



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

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## **Perspectives on Life during the Revolutionary War through the Lens of Art and Literature**

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### **Overview**

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Does a picture paint a thousand words? So often we ask our students to look at an image and tell us what they see. Typical responses will vary from the concrete and literal to the imaginative. But what happens when we ask students to look at a work of art from a specific time period in history? What happens when art is used as a primary source? Do they realize that they are looking through the lens from the perspective of an individual during a specific time period or a specific event in history? When and how can we encourage students begin to look a little deeper and question, explain and reflect on what they are seeing? Just what can students gain from each other's differing perspectives?

This unit will focus on art and historical fiction depicting the Revolutionary War. Art created during and after the Revolutionary War will serve as a catalyst for discussion of perspectives on life specifically in regard to race, class and gender during the Revolutionary War. Students will examine works of art and compare them with the historical fiction novel *Forge* by Laurie Halse Anderson during this four week unit in communications class. Students will judge the validity of the information before them by comparing and contrasting art and literature and then by drawing conclusions in order to write from perspectives of people of different races, classes and genders during the given time period. Culminating this unit with an essay, students will argue whether those perspectives still exist in today's society.

### **Objectives**

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In this unit students will examine and discuss both art and historical fiction from the Revolutionary War. Students will compare and contrast art and literature as a basis for their student led inquiry based discussions. The students will examine quotations from historical figures during the time period and connect them to specific works of art. Throughout the unit, students will write from the perspectives of individuals contained in works of art while incorporating imagery and figurative language. Within their writing, the students will make emotional connections with the events and people the artists and writers are portraying. To culminate their

work, students will write an argument essay aligned with the common core standards about whether the perspectives of individuals in regard to race, class and gender during the Revolutionary War still exist today.

## Rationale/Background

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So many words come to mind while thinking about the topic of this unit: equity, inquiry, discussion, standards and proficiency are just a few. The overall idea that stays in the fore front of my mind though is "thinking". How do we get our students to think? To think as individuals. To think deeply. To use the information before them and make inferences and draw conclusions. To understand that events of the past have formed their here and now and will shape their future. This is the struggle that I face in my eighth grade classroom.

I am a "communications" teacher (this encompasses reading, writing, speaking and listening) or in other words a reading and language arts teacher at Pittsburgh South Brook Middle School in the South Hills area of the City of Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh South Brook is comprised of about four hundred and seventy students ranging in grades six through eighth. Each grade level follows its own curriculum provided by the Pittsburgh Public School District. Recently, with the adoption of the Pennsylvania Common Core Standards there has been a shift to allow teachers to incorporate their own ideas and lessons within their classroom while following the standards. Within this, the word "freedom" comes to mind; the freedom to allow my students to think critically, make judgments, analyze ideas and express themselves in unique ways.

The students within my classroom setting range academically from proficient to below basic. Most students fall in the basic to below basic categories as defined by the Pennsylvania State System of Assessment. Almost all students come from economically disadvantaged homes. The students are often lacking external experiences outside of their neighborhoods from which to draw prior knowledge and connections with non-fiction and historical fiction texts. Students who have learning disabilities are also included in the main stream classroom. Class sizes range from an average of twenty five to thirty four students with approximately seven or more legally defined as learning disabled.

The structure of the literacy program in the Pittsburgh Public Schools is comprised of ninety minute block scheduling in order to maximize the time for instruction in the classroom. Students at Pittsburgh South Brook also have a thirty minute class of "reading intervention" time to help combat reading and vocabulary deficiencies that they may face in middle school. With the push towards common core and non-fiction, the rigor of text and non-fiction materials has also risen. Students who are reading deficient are now being asked to read and make sense of more and more complex materials. At the same time students have to sacrifice related arts classes such as art, music and Spanish to increase instruction time in other academic areas. I believe these classes are essential to students thinking critically and making connections with what they are learning.

This unit will incorporate art, literature and history so that students may think critically, make connections, and understand events that have been the basis and foundation for our society today. This unit will engage students in rich discussions; expose students to art and historical analysis of art, quotes, and literature while making connections and judgments about society then and now. Students will have an opportunity to "experience" life during the Revolutionary War through the art of writing. It is my goal to expose students to history in a variety of ways so that they can use these mediums to think critically and analytically so that they

may become better readers, writers, and thinkers.

During this unit of study, students will be reading the historical novel *Forge* by Laurie Halse Anderson. The premise of the unit is based upon this book that is set during the Revolutionary War, particularly Valley Forge which is located in Pennsylvania, and the state in which my students reside. The novel focuses on life for the main character Curzon who has escaped slavery and is on the run. The book *Forge* is a second in a trilogy written by Halse Anderson but can be read alone. *Forge* is part of the required reading set forth by Pittsburgh Public Schools for students in eighth grade. Students are asked to examine the friendship between Curzon who is African American and a young soldier who is Caucasian and whose family has never owned slaves. In order to do this students must first have a strong understanding of the Revolutionary War. Second, students must understand the perspectives on life during the set time period. Last, students must understand what impact these ideas had on the outcome of the war and life today. Throughout the novel, students are exposed to what life was like during the war from Curzon's perspective. Curzon, an escaped slave/prisoner of war who had previously fought in the war under the promise of freedom now re-enlists as a soldier posing as a free African American. Halse Anderson shows us the hardships of the war both physically and mentally during this time period from the first person perspective of the main character Curzon.

Using art as a basis for discussion and analyzing the work along with drawing conclusions about the artist's intentions and what it reveals about the time period will help students better understand the text they are reading. Halse Anderson provides us with a historically accurate portrait of the time period by using imagery throughout her novel. Many of the events depicted in her book align with the historical events depicted in some of the greatest pieces of art work depicting the Revolutionary War. I believe that when my students read about the events depicted in *Forge* and view and discuss these events depicted in the art work they will have a more firm grasp that these events that happened long ago were real and not just something that perhaps happened or people have created. They will be able to make more solid connections about these events and the time period they depict. Students will be able to use multiple resources in order to make sense of what different classes, races, and genders experienced during the time period. Engaging in rich discussions around the art work will deepen students understanding and enable them to engage in a practice that helps them to think analytically and understand how to draw conclusions. The students will build upon their own understanding by listening to their peers rationale, explanations, and reflections.

In an effort to understand the Revolutionary War we must first understand the events that led to the war. The Revolutionary War Unit in the social studies curriculum usually falls after the reading of the novel *Forge* in the English curriculum, therefore it is necessary to provide students with an overview of the war before reading the novel. This will be facilitated first through viewing art work and then by doing a close read of the historical events.

## **The Revolutionary War and Timeline of Events**

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### **The Stamp Act March 22, 1765**

After the French and Indian war, France surrendered its North American territories to the British. The British retained control of those territories. The British found it necessary to impose taxes on the colonists in order to maintain its army and pay for the war. One way the British imposed taxes was with the passage of the Stamp

Act. (March 22, 1765) This stamp act taxed legal documents and newspapers. Every public or legal document had to have a British Stamp on it. The colonists objected to this act and it was repealed. This gave the colonists the confidence that they could successfully oppose other taxes.

### **The Townshend Revenue Act 1767**

The Townshend Revenue Act was passed that taxed goods such as glass, paint, oil, tea and paper. The Colonists again opposed this taxation citing that it was illegal and was taxation without representation in the Parliament. This strong opposition caused colonists to boycott goods that were subject to the Townshend Revenue Act and goods that were typically imported from Britain. (Boston non importation agreement) Many colonists and shop owners joined this opposition because this then provided more revenue for them. In response to this great opposition troops from Britain and Nova Scotia then occupied Boston as resistance grew. This led to what is ultimately dubbed the Boston Massacre. (fig.1.4)

It was said that during the Boston Massacre troops fired into a large group of protestors. Crispus Attucks became the first black casualty of the Revolution. This is portrayed in Paul Revere's etching and was widely publicized in newspapers to rally support. "The massacre divided Boston along, class, ethnic, and racial lines."

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### **The Tea Act 1773 and the Boston Tea Party**

On May 10, 1773, the British government passed a law known as the Tea Act that created a monopoly and lowered the price on tea from the British East India Company. The price of tea was lowered but colonists had to pay a duty on the tea. This Act was an attempt to force the colonists to buy tea from the East India Company because the price was the lowest and other teas would be too expensive to purchase; thus helping the tea company and allowing the British to exercise control. Tea was an important part of life and no one would want to give it up. The colonists felt that purchasing tea from this company and paying duties would be an acknowledgement of British power and reaffirm British control. The colonists viewed this as another attempt at taxation without representation and were infuriated. A group of colonists known as the Sons of Liberty dressed as Mohawk Indians and boarded the boats that were in the harbor. The boats contained tea in their holding areas. They decided to dump the tea overboard into the Boston Harbor. Ironically, some of the tea belonged to Copley's father in law who consigned the tea and had ties to the loyalists.

### **The Intolerable Acts 1774**

The "Intolerable Acts" was what the American colonists nicknamed a series of laws – called the Coercive Laws that the British Parliament passed in response to the Boston Tea party. These laws put greater restriction on the colonists as a punishment so to speak for their opposition to the Parliament and their participation in the Boston tea party. The fifth law aimed at Quebec and limited expansion of the colonies.

### **The Boston Port Act 1774**

The first of the laws passed closed the port of Boston until restitution was paid for the dumped tea. Only food and firewood were permitted to pass through the port. This then made it impossible for the colonists to get the things necessary to sustain their everyday lives. The official port was moved to Marblehead, Massachusetts. The British Government used this act as a scare tactic so that other colonies would be afraid of such restrictions being placed upon them and would concede to the British Parliament. It was during this time that King George III appointed General Thomas Gage as military governor in an effort to intimidate the

inhabitants of the colony.

### **The Massachusetts Government Act 1774**

The second law revoked the colonies constitution and limited the number of town meetings that could be held. It also abolished the election of town officials. This act basically eliminated any self-governing and therefore further threatened the liberty of colonists. This proved to be counterproductive as the other colonies sympathized with the Massachusetts colonists.

### **Administration of Justice Act 1774**

The third law gave Thomas Gage the power to send offending colonists to Great Britain or other colonies for trial to be heard by a British judge.

### **The Quartering Act of 1765 and 1774**

The fourth law served many purposes. The first purpose was to supply housing and provisions to the British soldiers in the thirteen colonies. After the French and Indian war, Britain's debt had grown and the cost to send the troops back to Britain was too great. Therefore, to combat the problem, the British decided the soldiers would stay in America even in peacetime as a protective force and the colonists would bear the burden of the cost. The second purpose was to appease the Native Americans by protecting the borders of the colonies and thus preventing any westward expansion. The Quartering Act of 1774 gave the Governor the authority to shelter the troops by any means necessary.

### **The Quebec Act 1774**

The Quebec Act allowed for expansion into areas and limited the colonies room for expansion. It also passed reforms favorable to Catholics which angered the predominant Protestant colonists. The Province of Quebec was not given any political representation.

### **The Continental Congress 1774**

The Continental Congress (1774) was made up of two groups of people from twelve colonies (Georgia excluded) who met to discuss their issues with the British Parliament. A declaration of rights was born from this meeting. It was agreed that if the issues were not resolved in one year's time that they would meet again. The second Continental Congress meeting took place in 1775.

### **Liberty or Death**

Throughout the colonies, Americans of many persuasions believed that freedom and liberty were more precious than life itself. <sup>2</sup> The idea of liberty or death became a motto for those supporting the Patriot cause. This idea manifested itself in many different ways across the country. It was depicted and displayed everywhere and anywhere. The motto became somewhat of a mantra and was worded various ways in various regions. The most infamous of those were the words spoken by Patrick Henry when he stated, "As for *me*, give *me* liberty, or give *me* death." <sup>3</sup>

At the same time objects also served as a symbol of liberty. The liberty pole is one such object that symbolized the idea of liberty and freedom and that it was attainable. The liberty pole was derived from an ancient symbol of a Roman Goddess that carried a long wand called a vindicta. Throughout history, this image

evolved and was depicted in many ways in different struggles. During the Revolutionary War, a liberty pole was created in New York and a liberty flag was often hung at the top with a liberty cap carved from wood. The liberty pole erected in New York was torn down many times by British Regiment until a version was created that was indestructible. "The fame of the New York's Liberty Pole grew with every fight and spread rapidly beyond Manhattan." <sup>4</sup> Soon liberty poles were erected in many of the colonies.

I make mention of the liberty pole for two reasons. The first being that Laurie Halse Anderson makes reference to the liberty pole when she uses an epigraph from Jehu Grant a slave who escaped to fight for the Patriots in her novel *Forge*. "Tuesday, October 7, 1777. But when I saw liberty poles and the people all engaged for the support of freedom, I could not but like and be pleased with such a thing....These considerations induced me to enlist into the American Army, where I served faithfully about ten months, when my master found and took me home.-pension application of Jehu Grant, a Rhode Island slave who escaped to fight for the Patriots." <sup>5</sup>

One can draw the conclusion that Jehu Grant felt so strongly about the idea of liberty and freedom and that perhaps slavery might end if the colonists obtained independence that he ran from slavery to enlist and support the cause. Another notion might be that Jehu may have been granted freedom as many slaves were promised if he fought in the war. This quote also depicts parallels between Jehu and the main character in Halse's novel *Forge*. Curzon is also a slave who has run away and enlists in the army to fight for the Patriots.

The second reason I make mention of the liberty pole is the depiction of it in Samuel Jennings' painting *Liberty Displaying the Arts and Sciences* (1790-92, Library Company of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.) While the historical context and intent was to paint liberty bestowing gifts upon newly freed slaves, for the purposes of this unit I believe it is important to show the students not only the liberty pole in connection with the novel but the representation of the figures in the painting. The African American woman reaching to liberty with her hand on her heart and the man with his hand on his head lowered almost in disbelief are profound images. The people in the background are celebrating around the liberty pole.

Students many interpret this as freedom has been obtained or as something the people in the painting are trying to obtain. Interpreted either way, I think this is a great representation of historical value that will spark many interesting interpretations and conversations. I think it is a great piece for students to analyze and draw conclusions upon. I also believe many students will be able to elicit and create emotional responses in writing assignments around this piece.

### **The Role of Class in the Revolutionary War**

The British Army was made up of many different social classes. The "red coats" as they were called were the regular soldiers. This group was often made up of men who enlisted in the army for life but were often ex-convicts. These soldiers had some training but were trained for European Wars. Many of the men who were recruited were unfamiliar with American territory and had difficulty tactically in America. Unlike their opposing forces, the British were not trained for the harsh conditions they faced. Many of the British officers had achieved this role by purchasing their commissions or by using family connections. Generals were often rulers with aristocratic backgrounds. Many of the officers and generals had very little military background making it difficult to direct others. Despite this, the British army had proved very effective in defeating the French and their allies in Europe, and in military conflicts in the British Empire in India, therefore the American loyalists faced a formidable enemy.

The American Army was made up of two different groups. The first was the militia who were citizens ready to fight in an emergency. These soldiers had very little experience. The second group was called the Continental



Army. The Continental Army was the first established Army in America. The Army was made up of all different social classes, these included farmers, tradesmen, craftsmen and slaves. These soldiers enlisted to support the efforts of independence. The Continental Army had an advantage, as they knew the terrain and was trained for the harsh conditions. They also had better access to necessary supplies to fight in battle.

### **The Role of Gender in the Revolutionary War**

Women during the revolution served in many roles. Since many of their husbands had left for battle to support the cause, many of the women were left to do the jobs their husbands left behind. Often the women had to maintain farms and their homes or serve in the role their husband had before the war. Women also had to create many of the things at home that were boycotted. In support of the war efforts, many of the women served as nurses, cooks, and sometimes soldiers. Many women felt very strong about the cause and even served as spies. Some women went as far as to disguise themselves as men and serve as soldiers.

One particular group of women was known as camp followers. These women often worked at the camps as seamstresses and washed and mended clothing. These women were often paid for their service.

Mary Ludwig Hays who later became known as Mary Pitcher became an iconic hero and an inspiration to women during and after the Revolutionary War. Mary Hays accompanied her husband during war time and would run pitchers of water to the soldiers. The water was used to cool the cannons. It is said that when her husband was killed, she took over his position at his cannon and fought for the Patriots. Mary Hays was dubbed Mary Pitcher and her involvement in the Revolutionary War became legendary.

Abigail Adams was a patriot who ran the family farm while her husband worked at the second Continental Congress. Abigail Adams often wrote to tell the Continental Army where the British enemy was hiding. She also wrote a series of letters that included the conditions the people in Boston were living in as well as her views on slavery and women's rights. In one such letter Abigail Adam's wrote:

"I long to hear that you have declared an independancy-and by the way in the code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If perticular care and attention is not paid to the Laidies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation." <sup>6</sup>

Even though Abigail was at home she made sure she fought for the independence of all people.

An American female sculptor who also supported the Patriots efforts was Patience Wright. Wright was New Jersey born and when tensions starting increasing she left for England. In England, she created wax figures. Many royal figures sat for portraits. "The painter Sir Joshua Reynolds, President of the Royal Academy of art warned connoisseurs and aspiring artists that waxwork figures fell outside the category of true sculpture." <sup>7</sup> Obviously this did not discourage people, as some of her most notable patrons were Lord Lyttelton, Thomas Penn, and William Pitt. Wright worked as a spy during the war sending messages in her wax to American friends. Even though she was living in London she stayed true to her Patriot roots and even considered herself the symbol of liberty. The only remaining sculpture is that of William Pitt and is located in Westminster Abbey.

## **The Role of Race in the Revolutionary War**

A great majority of black people who fought in the Revolutionary war were Loyalists. Most slaves sided with whichever army had promised them freedom. The British were more successful in recruiting slaves belonging to Patriot masters because they promised the slaves freedom for fighting alongside them against the Patriots. Many runaway slaves had joined the British Loyalists in their efforts as well, after a proclamation was made promising them freedom. Runaway slaves belonging to Loyalists were returned to their owners. This does not mean that many didn't serve in the Continental Army. More black soldiers would have fought for the Patriots had Washington not banned recruitment of them when he took command of the Continental Army.

At the end of the war, Americans demanded return of their property. This included slaves. However, the Loyalists refused to go back on their word to soldiers and created a list of soldiers who fought. This list enabled black Loyalists to board a ship bound for freedom. Unfortunately, many of these soldiers seeking freedom ended up being returned to slavery in other countries where they sought freedom.

### **Native Americans**

The Native Americans fought on both sides of the war. Native Americans had their own concerns in regard to their lands. Some fought alongside the Patriots while others fought alongside the loyalists. One painter who depicted the Native Americans during the Revolutionary War in his art work was Benjamin West. From Benjamin West's work we often see the Native Americans as strong, muscular individuals.

One example of this is *The Savage Chief* (The Indian Family). (1761, Hunterian Collection trustees, Council of Royal College of Surgeons of England) In this painting we see a Native American leaving his family to fight in the war. The Native American is depicted as a stocky, muscular figure. Many of West's Native American figures often mimicked that of Greco-Roman sculpture. We also see a female Native American figure holding a child as depicted in many other paintings of that time period. In the background we see a child holding a dog. This was representative of many women and children who were left behind while their husbands went to war.

Another of West's paintings depicting Native Americans is *Colonel Guy Johnson and Karonghyontye* (Captain David Hill). (1776 National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.) The Colonel depicted in this painting is wearing Native American clothing and military clothing. There is light shed upon him while Karonghyontye is standing in the shadows. There is an obvious camaraderie between them as the Native American is holding a peace pipe and his hand is pointing outwards to where we see a group of Native Americans sitting peacefully around a fire. It appears as though the Native American is asking the Colonel to join them. This painting depicts the peaceful relations between the two groups of individuals fighting alongside one another. This also depicts the Native Americans as a people of civilized culture and not that of a savage one which is so often misunderstood by students. Students might find it interesting to note that historians have said that a Native American taught Benjamin West how to mix clay with bear grease in order to create paints.

### **Native Americans as a Symbol of Liberty and Freedom**

"On both sides of the Atlantic, artists searched for an emblem of liberty and freedom that was more distinctly American. A favorite solution was the image of an Indian." <sup>8</sup> In this sense, the image of an Indian was used to represent America in different prints. The symbol went through many changes during this time depending upon how the conflict evolved. In early images, the Indian symbol was portrayed with Britannia and was portrayed as vulnerable a woman who was abused. In many prints she is portrayed in conflict with Britannia. As the war tensions grew the prints depicted more violent scenes between an Indian princess as a symbol in



conflict with Britannia. Towards the end of the war, the Indian princess is depicted with the two figures putting an end to their struggle.

"After the American victories at Trenton, Princeton, Saratoga, and Yorktown, the emblematic Indian underwent a change in gender." <sup>9</sup> The image of the Indian changed to a masculine victorious figure. "Americans began to use the symbol of an Indian as iconic figures and selected different figures according to their regional cultures." <sup>10</sup> Americans chose these iconic figures based upon their different qualities such as dignity, leadership, ethics, strength, and peace.

## Artists and Art depicting the Revolutionary War

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### John Trumbull

John Trumbull was an American born in Lebanon Connecticut in 1756. He was the son of Jonathon Trumbull the governor of Connecticut. His mother was Faith Robinson Trumbull. John Trumbull attended Harvard at the age of fifteen. Many believe that Trumbull's artist style was influenced by the loss of sight in one eye. John Trumbull served as a soldier in the American Revolution. Later he was appointed second personal aide to General George Washington. As a painter, he studied under Benjamin West.

One of Trumbull's most iconic paintings and first painting depicting the Revolutionary war was *The Death of General Joseph Warren at the Battle of Bunker's Hill*. (fig.1.0) This painting depicts General Warren as a Christ like figure in which he is about to meet his final destiny by being slain by a British soldier. Colonel John Small prevents this from happening. This is perhaps because the British often considered themselves as very "gentleman" like figures. To slay a man who is already dying would be almost salvage like. Bjalajac explains that "Trumbull's painting represents class differences within the anarchic violence of battle." <sup>11</sup> He further explains that Trumbull captures the essence of camaraderie even though the two sides are opposing forces. "Yet the Masonic spirit of brotherhood signifies the emergence from revolutionary chaos of a new, more egalitarian social order." <sup>12</sup>

Trumbull's use of the light and shadows is evident as the soldiers are almost "bathed" in a glorious light and to the right you see the sky bellowing in dark clouds with the use of red almost representing blood that is shed from battle. The image is also divided by a diagonal line in which on one side we see biblical references depicting General Joseph Warren as a "Christ" like figure with light illuminating him and the other side of the painting representing a sort of "hell" with red and darkness in the clouds. In the right bottom corner we are given a glimpse of an African soldier who is hiding behind a Caucasian soldier. From the viewer's perspective, this could be a representation of social class and submission. Perhaps he is hiding because he is horrified at what he is witnessing or he may be behind the soldier in a submissive role. In terms of triangular composition, Trumbull placed the soldier at the furthest point to the right. "Trumbull's representation devalues Salem's role spatially as well as thematically by dethroning him from his perch and relegating him to the most inferior part of the composition. In this way Trumbull helped "read" him out of the event..." <sup>13</sup> On the left we see another African American figure hidden by the flags. Bjelajac tells us "Trumbull's acknowledgement of African-American participation serves only to underscore their relative invisibility and exclusion from the pantheon of American heroes." <sup>14</sup>



Two of Trumbull's paintings *Surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown, Virginia, 19 October 1781* (fig. 1.2) and *The Surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga, New York, 17 October 1777* (fig. 1.3) give us a glimpse of British defeat. In the painting *Surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown, Virginia, 19 October 1781* we see the French depicted on the left side of the painting as portrayed by the white flag. It is of interest to note that many people thought this to be the British and that the flag represented surrender however it is the French flag. On the right side we see the American Patriots. In the center, Major General Benjamin Lincoln is depicted on a horse. He is visibly extending his hand towards the sword of the British soldier. In the background we see dark clouds and a broken canon showing the remnants of the battle.







In the second painting *The Surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga, New York, 17 October 1777*, we see Major General Horatio Gates. It is interesting to note that Gates was retired from the British army and served in the American regiment during the Revolutionary war. Gates retired his commission from the British because advancement required money and influence. Frustrated with the British hierarchy, Gates joined the American army when war broke out within the colonies. In the painting to the left of Gates we see Lieutenant General John Burgoyne surrendering to the Patriots. He is offering his sword for surrender. To the right we see Colonel Daniel Morgan who is almost guiding him by extending his left hand toward the tent. This painting gives one the sense of peace. The cannons are bright and clean and the sky is blue.

It is important to show and discuss these images because the Battle of Saratoga is depicted in the novel *Forge*. The main character Curzon, previously a prisoner of war, proposes a question. He wants to know why no one is jeering as the soldiers surrender. He states furthermore that they should shame the British soldiers. Curzon when captured had experienced the humiliation of being paraded before the British and taunted in New York. He feels this is his turn to do the same. He is particularly puzzled by his comrade's response of "Uncle says we must give them honor."<sup>15</sup> "This is the first time a British Army has surrendered ever."<sup>16</sup> He questions whether the point of war is to beat the enemy and make them feel the pain of losing.<sup>17</sup> Halse gives a glimpse into the main character's mind and many young soldiers who often wondered what they were really fighting for and why grown men who claimed to be gentlemen couldn't agree without bloodshed.

### **Benjamin West**

Benjamin West was born in Springfield Pennsylvania in 1738. West was the son of a Quaker inn keeper. Benjamin West was self-taught and had very little formal education. West travelled to Italy where he copied

the styles of the great Italian masters Titan and Raphael. King George the III commissioned West to create portraits of the royal family in 1763. In 1770, Benjamin West painted the iconic *The Death of General Wolfe* (1770, The National Gallery of Canada). King George appointed him historical painter to the court in 1772. Benjamin West was the president of the Royal Academy.

*The Death of General Wolfe's* subject is the victory of the British over the French at the battle of Quebec. "Sir Joshua Reynolds regarded West's turn to realism as a vulgarization of high art, a descent from the universal ideals of classicism".<sup>18</sup> During the eighteenth century, artists' style was referred to as neoclassicism. This meant that artists painted pictures that were reminiscent of Greek or Roman style. Figures were often depicted wearing Roman or Greek clothing and sculptures were created in the style of Greek or Roman body forms. This was considered to be "classy" or "dignified". When Benjamin West painted a realistic picture, it went against what was considered to be classic art and was considered offensive in the world of art and quite rebellious. He was going against what "properly trained" artists did. "West's aesthetic rebellion against Reynolds and European academic tradition served the cause of American nationalism".<sup>19</sup> West wanted to show the "nonfiction" side to the New World. He wanted his painting to be historically accurate. He refers to a historian using a pen to write facts and compares this to an artist using a pencil.

*The Death of General Wolfe* depicts Wolfe lying in the arms of soldiers. It suggests a religious connotation in a sense in which Wolfe resembles Christ and the flag resembles the cross. The men surrounding him appear to be reminiscent of Christ's disciples after he was crucified. Wolfe is shown with a glorious light shining upon him. In the background to the right we see dark clouds billowing in the sky. Also to the right, we see a soldiers with their hands clasped almost to be praying for the Generals soul. To the left is a Native American looking at the General. The Native American is portrayed with strong muscle definition reminiscent of Roman sculpture. A man above him is in green but dons Native American attire. West identifies him as William Johnson. "As a superintendent of Indian affairs, Johnson had learned Iroquois customs and language and married a Mohawk woman, more easily enabling him to convince some Native Americans to ally with Britain against France."<sup>20</sup> This also shows us that the Native Americans were loyal to the British and supported their efforts to retain control of the colonies because the British promised protection against westward expansion.

## **John Singleton Copley**

John Singleton Copley was born in 1738. He was one of six children. Historians know that Copley was of Irish decent. There is very little known about Copley's schooling or boyhood. He has been viewed however, as well educated based upon the letters he wrote. Copley's mother owned a tobacco shop on Long Warf. When Copley's father died his mother remarried Peter Pelham. Copley's first work was a portrait of the Reverend William Ulsteed minister of Brick Church at the age of fifteen. Copley's fame came at an English exhibition in 1776. His income was actually large for the area and promoted him to aristocracy. Copley went onto marry Susanna Farnham Clarke who hailed from a wealthy family. Copley's in laws were connected to the Loyalists. An interesting note is that Copley's father in law was consigned the tea that was thrown into the Boston Harbor during the Boston Tea Party. In 1774, Copley sailed to London and toured Europe for nine months. Copley never returned to America.

"Copley's *Portrait of Paul Revere* (1768, Museum of Fine Arts Boston) is a significant social departure from aristocratic portraits of colonial wealth."<sup>21</sup> Copley depicts Revere in his portrait with a finely crafted silver tea pot. The viewer of the painting is drawn in by Revere's right eye. Light and darkness emphasizes this in his painting. The right eye is shown in light and is very powerfully looking at the viewer. Revere is dressed in very simple clothing with a white shirt made from cotton. His hand is under his chin in a manner that suggests

perhaps he is thinking or contemplating something. His tools are displayed on the table which suggests that he uses his hands to craft his beautiful silver pieces. Much attention is drawn to the eye of Paul Revere which suggests the all-knowing Masonic eye. "The arched, penetrating eye is akin to the all-seeing, providential eye that often decorated Masonic aprons, engravings, and other artifacts." <sup>22</sup> "The all-seeing eye symbolized God's creative power as Supreme Architect." <sup>23</sup> Copley's painting does two things here in regards to the social and political aspects of society. First he "elevates the social status of labor and of craftsmen" <sup>24</sup> and secondly, he "reassures wealthy patrons that portraits, silver teapots, and other luxury items were manifestations of virtue rather than vice." <sup>25</sup> Copley was very good at remaining a neutral party in the Revolutionary War.

## Paul Revere

Paul Revere was born in 1735. Revere's father was a Frenchman named Apollos Rivoire. His father was an artisan who was a metal smith and owned a shop where he created household silverware. Revere's mother was Deborah Hichborn and a Boston native. Revere was his father's apprentice and followed in his footsteps as a goldsmith. In 1757, Revere married Sarah Orne and had eight children. When Sarah Orne passed, Revere married Rachel Walker and again had eight children. In order to supplement his income as a goldsmith Revere was also a dentist. Since Revere was a skilled craftsman, "he wired in false teeth carved from walrus ivory or animal teeth." <sup>26</sup> During this time there was no formal training for dentists but Revere being a goldsmith was able to create fillings as well.

Revere was a prominent figure in the Revolutionary War. The patrons of his finely crafted silver pieces included artisans and the city's upper class. During this time, Revere was a member of the freemasons. As tensions grew so did his role in the mounting conflict. He spied on the British soldiers and is infamous for warning the colonists that the Lexington Minutemen were approaching. Revere also participated in the dumping of the tea during the Boston Tea Party. During the war, Revere manufactured gun powder and cannons for the Continental Army.

Paul Revere's *The Bloody Massacre Perpetrated in King Street Boston on March 5th 1770* (fig.1.4) became one of the large pieces of propaganda to fuel the tensions between the colonists and the British. In his etching, he portrays the event as a massacre of innocent men. The etching shows the British standing in a straight line firing in to a crowd of innocent protestors in which they are portrayed defenseless. On the building behind the British soldiers there is a sign that reads "Butcher's Hall". Paul Revere's etching depicts the sky as blue, yet in the corner we catch a glimpse of the moon. There has been much discussion around the time of day of this event and the absence of snow on the ground in Revere's work has been a point of contention. The colonists in his etching are dressed very gentleman like. In the crowd there is a woman standing innocently as yet to be defended by the men who were fighting, again alluding to the idea that the colonists were gentleman like figures. Crispus Attucks the first casualty of the revolution is portrayed in Revere's work as a white man.

Paul Revere's etching was a plagiarized copy of Henry Pelham, half-brother of John Copley. Pelham's version varies quite greatly in which we see British soldiers defending themselves against armed colonists. In Pelham's edition that he published two weeks after Revere's Crispus Attucks is depicted as an African man. Also vivid is the image of a Patriot figure wielding a large bayonet at the Loyalists in which we see them retaliating in such an attack. There are many different versions of the events that took place. One such version states that a Loyalist had refused to pay for a haircut and when confronted by a young male apprentice turned and attacked him thus causing a riot amongst the Patriots. It is alleged that Crispus Attucks was one of the organizers of this "mob". Stories then state that the angry mob began throwing snow balls at the Loyalists and that in turn the Loyalists opened fire on the mob killing five people. It is also important to



note that Crispus Attucks was a runaway slave that was never caught and because of these events was eventually viewed as a martyr for his role in the Boston Massacre.



*The Bloody Massacre Perpetrated in King Street Boston on March 5th 1770 ca. 1770 (1832 facsimile by William F. Stratton) Yale University Art Gallery*

### Scipio Moorhead

Scipio Moorhead was a slave and the first African American artist to paint a portrait during the Revolutionary War. His subject was Phillis Wheatley, another slave who was a poet. Susanna Wheatley, Phillis's owner recognized her talents and taught her to read and write as well as various languages. Phillis became a published poet and Moorhead designed the portrait used as a dedication in the front of her publication of poetry.

Moorhead's portrait of Phillis Wheatley is significant of this time period because it is the first time and African American let alone a slave was portrayed in such a way. Phillis is painted sitting at a desk with a quill pen in her hand. She is portrayed as an intellectual with her hand on her chin thinking. Phillis is wearing a cap and a dress similar to that of servant of the time although the family treated her more like a member than a slave.

### Other Artists and Works

Listed are other artists and works that may be used for discussion relevant to race, class and gender as well as works that depict conditions at Valley Forge in regards to the imagery included in the novel *Forge*.

Capture of the "Serapis" by John Paul Jones, 1854, engraving from Alonzo Chappel, National Archives

Retrospective image of a ship at war. It is important for students to understand the war was not just on land.

The Declaration of Independence, July 4<sup>th</sup> 1776, 1786-1820, John Trumbull, Yale University Art Gallery

This image is good to show students because it is not an accurate depiction of the people present but was created rather to show the founders of the nation. Students could have a great discussion surrounding the ideas of why Trumbull chose to paint this historical event in the manner he did.

*Der Tod Des Major Peirsons (The Death of Major Peirson)*, 1782-1784, John Singleton Copley, Tate Gallery, London

This work depicts the brutal battle along with civilian women and with Peirson's servant retaliating for his death.

*George Washington*, ca. 1782, James Peale, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

A great picture for students to examine the flags, background and the size of Washington depicted in this portrait.

*George Washington at Valley Forge*, Tompkins Harrison Matteson, 1854, Anonymous Collection

A retrospective painting depicting Washington with the troops. Also depicted is the role of slaves and women attending to injured soldiers.

*Joseph Brant*, 1786, Gilbert Stuart (portrait of a famed Mohawk chief), The Northumberland Estates, Alnwick Castle, Collection of the Duke of Northumberland

Depicts Brant in Native clothing and English silver.

*Lafayette at Yorktown*, ca. 1783-85, Jean Baptiste Le Paon, Lafayette College, Easton, PA.

This picture depicts Lafayette with James Armistead. Students will be intrigued to learn the story of James Armistead and the role of slaves during the war.

*The March to Valley Forge, December 17<sup>th</sup>, 1777*, 1883, W.T. Trego, American Revolution Center

Another retrospective painting of the harsh winter conditions and the differences in class between soldiers and officers.

*Molly Pitcher at the Battle of Monmouth*, copy of engraving by J.C. Armytage after Alfonzo Chappel, National Archives Records and Administration

This is a copy of an image of Molly Pitcher (Mary Ludwig Hays) who was legendary during the revolution. It depicts the role she took in the war after her husband was killed and shows how many women actually fought in support of the colonists

*Mrs. Thomas Gage*, 1771 John Singleton Copley, 1738-1815, Timken Museum of Art

A portrait of the British Commander's wife depicting the luxurious clothing worn by British women. A great conversation starter for students to compare and contrast the British women and the American women as well as a comparison of the classes during the war.

*Phillis Wheatley* 1773 Scipio Moorhead, London

A portrait of an African American slave poet painted by another African American slave. The portrait is located in the dedication of Phillis Wheatley's book and depicted her as an intellect.

*Washington, 1922, N.C. Wyeth, The Hill School, Pottstown, PA.*

Although painted in retrospect, this painting depicts the harsh conditions of winter at Valley Forge.

## Strategies

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### **Inquiry Based Discussions**

During this unit students will focus on a unit question and three overarching or guiding questions adapted and revised from the Pittsburgh Public Schools Core curriculum: What can we learn about life from art and historical fiction? How can art and literature illuminate human struggle? What does art and literature illustrate about the human experience? <sup>27</sup> Do the perspectives of life in regards to race, class and gender during the American Revolution still exist today?

Students will explore these questions as they examine and analyze art and the novel *Forge* through Inquiry Based Discussions. These discussions will require students to be the facilitators and will require a standard for discussion that will be explained further. The common core requires students to take ownership of their learning and the teacher to serve as a resource as students probe their way through gaining a deeper understanding.

An inquiry based discussion requires the students to facilitate the discussion. This can be done in a variety of ways. Students may sit in a semi-circle or may face one another. Students may be assigned roles such as facilitator, recorder, and time keeper. The teacher may allot a certain amount of time sufficient for discussion. The teacher may pose a question for discussion or present it as a "write about" that students may have done earlier so that they have time to gather or organize their ideas about a particular topic. Students are then given the opportunity to develop questions that they may ask other students during the discussion. The role of the facilitator is to keep the discussion going by asking students to elaborate more on their ideas such as "tell us more" or "can you explain a little further?" The goal is to actively engage students in the process of inquiry, critical thinking, and analysis.

### **Visual Thinking Strategies**

The Visual thinking Strategies that are often employed in both art classrooms and museums are also a strategy to get students to "enter" an image. The following questions can be used to engage students in a work of art: 1. What's going on in this picture? 2. What do you see that makes you say that? 3. What more can we find? <sup>28</sup>

The goal is to get students to think deeper about the historical events depicted and the history of the work without leading them. The art work should serve as a primary source for students to learn about the time period. Any works that are used in retrospect should be explained as that and students can engage in a comparison of what they find between the two.

## Close Reading Strategies

Shorter pieces of nonfiction can be used as a close reading strategy that is implemented in order for students to understand background on the artists and key figures from the Revolutionary War. (chunking the text, creating margin notes, highlighting key words, and analyzing the paragraphs) Students may also examine portraits of key figures. These pieces will provide students with some background knowledge while understanding events and figures from the set time period. Students will also examine the epigraphs throughout the novel *Forge* and make connections with works of art and how they understand the historical time period better from the art work.

## Writing and the Writing Process

Students will utilize the writing process as they write from different perspectives of figures contained in the works of arts. These writings will require students to demonstrate an analytical perspective of the time period and historical context not just creative writing. Students can then begin to evaluate today's society and whether or not race, gender, and class equity issues exist today. They can also start to think about change as well.

## Classroom Activities

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### Unit Question: What can we learn about life from art and historical fiction? <sup>29</sup>

This unit question will give students a starting point as they work their way through this unit of study. Students will begin with what they believe to hold true before beginning their work with both the art pieces and novel. Students will also begin by viewing an art piece and discussing what they understand it to depict. Students will also recall any prior knowledge they have about the American Revolution, the society and people during that time period.

### Epigraphs and their Meaning

At the beginning of each chapter, there is an epigraph that sets the tone and context for which students will read. Students will be asked to discuss, interpret, and analyze the meaning of selected quotes both before and after reading the text. Students will write about their ideas so that they later can use these quotes when discussing different works of art. The epigraphs will also serve as a good topic of discussion for an Inquiry Based Discussion. Questions such as: How does this epigraph relate to the works of art we have viewed? Which work of art depicts the words of the speaker? How are the words of the speaker represented in this work of art? may be posed.

### Analyzing Works of Art

At the beginning and throughout the unit of study students will be provided with examples of art work from the American Revolution. Students will use the Visual Thinking Strategies and the Inquiry Based Discussion model to analyze and interpret these works in regards to artist's intention, society, individuals including race, gender, class, the Revolutionary War and setting and which of the ideals presented still exist today. (Drawing conclusions) Students will also examine art from contemporary society of today in the form of but not limited

to paintings, sculptures, installations and advertising (commercials and print) along with their own ideas and experiences.

Selected works will be presented to students for discussion before the novel is read in order for students to understand the history of the Revolutionary War. Throughout the novel, selected works will be presented for students to discuss that coincide with what they will read or that match an epigraph. Students will be asked how the author's historical fiction account relates to the account of events depicted in the paintings. Students can then engage in a discussion regarding the accuracy of what they see along with what they are reading.

Students can also be broken into small groups to discuss paintings. They can then come together as a large group to "share out" what they have discussed and discuss the work as a large group.

### **Examining other Sources of Media**

Students will also be given an opportunity to examine other images such as posters from the war era. Students will analyze any images and text contained within those sources and will discuss the relevance of those and what it depicts about society of that time.

### **Writing from the Perspective of Figures Depicted in Works of Art**

As students gain a better understanding of race, class and gender perspectives during the American Revolution they will be given an opportunity to write letters from the perspective of an individual to another individual depicted in art from the American Revolution. Throughout the novel, they will examine the relationship between Curzon (the main character) and his friend Eben in regard to race. Students can judge the validity of this relationship and how Halse Anderson portrays it through historical fiction based upon the ideas they have gained from the works of art. Students will also be able to make judgments about the main character's relationships with others and the way different characters are portrayed in the novel.

### **Culminating Project**

At the end of the unit students will be asked to write an argument essay about whether the perspectives of the historical time period during the Revolutionary War still exist today in regard to race, gender, and class. Students will be required to support their ideas citing evidence from art from the Revolutionary War and today as well as quotes and information from the novel *Forge*. Students will be given a prompt: Do perspectives on life during the Revolutionary War still exist today in regard to race, gender, and class? The students will be provided with an assignment sheet explaining the criteria for their essay as well as prewriting organizers, self and peer editing sheets and a rubric. Students who demonstrate the need for a writing frame or organizational structure for their essays should be provided with those organizers as well.

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## Appendix

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### Pennsylvania Common Core Standards

#### CC.1.2.8.A

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective

summary of the text.

#### CC.1.2.8.B

Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences, conclusions, and/or generalizations drawn from the text.

#### CC.1.2.8.C

Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events.

#### CC.1.2.8.G

Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea.

#### CC.1.3.8.A

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

#### CC.1.3.8.B

Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences, conclusions, and/or generalizations drawn from the text.

CC.1.4.8.G

Write arguments to support claims.

CC.1.4.8.H

Introduce and state an opinion on a topic.

CC.1.4.8.I

Acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims and support claim with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic.

CC.1.4.8.J

Organize the claim(s) with clear reasons and evidence clearly; clarify relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence by using words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion; provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

CC.1.4.8.L

Demonstrate a grade-appropriate command of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

CC.1.5.8.A

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, on grade-level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CC.1.5.8.C

Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.

CC.8.5.6-8.A.

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CC.8.5.6-8.B.

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

## Notes

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1. Bjelajac, *American Art A Cultural History*, 133
2. Fischer, *Liberty and Freedom*, 115
3. Fischer, 116
4. Fischer, 47
5. Anderson, *Forge* 18
6. PBS, Abigail Adams' "Remember the Ladies" Letter (1776)
7. Bjelajac, 122
8. Fischer, 140
9. Fischer, 142
10. Fischer, 143
11. Bjelajac, 140
12. Bjelajac, 140
13. Boine, 21
14. Bjelajac, 141
15. Anderson, 50
16. Anderson, 51
17. Anderson, 51
18. Bjelajac, 131
19. Bjelajac, 131
20. Bjelajac, 133
21. Bjelajac, 113
22. Bjelajac, 112
23. Bjelajac, 112
24. Bjelajac, 113

25. Bjelajac, 113

26. Steve 2010

27. (Pittsburgh Public Schools 2013)

28. (Mrawski 2014)

29. (Pittsburgh Public Schools 2013)

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