foreign language literacy teacher is attached to our school full time as of last year but the students are mainstreamed into our classes from day one. They spend their elective period of the day with the foreign literacy coach and work on reading and communication skills. Each teaching team consists of four teachers. There are five class periods a day, each lasting eighty minutes. We rotate classes each nine-week quarter. So, our first block class becomes our second-block second quarter, and our fifth block rotates to first. It allows us to see each student in a different light and to take advantage of those times when a child may be a "sleeper" in first block but come to life in second block!

Bailey Middle is also a BYOT (Bring Your Own Technology) school. Students who have Smart Phones, laptops, or iPads are allowed to bring them into the classroom, at the discretion of the teacher. Not every student has personal access to these items, sometimes due to lack of money but most recently because parents do not like their kids having them at school. The school is Wi-Fi connected and has a growing collection of iPads, Chrome books and other technology available for check out through the media center. We currently have 1600 plus students and approximately 200 plus technology items for check out by teachers. If I have a BYOT day I can arrange ahead of time for fifteen to thirty Chrome books to be stationed in my room or rely on students to share their technology with seat mates. It is not a perfect situation but is ever changing because of PTSA, and large company grants or donations. Each class room is also equipped with a couple of extra desktops, and a Smart board or ceiling-mounted LCD projector. Technology will be important for my students when we are examining primary sources throughout the unit.

Content Background

The three most recognized causes of the American Revolution 1765-1783 are salutary neglect, the French and Indian War and the phrase "no taxation without representation." Britain's American colonies were established in 1607 with the idea that they would provide much needed resources and income for the mother country. Under the economic theory of mercantilism, the colony existed to make Britain wealthy, to make the colony totally dependent on England and to make the colony dependent on slave labor in order to fulfill the list of exports sent to Britain.

The famous phrase “no taxation without representation in Parliament” became the rallying cry of many American colonials in the years directly after the French and Indian War. Not only were duties levied but British merchants also demanded payment in British pounds instead of the questionable colonial currency.⁵ Colonial legislatures were now prevented from issuing paper currency, which led to difficulty in paying their debts and taxes.⁶ Many regard the Stamp Act of 1765 as the beginning of the end for British rule. The tax required special government issued stamps (taxes) for legal documents, newspapers, and playing cards. Very few in Parliament questioned the right of Parliament to tax the colonials. The colonials reacted with boycotts, protests and the creation of a Stamp Act Congress. Protests and boycotts spread throughout the thirteen colonies. Pressured by already unhappy merchants in England, Parliament made the decision to repeal the tax. Each new tax met with renewed resistance. Organizations such as the Sons of Liberty and Committees of Correspondence worked across the colonies to create dissention and organize protest against each new tax. Americans argued that the British had no right to tax the colonials without colonial representation in the British Parliament. The smuggling of goods to and from the West Indies increased with great fervor. Tax collectors were tarred and feathered on a regular basis.

Considered the final indignity to the colonials, Britain passed the Tea Act. The British East India Company was on the verge of bankruptcy due to cheap smuggled tea imports from the Dutch. The East India Company was given the right to have a monopoly on the transport of tea into the colonies thus disallowing colonial tea traders the right to compete.⁷ Boycotts of British tea became the rage across the colonies once again. In December of 1773, the Sons of Liberty orchestrated the Boston Tea Party. Boatloads of Americans dressed as Native Americans rowed out in the harbor to the three British ships containing tea. The ships had refused to leave the harbor until all the tea had been sold directly to the colonials. A silent crowd of about 2,000 people gathered on the docks to watch. The Sons boarded the three ships and met no resistance, even though the British troops were armed, dumped over three hundred chests of tea, and rowed back to the docks with no interference. Less than seven weeks later, Parliament handed down the punishment to the Americans. The Coercive Acts, or Intolerable Acts as they were known, ended town meetings, closed the Boston harbor until all the tea was paid for, pushed English military members accused of crimes back to England for trial, and changed the borders of the Ohio River valley and Quebec territories in favor of the French Catholics living there.

Although it would be another sixteen months before the first shots would be fired at Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts, the colonials started taking action by raising militias and creating the First Continental Congress. As April of 1775 approached, any opportunity for some sort of peaceful negotiation ended. Americans would issue a formal declaration of separation in July of 1776. In October of 1781 the British would surrender to George Washington. Unbeknownst to Cornwallis, his British Navy had been cut off by the French and American ships. With limited supplies, malaria on the heels of the army

and no chance of rescue, Cornwallis surrendered his Army to Washington in October of 1781. The unthinkable had been accomplished again: David beat Goliath. The British Army Band played “The World Turned Upside Down.” Cornwallis refused to come down and officially surrender to Washington. In his stead, Cornwallis sent Brigadier General Charles O’Hara to surrender to Washington. O’Hara offered the ceremonial sword first to the Comte de Rochambeau, who shook his head, then to General Washington who also shook his head but indicated it was to be given to the man who had been defeated at Charleston, his second in command, Benjamin Lincoln.⁸ The world had been indeed turned on its head with the victory of the American Patriots. The journey to full nationhood was only beginning for the United States. How the United States created a lasting democracy was to be hammered out over the next few years and the ensuing Constitutional Convention in 1787.

Textual Content

There are so many books written about the American Revolution for children. *My Brother Sam is Dead*, *Woods Runner*, *Johnny Tremain*, *Octavian Nothing*, and the *Chains/Forge/Ashes* trilogy are among the many written for middle schoolers. I had never read *Octavian Nothing* and was, in fact, dissuaded by other teachers. Among the various concerns I heard expressed was the notion that the novel was too long, too dense and a bit peculiar. I read the first book with a bit of trepidation and realized that my colleagues’ warnings were on target. I did, however, think about my honors students reading the novel. My concerns in the end centered on experiments conducted by a group of people who owned Octavian and his mother. The type of experiments performed on the mother and child were severe and I was not sure that my thirteen-year-olds could handle reading about them. In the end, I dropped it as a choice. I would, however, recommend the book for eleventh graders. *Johnny Tremain* is an older novel and it has been taught by generations of teachers across the country. It’s a great read but overdone and the lexile level is a little low for eighth graders. I also thought *Johnny Tremain* too similar to *My Brother Sam is Dead* and quite frankly, I prefer *Sam*. The story of Sam is a classic with its tale of divided loyalties in a family and across the countryside, the privations of war, and questions never answered as to the consequences of a war against Britain and your own family. *My Brother Sam is Dead* appeals to both male and female readers and the story is centered on a family. The others texts I chose were *Chains* and *Forge* by Laurie Anderson and *The Year of the Hangman* by Gary Blackwood. Publication of Anderson’s last in the trilogy, *Ashes*, comes out in early 2015 and that might be a hook for students who like to read. Anderson finally reveals the fates of the main characters in the third novel. A novel that unfortunately escaped my attention was *Sophia’s War* by Avi. I will definitely include it in next year’s selection because it is from a girl’s point of view and that seems to be lacking in young adult fiction about the American Revolutionary era.

Each novel concentrates on several different events during the Revolution. Tim Meeker in *Sam* begins his story at the first shots are fired in the war at the battle of Lexington and Concord in April of 1775. The British knew of the Patriot effort to amass weapons and artillery in the countryside west of Boston. American Patriots taking on the great British Empire was an unthinkable act of disloyalty to many colonials, especially Tim and Sam's father. But this sentiment echoed throughout the thirteen colonies. *Sam* concentrates on the whole community of Redding throughout the entire war. The Meeker men are immediately thrown into the chaos of divided loyalties as the first battle end. A staunch Loyalist, Father Eliphat, refuses to recognize that there are two sides to every conflict. His Loyalist support of King George is all that matters. His oldest son, Sam, returns from Yale and immediately jumps into the fire of revolutionary talk. Sam has chosen to join with the Patriots and runs off with the family's Brown Bess rifle. The younger brother, Tim, is torn by his love for father and brother but the years of privation push him into a category that is neither Loyalist nor Patriot but rather a survivor. Tim watched his father being beaten by the cowboys and then lost track of him in an icy storm. Eliphat's fate was later revealed as a prisoner of war who died of cholera on a prison ship. Sam's attempts to save food supplies for the family's tavern end in disaster. He was betrayed by a fellow soldier and hanged as a thief.

Chains and *Forge* by Laurie H. Anderson focus on two young slaves named Isabel and Curzon. Book 1, *Chains*, relates the tale of a teenager and her sister, Ruth, on the eve of what they hope to be freedom from slavery. Their owner has promised to free them upon her death but an unscrupulous relative does otherwise. Their journey takes them to New York City and the British invasion of the city in the fall of 1776. Book 2, *Forge*, tells the tale of Isabel's older friend, Curzon, also a slave living in New York City. His escape leads him to many adventures at the Battles of Saratoga, a horrific winter in Valley Forge, and recapture by his former owner. The third book of the trilogy, *Ashes*, will tell the story of Isobel and Curzon's fate. Not many young adult books focus on slavery during the Revolution and my interest was piqued by that subject matter.

Chains and *Forge* focus on their characters' experiences through specific events, such as the British invasion of New York, Loyalist actions of the New York populace, African Americans bid for freedom during the Revolution, and the hardships of life as soldier at the lowest point of the war, Valley Forge. I found myself drawn to the two novels because of the African-American viewpoints. I often find that not much is discussed with students about the place of African-Americans in Revolutionary War history. In the rush to cover the Revolutionary era, teachers cover causes, important events, and famous people and frequently leave out the common man. Who are these farmers, city dwellers, freemen, and slaves and what are their roles in the Revolution? I look at the looming Civil War and then work backwards to determine the roles both freemen and slaves played in the Revolution. Author Anderson states, "Slaves had to choose between the side that liked to talk about freedom and the side that actually offered it to them."⁹ The

call for freedom from England echoes in the hearts of the enslaved men and women. Where is their freedom?

Isabel is a slave but runs away, as does Curzon (Curzon appears as a character in both *Chains* and *Forge*). Curzon serves in the Patriot army at Valley Forge. One of the very first men injured in the War was a Massachusetts slave, Prince Easterbrooks. African Americans, freedmen and slaves alike, were present at every single major battle of the Revolutionary War.¹⁰ Some were offered freedom in exchange for serving with the British troops. Liberty was not just for the Patriot whites but a dream for their slaves. White owners, especially in the South, found the idea of blacks using weapons disagreeable and dangerous. Washington was forced to disband African American units because of Southern complaints. There were many who still served in the North, including freedmen. But in the end and out of need, the Continental Army offered freedom to those who would serve, as did the British. This was a promise both sides broke for the most part.¹¹ The Patriots demanded freedom from a harsh master but could not understand why their slaves might want the very same freedom. After the war was over, some of the Patriots began to question the institution of slavery, but most maintained that blacks were not part of “the socio-political community and therefore had no right to enjoy the freedoms” gained by some during the War.¹²

Isabel and Ruth of *Chains* find their hopes of freedom immediately dashed as the novel begins. Isabel is not only an older sister to Ruth but also her guardian in every sense of the word. Although there is no medical diagnosis of epilepsy given in the book it is evident that Ruth’s seizures are a result of the disorder. Isabel fears that Lady Lockton will use her “spells” as an excuse to get rid of the child and those fears are not unfounded. As the Loyalist Lockton couple conspire to make the British invasion of New York City a success, Ruth’s status in the house becomes precarious. Isabel returns to the house after an errand and finds Ruth has been sold to people outside of the city. She may have been reluctant to escape before because of the added responsibility of Ruth, but the sale prompts Isabel to run and find her sister. The New York City fire, friendships with Lady Seymour, a Lockton cousin, and Curzon prompt her to take the situation of solving Ruth’s location into her own hands and run.

A big portion of *Forge*’s action takes place at Valley Forge. Of Washington’s total forces present at Valley Forge, 2,500 will die of diseases such as typhus, smallpox, measles, and dysentery. The men, like Curzon, were already hungry, exhausted from days of long marching, and ill-prepared for the coming long winter in Pennsylvania. It is estimated that only one in three had shoes. Uniforms were ripped apart and wrapped around bleeding feet. Curzon talks about the flavorless firecakes: water and flour mixed then cooked in the ashes of the fire. He dreams of food ceaselessly. Hundreds of horses also died because of the lack of food and exhaustion. Soldiers often stole from farmers who could ill afford to lose it. As spring arrived, the French signed an alliance with the Americans, which brought in much sought after aid and supplies. Victories would drive

the British into the South in the hopes of ending the War once and for all - a bad gamble on their part. Southern backcountry men proved the downfall of Cornwallis and his army.

Loyalists could be found in every colony. They were loyal to King George and the British Empire. Although this war was a Revolution it was also a civil war between the Patriots and Loyalists. Loyalist support was heaviest in New York, New Jersey, and the Carolinas. Each side rushed to gather recruits to their mission. The British often overestimated the power of Loyalists in battle. The Battle of Moore's Creek in North Carolina found a significantly outnumbered Patriot force beating Loyalists, thus resulting in the British being kept out of the South for a considerable time. Loyalist populations were estimated to be set at about 15% to 25% at any one time. Many just kept quiet while biding their time in hopes of British victory. Loyalists were burned out of their homes or roughed up, as Tim's father is in *Sam*. The Patriot population numbered up to 45%. Isabel's (*Chains*) New York City harbored a large population of Loyalists. Many were refugees from other colonies. Many were wealthier and older, as are the Locktons in *Chains*. New York City became both the political and military base of operation in America from 1776 to 1781.¹³

The Year of the Hangman was an accidental find. Many Revolutionary War books are for younger ages and I was trying to find something age appropriate for eighth graders. The main character, Creighton, has a bad attitude and is in lots of trouble when he gets kidnapped upon the orders of his mother and sent to the backcountry of the colonies at war with England. I liked the bad attitude part and the idea of presenting students with an alternative history in which America lost the Revolution. This was a captivating thought experiment to consider. What intrigued me about this book is how Gary Blackwood weaves the truth and fiction of the War together. Students may have a hard time determining what is fact or fiction, and I plan an activity for them to do just that. I did make it very clear to students that they need to read Blackwood's author's note before reading the novel. Blackwood classifies the novel as an alternate history and I think his afterword helps to juxtapose fictional and non-fictional events in the book. While British bad-boy Creighton and his family are fictional, Peter Francisco, Ben Franklin, Benedict Arnold and their dialogue are historical figures. Blackwood conducted extensive research in order to use Franklin's many sayings. Franklin gives a wonderful account of Washington's capture by the British (a fact often forgotten in history books). Washington is hanged in the book but rescued in reality by his men. Blackwood totally turns around the known fate of traitor Benedict Arnold in this novel and makes Arnold a hero here.

I was also drawn to *Year of the Hangman* because the main character is close in age to my thirteen-year-olds here at school. Creighton is smart but indolent: traits a few of my middle schoolers share. He mourns his dead father who disappeared in the colony's backcountry of North Carolina by drinking at pubs and playing foolish games with older boys. I hear stories from current students about their older brothers and sisters successes and sometimes blunders into adulthood. Creighton reminded me of the trials and

tribulations that my former students are encountering in high school. Creighton's kidnapping and trip to the rebellious colonies changes his life forever. Blackwood's rich re-crafting of the Revolution and all its characters is amazing. The author weaves the heroes and black-guards of the Revolution into the story of Creighton's transformation from lackadaisical boy into champion of the American cause.

I was teaching the Revolution as my students read their chosen novel. I did, however, introduce the books to them the first week of school in August. They had to make a choice by September 5. We did a little research, looked at reviews, talked about the books in an open discussion, and I did give students an idea of which books drew more male readers or female readers. I find that a month is a good amount of time to get students to finish the books. I will discuss the activities later on that students participated in each week while they were reading. I also gave them reading deadlines for each week in hopes that they would not fall behind. By September 26 I had covered the background for colony building and the French and Indian War and this material would then lead to taxation without representation and salutary neglect. By the time I started the road to war (1765-1775) students had finished their books.

Strategies

Students will be familiar with the SOAPSTONE model.¹⁴ This also will be covered by week two as we do a lot of primary sources. This will be used for analysis of any object.

- S = Subject of the piece?
- O= Occasion, time, place, setting?
- A=Audience, who is this directed to?
- P=Purpose, why was this piece written, painted, etc.?
- S=Speaker, who's voice is telling the story?
- TONE=Attitude or emotional characteristics of the piece?

AP (Advanced Placement) classes in high school often use this model and many middle schools adopted this practice several years ago in order to familiarize kids with the practice earlier on, so that there are no surprises for them in high school. There are also several more writing components to this Document Based Question format that help with interpretation. It is a great asset for the kids to have this foundation when evaluating and interpreting primary sources. For this unit, combining the novel with primary sources, and verifiable facts should bring about a well-rounded decision when assessing the historical accuracy of the novel. The writing pieces in this AP-DBQ element are also a part of the Common Core and Essential Standards in North Carolina. The following two worksheets will be utilized as part of primary source analysis:

Artifact analysis worksheet

http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/artifact_analysis_worksheet.pdf

Cartoon analysis worksheet

http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/cartoon_analysis_worksheet.pdf

High schools also utilize APPARTS "APPARTS."

https://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/archive/files/apparts_b60cd02284.pdf). This provides more detail or higher level thinking skills than the SOAPSTONE process and I could use this for some written sources.

Another activity I like is the diamond fold. The folding process creates a diamond in the center of the paper with four triangles off to the sides. The diamond is synthesis and the four triangles historical events, personal connections, or solutions to problems that the characters encounter. A copy may be found on my wiki

<http://alexandraedwards.cmswiki.wikispaces.net/>

I am currently using Kylene Beers and Robert Probst's *Notice and Note Strategies for Close Reading* with my students. All the Language Arts teachers at Bailey are using the text along with the signposts. Students would be familiar with this process by the time they reach eighth grade. The signposts include:

- Lesson of the unexpected: Why did the character feel that way?
- Aha moment: Why might this realization be important?
- Tough questions: What does this tough question make me wonder?
- Words of the Wiser: How could this advice affect the character?
- Again and again: Why is the author bringing this up again and again?
- Memory moments: Why is this moment important? What unsettles you about the moment?
- What kind of access do you get to a character's head and thought process?

Activities

I am merging two sets of separate activities together as a culmination of this curriculum unit. The first segment I want to address with the unit is how my students are going to interpret painting, prints, political cartoons, documents, and any other primary sources. I would like to begin the first day with the SOAPSTONE format, as developed for middle and high school students. This unit is meant to be taught from late September (beginning with coverage of the French and Indian War) to late October (culminating the unit with the end of Revolutionary War) and is expected to take five to six weeks. I want students to feel confident in their analysis of primary sources and I will begin this work with them

on the first day of school in August. The second phase include close reading activities to accompany the fiction on the syllabus.

Activity One

Completed over a period of four weeks, using five minutes for each visual item and ten for written primary sources. Tying in visual and textual primary sources is an important part of the unit. It addresses the validation of historical accuracy within the novels. Here are primary sources that will used (before and during the novel reading process) with the SOAPSTONE method:

- *The Slave Ship* (JMW Turner 1840 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) to be paired with a reading from *The Old African* by Julius Lester and Jerry Pinkney (pages 30-40).
- *Join or Die* (Ben Franklin 1754 Library of Congress US) Franklin's warning that the lack of unity would be the downfall of the colonies is finally heeded in 1774.
- *The Colonies Reduced* (1767 LOC US) Dire warnings of separation from the mother country
- *The Stamp Act and the Repeal* (1766 Williamsburg US) Humorous look at the impact of boycotts on British revenue
- *Bostonians Paying the Excise Man* (1774 LOC US) The fate that waited for tax collectors in the colonies
- *Bostonians in Distress* (1774 LOC US) The British finally mean what they say and Boston suffers from its actions in the Tea Party
- *The Political Cartoon of the Year 1775* (LOC British) The effect of British pride and obstinacy
- *Poor Old England* (1777 LOC British) Britain is unable to reign in her colonial children
- *Common Sense* by Thomas Paine. Paine's appeal to declare independence appears several times in the novels and is used as a primary source by Anderson in *Chains*
- *Declaration of Independence* I am using this document to illustrate what could happen to the signers if caught.
- Letters and diary entries from families/military personnel in New York City during the siege, Patriot and Loyalist. There are many primary sources in *Chains* at the start of each new chapter.
- Paintings and drawings of the Valley Forge winter 1777
- <http://www.sandcastles.net/journal5.htm> Diary and journal entries by American soldier George Ewing, present during the Valley Forge winter
- Paul Revere's engraving of the Boston Massacre as a form of propaganda, a drawing originally done by Henry Pelham.

- https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/libs/scua/university_archives/henry_rutgers.shtml Patriot Henry Rutgers observations of life in New York during the Revolution.

Activity Two

This activity will take approximately one hour. This is a close reading activity utilizing *The Old African* by Julius Lester and beautifully illustrated by Jerry Pinkney and pulling in JMW Turner's painting *The Slave Ship* (1840 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). Students will close read pages thirty through forty in *The Old African*. The main character, Jaja, and his fellow villagers have been loaded on the ship and are on their way to the Americas to be sold as slaves at an auction. Students will focus on the lines which include Jaja helplessly watching his beloved jumping overboard welcoming the death of the sea rather than the violence of the unknown, soon to be followed by his teacher being tossed brutally into the sea by the Lords of the Dead (white slavers).¹⁵ I want students to find and describe the imagery of that first night on the ship, the smell of death and sea sickness, the cries of families separated, and the sound of waves crashing against the hull of the ship. Combining Pinkney's illustrations, Turner's painting of sailors on a slave ship tossing overboard sick or dying slaves, and Lester's vivid imagery should give students a sense of what the Middle Passage journey was like. I want students to imagine that these people on the ship could be Isabel or Curzon's grandparents. The lesson incorporates all of the following:

- Lesson of the unexpected: Why did the character feel that way?
- Aha moment: Why might this realization be important?
- Tough questions: What does this tough question make me wonder?
- Words of the Wiser: How could this advice affect the character?
- Again and again: Why is the author bringing this up again and again?
- Memory moments: Why is this moment important? What unsettles you about the moment?
- What kind of access do you get to a character's head and thought process?

Students will construct a six-side cube and use words from the text to showcase the imagery from the reading. There should be four words, a description of how the word is used in the text and then a drawing that shows how they interpret the word from the text. The last two sides should address one of the *Notice and Note* questions listed above. Ola's decision to jump into the sea is perfect for "tough questions" and Obasi's "words of the wiser" to Jaja as he tried to prevent the Lords of Death from touching Ola are spot on. http://www.firstpalette.com/tool_box/printables/cube.pdf

Activity Three

Approximately thirty minutes in a single class period will be needed. Diamond fold analysis. Fold paper in a diamond shape. Questions will vary in the fold, depending on novel. The center addresses the different types of conflict and how major characters confront adversity. The four surrounding triangles address imagery, important memory moments characters encounter, words of advice another character might give and why that was important, and how characters react with each other and the importance of these encounters. Fold the paper in half and then fold in half again so it looks like a greeting card. Take the closed upper left end and fold it over to the edge. When open, the paper is divided into a diamond (center) and triangles in the four corners. See <http://alexandraedwards.cmswiki.wikispaces.net/> for an example of the fold. This is an excellent vehicle for extended writing responses in a Social Studies class room.

Activity Four

Students need at least two weeks at school and at home in order to complete the project. These are the individual novel projects that students will complete as a final piece of the novel study. Students will place this on a snail. Video instructions and a partial example are on <http://alexandraedwards.cmswiki.wikispaces.net/> The “snail” foldable can be used for many types of activities. The following activities are mostly writing based and formulated on novel and primary source readings and visual images.

*Chains*¹⁶

1. Create a title page and colored illustration – hand drawn. You may type any writing. 12 font
2. Panel 1. Tell me about the circumstances of Isabel and Ruth’s sale back into slavery. Be detailed. What does Isabel think and how does she react? Compare this to the moment she discovers betrayal again with the sale by the Locktons of Ruth to people in another city.
3. Panel 2 and 3, answer the following questions: 8 words to describe the inhabitants of New York pgs 26-27 from Patrick M’Robert’s viewpoint; why did the British want to invade New York; what is M’Robert’s view point on slavery; read Samuel Johnson’s primary source on 36 – why does he say it’s ironic that the loudest calls for liberty came from slave owners; re-read primary source on 62 what is Knox’s view on New Yorkers and do you think Isobel would agree with Knox?
4. Panel 4 and 5 Read chapter 14 XIV and write a tiny speech supporting the assassination of Washington. Include: state your position on why you support assassination, defend your position and include one quote from the text, rebut the view that he should not be killed.
5. Panel 6 detail what “Liberty to me means . . .” and support with details (pgs. 38-39, 89-90) from Elihu Lockton, Curzon and Isabel view points.

6. Panel 7 What happened to Mr. Lockton? Write a narrative from the perspective of Elihu Lockton detailing his escape on June 28th (pgs. 106 – 110. How did he escape and what was his fate?
7. Panel 8 Read pgs 21-24, 135, 144-145, 151-153, 157 and chapters 21-24. These highlight the views Madame Anne and Lady Seymour on slavery and how they treat Isabel. You may do a Venn. How are they different?
8. Panel 9 the great fire. Re-read the primary source on XXX1 and XX11. List 5 historical facts you learn about the fire and the aftermath. According to Patriots, who started it? According to Loyalists, who started it? Did the fire strengthen or weaken the British occupation of New York? How did the fire and aftermath affect relationship between Isabel and Lady Seymour? How did it impact Curzon?
9. Panel 10 and 11 draw a sketch of yourself as you wander the streets of New York on September 21, 1776, and tell me in bubbles what you hear, see, smell, feel, taste.
10. Panel 12 read primary source in chapter XXXV11. What is Paine saying in your own words? How does this primary source relate to the American Revolution? Do you agree with Paine or not? Why?
11. Panel 13 and 14 and 15 illustrate and color – draw (do not computer generate) the 2 most important scenes in the book. You may do 3 illustrations.
12. Panel 16. Read pgs 89, 142, 182, 246, and 289. How are Isabel, Curzon and Lady Seymour “chained”?

*Forge*¹⁷

1. Title page with title and illustration. You may computer generate all writing font 12 but drawings are hand done.
2. Panel 1 and 2. Give me details about the three main characters in *Forge*. Physical, background, type of character.
3. Panel 3 What does chapter XLV11 suggest about the power of friendship and tell me why Curzon has such a hard time believing that Eben and the other men would go to such lengths to help him escape.
4. Panel 4 and 5. Access <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2006691573/> this painting by A Gilbert. Describe what you see in detail. The setting of most of the novel is at Valley Forge. Give at least six examples and describe from the novel of how Curzon and the others survived. What was the food like, major cause of deaths etc?
5. Panel 6 Read the primary source on page 3. What are the “birthday” and the “new world” that Paine is referring to? How does this relate to Curzon? Why do you think the author used this particular primary source to begin *Forge*?
6. Panel 7. Read pages 287-289. Why do you think Washington changed his mind and allowed African Americans to enlist in the Continental army? On 289 Anderson states, “Slaves had to choose between the side that liked to talk about freedom and the side that actually offered it to them.” What two sides is she

- referring to? Why does Curzon join the Continentals? Was this a wise choice for him and why or why not?
7. Panel 8 and 9. You are a soldier at Valley Forge. Draw a sketch of yourself and answer in detail what you hear, smell, taste, feel, and see at Valley Forge. Give me at least two specific examples for each of the senses. Be detailed.
 8. Panel 10. Read pages 14, 20, 40, and 106 about the compass. Explain what the broken compass symbolizes. What does the compass needle inside Curzon represent? Why did the author use the symbol of the compass in the novel?
 9. Panel 11, 12, and 13 illustrate the three most important scenes in the book, in your opinion.
 10. Panel 14 Read 135. What kind of document is this? Who gave the orders? What does this source tell us about the behavior of some of the soldiers at Valley Forge? Why did the author place this excerpt in this particular chapter?
 11. Panel 15. Create a Venn diagram. Who is Gideon? Think about Gideon's and Curzon's background, their background as a slave, and their outlook on the revolutionary war. On the Venn list the characteristics unique to Gideon, right characteristics unique to Curzon, and middle characteristics they both share.
 12. Panel 16 on page 115, Silenus compares the camp to a forge that is molding the army. In what ways are the experiences Curzon has at camp like a forge? How have the experiences molded and changed Curzon?

My Brother Sam is Dead

1. Panel 1 (on backside of cover page) What were the sequence of events which led to the American Revolution? What are the overall causes of revolution and explain them, not itty bitty facts.
2. Panel 2 and 3 Describe the 3 main characters in detail.
3. Panel 4 and 5 http://www.historyofredding.com/my-brother-sam-is-dead_camplife.htm http://www.historyofredding.com/my-brother-sam-is-dead_taverns.htm here are two articles about camp life and tavern life. Read. Choose one. Write a synopsis – summary – on the article, in your own words, no copying directly.
4. Panel 6 What is the meaning of loyalty – how are families and friendships affected when their allegiances conflict? Give examples from the novel.
5. Panel 7 and 8 Sam and Mr. meeker each have a different point of view toward the War. Explain Sam's position on the War and his reasons for it and compare it with Mr. Meeker's position on the War.
6. Panel 9 Describe the major conflict Man v self and man v nature in this book in detail!
7. Panel 10 and 11 Compare and contrast Sam's account of the battle at Lexington/Concord (American view) and <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/lexington2.htm> this British view of the Battle

8. Panel 12 in chapter 11 Mrs. Meeker begs Sam to come home after Mr. Meeker's death. Sam refuses. Tim says that he realizes that his brother will never leave the War because he thinks he is a part of something big. Explain what Tim means by "something big".
9. Panel 13 What is your reaction to the statement in the epilogue "but somehow, even 50 years later, I keep thinking that there might have been another way, besides war, to achieve the same end." Do you think the United States could have become a nation without the Revolutionary War?
10. Panel 14 and 15 illustrate the two most important scenes, in your opinion, from *My Brother Sam is Dead*
11. Panel 16 Was Mr. meeker justified in throwing out of his tavern a man who said "the only good lobsterback is a dead lobsterback" and "King George is a great hairy fool"? Explain the customer's reaction to Mr. Meeker when the customer said, "I thought I was among free men, not slaveys"?

*The Year of the Hangman*¹⁸

1. Title page with illustration colored. Drawings are to be hand drawn. Writing may be computer generated. Font size 12.
2. Panel 1 summarize Creighton's character traits and give me examples to back each up with page number. Keep this summary within the pages of the first ½ of the book.
3. Panel 2 What advice would you give to Creighton about his most important problems? Do you think he would follow your advice? Why or why not?
4. Panel 3 and 4 Describe the other five main characters in the novel and their relationship to Creighton. What is their fate by the end of the book?
5. Panel 5 If you could enter the book, what kind of character would you be, why, and what would your role be in the story?
6. Panel 6 draw your character of Creighton in outline format and do speech bubbles to rate him on honesty, perseverance, courage, self-confidence, and integrity. Keep this in the last half of the book. Give examples from the book to back up your analysis.
7. Panel 7 and 8 This is an uchronia or alternate history book. Describe the alternate events in the book in detail. You must have at least four events.
8. Panel 9 Design an advertisement to sell this book. Include a price of the time (measuringworth.com will translate today's price into 1780's price), an illustration and words to best tell the reader why they should spend their money on the book. Do not copy the cover of the book!
9. Panel 10 Creighton has been a "naughty" boy. According to his Mother, what are his "crimes"? Describe the whole kidnapping process.
10. Panel 11 and 12 <http://www.biography.com/people/benedict-arnold-9189320#revolutionary-war-and-betrayal> Read about the real fate of Benedict

- Arnold and give me a summary in your own words. Then, tell me how Blackwood changes his fate in the novel – or does he?
11. Panel 13 Write a mini article about the death of Washington in the novel: Who, what, where, when, why etc.
 12. Panel 14 and 15. So much happens between pages 150 and 179. Franklin has given Creighton responsibilities and “enough rope to hang himself”. Creighton is surprised that the Yanks are not all buffoons at the tavern. He thought of his Dad as a failure and traitor but is it possible he is a hero after what Creighton hears about the Carolina incident? Creighton questions what side he is on and remembers his Dad telling him about what honor is. Explain this transformation and give examples from the text.
 13. Panel 16. What is Franklin talking about on 165 “Franklin laughed. . . “How does what he says pertain to the Americans?

Appendix – Implementing District Standards

The North Carolina Essential Standards I will be addressing include:

8H1.3-use of primary sources. The whole unit focuses on primary sources: Paintings, political cartoons, documents, drawings, and other items. Primary sources are used throughout the year.

8H2 - understanding the ways in which conflict, compromise, and negotiation have shaped the US/NC. The pre-Revolutionary era offer many opportunities of colonial negotiation, compromise, and conflict with taxes, boycotts, repeals, *Mecklenburg Resolves* and *Halifax Resolves* locally and *The Declaration of Independence* and *Olive Branch Petition* nationally. The role of slaves during the war is important to comprehend as we move forward into the next century. Slaveholding was seen as a negative in the New England and Middle Atlantic states and as a source of negotiation (3/5th Compromise) during the Constitutional era.

8H3 - understanding the factors that contribute to change and continuity in the US/NC; analyzing the democratic ideals which shaped the government of the US/NC. Discussing mercantile economic theory, no taxation without representation, and how *The Declaration of Independence* was articulated. Again, what was the role of slaves during and after the war?

8C & G2.3 - explain the impact of human and civil rights issues experienced by people throughout the US/NC. I will be examining the concepts of indentured servitude and slavery in Revolutionary times. Moving forward into the 19th century slaveholding in the North is seen as abhorrent.

8C1 -analyze how different cultures influenced US/NC. The unit is focusing on a variety of groups arriving to the colonies and their reasons for leaving Europe. It also focuses on slavery and the opportunities for possible freedom during the Revolution.

Bibliography

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Chains*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2008. This is part one in a trilogy and serves as a story of survival for a young black slave during the Revolutionary War years.

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Forge*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2010. This is the second book of the trilogy. The novel focuses on the journey of a young black slave during the harsh Valley Forge winter. The third novel *Ashes* will be released in 2015 and tells the fates of Isabel and Curzon.

Blackwood, Gary L. *The Year of the Hangman*. New York: Dutton Children's Books, 2002. I liked this book so much, I think in part because of the alternative history angle. Benedict Arnold is a hero and helps to save the Revolution.

Collier, James Lincoln, and Christopher Collier. *My Brother Sam Is Dead*. New York: Four Winds, 1974. This is a classic story of a family divided by their loyalties during the Revolutionary War.

Anderson, M. T. *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation*. Cambridge, Mass.: Candlewick Press, 2006. I chose not to have my students read this book because some of the scientific experiments conducted on humans and animals goes a little far. I do, however, recommend that teachers read it and make their own minds up at the conclusion of the story.

Lester, Julius, and Jerry Pinkney. *The Old African*. New York: Dial Books, 2005. *The Old African* is a beautifully illustrated picture book that I used along with JMW Turner's painting *The Slave Ship* (JMW Turner 1840, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). Pairing written works with paintings and drawings is a wonderful way of extending the students' comprehension of a particular time period.

Beers, G Kylene. *Notice & Note: Strategies for Close Reading*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2013. *Notice and Note* by Kylene Beers is an excellent source for close reading analysis, especially non-English, Language Arts teachers. The book opened up a completely different method for me as far as examining written works in the classroom.

"SOAPSTONE Worksheet." SOAPSTONE.
teachersites.schoolworld.com/.../files/alicia_soapstone (accessed July 13, 2013).

SOAPSTONE process for working with primary sources helps students examine the primary pieces in a more exacting manner. APPARTS and PERSIA are for higher level thinking middle school students and high school students.

Notes

¹ Laurie Halse Anderson. *Forge*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2010

² James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier. *My brother Sam is Dead*. New York: Four Winds, 1974.

³ Beers, G. Kylene. *Notice & note: strategies for close reading*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2013.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "Parliamentary taxation of colonies, international trade, and the American Revolution, 1763–1775 - 1750–1775 - Milestones - Office of the Historian." Parliamentary taxation of colonies, international trade, and the American Revolution, 1763–1775 - 1750–1775 - Milestones - Office of the Historian. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1750-1775/parliamentary-taxation>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "Surrender of the British General Cornwallis to the Americans, October 19, 1781." The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. <http://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/war-for-independence/resources/surrender-british-general-cornwallis-americans-october> (accessed July 26, 2014).

⁹ Laurie Halse Anderson. *Chains*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2008.

¹⁰ African Americans During the Revolution."

http://www.history.org/history/teaching/enewsletter/volume5/images/reference_sheet.pdf.
http://www.history.org/history/teaching/enewsletter/volume5/images/reference_sheet.pdf (accessed September 26, 2014).

¹¹ "Loyalists in America."

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loyalist_%28American_Revolution%29.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loyalist_%28American_Revolution%29 (accessed September 26, 2014).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ "Loyalists in America."

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loyalist_%28American_Revolution%29.

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¹⁴ "SOAPSTONE Worksheet." SOAPSTONE.

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¹⁵ Julius Lester and Jerry Pinkney. *The Old African*. New York: Dial Books, 2005

¹⁶ Erin Fry and Nicole Boylan. "*Chains* Study Guide." *Chains* Study Guide. Accessed November 6, 2014. http://erinmfry.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Chains_TG_final.pdf.

¹⁷ Erin Fry and Nicole Boylan. "Forge Study Guide." *Forge* Study Guide PDF. Accessed November 6, 2014. <http://erinmfry.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Forge-Teachers-Guide-final.pdf>.

¹⁸ "The Year of the Hangman Novel Unit." *The Year of the Hangman* Novel Unit. Accessed November 6, 2014.

http://jnminutillo.iweb.bsu.edu/YAHistoricalFiction/YAHistoricalFiction/Pre-Civil_War_files/The_Year_of_the_Hangman_Novel_Unit.doc.