



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

*to strengthen teaching in public schools®*

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2013 Volume I: Picture Writing

---

## **Picturing a Different America: "Reading" Images, Reading Strategies, and Historical Contradiction – Without "Frontloading"?**

Curriculum Unit 13.01.06, published September 2013  
by Sheila McBride



John Trumbull, *Battle of Bunker Hill*, 1786, detail. Yale University Art Gallery.

## Overview

---

"I don't know what happens. I read the history book. But when I put it down I have no pictures in my head," say the children of immigrants Marsha Ehler teaches and writes about in California. Her students are "strongly visual learners who rely primarily on what they see to help them process information, but they often lack the 'standard collection' of American images (accurate or inaccurate) gleaned" from years of contact with historical stories and images. <sup>1</sup> But how many other school children might also have this "lack of strong iconic images" of historical settings and figures? In this unit, Language Arts and Social Studies interact to enrich middle-school student learning of the Revolutionary War and early American race relations in the context of a recent young-adult historical-fiction novel, *Forge*, by Laurie Halse Anderson.

But how much visual and information context should be provided for the students? Can the book stand alone? Are actual pictures necessary to help build a library of internal imagery for young readers so they can visualize the setting adequately? This unit identifies what minimal historical background and images related to the setting and characters (escaped slaves during the Revolutionary War) in this novel should be provided to middle-school students before and during the unit to ensure reading comprehension. Images and assignments in the unit direct student thinking to the contradictions in early American history between our founding fathers' ideals - "All men are created equal" - and their tolerance of or active engagement in slave-owning. Students will learn that 5,000 African Americans fought in the American army, but many times that number fought for or joined the British side. The historical contradictions that underlie America's early history are central to this novel and this unit.

This unit applies new Common Core timing recommendations for the best times *during reading* to introduce historical background, including images, to ensure that students experience the struggle to comprehend the text themselves through close reading. Teachers in states that are now implementing Common Core State Standards will be especially interested in the controversy that labels standard practices of prefacing reading assignments with outside information and interpretation as "frontloading." If not at the front, then when is the right time, if ever, to present additional context to ensure proficient reading comprehension and student connection to unit theme of social justice? All these questions coalesce around the reading of *Forge*, a well-researched historical first-person novel of a teen boy who escapes slavery to land in the thick of the Revolutionary War. This four-week unit could be used in conjunction with Social Studies units on war and slavery in early America, <sup>2</sup> and it includes activities for "close readings" of historical images, student-produced drawings from the text, nonfiction readings, descriptions of internal visualizations, and a "Picture a Different America" writing assignment.

## Demographics

---

This unit is aimed towards seventh or eighth graders from an urban school district in a mid-size Rust Belt city. Our school is the district's 6-12 arts magnet school, for which students audition in the fifth or eighth grade to enter in sixth or ninth. The students are ethnically diverse, more female than male, and they "major" in various arts fields. Like those of the rest of the district, one of our goals is to close a racial achievement gap on state tests. Our students run the gamut academically, struggling more in math than in English. 25% are

basic or below, while another quarter are "gifted" students or advanced on the tests. This wide range presents other challenges.

This unit was produced during a summer seminar called "Picture Writing" with Professor Janice Carlisle at the Yale National Teachers' Institute. This year, our state is adopting the Common Core State Standards, which require significant revamping of curriculum and teaching styles. I began the investigation into the "frontloading" recommendations by the Common Core as our school was preparing for this transition. The novel, *Forge*, has been chosen by my school district, the city schools of Pittsburgh, PA. We teach a uniform curriculum, and this 2010 young-adult historical novel has been added to the curriculum for this fall and preliminary ideas for teaching it have been shared. The shape of this unit is, in part, an effort to integrate these varied elements.

## Objectives/Goals

---

Every teaching unit has multiple goals, which crisscross in design and implementation. The three primary goals during the design of this unit have been, first, to use pictorial resources to provide historical context and crossover practice in English Language Arts (ELA) skills such as reading and contextualization; second, to create a unit that employs the shifts in the Common Core away from frontloading and towards close reading; and third, to combine images and texts to increase both historical empathy and critical analysis. The Rationale section below will elaborate on these three foci.

The learning objectives for this unit are for students to be able to use presented historical images to practice powers of observation, interpretation, and inference, and then translate these skills from picture interpretation to close reading of fiction and nonfiction texts. Students should be able to focus on reading the text itself first, reaching for teacher-provided context only after their own struggle and after searching through the novel for clues to the historical context. Students will analyze how extended metaphors are used in this text, and they will be able to make connections to visual representations of the metaphors. During unit exercises, students will strengthen their skills in visualizing significant moments in the text, linking specific passages with drawings in which they endeavor to sketch, describe, and explain their "inner pictures." After close reading of images and texts, students should become motivated to research images and historical context for and through *Forge*, and make connections to Social Studies content before, during, and after reading the text. All this should help them express their budding fervor for social justice through an essay and art project that will, I expect, express their admiration of our founding ideals mixed with outrage over social hypocrisy in early America, while maintaining empathy for people's needs to conform to most norms of their time and place.

## Background/Texts

---

The primary text for this unit is the young-adult historical-fiction novel *Forge* by Laurie Halse Anderson. Published in 2010, *Forge* was the second in a planned trilogy following the 2008 *Chains*, a National Book Award Finalist. The books are listed as appropriate for grades 5-8; *Forge* has a lexile (reading complexity) score of 820, which is not difficult for most upper-middle-school students. *Forge* is designed to stand alone,

and it is told in first-person from the point of view of a single character, in this case a teenaged African American boy named Curzon, who by 1777 has escaped from enslavement and is now on the run in New York State and Pennsylvania. We are given glimpses of what happened to him in the previous book, which included prison (he fought for the American side, was captured as a prisoner-of-war and escaped) and his dealings with a "vexatious" escaped slave girl named Isabel, but these flashback moments are not distracting, and more information is not necessary to the present story.

By page 35 (of 280) Curzon has had several serious adventures involving the description of the death of a "redcoat" soldier and the making of a friend, a talkative white boy named Eben (Ebenezer). It is revealed that Curzon fought in the American army because his "owner," Master Bellingham, promised him his freedom after the war. However, Curzon is still in danger since bounty hunters could recapture him as he has no proof of his promised freedom. Curzon finds himself re-enlisting in the American army in time for the end of the battle of Saratoga (New York), in October 1777, known as one of the turning points of the war. The bulk of the rest of the book takes place after his regiment marches into Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, as unprepared as the rest of the army to feed and shelter its members for a long, snowy winter. Anderson presents us with specifics of the hardships, humor, and deaths there.

Around half way through, the book turns, as Curzon reencounters his old master, now an officer desperate to appear of a higher class. He has guards capture Curzon, going back on his promise to free him, forcing him to serve, in fancy dress, his old master and other gentlemen in the encampment, while regular soldiers starve. Curzon's character is not developed much further during this section, and the students might find it less compelling than the earlier ones, although the girls could be fascinated when Isabel reappears. In my opinion, using outside visuals with or without nonfiction texts would be helpful to motivate reading at this point.

Near the end, Curzon and Isabel eventually escape with the help of Curzon's white fellow soldiers, and we are left on the cusp of their new adventure in the forthcoming Book Three as the Army marches out of Valley Forge in May 1778, having survived and somehow become a fighting force that will eventually win the long war. The nature of the story as a trilogy affects *Forge* in that it may feel incomplete at the end, leading to difficulties with traditional analysis of plot and resolution. A *Booklist* review calls this book "well-researched," adding, "Curzon isn't as fully realized here as Isabel," the narrator of the first book of the trilogy, "was in *Chains*, resulting in a less-cohesive and less-compelling whole." The review continues, "Once again, though, Anderson's detailed story creates a cinematic sense of history while raising crucial questions about racism, the ethics of war, and the hypocrisies that underlie our country's founding definitions of freedom." <sup>3</sup> I feel that the book has potential, especially in the beginning, to grab the attention of the students. Images and primary-source analysis tied to the novel will help maintain close reading practices through to the end.

In addition to *Forge*, students will be provided several nonfiction texts related to the period of the Revolutionary War and other topics mentioned in *Forge*, such as biographies on the historical figures mentioned in the text or informational pieces on life in an 18<sup>th</sup> century military regiment. <sup>4</sup> In addition, visual texts illustrating or contrasting with these texts will be presented for "reading." These readings will generally be short, have a higher lexile score of text complexity, and will provide opportunities to practice close reading of challenging text.

## **The Revolutionary War Era**

As a teacher, I find it important to know some, or a lot, of the wider historical context of a historical novel, even if I do not teach it explicitly, at least at first. Many important pieces of background information are



contained in a special section in the back of *Forge*. However, I do not think it is advisable to ask students to read all this, at least right away. Students and teachers can start with quotes that begin each of *Forge's* 62 short chapters, for example:

We marchd before Day from these woods & traveled all Day In the Storme & the worst traveling I Ever saw – the Rhodes was mostly Clay which was Like mortar – we traveld to a Small town. –1777 Diary of Sergeant John Smith

I think a teacher could better guide "close reading" of these often-difficult snippets of text already having researched the background information. The sources of each of these primary source quotes are available on *Forge's* website. <sup>5</sup> This site, along with the material at the back of the novel, might be almost enough research – for teachers – to allow students at least to begin reading the book.

Additional background information that I feel would be useful for teachers in preparing for *Forge* is readily available on many teacher-oriented Revolutionary War websites, including the Valley Forge National Historical Park site. <sup>6</sup> Some real people from the pages of American history books appear at least briefly in *Forge*: Benedict Arnold, the Marquis de Lafayette, George and Martha Washington, Charles Willson Peale, and Baron von Steuben. Portraits of many of these people are readily available, including, from the Yale University Art Gallery website, some paintings or etchings that could be matched to printed text. Other real people show up in *Forge* who are perhaps less known: Agrippa Hull – a free African American from Massachusetts; Oneida warriors; Baumfree and Bett, parents of Sojourner Truth and slaves of a Colonel Johannes Hardenburgh; and many more, all listed in the appendix of the novel. These people may offer an opportunity for students to draw as a visualization strategy, from descriptions in the book or quotations brought from elsewhere. Or they could provide research opportunities later in the process. Real events are also listed in the back of the *Forge*, including those in military settings in Saratoga, New York, and Valley Forge. A visual map or timeline of the war would be helpful here, perhaps half way through the book, requiring rereading by the students to solidify events of the book.

One source of confusion for students who are familiar with the history of runaway slaves and the Underground Railroad is that such a thing was impossible during the Revolutionary War era. Although free blacks were many, if a runaway was discovered, there was nowhere to go to be guaranteed freedom. In the 1770s, slavery was still legal in all parts of the new America, including Canada and the Northern States; runaways could be captured and returned to slavery for reward bounty from anywhere. Curzon, the main character of *Forge*, and Isabel, his companion and the narrator of *Chains*, remain in jeopardy throughout both tales. One image illustrating this historical contradiction, which could be shared with students, shows runaway-slave reward ads posted in a newspaper owned by Benjamin Franklin, after he signed the declaration announcing all men's equality. <sup>7</sup>

However, life in this early America is revealed to be somewhat less racist than in years to come; as many as an estimated 5,000 free blacks and slaves served in the American army in fully integrated regiments, the last time this would happen for nearly two hundred years. The American military would not be reintegrated until after WWII. <sup>8</sup> Several searing scenes in the book deal with difficult military subjects, including death, hanging, and dismissal into the harsh winter to a nearly certain death. Women appear on the battlefields and in the camps in many capacities, as they actually did in most pre-modern wars. Any of these subjects could be the basis of a quick image/text supplement or quick research break, as long as each is hooked back to the text. One recommendation by the Common Core Standards is to increase the amount of "close reading" of dense nonfiction texts. Other historical topics related to *Forge* that could be the basis of related nonfiction texts are

descriptions of Valley Forge, colonial work practices such as blacksmithing, military medical practices, desertion and punishment, weaponry, colonial foods, literacy/illiteracy, and many topics on the slavery as practiced in that era.

Two other major historical subjects beg for more elaboration in *Forge* and can be confusing to many children as well as adults. Particularly in schools with large African American populations, these subjects may cause great consternation. Many more American Americans during the time of the Revolution – estimates range upwards from 20,000 – chose to fight for the British loyalists rather than join the 5,000 in the rebel armies. The British, including the loyalist governor of Virginia, promised freedom to any slave who fought for the British. In fact, the perception in the African American slave community seems to have been that their best chance for freedom overall was if the British won the war. The actuality is more complex than that, but the gist is true. A stirring recounting of this little-known complication of America's founding myth can be found in Simon Schama's *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves, and the American Revolution*,<sup>9</sup> which became a BBC series shown on some PBS stations. The knowledge that the American Army sent Curzon, the fictional teen soldier in *Forge*, back into slavery when his runaway status is discovered while the British Army would have offered him freedom, gives students a broader view of the character's choices and of early America's contradictions. Many other sources explain this counterintuitive reading of America's birth, including a brief explanation at the back of *Forge*. In this unit, midway through *Forge*, students will receive some of this outside visual and reading material to supplement *Forge*'s presentation of history. These materials<sup>10</sup> provide additional opportunities to practice close reading of texts and images while always being tied back to the main text. Were the British the real "good guys" of the American Revolution? Many opportunities exist to relate this supplemental visual and nonfiction material to the central novel; some are detailed in the Strategies and Activities sections of this unit.

Another source of consternation for students as they read *Forge*'s representation of history is the depiction of George Washington as indifferent, at best, to the fate of slaves. Our founding father, portrayed so nobly in John Trumbull's iconic Revolutionary War era paintings, owned hundreds of slaves over his lifetime. He finally freed some in his will after his and Martha's death, although he could not free the slaves Martha had directly inherited. Was he hero or hypocrite? A brief discussion of this topic is included in the back pages of *Forge*. In addition, the author of *Forge*, Laurie Halse Anderson, on July 4<sup>th</sup> of this year posted a moving, sometimes amusing, rumination titled "My Conflicted Relationship with George Washington" on her blog.

I hate the fact that Washington was a slave owner. I hate that he and most of the other Founding Fathers participated in slavery. I am furious that they didn't have the balls to write a Constitution that freed all Americans, instead of just freeing the white ones.

She continues, as a "postscript":

Of our first eighteen Presidents, thirteen of them were slaveowners (Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Jackson, Van Buren, Harrison, Tyler, Buchanan, Johnson, and Grant). Did you know that? If not, how does that change the way you think about how you were taught history?

Reading Anderson's blog will be fun for teachers and might be stimulating to middle-school students who show an interest in the subject. Interestingly, she engages in some alternate Picture/Writing of her own, pairing iconic images of Washington with various slogans, including "Did Great Things for America. Could Have Done More."<sup>11</sup> Images like these, or pairings of images contrasting slave life with the grandeur of the upper classes,<sup>12</sup> could do more than help students "picture" the setting; they can help to highlight the ironies that I

believe Laurie Anderson wishes to illuminate in her books *Chains* and *Forge*. The trick is to write questions for class discussion or writings that tie these images and ironies back to the primary text, *Forge*.

As Stephen Ambrose says in a recent article on our "Flawed Fathers," "Of all the contradictions in America's history, none surpasses its toleration first of slavery and then of segregation." Spurring great public comment, articles like these complicate the venerated images of our founders. As Ambrose also notes, "Of all the contradictions in Jefferson's contradictory life, none is greater.... His writing showed that he had a great mind and a limited character."<sup>13</sup> This could be said of many of our founding fathers, including ones who appear in *Forge*. Excerpts from articles like these can supplement *Forge*, especially in the context of related writing assignments linked to the novel. As students come to grips with the flawed real men portrayed in *Forge* and the supplemental nonfiction readings they can be asked to write or discuss the contrast between the new images they are forming and the beatified icons of usual American history. John Trumbull's iconic paintings of Revolutionary War heroes, his contemporaries, have over the past 250 years helped create and maintain America's founding visual myths. Many of these paintings are available on the Yale Art Gallery website, including images of actual gentlemen portrayed in *Forge*, such as Washington, Lafayette, and Von Steuben. These images, or other portraits from the era, can be paired with articles about contradictions between the real men and their words. For example, this quote by Benjamin Rush, a prominent abolitionist and signer of the Declaration of Independence, appears in *Forge*.

It would be useless for us to denounce the servitude to which the Parliament of Great Britain wishes to reduce us, while we continue to keep our fellow creatures in slavery just because their color is different from ours.

When paired with a venerable portrait of Rush by Charles Willson Peale, Rush seems a saintly man. However, add in a short biography of Rush, and then ask students to explain why the slave-owning man in the portrait didn't free his last slave until nearly twenty years after he made the above statement.<sup>14</sup> This challenges both the students' historical empathy and their sense of social justice. Close readings of the contrasting images, quotes, or short history pieces make good daily writing exercises related to *Forge*.

So all this historical information is fascinating, potentially enriching to the students' experience of this historical fiction novel, and rich with interpretive possibilities. But when should it be presented, how, and does it distract from the reading of the main text itself? How much should be presented *before* the novel? Would that be frontloading, and what is that really? The preparation of this unit has been shaped by these questions.

## Rationale

---

### "Frontloading" and the Common Core

When *Forge* was announced as the district's replacement next year for the historical novel/research unit used in my previous two years of teaching eighth grade, my first instinct was to plan an elaborate research unit about colonial slavery and the Revolutionary War era with an extensive visual introduction, similar to the contextualizing, pre-reading, and research we used for the superseded unit on Apartheid. In the previous years, teachers supplied nonfiction texts about Apartheid, showed PowerPoints with documentary

photographs, played pieces of videos, and assisted students in choosing, researching, and writing projects about aspects of that history, all *before* we read a young-adult novel set in that fascinating recent time and place. We told the students that the plot resembled real-student uprisings, and we prepared them for a resolution not as happy as our usual Hollywood expectations. In other words, we frontloaded like mad.

I had never used the term. Certainly, teachers in my district were told during several 2012/2013 professional development (PD) sessions that a pedagogical shift required by the Common Core – coming this year to Pennsylvania and many other states near you – is to limit pre-reading, anticipatory set, contextualizing, or informational scaffolding, whatever you call all the good things we've been taught to do, before reading complex text. In fact, many teachers of disadvantaged children believe fervently in these practices, feeling that providing contextualization helps to level the playing field for children for whom there might be a "knowledge deficit."<sup>15</sup> All this suddenly was "frontloading," and it was firmly discouraged, or at least so the local PD sessions claimed. I believe that professional development is going on around the country repeating the belief that the shift of Common Core State Standards requires that pre-reading strategies be eliminated, therefore confusing many teachers. Since all this was happening just as a unit concept for the "Picturing Writing" seminar was due, a unit in which I had fully intended to, well, frontload, especially with images, my first research goal was born. What really do the Common Core guidelines say about pre-reading or frontloading, and how can they be applied to a new unit?

One of the architects of the Common Core standards, David Coleman, explained this pedagogical shift, stating that "text should be central" in instruction, "and surrounding materials should be included only when necessary, so as not to distract from the text itself." Educators "should be extremely sparing in offering activities that are not text-based."<sup>16</sup> In addition, Coleman created a video demonstration using "Letter from Birmingham Jail" in which he demonstrated close reading of this text *without* using any of the usual contextualizing materials, explanations, or, notably for this unit, visual images or photographs. Coleman did not even begin with a "prior knowledge" conversation. He recommended simply asking readers to begin reading and to lead students into rereading the text for themselves.<sup>17</sup> There was immediate reaction in the educational press, as Coleman's example runs counter to many techniques recommended to teachers of reading for drawing out or enhancing students' prior knowledge. Because of Coleman's prominence in creating the standards that are being adopted by nearly every state, his advice is heeded and discussed. It certainly has confused me in the context of this unit.

Articles appeared in support of ditching standard practices of introducing a text. "Too often, well-meaning teachers are giving students a predigested version"<sup>18</sup> amounting to "spoon feeding" answers to students. Frontloading might let kids off the hook by putting most of the heavy lifting of reading on the teacher's shoulders.<sup>19</sup> By the time they actually read the book, "there wasn't a single shred of an idea in there that the kids didn't already know...." What they were learning was that reading [the text] wasn't really necessary."<sup>20</sup> Yet the Common Core designers backed off their original claims a bit, saying that "scaffolding" is acceptable only if it does "not preempt or replace the text by translating its contents for students or telling students what they are going to learn in advance of reading the text." In other words, frontloading is still to be avoided. Writers jumped on the bandwagon started by the Common Core creators that material presented before, or even during, reading should not "become an alternate, simpler source of information that diminishes the need for students to read the text itself carefully."<sup>21</sup> The consensus this past year is clear: most pre-teaching is out with the tide.

But in opposition to this pedagogical current is not only the memory of my own teacher training and



experience, but many articles I researched, which espouse the pre-teaching of context when preparing to read texts, visual or not, in the classroom. For example, Maureen Bakis, before asking students to read graphic novels set in revolutionary Iran (*Persepolis*) or in a fictional London future (*V for Vendetta*), provides articles, images, and discussion *in front* to help students picture the setting in advance. Marsha Ehler provides outside historical photographs and history before her students read historical fiction novels. <sup>22</sup> The examples are too numerous to mention. English Language Arts pedagogy is steeped in them. Like these teachers and curriculum writers, I want to frontload. I still want to pack the beginning of the unit with pictures and explanations of the exotic, at least to twenty-first century students, setting of Revolutionary America. I want to introduce the students to the contradictions of slaveholding founding fathers spouting the rhetoric of equality and freedom so they can see the hypocrisy in case they might miss it in *Forge*. I want to show images of cruelty to enrage the students and engage their incipient sense of social justice so they will judge *Forge*'s characters with passion. But I stop myself. Students are "supposed" to read the text and pull all this out for themselves. But will they? In the Strategy section, I will discuss how I have decided to handle this dilemma – wanting to be sure all children can visualize the Revolution and wanting to make up for gaps in their reading skills, but worried that I might remove their need to read or overwhelm their internal visions built the novel with outside pictures – and I also add a few places I turned for advice.

### **Image/Texts**

What sort of relationships will words and images have in this unit's classroom? Students may not remember whether they saw the image of barefoot soldiers in Valley Forge on a computer or if bloody footprints were vividly described in the book, possibly leading to confusion over the author's described setting. These are not picture-book images designed to tell the story collaboratively with the text. These images will necessarily live outside and sometimes in a strained relationship to the primary text. I have decided to call my image and text pairings "image/texts," after W.J.T. Mitchell's classifications of word-picture relationships. In image/texts, words and pictures remain in tension with a "problematic gap, cleavage, or rupture in representation"; <sup>23</sup> they never meld together into imagetexts, in which words and picture complete each other. The paintings and drawings that can be related to *Forge* will be image/texts that might provide an artistic portrait of one of the real people mentioned in the book, General Lafayette for example, but with few assurances that the fictionalization resembles the actual historical person. Or the students may see the image of an eighteenth-century compass, which could be like the one used by the fictional main character, but there is no way to know if that is the case. Other images will be creative art, mediated by a painter's vision, produced for entirely different purposes more than two centuries ago, neither as "reality" nor as illustration. Calling these pairings image/texts reminds student and teachers that these juxtapositions may jar, or inspire, but they will rarely be a perfect fit.

### **American Icons**

Another quality affecting many of the images in this unit is their potential "iconicity" for some students in the class and their unfamiliarity to others! Since only limited historical images of the Revolution and of slavery of that era exist, some of them have necessarily acquired iconic status through repeated viewing in American myth and media, in much the manner of Dorothea Lange's *Migrant Mother* photograph stands for the Depression or Grant Wood's *American Gothic* painting represents the Midwest. These images have been kept "in circulation, thereby perpetuating pictorial and social clichés. 'Whatever reality its subject first possessed has been drained away and the image become icon.'" <sup>24</sup> This status enhances their power, so that I fear that several of the unit images will be so deep in students' cultural subconsciouses, especially the Trumbull paintings, that the internalized images will resist alternate readings or connections to our novel. Alternately,

for some students — new to this country, grown up in minority or non-mainstream communities, or from a media-poor environment — may feel the lack, as Ehler says, of the "'standard collection' of American images gleaned" from standard American culture "to match the historical events described in their textbooks." <sup>25</sup> George Washington, Valley Forge, General Lafayette, or runaway slave posters may be iconic to the point of emptiness for some, but essential American "reading" for others. This disparity in our students' cultural backgrounds brings us back to the debate over prior knowledge and the urge to "level the playing field" by frontloading with background context, visual or otherwise. When teaching American icons, as with other background knowledge, a teacher must weave a delicate dance between the jaws of too much or too little.

## Reading Pictures

One assumption being made in this unit is that pictures can be "read" in some fashion to create deep connections to related text and that skills used in that reading can enhance close readings of text. This investigation begins with one caveat: perhaps "reading" is too restrictive a concept. As Albers queried, has "the interpretation of pictures been illicitly invaded by models of reading based too narrowly on the kind of meaning written words have? Is there a mode of meaning specific" to the image, and "therefore irreducible to any words, however eloquent?" <sup>26</sup> Again, this unit is an experiment, looking for what meaning students make of images they "read" alongside text in the classroom.

Teacher/researchers disagree on how much the practices of reading *written texts* and reading images differ. "Written text and visual images are governed by distinct logics," believes Frank Serafini when he discusses "multimodal" texts that combine words and pictures. "That is, written text is governed by the logic of time or temporal sequence, whereas visual images are governed by spatiality, composition, and simultaneity." <sup>27</sup> Serafini and Suzette Youngs have analyzed the ways that middle-school students make sense and improve their interpretations of illustrations in historical picture books. The researchers divide the teaching process of working with image/texts such as picture books into three phases: 1. Previewing, Noticing, and Naming; 2. Moving Beyond Noticing to Interpretation; and 3. Moving Beyond Interpretation to Critical Analysis. During Phase 1, teachers ask students to notice and name elements and genre features of the image/texts, avoiding as much interpretation or analysis as possible. Only after much noticing, naming, and listing would the discussion or writing proceed into interpretation. <sup>28</sup>

This process is much like the one followed by our seminar professor, Janice Carlisle, as she asked our class to notice visual features and elements of a painting at the Yale British Art Museum without allowing us access to the painting's title or wall notes. Only after extended noticing and naming of what we could see, were we encouraged to interpret, analyze, and finally view the wall notes about the painting. Our discussion of this painting was much deeper, more insightful, extensive, and exciting than of other paintings where we did not follow this process. Carlisle's process was based on that of Linda Friedlaender, who with others, trains medical professionals in the art of close observation by asking them to work first with art objects, leading to sharper, deeper observations in medicine. <sup>29</sup> If similar results can be seen with middle-school students, this process shows great promise. In fact, parallels can be drawn to the rationale behind the frontloading controversy in the Common Core. Asking students to read closely *first* before encouraging them to interpret - or worse, before offering an easy, outside interpretation - can lead to deeper insight and more motivated reading. Why this runs so counter to teachers' instincts in teaching reading, whether of texts or images, is the question.

## Historical Contradiction and Social Justice

One inspiring quality of many upper-middle schoolers is their developing sense of social justice. Issues that

reveal how unfair the world is or was are engaging if students are given a way to express their outrage, their sensible faith that something ought to and will be done. In this case, the injustice is the racial inequality built into American society from its earliest moments, hypocrisy even more startling as it comes from the mouths of the very creators of our founding sentiment, "all men are created equal." Although this fact may be apparent, it confronts readers urgently in a novel like *Forge*, in which the protagonist is a lively, intelligent, humorous, loving teen our students might aspire to be – and he could be hunted like a dog at any moment on a continent with no space for this fought-for freedom. The reality of the slave-owning founders of our signers of the Declaration, including George Washington, who freed his more than one hundred slaves only after his own death, hits hard in this novel, even though their actions are not its central thrust. Students are also developing greater social empathy, which will be challenged as they are asked to both condemn and excuse our founding fathers for their flaws. Historical contradictions and injustice will form the foundation of several larger writing assignments during the second half of the unit, keeping students engaged in the slower later parts of *Forge*.

## Strategies

---

### **Avoid Frontloading; Instead, Sprinkle Lightly, Later**

Visual literacy may be crucial in the twenty-first century, but for English teachers, teaching students to read increasingly complex written texts will be our first priority. This is similar to the Common Core's advice on close reading and frontloading: keep the task of *reading* primary. I am not going to present a defense of the old techniques of pre-reading or arguments for them. Rather I am assuming that many teachers in new Common Core states will want to follow Common Core recommendations, at least for the next few years. I am presenting a few practical tips for applying the new strategies, sometimes from experts and sometimes as a result of my own interpretations. Here are some practical suggestions emerging from the literature. T. Newkirk reiterates his past emphasis on sticking with "the text itself" as much as possible.<sup>30</sup> T. Shanahan, offering "practical guidance," says, "Not all pre-reading has to take place before reading." A unit "might include *several small pre-reads* rather than a single big one"<sup>31</sup> after the students experience significant struggle with the text itself. If providing pre-reading at all, in this case interpretation of historical images, keep the total time extremely short relative to the length of time for reading, say, "less than 3% of the reading time." That would mean two minutes of a block class, or perhaps even a third of a block for a novel that will take four weeks to read. In most cases, try not to provide background, "but to carefully observe as students confront the information, querying them about the potentially confusing stuff and adding any necessary explanation before a second reading." Always try to "let the author do the talking." Use outside material mainly for motivation, to give students "reason to read, perhaps arousing their curiosity or sense of suspense."<sup>32</sup> Finally, teachers should not reveal any information that students could read, or reread, for themselves; don't "spoil the quest."<sup>33</sup>

Avoiding frontloading is not easy. One illustration of the difficulties of shifting from old teaching strategies to the new comes from an article by a practicing teacher describing how she might start a class reading of a Shakespeare play. Angela Peery says, "The 'old' teacher in me, the one who didn't know about the Common Core standards," might have given background on Shakespeare's life, shown images of his times, described upcoming characters and themes. She claims that the pre-Core "old" teacher in her, still before reading the play, "might at this point conduct a whole-class discussion, which would consist mostly of me explaining all

the problematic phraseology." She goes on to say that now she would plunge directly into a class reading of the Prologue. Since the "most salient characteristic of 'close reading' as advocated in the Common Core" is *rereading*, the "new" teacher" in her, however, would create various small groupings to reread the text together first. Only then might she offer tidbits of interpretation or context, after significant rereading and struggle. <sup>34</sup> So we are back to asking students to read or notice first and then, and only then, should the teacher add interpretation or context.

How do I interpret this frontloading advice when plotting my own strategy, especially when using images? *Be sparing. Encourage students to reread images and text first before offering interpretation. Motivate students to spend much more time on observation and noticing, on struggling to read, when first encountering either an image or a text. Start presenting outside materials well after students have faced the challenge of reading. Stay close to the text with most image or nonfiction resources, making sure they are not distractions from the primary thrust of the text. Create "text dependent" assignments linking resources to the central novel. Focus on using pictures to motivate students' interest in reading Forge.* For example, fifty pages into the book, I will supplement with visual images and information on how the cumbersome loading process of a musket led to a different kind of war than the students might be imagining and then ask them to write or draw their visualizations. I have *not* given up on visual contextualization; rather I have cut it down, presented it later, and always tied it to the text.

### **Close Readings of Images, Nonfiction Texts, and Primary Sources**

Another recommendation by the Common Core involves asking students to do frequent close readings of difficult texts. In this unit, "texts" refer to images of various kinds as well as to written works. After the reading of *Forge* is well underway, daily exercises will ask students to write down what they notice/understand from a presented image or text, following a "observation, interpretation, analysis" model, after those of Serafini, Youngs, and Friedlaender described above. Explicit connections between strategies for reading images and texts will be drawn out during the discussion through teacher questioning.

### **Visualizing the "Disciplinary Literacy" Pattern of Rereading Text**

Our district follows a specific pattern of reading/writing of texts, called the Disciplinary Literacy (DL) method, developed in part by the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh, which involves layered rereading of texts for deeper understanding. First, students are asked to read to produce a "gist" or quick summary in response to questions such as, "What do you learn about the characters in this section, and how do you know?" Then they are asked to choose a "significant moment" from the text, and explain why they chose it usually in writing. Then we ask them to examine "author's techniques" such as the use of literary devices, or to "Reread to WriteAbout" an interpretive question leading to a class discussion, and finally move on to answer a critical analysis question, all before moving on to the next section of text. This rereading of text for deeper understanding fits well with Common Core recommendations. This unit will continue the DL pattern when reading images and text, with a visualization twist. They will be asked to draw or create collages of some of their "gists" or significant moments.

## Activities:

---

### Unit Questions

Students will be provided the following Unit Questions in the beginning of the unit, which will guide their participation, on a document shared by students, teacher, and parents. Students will periodically be asked to write on these questions:

1. How can historical fiction enhance historical understanding and vice versa?
2. How does one closely read complex images, graphs, and nonfiction texts to illuminate historical fiction, and how can these skills help each other?
3. What metaphors, both literary and visual, are fundamental to this novel, and how do other literary devices and elements interrelate to create this story?
4. How do outside images and texts, as well as your own research, help with understanding a historical novel, and prompt future historical research?
5. If we find hypocrisy in stories of America's past, can we still trust our ideals to build a better future?

### Image/Text of the Day

During the second and third weeks of the month-long unit on *Forge*, daily warm-ups of the image/text of the day will be presented on the computer projector. For these short exercises, students will follow the "observation, interpretation, analysis" model, following the work of Serafini and Youngs described above. They will be instructed to respond at first by observing without interpretation, "turn and talk" to a neighbor or tablemates, individually write again - this time with interpretations linked to *Forge*, and finally discuss and analyze with the whole class.

Two types of images will be used in the warm-ups: first, images or videos of historical artifacts (sometimes in use) and second, paintings or other artworks of the period. Some of the images that could be introduced as warm-up are of muskets (stills or video), forged slave shackles and chains, daily activities or clothing of slaves and masters, a colonial compass, colonial blacksmithing, military medical equipment including field surgery equipment, a chart showing the order of the battles of the war, or a chart showing the order of major wars fought by the U.S. so that students really get how long ago this is (for students who confuse the Revolutionary and Civil War, Civil Rights, and the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries). Any of these might be combined with a short nonfiction reading and then followed by a quick interpretive writing assignment tying the image and nonfiction material back to *Forge*.

The Revolutionary War era artworks that will be presented include several of John Trumbull's famous paintings of Revolutionary War heroes and battles; paintings or etchings depicting the contrasting lives of slaves and their masters, particularly when a "founding father" is shown; political cartoons of the era; and portraits of the actual people in *Forge* (see the list in Image Resources). A single artwork will be viewed first as an opportunity for observation only. After individual writing and "turn and talk," students will be given interpretive questions to answer that refer back to *Forge*. For example, with David Edwin's *Apotheosis of Washington*, an etching that sets a draped George on a cloud with angels, "How do you believe Curzon (the main character) would view this etching if he or saw it after the war, given his experiences with Washington at Valley Forge? Give examples from the text." For the painting reproduced at the top of this unit, "Look for evidence of African Americans in this depiction of a Revolutionary War battle. What do you think it says about their presence in



battle? How does this representation compare to Curzon's experience at Saratoga and Valley Forge?"



David Edwin, after R. Peale, *Apotheosis of Washington*, 1800, Yale University Art Gallery.

### Find the Visual Metaphors

Some of the historical artifacts described in the Image/Text of the Day also serve as visual metaphors in *Forge*. A particularly powerful one is the title of the novel, *Forge*, which is also an unfamiliar term to many of my students. *YouTube* videos of blacksmithing from the era and photos of forged slave shackles begin this exercise. After an observation-only period, students will be asked to suggest their own connections to the novel; then they will be presented with a writing prompt, "In what ways is the title of the book a metaphor for

the encampment (Valley Forge), and for the transformations occurring in the soldiers over the long winter there? Explain your answer with examples from the book." <sup>35</sup> Other recurring visual metaphors include Isabel's seeds, which Curzon carries with him from his adventures in the first book *Chains*, and a surveyor's compass, which serves as a metaphor for the main character losing and finding his way. Some students are also unfamiliar with this instrument. This could become a "Metaphor of the Day" exercise for one week of the unit.

### **Visualize the Text**

Students will be asked to draw part of their gist some of the time, and more often as part of their choices of a "significant moment." They must also explain why they "see" the event or setting the way they do and provide quotes from the text to back it up.

### **Observing Primary Sources**

One of the concepts to teach in this unit is the difference between primary and secondary sources in historical texts and research. The primary source quotes at the beginning of each chapter offer an opportunity to practice close reading as warm-ups. Other primary sources, such as photographs of the "Book of Negroes," an official list created by the British after defeat that listed all slaves who had "earned" freedom and could move to British land or colonies, will be used as an opportunity to "read" an image closely. Runaway slave ads from the era will also be observed and interpreted.

### **Read All About It/The British War for Freedom**

The focus of this unit is on the images, not the nonfiction supplements to *Forge*, but a few could be mentioned. Our district furnishes readings on military medical practices of the times, musketry, women in the military, and an article from a small reader on slavery titled, "Fighting for Britain in the American Revolution." <sup>36</sup> With information from Simon Schama's book (see Bibliography), this last article could be paired with video from Schama's *Rough Crossings* series and with images from the "Book of Negroes" (see primary source section above), and a longer writing assignment with this prompt: "Should Curzon have tried to join the British army instead of the American one? Why or why not? Use your knowledge of his character, the events of the book, our supplemental readings about the British and slavery, and your imagination to support your answer."

### **Picture Valley Forge**

Half way through the book, students will be asked to collect as many visual descriptions as they can of the conditions and setup of Valley Forge during the winter of 1777/8. They will share these in groups, then in pairs, and they will be given computer time to research images to match these descriptions. Following models of publications of the times, they will then create an illustrated newspaper article or a flyer about Valley Forge. Since newspapers of the day were illustrated only with line drawings, they will turn photos or paintings into drawings to accompany their articles. They must use descriptive words from the novel, adding only a few extra words to connect them.

### **"Picturing a Different America" Assignment**

(1.) Letter from Valley Forge or (2.) Postal Wormhole to 1778. Students could be offered both choices and asked to choose one, or both could be required.

(1.) Choose a character from the novel, *Forge*, such as Curzon, Isabel, Eben, or another. As that character,

write a persuasive letter to the signers of the Declaration of Independence, such as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Rush, and Ben Franklin, urging them to revise the document to include freedom for all African-Americans. (Since many of the characters in *Forge* are illiterate, you can imagine using a "scribe," a literate member of society, who volunteers or whom you pay to write down a letter as you dictate it.) Use details from both (a) your character's life (use examples from the book, and *then* you can make up something else) and from (b) the supplemental materials you have been provided to support your arguments. Be sure to empathize with the founding fathers' ways of looking at the world in 1778 as you try to convince them to change their worldview on slavery, defy their peers, and revise this founding document. Use a "voice" consistent with your 1778 character as well. In addition to your persuasive arguments, include near the end your contrasting visions of the America that your character can imagine developing if the founders *do* decide to abolish slavery at this early moment in our country's history and the America that could develop if they *do not*. Use literary devices such as sensory imagery or visual metaphors to bring these visions to life. End with a call to action suggesting the words they should use in the revised Declaration. *Visual extension:* Illustrate your two contrasting visions of America if the signers of the Declaration *did* or *did not* take your advice to revise the document.

(2) Write another persuasive letter, this time assuming a postal wormhole that can pass mail from the present, the 2010s, directly to George Washington more than two hundred years in the past, 1778. Use (a) the experiences of Curzon, Isabel, Eben and others in *Forge*, (b) information from the supplemental materials you have been given, and (c) your knowledge of American history after 1778 or the way our society is shaped today, to persuade George Washington to grant slaves freedom when and after serving in the army, to take a stand against the other founding fathers by opposing slavery, and to release his own slaves immediately. Be sure to use examples and support from all three kinds of sources listed above. Be sure to empathize with Washington's dilemma as a military leader who needs the support of slave-owners to survive and as a husband whose family members depend on slaves for their lifestyle. In addition to your persuasive arguments, include towards the end the contrasting visions of the America you can imagine developing if he *does* and if he *does not* decide to take a stand against slavery at this early moment in our country's history. Use literary devices such as sensory imagery or visual metaphors to bring these visions to life. End with a call to action suggesting the first practical actions he should take. *Visual extension:* Illustrate your two contrasting visions of America if George Washington *does* or *does not* take your advice.

### **More Activities**

Numerous other activities could be created in a four-week unit, for example: *Our Founding Slaveowners: Developing Empathy for Complex Men.* Defend the choices of one of the slaveowners from the novel, using *Forge* and your knowledge of the culture of the times from our readings and from Social Studies. *Compare the Classes:* Write about what you observe in visual comparisons of the daily life of the masters, gentry, middle class, farmers, "house" slaves, and field slaves. *Consider Flexible Groupings:* Combine the students in different ways to work through their close-readings of image/texts. *Finding the African American Presence in Revolutionary America* (based on a famous book of nearly this name). We could treat our daily warm-ups for a week on finding the small African American faces in Trumbull's painting, "The Battle of Bunker Hill" or in the names on lists, etc. This could almost be seen as a scavenger hunt.) *Re-viewing History: Rewrite Part of the Book from a Different Character's Point of View.* Isabel and Eben are vivid characters in *Forge* who participate in many of the events of the novel. Rewrite the middle and end of *Forge* from Isabel's, Eben's or some other character's POV; include historical allusion and vivid literary devices (metaphor and sensory imagery). Illustrate one scene from your revised story showing Isabel's or Eben's point of view.

## Bibliography

---

Bakis, Maureen. *The Graphic Novel Classroom: POWERful Teaching and Learning with Images*. Corwin Press. 2011.

Coleman, D., and S. Pimentel. "Revised Publishers' Criteria for the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Literacy, Grades 3-12." Common Core State Standards Initiative. [www.corestandards.org/assets/Publishers\\_Criteria\\_for\\_3-12.pdf](http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Publishers_Criteria_for_3-12.pdf) (accessed July 13, 2013). Comments by creators of the Common Core standards which shed light on the "frontloading" controversy; this is the revised version softening the original language against pre-reading.

Coleman, David. "Close Reading of a Text: MLK's 'Letter from Birmingham Jail.'" Middle school ELA curriculum video. [engageny.org/resource/middle-school-ela-curriculum-video-close-reading-of-a-text-mlk-letter-from-birmingham-jail](http://engageny.org/resource/middle-school-ela-curriculum-video-close-reading-of-a-text-mlk-letter-from-birmingham-jail) (accessed June 15, 2013). This demonstration of Coleman's recommended techniques for teaching reading of complex text avoids frontloading.

Ehlers, M. G. "'No Pictures in My Head': The Uses of Literature in the Development of Historical Understanding." *OAH Magazine of History* 13, no. 2 (1999): 5-9.

Fisher, Douglas, and Nancy Frey. "Close Reading in Elementary Schools." *Reading Teacher* 66 (2012): 170-188.

Iaccarino, Anthony. "The Founding Fathers and Slavery." In *The Encyclopedia Britannica* Copyright 2013. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1269536/The-Founding-Fathers-and-Slavery> (accessed July 30, 2013).

Gewertz, Catherine. "Common Core's Focus on 'Close Reading' Stirs Worries." *Education Week*: February 8, 2012 and another April 24, 2012.

Hibbing, Anne Nielsen, and Joan Rankin-Erickson. "A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words: Using Visual Images to Improve Comprehension for Middle School Struggling Readers." *The Reading Teacher* 56, no. 8 (2003): 758-770

Hinchman, Kathleen, and David Moore. "Close Reading: A Cautionary Interpretation." *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 56 (2013): 6

Newkirk, Thomas. *The art of slow reading: six time-honored practices for engagement*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2012.

Newkirk, T. "The Text Itself: Some Thought on the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts." (2012) [www.heinemann.com/pd/journal/TheTextItself\\_Newkirk\\_Essay\\_S12.pdf](http://www.heinemann.com/pd/journal/TheTextItself_Newkirk_Essay_S12.pdf) (accessed June 20, 2013). Newkirk says the "text itself" is never considered without outside connections; the mandates on close reading of the text will fail.

Peery, Angela. "Reading for the Future: How the Common Core Will Change Instruction." *The NERA Journal* 48:2 (2013): 1-9.

Porter-Magee, Kathleen. "Teach Like a Champion versus the Common Core: Do pre-reading activities help or hurt struggling students?" *Common Core Watch*. Thomas B. Fordham Institute Website. February 3, 2012. <http://www.edexcellence.net/commentary/education-gadfly-daily/common-core-watch/2012/teach-like-a-champion-versus-the-Common-Core.html> (accessed May 2013).

Sandler, Susan and Zaretta Hammond. "Text and Truth: Reading, Student Experience, and the Common Core." *Phi Delta Kappan*. 94.4 (2012): 58-61.

Serafini, Frank. "Expanding Perspectives for Comprehending Visual Images in Multimodal Texts." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 54:5 (2011): 342-350.

Shanahan, T. "Practical guidance on pre-reading lessons." *Shanahan on Literacy*.  
[www.shanahanonliteracy.com/2012/03/part-2-practical-guidance-on-pre.html](http://www.shanahanonliteracy.com/2012/03/part-2-practical-guidance-on-pre.html) (accessed June 15, 2013). Comments by creators of the Common Core standards which shed light on the "frontloading" controversy; this is the revised version softening the original language against pre-reading.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Common Core Ate My Baby And Other Urban Legends." *Educational Leadership* 70: 4 (2012): 11-16.

Wilson, Donna. "Training the Mind's Eye: 'Brain Movies' Support Comprehension and Recall." *Reading Teacher* 66:3 (2012): 189-194.

Youngs, Suzette. "Understanding History through the Visual Images in Historical Fiction." *Language Arts* 89:6 (2012). 379-395.  
Thorough and thoughtful study of middle-school students reading historical picture books for visual and literary elements.

Youngs S. and F. Serafini, "Comprehension Strategies for Reading Historical Fiction Picturebooks," *The Reading Teacher* 65:2 (2011): 115-124.

#### Revolutionary War History Resources

Ambrose, Stephen. "Founding Fathers and Slaveholders." *Smithsonian Magazine* November, 2012.  
[http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/Flawed\\_Founders.html](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/Flawed_Founders.html) (accessed August 1, 2013). This article examines the contradictions of our "flawed founders" attitudes and behaviors regarding slavery, starting with Thomas Jefferson who penned, "All men are created equal," then continued to hold humans as his slaves.

Anderson, Laurie Halse, *Chains*, New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2008. National Book Award Finalist first book in a projected historical fiction trilogy, told from the point of view of Isabel, a young escaped slave.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Forge*, New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2010. Second book in the trilogy is told from the point of view of Isabel's companion, Curzon, a teen Revolutionary War soldier who is also an escaped slave.

\_\_\_\_\_. "My Conflicted Relationship with George Washington." *Laurie Halse Anderson Blog*. Entry dated: July 4, 2013.  
[www.madwomanintheforest.com](http://www.madwomanintheforest.com). (accessed July 21, 2013). Rambling, funny, thought-provoking entry by the author of *Forge* about the contradictions of Washington as both a slave-owner and freedom fighter.

"Benjamin Rush" and "Portrait of Benjamin Rush," from *WGBH: Africans in America*. 1999. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/>

Johnson, C., P. Smith, and the WGBH Series Research Team. "Fighting for Britain in the American Revolution." In *Slavery in American: A Historical Reader*. Nextext. 2001.

Schama, Simon. *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves and the American Revolution*. Vintage Books, 2009. The story of the African-Americans during and after the Revolutionary War who turned to the British for the promise of freedom, resettling in Nova Scotia and then Sierra Leone. See also the BBC/WNET docudrama of same name.

"Valley Forge National Historical Park," *National Park Service*. [www.nps.gov/vafo/](http://www.nps.gov/vafo/)

#### Images Resources:

The Granger Collection. *George Washington the Farmer*, Lithograph after a painting by J. Stearns, 1853, also in an article by S. Ambrose, "Founding Fathers and Slaveholders" (see above), shows Washington in a field overseeing slaves; *George Washington Skipping the Rope for Exercise*, Pen-and-ink drawing, 1888, showing a slave holding the rope; N. Currier, *Washington at Mount Vernon*, 1852, on horseback with slave field hands; *President Washington and his Servant*; and Edward Savage, *George Washington*



*Family*, painting, 1796. The archives are fascinating, but images are not free to use.

Metropolitan Museum of Art. Trumbull, John. *George Washington*, 1780. Also in <http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/maps/portraits/trumbull.html> (accessed August 1, 2013). This is a standing portrait of Washington with his slave valet, William "Billy" Lee, shadowed behind him. Email for access to the collections, [iap@artstor.org](mailto:iap@artstor.org).

Yale University Art Collection, John Trumbull paintings: *The Battle of Bunker Hill*, 1786, in which several African American soldiers are depicted; *The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776*, 1786, representing 48 of the 56 signers, and *General George Washington at Trenton*, 1792, a noble portrait; David Edwin after Rembrandt Peale, *Apotheosis of Washington*, etching, 1800, an unintentionally humorous depiction of Washington as a saint on a billowing cloud; Ralph Earl, *Major General Friedrich Wilhelm Augustus, Baron Von Steuben*, painting, 1786, Von Steuben appears in *Forge*; Paul Revere, *The Bloody Massacre Perpetrated in King Street Boston*, hand colored engraving, 1770, illustration for *The Boston Gazette* which depicts the first casualty, freed slave Crispus Attucks, as a white man; and Amos Doolittle, *Brother Jonathan Administering a Salutary Cordial to John Bull*, etching, 1813, cartoon characters representing the relationship of the British and Americans after the war. <http://ecatalogue.art.yale.edu/search.htm>. This collection is readily searchable.

## Notes

---

1. M. G. Ehler, "No Pictures in My Head," 5-9.
2. I am grateful to Pittsburgh teachers Elaine Yellin and Jonathan Edwards, for their ideas.
3. Review in *Booklist*, September 15, 2010.
4. Some of the supplementary nonfiction readings were chosen by the Pittsburgh School District, and some selected especially for this unit.
5. Smith quoted in L. H. Anderson's *Forge*, 52. The sources of each of these actual primary source quotes are available on Laurie Halse Anderson's website, [www.madwomanintheforest.com](http://www.madwomanintheforest.com).
6. Valley Forge National Historical Park. <http://www.nps.gov/vafo/index.htm>
7. The Granger Collection.
8. African Americans have served in all wars in which American has fought; however, the troops were not reintegrated until 1948, after WWII.
9. S. Schama, *Rough Crossings*, especially the introduction.
10. See this unit's Strategies, Activities, and Related Materials sections for ideas.
11. L. H. Anderson, "My Conflicted Relationship with George Washington."
12. See Image Resources
13. S. Ambrose, "Founding Fathers and Slaveholders," web version, 1.

14. "Benjamin Rush" and "Portrait of Benjamin Rush," from *WGBH: Africans in America*.
15. Lemov quoted in C. Gewertz, April 2012
16. David Coleman quoted in C. Gewertz, "Common Core's Focus on 'Close Reading' Stirs Worries" and D. Coleman and S. Pimenthal, "Revised Publishers' Criteria for the Common Core State Standards," 8-9.
17. D. Coleman, "Close Reading of a Text: MLK's 'Letter from Birmingham Jail.'"
18. S. Sandler and Z. Hammond, "Text and Truth," 58-61.
19. K. Porter-Magee, "Teach Like Champion versus the Common Core."
20. T. Shanahan quoted in C. Gewertz, "Common Core's Focus on 'Close Reading' Stirs Worries."
21. D. Coleman and S. Pimenthal, "Revised Publishers' Criteria for the Common Core State Standards," 8-9.
22. M. Bakis, "Chapter 4" and "Chapter 7" and M. Ehler, "'No Pictures in My Head'," 7-8.
23. W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*. University of Chicago Press. 1995. 89.
24. Literary historian Paula Rabinowitz quoted in Stein, 563.
25. M. G. Ehler, "No Pictures in My Head," 5-9.
26. Svetlana Alpers' ideas explained in J. Miller, *Illustration*, Harvard Press, 1994. 66.
27. F. Serafini, "Expanding Perspectives for Comprehending Images in Multimodal Texts."
28. S. Youngs and F. Serafini, "Comprehension Strategies for Reading Historical Fiction Picturebooks," 117-121.
29. L. Pellico, L. Friedlaender, and K. Fennie. "Looking is Not Seeing: Using Art to Improve Observational Skills," *Journal of Nursing Education* 48:11, 2009.
30. T. Newkirk, "The Text Itself."
31. T. Shanahan, "Practical Guidance on Pre-Reading Lessons."
32. T. Shanahan, "The Common Core Ate My Baby and Other Urban Legends," 11-16.
33. T. Shanahan, "Practical Guidance on Pre-Reading Lessons."
34. A. Peery, "Reading for the Future," 1-9.
35. Adapted from the District's preliminary unit on *Forge*.
36. Johnson, et al. "Fighting for Britain..." in *Slavery in America*.

## Appendix: Implementing District Standards

---

Several Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts refer to students examining the relationships between pictures and words, as in this unit.

Speaking, Listening, Presenting Grade 8

2.Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually...)

5.Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

Reading Informational Text Grade 8

7.Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., print or digital text, video, multimedia)...

Throughout the unit, students will observe, interpret, and analyze written texts as well as images; draw or otherwise "picture" significant moments in the text; and explain, with support, how they created meaning out of the text or image. These activities are related to:

Reading Literature Grade 8

A1.Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

A4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone...

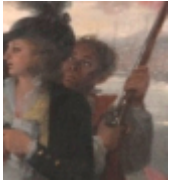
Writing and research projects that accompany the unit address these standards:

Writing Grade 8

C7.Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

C3.Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

In addition, the project and unit aligns with the Common Core strategy of distributing responsibility for literacy among disciplines. Students will be asked to make connections to the Revolutionary War information they study in Social Studies.



John Trumbull, *Battle of Bunker Hill*, 1786, detail. Yale University Art Gallery.

---

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

©2023 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University, All Rights Reserved. Yale National Initiative®, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, On Common Ground®, and League of Teachers Institutes® are registered trademarks of Yale University.

For terms of use visit [https://teachers.yale.edu/terms\\_of\\_use](https://teachers.yale.edu/terms_of_use)