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Study Guide

for

Johnny Tremain

by Esther Forbes



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New York, New York Columbus, Ohio Woodland Hills, California Peoria, Illinois

Meet Esther Forbes



No matter how much external things change, the human emotions do not seem to change much.

—Esther Forbes

For Esther Forbes, the past was as alive as the present. Forbes's love of history dated back to her earliest childhood days in rural Massachusetts. The youngest of five children, Esther was born in 1891 into a family with a tradition of studying history. Her mother was an antiquarian—an expert on objects from much earlier times—whose work focused on New England. Young Esther's home was filled with physical reminders connecting her present life to the past. The Forbes family also preserved history with stories of its own past. One of the stories was about an ancestor jailed for witchcraft.

In these surroundings, Forbes quickly developed her love of history and of stories based on historical events. She read widely—everything from the classical *Iliad*, to her mother's manuscripts, to books found in her attic. Not surprisingly, Forbes's first attempt at a novel, written at age thirteen, had a historical setting. Forbes also spent time riding her pony through the countryside of Massachusetts and scouring ponds for turtles, which she collected.

After high school, Forbes studied history at the University of Wisconsin. Like her character Johnny Tremain, whose life changes because of the American Revolution, Forbes's life was redirected by war. After the United States entered World War I, Forbes left college to join the war effort, working on a Virginia farm. "One of the proudest moments of my life was when the farmer appointed me as a teamster to work only with horses, instead of merely shucking corn and picking apples like the other girls," she said.

Forbes worked as an editor for a book publisher after World War I ended. She also devoted time to her own writing, publishing her first novel in 1926. In the next ten years, she published four more books—all historical novels linked to New England. Turning her interest to biography, Forbes chose as her subject a famous historical figure from this region. Her book *Paul Revere and the World He Lived In* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1943.

During her extensive research for *Paul Revere*, Forbes was drawn to the lives of early Bostonians. She became especially interested in the young apprentices of this time and decided to tell their story in a work of historical fiction. In this work, entitled *Johnny Tremain*, war influenced her life once again. With World War II raging, Forbes saw young people thrust into adult roles of responsibility. Like the patriots of colonial America, they were fighting desperately for their cause. In *Johnny Tremain*, Forbes wanted to show that in the 1770s, as in the 1940s, young Americans "were conscious of what they were fighting for and that it was something which they believed was worth more than their own lives."

Forbes won the 1944 Newbery Medal for *Johnny Tremain*. She explained that she wanted to show readers "the excitement of human nature, never static, always changing, often unpredictable and endlessly fascinating."

Introducing the Novel

The story of *Johnny Tremain* begins in 1773 in the Boston home and workshop of old Mr. Lapham, a master silversmith. Fourteen-year-old Johnny Tremain is one of three apprentices who live with the Lapham family while learning the silversmith trade. Although Johnny is an orphan, he had the advantage of a mother who taught him to read and write. These abilities, along with Johnny's intelligence and superior skill as an apprentice silversmith, make him overly proud. He wins no friends with his haughty attitude toward the other two apprentices. Johnny is so proud and aware of his value to the Laphams that, at times, he even treats his master's family disrespectfully.

As the story begins, Johnny is far more interested in his personal ambitions than in the political turmoil brewing all around him. At this time, the colonies were on the eve of the American Revolution, and Boston was a hotbed of tension and unrest. Many colonists were fiercely engaged in debating how much control Great Britain should have over the colonies and whether to form a separate nation.

Johnny's story is filled with characters, places, and events that make Boston, as it existed in the early 1770s, come alive. Some characters are mostly interested in their daily lives. Other characters are passionately interested in the political changes erupting around them. Though many of these characters are fictional, Forbes has skillfully interwoven their stories with those of real people and events from history. In fact, the author has combined fact and fiction so seamlessly that readers may not always know what is real and what is invented. In the words of one critic, "If Jonathan Lyte Tremain never lived in the flesh, he lives vividly with the men of his time."

In writing *Johnny Tremain*, Forbes drew upon the extensive research she did for her biography of a famous Boston patriot: Paul Revere. With Forbes's vivid descriptions,

readers can imagine what it was like to walk down Boston's cobblestone streets in the early 1770s. They can share the sense of danger and excitement surrounding such real events as the Boston Tea Party, Paul Revere's famous ride, and the Battles of Lexington and Concord. Readers also learn more about such great Patriot thinkers and leaders as Sam Adams, John Hancock, and John Adams.

In *Johnny Tremain*, readers share not only a historical journey but also Johnny's personal journey of growth and discovery. When planning the novel, Forbes was determined "to give Johnny room enough to change and grow." She also wanted "an obstacle [for] Johnny . . . to face from the beginning to the end of the book. . . . This obstacle was to have psychological significance." At the beginning of the novel, Johnny is an arrogant and impulsive boy, but then life knocks him around quite a bit. He runs into some bad luck and also creates some problems for himself with his excessive pride. He has to face his problems and try to figure out who he is and what matters to him. When the dramatic events of the American Revolution involve Johnny, he must decide what ideas and beliefs are worth fighting for.

THE TIME AND PLACE

The story of *Johnny Tremain* takes place mainly in Boston, beginning in the summer of 1773 and ending in April 1775. At this time, Boston was an important colonial city with a thriving economy. The thirteen American colonies were well established and had grown in population to two and a half million. The geographic area of the colonies was larger than that of the mother country, Great Britain. Transportation within and between colonies was very slow, with horse or horse-drawn carriage the fastest method of travel. Mail service was minimal and news could take days, weeks, or months to circulate.

The circumstances leading to the momentous historical events described in *Johnny Tremain* had been brewing for more than a decade. In 1763 Great Britain found itself deeply in debt after the end of the French and Indian War. The British government decided that it was time that the American colonies helped pay for their own defense. Between 1763 and 1775, the British Parliament approved a variety of laws requiring colonists to pay new taxes. Many colonists objected strongly to paying these taxes because they had no representatives in Parliament. Thus, they said, Parliament had no authority to tax them. “No taxation without representation” became the rallying cry of colonists opposed to the new taxes.

One of the new laws, the Stamp Act, meant colonists had to pay a tax—in cash—for most products made from or using paper. As this tax affected nearly every purchase,

the colonists decided to protest by boycotting, or refusing to buy, British goods. Some protests led to violence. The most important effect of the Stamp Act, however, was that the colonies began to unify. People like Sam Adams began to organize groups dedicated to the cause of fighting British tyranny.

Another event that helped trigger the American Revolution was the Boston Massacre in 1770. Confusion during a routine street dispute led to violence and bloodshed between colonists and British soldiers who were stationed in Boston. This event further convinced Patriots such as Sam Adams that all the colonies should unite against Great Britain. He encouraged regular communication between important leaders from the different colonies. Eventually, Adams’s “committees of correspondence” became the Continental Congress, which met for the first time in 1774.

Did You Know?

Not all colonists were Whigs—people who supported independence from Britain and opposed British control of the colonies. Some colonists protested the taxes the British imposed on them yet did not support independence from the mother country. Other colonists were Tories who opposed the Whigs entirely and supported King George’s rule. The issue was not simply how much control the British should have, but how governments should be organized and how much say individuals should have in their governing. Some merchants, like Mr. Lyte in the novel, tried to stay neutral in the political disagreement in order to keep customers. They

claimed to support the Stamp Act boycotts, for example, but then secretly traded with the British.

Important real-life Whigs such as Sam Adams, his cousin John Adams, and John Hancock appear in *Johnny Tremain*. Several of the British leaders and soldiers in the novel—for example, Governor Hutchinson and General Gage—were real-life Tories. According to Forbes’s research, they were decent people who disagreed very politely with their Boston neighbors. In fact, Whigs and Tories were sometimes friends, despite their political differences, both in the novel and in real life.

Before You Read

Johnny Tremain Chapters 1–5

FOCUS ACTIVITY

What personal qualities or accomplishments are you proud of? What are some of the positive effects of pride? What are some of the negative effects of pride?

Chart It!

Jot down memories of situations in which you or someone else felt proud. Think about the positive and negative effects of that pride. Then create a two-column chart listing those effects. Share and discuss your chart with a partner.

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how pride affects Johnny Tremain’s life.

BACKGROUND

Time and Place

In the 1770s, the city of Boston was almost an island. It projected out into Boston Harbor, connected to the mainland by a thin strip of land called “the Neck.” This was both good and bad for Bostonians. It was good because it provided easy access to Boston Harbor, while the Neck’s guarded gates helped protect the city from attack. It was bad because it meant that the city could be easily isolated from communities on the mainland.

The city itself was a fairly typical eighteenth-century British-style town. A main feature was the Common, which still exists today. This land was shared by all and was used for pastureland, military training, horse-riding, and general recreation. People gathered at the Common to exchange news, as they did at the many water pumps scattered throughout the city.

Did You Know?

Johnny Tremain, like many poor boys of his time, was apprenticed to a master craftsman to learn his trade: silversmithing. Apprentices worked and usually lived with their masters for a period of about seven years. In exchange for the boy’s efforts, the master would train, house, and feed him.

Paul Revere, whom Johnny consults for advice on a difficult smithing task, was a very talented and well-regarded silversmith in Boston. He learned the trade during an apprenticeship with his own father. Revere was particularly famous for his ability to keep the basic beauty of a design, while adding many decorative frills that were popular at the time.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

belligerent [bə lij’ər ənt] *adj.* likely to argue or fight

chagrin [ʃə grin’] *v.* to distress by disappointment or humiliation

enigmatical [en’ig mat’ik kəl] *adj.* puzzling

exuberant [ig zōō’bər ənt] *adj.* enthusiastic

fatuous [fach’ōō əs] *adj.* silly; foolish

flaccid [flak’sid] *adj.* without energy; limp

nonchalantly [non’shə lənt’lē] *adv.* in a way that shows casual indifference

unobtrusively [un’əb trōō’siv lē] *adv.* without being noticed

venerable [ven’ər ə bəl] *adj.* worthy of respect or awe

Active Reading

Johnny Tremain Chapters 1-5

Johnny's accident changes his life in many ways—physically, practically, and emotionally. As you read the first five chapters of Johnny's story, notice what these changes are and how he reacts to them. List details that show the contrast between Johnny's life before and after the accident.

The graphic shows a stylized book with a central table. The table has two columns: 'Before' and 'After'. The word 'proud' is written in the 'Before' column, and 'humiliated' is written in the 'After' column. The book's cover is outlined, and the pages are represented by the table structure.

Before	After
proud	humiliated

Responding

Johnny Tremain Chapters 1–5

Personal Response

What is your opinion of Johnny before the accident? Does your opinion of Johnny change after the accident? If so, how?

How do you think you might react in Johnny's situation? What advice would you give to him?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Describe Johnny's position and his behavior in the Lapham household at the beginning of the novel. What does his behavior reveal about his character?

2. What happens to change Johnny's position in the family? What role does Dove play in this event? How does Johnny react to his new status?

3. What obstacles does Johnny face as he tries to redirect his life? How does Johnny's friend Rab help him? How does their friendship change Johnny?

Responding

Johnny Tremain Chapters 1–5

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. Compare and contrast the daily lives of teenagers in Johnny's world with the lives of teenagers in your own community.

5. Evaluate the tactics that the Sons of Liberty use to further their cause. Do you think such tactics are justified? Why or why not?

Literature and Writing

Writing an Essay

In the **Focus Activity** on page 12, you created a chart listing positive and negative effects of pride. Refer to your chart as you write an essay evaluating the positive and negative effects of Johnny Tremain's pride. In what ways does Johnny's pride benefit him and other people? In what ways does it harm Johnny and others? How does his pride affect how others view and treat him? What role does pride play in Johnny's accident? Support your ideas and opinions using details from the novel.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

Esther Forbes vividly brings eighteenth-century Boston to life. In your group, divide up the five chapters. Then skim to find historical details that describe Boston and the daily lives of its residents, including such historical figures as Paul Revere, John Hancock, and Sam Adams. Exchange information within your group in order to better understand the novel's setting. If you wish, have one or more group members sketch scenes from Boston in the 1770s. Share your insights and your sketches with the members of another group.

Making an Apology

Everyone, no matter what his or her age or position, makes mistakes. Apologizing for mistakes is often difficult, but it is necessary to maintain good relations with others. Both Johnny and Dove have a great deal to feel sorry about. Each boy has broken rules of good behavior and caused harm to others. Put yourself in the place of either character and write an apology for your behavior. Read your apology aloud to the class.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

Johnny Tremain Chapters 6–8

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Do you think it is fair to expect people to pay taxes when they cannot vote for those who impose the taxes? Give reasons for your answer.

Discuss

Discuss and debate the question above with your classmates. Challenge them to support their opinions with valid reasons. Does everyone agree that “taxation without representation” is unfair? Why or why not?

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how Sam Adams, Johnny, Rab, and other Bostonians respond to “taxation without representation.”

BACKGROUND

Time and Place

As early as 1767, the British were taxing the tea that was shipped to the American colonies. Some colonists began boycotting British tea; as a result, tea exporters such as The East India Company lost a great deal of money. To help this important business, the British government gave it exclusive rights to sell tea in the American Colonies, under The Tea Act of 1773. In September of that year, the East India Company filled seven ships with tea bound for the colonies. These ships, carrying hundreds of thousands of pounds of tea, were headed for Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston. Protests broke out in all these cities, and several of the ships turned back to England. The ships bound for Boston reached their destination in November 1773. The Patriots responded with a dramatic protest that you will read about in the next section of the novel.

Did You Know?

In the 1770s, Boston was a key American shipping port, both because of the fine ships built there and the many different products traded on the Boston wharves. Most Bostonians were somehow connected to the shipping trade or to the fishing industry: a variety of craftspeople built ships; unskilled workers loaded and unloaded merchandise from ships and warehouses; other Bostonians made a living catching and selling fish and oysters. Many of Boston’s wealthy families had made their money through shipping and trade.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

commandeer [kom´ən dēr´] *v.* to take for military purposes

divulge [di vulj´] *v.* to reveal

dun [dun] *v.* to pester for payment

gesticulate [jes tik´yə lāt´] *v.* to make gestures with the hands, usually while speaking

inflammatory [in flam´ə tōr´ē] *adj.* likely to excite or upset

inundate [in´ən dāt] *v.* to overwhelm

lamentably [lam´ən tə blē] *adv.* regrettably

paroxysm [par´ək siz´əm] *n.* emotional fit

proximity [prok sim´ə tē] *n.* near location

Active Reading

Johnny Tremain Chapters 6-8

Esther Forbes combines fact and fiction as she tells the story of the events leading up to the American Revolution. The major events Forbes describes, such as the Boston Tea Party and the closing of Boston Harbor, actually occurred. As you read, summarize the major events listed in the boxes on the left. In the right-hand boxes, note how each event affects Johnny on a personal level, and the Patriot movement on a political level.

Event	Effects
<p data-bbox="381 554 572 582">Boston Tea Party</p> <hr/> <p data-bbox="314 611 640 674">Patriots board ships, dump taxed tea into Boston Harbor</p>	<p data-bbox="994 605 1336 833">Johnny proud to join Tea Party; uses axe despite crippled hand. Tea Party helps unify Bostonians, strengthens Patriot movement; British vow to punish Bostonians</p>
<p data-bbox="335 953 619 982">Closing of Boston Harbor</p> <hr/>	
<p data-bbox="335 1349 619 1412">Rebellious Acts of Sons of Liberty and Observers</p> <hr/>	

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Responding

Johnny Tremain Chapters 6–8

Personal Response

In these chapters, Johnny becomes involved in some important historical events. What aspect of his involvement made the strongest impression on you? Explain your choice.

Does the idea of playing a personal role in historical events appeal to you? Why or why not?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Explain the British tax on colonial tea. What response is planned by Sam Adams and the other Observers? How does Johnny help implement these plans?

2. Describe Johnny's relationships with Cilla, Lavinia Lyte, and Dove now that Johnny is living with Rab and his family. What do these relationships reveal about Johnny and his personal growth?

3. What positions in favor of revolution are argued by Sam Adams and James Otis? How does Johnny react to Otis's words?

Responding

Johnny Tremain Chapters 6–8

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. Do you think the Bostonians are justified in their reaction to the tax on tea? Why or why not? Do you think Britain's response is fair? Explain. You may wish to recall your response to the **Focus Activity** on page 16.

5. In your opinion, is Rab a good friend to Johnny? Give reasons for your answer.

Literature and Writing

Writing a Letter

Choose a character from Chapters 6–8, such as Johnny, Lavinia Lyte, Sam Adams, or Paul Revere. Write a letter from your character to a friend living outside Boston. Describe the situation in Boston and the state of political debate there. Draw on details from the novel as you describe your view of recent events and your reactions to them.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

After the Boston Tea Party, Boston moves closer to war. At the same time, Whigs and Tories, colonists and British soldiers, still interact and often appear even friendly with each other. As a group, look for evidence in the novel of growing tensions and contrasting gestures of goodwill. Discuss and debate why you think hostility and civility were able to coexist in Boston in the early 1770s. Does this state of affairs surprise you? Why or why not? Share your ideas and insights with the members of another group.

Mathematics Connection

Use these facts as you calculate some of the economic costs of the Boston Tea Party. *British tax on imported tea*: threepence per pound of tea; *ships bound for Boston in 1773*: *Dartmouth*, 114 chests; *Eleanor*, 114; *Beaver*, 114; *William*, 58. If each chest holds 400 pounds of tea and all chests were full, how much tea was headed to Boston? What was the total tax due on all the tea? If a pound of tea was worth nine British pounds sterling, what was the value of the tea destroyed at the Boston Tea Party?



Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

Johnny Tremain Chapters 9–12

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Do you think that an individual can play an important role in historical events? Do you think that a small number of people who are deeply committed to a cause have the power to change the course of history? Why or why not?

Share Ideas

In a small group, discuss the questions listed above. Challenge group members to support their ideas and opinions with specific examples from history or from the real events and characters described in the novel. Share your group's ideas with the rest of the class.

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how Johnny and other characters play important roles in historical events.

BACKGROUND

Time and Place

Bostonians responded with outrage to the closing of their port and the arrival of British soldiers and warships. The Committees of Correspondence that Sam Adams began in the early 1770s evolved to play an even more active role. In September 1774, all the colonies except Georgia sent representatives to the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia. The Congress decided on a boycott of British goods and promised to stand together in defense of Boston. One result of this promise was the forming, arming, and training of colonial militias. The Congress also prepared a summary of its complaints for King George. The king, however, was not interested in reviewing these complaints and sent more soldiers and ships to Boston.

Did You Know?

Colonial militiamen had no uniforms and had to supply their own guns and ammunition, as well as food and other accessories. Many had learned to shoot while hunting for food or fighting Native Americans in the countryside. They were hardly prepared for the organized and almost polite method of warfare practiced by the British army, in which soldiers lined up on opposite sides of the battlefield and advanced toward the enemy, shooting. Though the militiamen's rifles were accurate, they held only one shot and often lacked the bayonets (knives) attached to British guns. This meant that while the militiamen were reloading, they were defenseless. On the other hand, the British soldiers' bright-red uniforms made them easy targets.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

converge [kən vɜrj'] *v.* to come together in a single point or focus

dilapidated [di lap'ə dā'tid] *adj.* in poor condition

dilatory [diil'ə tōr'ē] *adj.* causing delay

disconsolately [dis kon'sə lit lē] *adv.* in a downcast or cheerless manner

inebriated [i nē'brē ā'tid] *adj.* drunk

lassitude [las'ə tōōd'] *n.* fatigue; lack of energy

maudlin [mōd'lin] *adj.* sentimental

punctilious [pungk til'ē əs] *adj.* with great attention to detail

sedition [si dish'ən] *n.* rebellion against the government

Active Reading

Johnny Tremain Chapters 9–12

The final chapters of the novel describe events that occur beginning in the fall of 1774 and ending in the spring of 1775. These events lead the British and the Patriots ever closer to war. As you read, follow the progress of events by noting the main actions of the characters listed below.

Paul Revere	Sam Adams and John Hancock
	Continue as leaders of Patriot movement; in March, leave Boston for Concord to attend Provincial Congress
Johnny	Rab
Dove	Dr. Warren
Colonel Smith	General Gage

Responding

Johnny Tremain Chapters 9–12

Personal Response

Think about Esther Forbes’s statement that she “wanted to give Johnny room enough to change and grow.” Do you think she succeeded? Why or why not?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. What are some ways that the Patriots prepare for war? How would you describe the mood between Bostonians and the British troops occupying their city?

2. Explain how the Minute Men learn of the British army’s actual battle plans. What do these efforts reveal about the Patriots’ commitment to independence?

3. Summarize what happens after Johnny finds Rab at Lexington. At the end of the novel, what decision does Johnny make about his future? What does this decision reveal about his values and character?

Responding

Johnny Tremain Chapters 9–12

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. How does the author create suspense during the final chapters of the novel?

5. According to Johnny, at sixteen he is “A boy in time of peace and a man in time of war.” Do you agree with this statement? Do you think more is expected of young people when a country is at war? Explain.

Literature and Writing

Battlefield Report

Imagine you are a reporter for either the *Observer* or for a British newspaper. Write a news report about the Battles of Lexington and Concord. Remember to cover the facts by answering these questions: *Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?* Though a news report should be unbiased, you will want to consider your audience. For example, a London audience would be more interested in the brave deeds of its own troops than in those of colonial troops. Share and compare your report with those of your classmates.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

Though the Battles of Lexington and Concord are historical events, in the novel you learn of them largely through Johnny’s personal experience. With your group, review the text. Try to distinguish between Johnny’s experience of events and the objective events themselves. How might the events in the novel’s final chapters be different without Johnny’s presence? Review your response to the **Focus Activity** on page 20 as you discuss these questions. Share your ideas and conclusions with the members of another group.

Performing: Impersonation

When Billy Dawes impersonates a drunk and sneaks out of Boston, he succeeds on the strength of his acting ability. Try your hand at impersonation. Choose a character and a passage of dialogue from the book. Using minimal props, try to re-create your character’s personality with body language and tone of voice. Share your impersonation with class members. Can they tell who you are?



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Responding

Johnny Tremain

Personal Response

Johnny Tremain is full of real-life people who changed their world—and ours—with their ideas and actions. Which of these people did you find most fascinating? Why? In your opinion, which ones played the most important roles in the historic events of the American Revolution? Give reasons for your answers.

An important theme of the novel is the desire for freedom and self-determination, and the sacrifices that are required of those who aspire to these goals. What did you learn about these issues from reading *Johnny Tremain*?

Writing about the Novel

One critic said of *Johnny Tremain*: “And there is a fine sense of fair play in the recognition that men of all persuasions are good, bad, and indifferent.” Do you agree with this statement? How would you describe the author’s treatment of the Patriots and the British? Was it balanced and unbiased, or was the author advancing a particular point of view? Do you think her characters, both fictional and historical, seem well-rounded? Do they have a credible mixture of faults and strengths? On a separate piece of paper, write your own critical review of *Johnny Tremain*, focusing on the questions above. Support your ideas using specific details from the novel.



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from America's Paul Revere

Esther Forbes

Before You Read

Focus Question

What does freedom mean to you? What do you think it meant to the founders of the United States?

Background

By the mid-1700s, sea trade had made colonial Boston a prosperous, bustling city. Nearly every Bostonian depended in some way on the cargo ships that sailed into and out of Boston Harbor. It is not surprising, then, that many Bostonians became angry when the British government placed limits on colonial trade. Anger turned to rebellion when the British government decided to levy new taxes on the colonists without giving them a voice in the decision. Paul Revere was one of the people who organized and led this rebellion.

Responding to the Reading

1. What was the Stamp Act? Why did Paul Revere and other colonists rebel against the act?

2. What was the purpose of the Boston Tea Party? How did the British government respond? In your opinion, did the response backfire? Explain.

3. Why did Paul Revere and Billy Dawes ride to Lexington on the night of April 18, 1775? Why did they join Doctor Prescott and attempt to go on to Concord? Did they accomplish their goal?

4. **Making Connections** In what ways are Johnny Tremain and Paul Revere similar? In what ways are they different?

Geography and Art Connection

What American Revolutionary War sites or monuments exist in the greater Boston area today? Which of them have a connection to this excerpt from *America's Paul Revere*? Using travel books or the Internet, research these sites. Make an illustrated brochure that advertises several of them.

Remember the Ladies!

Abigail Adams

Before You Read

Focus Question

The Declaration of Independence states, “We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal. . . .” Do you think the Founding Fathers meant that all men and women are created equal? Explain.

Background

John Adams was a leader in the Patriot cause. As a member of the First Continental Congress, a drafter of the Declaration of Independence, and the second President of the United States, he had a great deal of influence in shaping this country. His wife Abigail Adams was also a highly intelligent, politically aware person. However, because of the restrictions placed on women during her lifetime, the only political influence she could exert was through her husband. The following letters to him show some of her concerns.

Responding to the Reading

1. According to Abigail Adams, how do the women of Boston respond to the limitations of war?

2. Does Abigail Adams understand why some colonists might not support independence? Support your answer with examples from her letters.

3. How does Abigail Adams want the laws of the newly independent country to differ from the laws of the former colonies?

4. **Making Connections** In your opinion, would Johnny Tremain agree with Abigail Adams about women’s roles and rights? Use examples from the novel, particularly regarding Johnny’s relationship and attitudes toward women, to support your position.

Government Connection

Working with a partner, find out what role women play in today’s government. Learn about current elected officials who are women. How many women are there in the Senate or in the House of Representatives? Are any Representatives or Senators from your state female? Then list some other ways that women contribute their ideas to national political debates. For example, identify some organizations and individuals representing or advancing women’s views. Share your findings with classmates.

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Paul Revere's Ride

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Before You Read

Focus Question

How might a poem about Paul Revere's ride differ from a story about it?

Background

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was a nineteenth-century poet and writer known for his poems about American history. Many of his poems are narrative, which means that they tell a story. This narrative poem tells the story of Paul Revere's ride on the night of April 18, 1775.

Responding to the Reading

1. Longfellow uses sensory language to describe the night of April 18, 1775. What words or phrases help you see and hear what happened during Paul Revere's ride?

2. In "Paul Revere's Ride" Longfellow writes, "The fate of a nation was riding that night." Do you agree? What might have happened if the events had gone differently?

3. How does Longfellow's portrayal of Paul Revere compare with that found in *Johnny Tremain*? In what ways are the portrayals the same? In what ways are they different?

4. **Making Connections** This poem retells historical events also portrayed in *Johnny Tremain*. Compare the two portrayals of these events.

Art Connection/Creative Writing

With a partner, choose a current event to describe. Then decide which of you will write a brief fictionalized account of the event, and which of you will write a poem about it. When you are finished, compare and contrast your work. Discuss what unique perspectives each version offers.

Parliament Has the Right to Tax the Colonies

edited by Don Nardo

Before You Read

Focus Question

Have you ever changed your opinion about an important issue? If so, what made you change your mind?

Background

In both Great Britain and its colonies during the 1700s, there were people who felt that the American colonists had no right to protest their situation. Colonists who supported the British were called Tories, or Loyalists. Some of them fought with the British during the American Revolution, some of them kept quiet during the conflict, and many of them moved to Great Britain after the colonies gained their independence.

Responding to the Reading

1. According to the author, why did Parliament have the right to tax the colonies?

2. What alternative taxation method does the essayist discuss? Why does he say this method will not work?

3. Based on what you know about this period of history, do you think the author makes a convincing argument? Why or why not?

4. **Making Connections** The author of this essay calls the rebellious colonists “lawless and self-centered.” Does *Johnny Tremain* support this view in any way? If so, how? How does *Johnny Tremain* disprove this view?

Debate

Using the Tory viewpoints presented here and the Patriot views advanced in *Johnny Tremain*, prepare arguments for a debate about Parliament’s taxing of the colonies. Work in teams, with individuals assigned to each side. Agree on debate procedures and rules in advance. Then hold a post-debate discussion. Have anyone’s views changed? Were you able to appreciate the opposing side’s arguments?

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The Boston Tea Party

Donald W. Olson and Russel L. Doescher

Before You Read

Focus Question

What do you visualize when you think about the Boston Tea Party? How do you imagine the decks on the ships looked? How do you imagine the scene surrounding the ships?

Background

Donald W. Olson and Russel L. Doescher are both physicists at Southwest Texas State University. In this article, which first appeared in *Sky and Telescope* magazine, they discuss the effects the moon and the tide had on the events of the Boston Tea Party.

Responding to the Reading

1. Why did the Boston Tea Party happen when it did?

2. Why would it have been ideal to hold the Tea Party just after high tide? Why was low tide not an ideal time?

3. What happened to the tea as the members of the Tea Party unloaded more and more of it overboard during low tide? What did some Tea Party members have to do as a result?

4. Why was the tide lower than usual on the night of the Boston Tea Party?

5. **Making Connections** In *Johnny Tremain*, when the Observers meet to plan who will participate in the Boston Tea Party, Dr. Warren says to Paul Revere “Look here, Paul, it has been decided this work must be done by apprentices, strangers—folk little known about Boston.” Do you think this statement by Dr. Warren is historically accurate? Support your answer with evidence from “The Boston Tea Party.”

Science and Internet Connection

On which day of this month will the conditions in Boston Harbor most closely resemble those that occurred on December 16, 1773? To find the answer, search the Internet for tide predictions for the Boston area. Look for estimated water levels and for the times that high tide and low tide will occur. For an additional challenge, find out what phase the moon will be in on the day that the conditions will be similar to those of December 16, 1773.