



## JEAN FRITZ'S AMERICAN HISTORY SERIES by Jean Fritz

### INTRODUCTION

#### Teaching Tips for PaperStar<sup>®</sup> Paperbacks

It's easier than ever to spot the best children's literature for your classroom. Just look for PaperStar<sup>®</sup>, the brightest light in children's paperbacks. Here are some ideas for using these acclaimed books with your students.

### THEMES

#### Cruising the Web

The character-revealing incidents and humorous anecdotes in Jean Fritz's six Revolutionary War biographies depict historical figures who are more true to life than the heroic or villainous stereotypes often found in textbooks. Your students may begin to explore and appreciate the human complexities of these famed personalities through the development of character webs, which visually represent their foibles and quirks as well as their documented strengths. Patrick Henry will emerge as an expert at bird calls and a father of four in addition to being a great orator. King George will be seen as an amateur astronomer and the father of fifteen as well as a ruler. The construction of character webs also may be used to highlight significant similarities and differences among these Revolutionary personalities. Your students may then compare Fritz's character depictions with those found in other writings. For example, you may share Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "Paul Revere's Ride" with your students and have them compare and/or contrast the poet's romanticized view of Revere and his famous ride with that provided by Fritz.

## **Time and Time Again**

And what a time it was! Each of Jean Fritz's humorous biographical narratives is well informed by important facts and small vivid details shedding light on historical personalities as well on the shared context of their Revolutionary Period. Your students may develop time lines to help them organize and perceive important events as they pertained to the lives and beliefs of each of these individuals. Then, all of the individual time lines can be incorporated into a multi-strand representation, which will enable students to synthesize the events chronicled in each of these books and "see" when and where these six men crossed paths, joined hands, or opposed each other. You may have your students work in small groups on the individual chronologies, each contributing one strand to the class's development of the multi-strand time line. It is important to have children agree on a scale so that events may be shown clearly by year or by decade. If you have your students make their time lines on long rolls of paper, entries may be written on cards or Post-it notes, allowing for temporary placement along each line and ease in correction or realignment. Once all information is properly placed, you may have your students embellish selected events with drawings and pictures.

## **ART STUDY**

### **A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words**

Jean Fritz's biographical series is complemented by the artwork of three prominent children's illustrators: Margot Tomes, Trina Schart Hyman, and Tomie dePaola. You may have your students look carefully at the visual representations provided by these artists to determine how they contribute and add to the textual information provided by the author. Do the illustrators use different media and techniques? How does their style of presentation affect the mood and tone of each book? Do the illustrators incorporate details in their illustrations that add to or enhance the information conveyed through the narrative? How would these stories be different if the illustrations were not included?

## GAMES

### Revolutionary Jeopardy

The humdrum experience of learning the many terms associated with our Revolutionary Period can be transformed into an exciting and fun competition. With direction and assistance, your students may prepare answers on small cards addressing specific vocabulary and definitions gleaned from Fritz's narratives. Following the answer-question approach made popular on the television game show Jeopardy, students may be placed on small teams, and individually read answers to members of the opposition, looking for correct responses in the form of questions. For example, "This English governing body voted to impose taxes on the American colonies" would be correctly answered by "What was Parliament?"; or "This book published annually by Benjamin Franklin included weather forecasts, tides, and a collection of wise sayings" would be answered, "What was Poor Richard's Almanack?" Points awarded for correct responses and lost for incorrect responses will bring momentary victory or defeat. But never fear, new opportunities for success await as students exchange their answer cards and find themselves, again and again, in Revolutionary Jeopardy!

## ACTIVITIES

### **All the News That's Fit to Print**

Get out your pencils and pads, it's time to go to press! Your students, separated into staff teams for two colonial newspapers, *Ye Tory Tribune* and *The Revolutionary Times*, may explore the divided loyalties of those who resented being taxed without Parliamentary representation and those who remained loyal to King George III, disapproving of rebellious leaders who agitated for independence. Free to cover events like the Boston Tea Party and the battles of Concord and Lexington, your cub reporters also may choose to write editorials addressing the appropriateness of John Hancock's extravagance or Ben Franklin's perception that King George treated America like an "apprentice." The final edition of each newspaper also will require your students to make decisions as to headlines, article placement and may include ads for Revere ware, false teeth, iron stoves, and other items of the times. In-depth coverage of information reported in these opposing newspapers will provide opportunities for detailed investigative research and may serve as a basis for further debate in which students are led to discriminate between fact and opinion and to identify language that distorts or exaggerates actual events.

### **And the Oscar Goes to ...**

Ready... Action! The characters and events in Fritz's biographies literally can be brought to life by having your students select specific episodes from each of these six narratives for role play in creative dramas. With minimal student-made costuming and an opportunity to practice dialog and plan simple staging, your young thespians may re-enact the discussion in a Connecticut tavern in which John Adams tries to convince his cousin Sam to ride a horse; or the court room scene in which Patrick Henry delivers his famous "Liberty or Death" speech (including the man in the balcony who spit his wad of tobacco into the audience below); or the arguments that take place at the Continental Congress as to how the Declaration of Independence should be worded. Fun and learning await both actor and audience as your students step into the character and times of these prominent Revolutionary players. That's a wrap!

## **The Leather Apron Club**

Blacksmiths, printers, carpenters, hatters, silversmiths, candle and soap makers, coopers — these were some of the Leather Apron men of the Revolutionary Period who provided essential and inventive crafts that made for good business and comfortable living. After listing and discussing the various Leather Apron trades of the time, you may have your students don aprons of their own and learn what it was like to be an apprentice in one or more of these hands-on shops. You may have them dip candles, follow a recipe for mixing and shaping soap bars, simulate early printing techniques using cardboard or Styrofoam, make faux silver ware using modeling clay and aluminum foil. Items from each shop may then be arranged on table displays or in mock museum displays that provide written explanations of the work done. Yes, a few basic art supplies mixed well with a good dose of creativity and energy will not only provide your students with yet another vehicle to experience what they have read but also may entice other readers in school to investigate books and things they might not discover.

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