

Raid at Red Mill by Mary McGahan tells the story of the Mott family who lived in Mamaroneck, New York, at the close of the Revolutionary War. As the story begins, fourteen-year-old Anne learns that a nearby farm has been raided, possibly by the infamous Tory raider, Fade Merritt, and she fears her family's home is also in danger. Many neighbors have lost goods, such as corn, cows and wagons that are so rare after six years at war. So far, the Motts, who are Quakers and take no sides in war, have been spared. As the fear of a raid builds throughout the story, Captain Pete, a family friend who stores his whaleboats on the Mott property is attacked after trading goods in New York City. Anne calls on her friend, distant cousin, and soon to be fiancé, Adam Mott, for advice. At the end of the book the Mott farm is indeed raided by Fade Merritt, but fortunately no one is badly hurt and Anne manages to hide many of the family's precious and valuable belongings in time.

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Before reading ***Raid at Red Mill***, discuss with the class what they already know about the Revolutionary War. After sharing responses, read the title and tell them the story takes place in 1782, six long years after the shot heard round the world. Some questions for discussion might be:

- If this story takes place in 1782, where does it fit in chronologically with other events of the Revolution already studied?
- Look at the illustration on the cover of the book, and discuss the title. What happens at a mill? What is a raid? What predictions do you have about the story after examining the cover?
- Show students the maps on the inside cover and at the beginning of Chapter 1. Why might the Mott property and surrounding land and water be an important location in the war?
- Have any students been to Mamaroneck or other parts of Westchester County? What are their impressions of the area now?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Literature • Social Studies • Art • Writing

1. After reading all or part of the book, discuss historical fiction as a type of literature, a mixture of fact and fiction. Some of the characters in the story actually existed and many of the events really occurred. Even those characters that are created by the author probably shared some of the experiences and feelings of real people. Discuss

how the reader can distinguish between what is fact and what is fiction. Groups of students might try researching events and characters in the story using sources such as the internet, encyclopedias, almanacs, atlases, historical documents, newspapers, etc. Have a mini-lesson about how to use these sources and a class debriefing. What names and events could they read about in other sources and which were most likely created by the author?

2. This story exposes students to what life may have been like in one area of New York during the Revolutionary War. There is so much more to learn about this time in America's history:

- What was happening in the other colonies at the close of the war? Were battles still being fought? When did the last of the British troops finally leave? What were the circumstances surrounding their departure?
- The Motts are a famous family from Mamaroneck. Were there any famous people living in your city or town during the Revolution? What role did they play in the war? What can you learn about their daily lives?
- Choose any aspect of the Revolutionary War to investigate further. Brainstorm a list of possible topics as a class.

3. Ask students to find the passage on page 6 describing Anne's favorite place to sit and think. Why was it special to her? For homework, have students go to their favorite place to think, and describe the place in detail: what can they see, smell, hear from there? what does it look like? etc. Students could draw or paint an illustration to go along with the assignment.

4. Look closely at the cover and illustration on page 21. Reread the passages on pages 19–24 that describe the clothing the characters wear. Have students record items of clothing and any symbolism they hold. On a second sheet of chart paper, have students describe clothing people wear now. Do some articles of clothing or accessories signify certain attitudes or beliefs? Some students may enjoy illustrating and writing a "Then and Now" book about fashions for girls, boys, men and women in colonial times and the present.

5. Captain Pete used whaleboats for his trading missions to New York City. Page 26 has a brief description of the boats. Encourage students to learn more about different types of boats, past and present, their methods of construction, and their functions. Students could share what they learn in group-made books, charts, and/or models.

STUDY GUIDE

Raid at RED MILL

6. On page 42, Anne and Adam talk about how life is more complicated now that they are older. Discuss the examples they refer to. Then ask students to reflect on whether this is true in their own lives. Break into small groups to share and discuss experiences, allowing students the option to pass, and just listen if they choose.
7. For a mini-lesson on how an author builds anticipation of an upcoming event, reread pages 70 and 71, the pages just before Fade Merritt raids the Mott's home. Ask students to find phrases or sentences that make them wonder or worry about what's happening. Encourage students to notice how authors create anticipation in other books, using post-its to mark pages for sharing in small reading groups. Later students can try incorporating these techniques into their own writing.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITY

More about Mills!

Throughout the story there are references to the mill on the Mott's property (pp. 11, 18, 25, 38, 61 [illustration]). Reread the passage on page 25 which briefly describes how the Mott's mill worked. As a class create a "K-W-L" chart, starting by listing what the students already Know about mills, then adding what they Want to know, and later what they Learned. To assist students in their learning, help them find other books or videos about mills at your school or local library. Visit a local dam or mill if possible. Invite a community member who knows about mills/dams/water power to speak to your class. After learning more about how mills operate, break students into groups to draw or build a model. This study may spark an interest in other types of power generation; if so encourage students to learn more about alternative types of power such as solar power, wind power, etc.



by Mary McGahan

