

7. Many of the items we buy at the grocery store today, were hand-made by children and families in colonial times. In Chapter 2 (p. 10), Hannah makes candles from hemp and tallow. Brainstorm a list of other items that colonial children helped to make (i.e. soap, paper, wooden utensils). Send groups of children off to investigate what and how items were made. Have them share their expertise by attempting to make the items themselves. Invite other classes in to observe your work.

### **COOPERATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITY**

Make a Revolutionary Slide Show!

*A Message for General Washington* closes at the end of the Revolutionary War. Chances are your class has been learning about other events in the Colonists' fight for independence, or if not, will now be inspired to investigate more about this time in American History. This book provides a perfect opportunity for your class to review earlier events in the war, organize them chronologically, and share what they've learned with others.

If you have computers available, making a class "slide show" is an excellent way to share information with other students and families at your school. To begin, brainstorm a list of important events in the Revolutionary War. As a class number the events in chronological order (requiring fact checking on exact dates is a good learning activity as well). Pairs of students could then choose an event. Together they would be responsible for illustrating a "slide" on the computer and writing and recording a short (less than 60 seconds on most slide show programs) script about their slide. As a group, check to be sure that each slide has been placed in its proper chronological spot in the slide show. When you've finished, designate one computer for slide-show viewing. That way, when the program is opened, anyone can just "click" on a button to view a colorful slide show packed with information about the Revolution.

If you do not have computers or a slide show program available, get long strips of mural paper and make an illustrated time line of the Revolution. Your class could "perform" the time line by having students describe their events in chronological order.

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# TEACHERS GUIDE

## *A Message for* General Washington

by Vivian Schurfranz



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***A Message for General Washington***, by Vivian Schurfranz, tells the story of how young Hannah Winslow delivers an important message to General Washington. In an adventurous and dangerous journey, Hannah travels as a spy from her hometown of Yorktown to Williamsburg, 12 miles away. In a small pouch around her neck she carries a map which details the position of British troops in Yorktown. This information is critical for the Colonist soldiers to overthrow Cornwallis' army. Hannah has several close encounters with British troops, and an American traitor, before she reaches an encampment of French soldiers who are helping the Americans. A French trooper escorts Hannah on the final leg of her journey to General Washington's headquarters, where she delivers the message to him personally.

Her mission completed, Hannah spends the next several weeks living with her sister in Williamsburg since the roads back to Yorktown have been closed. In the meantime, Hannah helps her sister with the less exciting tasks of the war effort, like mending uniforms, and rolling bandages.

Finally on October 19, 1781, the British surrender and Hannah is able to return to Yorktown for a special ceremony to celebrate the Colonists' victory and the end of the Revolutionary War.

### **PRE-READING ACTIVITY**

Before reading *A Message for General Washington*, 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 during the last few months of the war.

Some questions for discussion might be:

- If this story takes place in 1781, where does it fit in chronologically with other events of the Revolution already studied?
- What do you know about General Washington? Why might someone be delivering a message to him?
- Show the students a map of the Yorktown/Williamsburg area. Where do you think British troops would be stationed in Yorktown? Why would this information be important to the Colonist army stationed in Williamsburg?
- Have any students been to Yorktown or Williamsburg? Visited their historic sections? What are their impressions of these places now?

### **CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS**

#### **Literature • Social Studies • Art • Writing**

**1.** After reading a few chapters 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 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 readers to the generals, troops, and cities involved in the final battle of the Revolution. There is so much more for students to learn about this time in America's history:

- This story took place in Virginia in 1781, five and a half years after the famous battles of Lexington and Concord. What was happening in the rest of the colonies around the same time?
- French troops fought with Americans during this final battle of the Revolution. How, when and why did the French become involved in the war?
- Many generals, including Generals Washington, Lafayette and Rochambeau are mentioned in this story. What other information can you find about these men?
- Choose any aspect of the Revolutionary War to investigate further. Brainstorm a list of possible topics as a class.

**3.** Hannah acts as a spy to deliver an important message for the Americans. Her role requires her to lie to many people. Read short excerpts from essays of famous philosophers who have written about lying (Kant, Montaigne, Sissela Bok). Stage a debate and/or have your students write essays about if and when they think it is acceptable to lie. They might include Hannah Winslow, world leaders and/or themselves as subjects for discussion.

**4.** In Chapter 6 (page 47), Hannah watches as soldiers transform the capitol building into a makeshift hospital. What was medical care like around the time of the Revolution? Where did doctors and nurses receive medical training? You may have some budding "pre-meds" in your class who would be interested in researching medicine in colonial times.

**5.** In Chapter 8 (page 67) Hannah watches as the American soldiers march to Yorktown to fight the British. Waving in the parade is the American flag, "with its thirteen stripes and stars on a blue field." Some students may be interested in discovering more information about our first flag and its evolution to the "stars and stripes" we wave today.

Still other students may like to investigate the different uniforms that Colonist soldiers wore. In this book alone students can hunt for the descriptions of a variety of uniforms: Lizzie's father, who was in the cavalry, wore a blue jacket with white straps, and a brass helmet with a red plume (p. 14). Soldiers from the backwoods of Pennsylvania wore fringed leather hunting shirts and moccasins (p. 85), the Virginia Light Dragoons wore black helmets with horsehair crests (p. 86), and French soldiers wore gold and white uniforms (p. 88). Illustrated displays, such as murals, charts or big books would be wonderful ways for students to share what they've learned.

**6.** In this story, Hannah played an important role in helping the Patriots win the war against the British. What role did real women and children play in the Revolution? Send students off to investigate. They may enjoy writing their own historical fiction about a colonial child's role in the war. Another option is for students to write and perform short skits about children and families during this time period.