

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITING

If your students or you answered each of the following questions in order, the responses should create a pretty close summary of the book itself with many opportunities to interpret the words and pictures in it.

It's probably NOT a good idea to assign them all. The book is enjoyable to read; that may be one of the important reasons you decided to use it. To make students stop to write the answers to all the questions would quickly put an end to whatever pleasure they were getting. The goal is to aid in illumination, not to kill the fun.

Instead, read the book and decide what information is most important for your students to know and which aspects of the narrative you feel need more discussion. Then, find the relevant questions in the sets below. Use them as prompts for discussion or for written assignments.

If you do decide to have your students write, you might copy the questions you intend to use and paste them into the Comprehension template. Adjust the answer spaces as you would when you add or subtract lines from any table in Word. We included the page numbers on which answers could be found and suggest you provide this information to students.

(L) refers to literal questions. (I) refers to questions in which students need to make inferences. (J) refers to topics that might be used for journal entries used as the bases for longer discussions.

Set 1 (Page 2)

Set 2 (Page 3)

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Set 1

Pages 1-11

- Why are the two men on the dock both happy the British troops were there (up to that point) and happy they are leaving? (I) (Page 2)
- Why does the author show some colonists crawling past customs officials? (I) (Page 3)
- Why is England “having fits”? (L) (Page 3)
- What were the three legs of the triangle that made up the “Triangular Trade”? (L) (Page 4)
- Look at Carl in the lower right panel on page. According to the introduction, what is his function in the book? How is Carl helpful? (L) (Page 5)
- What is upsetting the Boston traders? (L) (Page 5)
- Note a fact about each of the following: (L) (Pages 7 and 8)
 - New England Puritanism
 - John Locke
 - Jean Jacques Rousseau
 - Isaac Newton
- What do the ideas these men had have to do with how people are thinking about British rule in the colonies? (I) (Pages 7 and 8)
- J- Students of history often have the impression that important events just pop up out of nowhere. Stan Mack attempts to show the reader that the ideas and language for the opposition to Britain and the revolution was, in part, a consequence of Enlightenment thinking (John Locke wrote the Second Treatise of Government in 1690, almost fifty years before Thomas Jefferson was born!). Ask your students to think of a life-changing event in their own lives that may have seemed sudden at the time. Then ask them to reflect on all the things that lined up before, other events, other thinking by other people, that might have been partial influences or causes of the event. The goal here is to get students to consider that their lives exist in the context of history, personal, family, local, national, etc.
- What are two things James Otis says when he is arguing against the “Writs of Assistance” (search warrants mentioned on page 5)? (L) (Page 9)
- How are the three men thinking of using James Otis’s words? Why? (I) (Page 10)
- From what we see of young King George III, what impression do we get of him as the leader of the British Empire? (I) (Page 11)

Set 2

Pages 12- 20, top

- How do Britain's colonies in America benefit Britain? (I) (Page 13)
- On this page, we meet Stanislaw, a poor peasant. Why does he decide to come to America? How does he get there? (Note: Remember Stanislaw. We will see him again and follow his journey.) (I) (Page 13)
- There are no Lords, Earls, Counts and Countesses, Barons and Baronesses, and other titled nobles in the Atlantic colonies. Who are the "important" people? How do you know? (I) (Pages 15 and 17)
- What are the three new technological developments mentioned on this page? (L) (Page 16)
- What are some of the things that the colonists are complaining or fighting about? (L) (Pages 17 and 18)
- What are some of the things the colonists are not fighting about? Why? (I) (Pages 18 and 19)
- At this time, what is the role of African people and Indians ("indigenous peoples")? (L) (Page 20, top)

Set 3

Page 20-27, bottom

- Why would the city laborers, ordinary working people, care at all about the anger the rich merchants have at England? (I) (Page 20, bottom)
- Prime Minister George Grenville is called a “myopic money cruncher.” What does this mean? (I) (Page 21)
- From what Grenville says at the top of the page, why does he feel he has the moral and legal right to “reform this sloppy system” by taxing the American colonists? (L) (Page 21)
- Why are the merchants unhappy? When the author says, “They start paying attention to James Otis and his ideas,” what does he mean? (Look back on page 9 to refresh your memory.) (I) (Page 23)
- Write three facts about Sam Adams. (L) (Page 24)
- Which group of colonists does Sam Adams listen and talk with? (L) Why? (I) (Page 24 and 25)
- How are Prime Minister Grenville’s new taxes hurting both merchants and their workers? (I) (Page 25)
- The narrator calls James Otis and Sam Adams “co-instigators.” What does that mean? (L) (Page 25)
- The narrator says that Otis and Adams “...use this discontent to launch a political movement.” A political movement is a group of people who band together to try to convince other people to take action about something. Why do Otis and Adams think these unhappy people are likely to join a political movement? To do what? (I) (Page 25)
- What surprises the messenger who brings Otis’ letters to people in the other colonies? (L) (Page 26)
- Why might the “better people” of Boston feel that criticizing Britain or the king (“the crown”) is wrong? (I) (Page 26)
- On this page, Grenville is answering the complaint that Parliament is passing tax laws without American representatives there. What is his answer? (I) (Page 27)
- We said that the purpose of a political movement is to move people to action. How do Otis and Adams use the economic hard times to attract more people into their movement? (I) (Page 27)

- J- False Cause: Otis and Adams are propagandists. They try to attract people to support their cause in a number of ways. Among them is to blame every bad thing in the lives of their countrymen on Great Britain: since the king is a despot, if you have a bad corn crop, it's his fault. In formal logic, tying two things together that aren't necessarily related is called An Argument from False Cause (Extreme example: Every time I remember to take my umbrella, it doesn't rain. So if I take my umbrella to the ball game tonight, no one else will have to—it won't rain.). Ask your students to look and listen for times when others put things together and believe (or tell you) that one caused the other when, in reality, there is not logical relationship between the two events.

Set 4

Page 28-40

- Grenville's felt that a small tax paid by many people might work better than larger taxes paid by the few. How did his idea backfire? (I) (Page 28)
- J- Grenville's Tax Plan: Remember that the money Grenville and Parliament is trying to raise by taxing the colonists is largely to repay the debt Britain has as a result of its war with France. So, don't the Americans have a responsibility to help repay the cost of a war that was waged to protect them? And, is a small tax on a lot if things not a good way to raise that money? So, in your opinion, was Grenville wrong?
- In what way was the Stamp Act a catalyst for the colonies to unite? (I) (Page 29)
- Explain why the colonists might have liked the nickname "Sons of Liberty"? (I) (Page 29)
- Why do the Sons of Liberty hang Andrew Oliver in effigy? In what way is this "street theater"? (I) (Page 30)
- In what ways does the mob protest the Stamp Tax? (L) (pages 30 and 31)
- Do you feel Otis and Adams are sincere when they say about the actions of the mob, "Disgraceful!" and "Shocking!" Explain. (I) (Page 31)
- Why does the Stamp Collector quit his job? (I) (Pages 32 and 33)
- Why are people calling for a "mass boycott of English goods"? What are they hoping that will accomplish? (I) (Page 33)
- What does the narrator mean when he tells us that a "dazzling orator named Patrick Henry attacks the king"? (I) (Page 33)
- Why was attacking the king in this way so startling in those days? How do some of the other legislators react to Henry's attack on the king? (I) (Page 33)
- What does it mean to say that Parliament "repeals the Stamp Tax"? (L) (Page 34)
- Who is John Hancock? Who is John Adams? (L) (Pages 35 and 36)
- Why is it a good thing that John Hancock and John Adams are in the movement? (I) (Pages 35 and 36)
- What are the "Townshend Duties"? (L) How do these laws reinvigorate opposition to England? (I) (Pages 36 and 37)

- Up till now, the Southern Planters have been loyal to the king. Why do you think so? (I) (Page 38)
- Now the Southern Planters are beginning to change sides. Why? (L) (Page 38)
- What happens in 1768 when the British customs agents seize one of John Hancock's ships? (L) Why do the laborers in the mob care so much about the ship of a rich merchant like Hancock? (I) (Page 39)
- What is John Hancock's choice? What does it mean to say, "He's gambling on the insurgents?" (I) (Page 40)
- What do we learn about women's role in politics at that time? (L) (Page 40)

Set 5

Page 41-46, top

- How does Lord North intend to put an end to the Sons of Liberty and their movement? (L) (Page 41)
- What might happen to a merchant who continued to deal in British goods by defying the boycott? (I) (Page 41)
- How does the episode that later became known as The Boston Massacre occur? (L) (Page 42)
- If the events as reported are true, explain why you do or do not consider the episode a “massacre.” (I) (Page 42)
- According to the last panel on the page, why did John Adams, a patriot, agree to defend the soldiers who had fired on the crowd during the “Boston Massacre”? (I) (Page 43)
- What is the outcome of the trial? (L) (Page 45)
- When Lord North repeals the Townshend Acts, he keeps one tax. Which one? (L) Why do you think he kept a tax on that product? (I) (Page 45)
- What right to the colonies feel they have that England “refuses to understand”? (L) (Page 45)
- What messages do Massachusetts and Virginia want to get out to the people? (L) (Page 46)

Set 6

Page 46, 60, bottom

- J- For your information, the price of East India tea was so low, that even if the colonists had bought the tea and paid the tax, the total cost would have been less than if they had bought other tax-free tea from Europe. Why didn't they want the less expensive tea? (It was just as good or better than other teas.) (Page 46)
- J- Would you have participated in the Boston Tea Party? Why or why not? (Page 49)
- According to the narrator, what is England's latest blunder? (L) (Page 46)
- What does the crowd want? What is the governor's answer? (L) (Page 47)
- How are the 150 dressed? (L) Why? (I) (Page 47)
- What do they do? (L) Why? (I) Why do you think this episode became known as the Boston Tea Party? (Page 48)
- The narrator tells us about both radicals and conservatives. What did the radical colonists do? How did the conservative colonists feel about the boycotts against Britain? (L) (Page 49)
- Why does Stan Mack show us a blacksmith in the last panel? (I) (Page 50)
- What is the meeting for? Who attends? (L) (Page 51)
- What is the word that is upsetting some of the colonial leaders? (L) Why? (I) (Page 51)
- What techniques of persuasion are the radicals using? (L) (Page 52)
- We agreements are made at this First Continental Congress? (L) (Page 53)
- What activity is going on in the colonies during the next year? (L) Why? (I) (Page 53)
- J- It's at this point in our history that what later comes to be known as "the right to bear arms" begins. For what purpose are the colonists forming militias? Should the citizens of a country have the right to form private armies for this purpose? Are there other reasons civilians should have the right to be armed? Explain your point of view.
- How does Britain respond to the boycott? (L) What is General Gage's plan? (L) (Page 54)
- How do the Patriots respond to the movement of Gage's troops? (L) (Page 55)

- What do we learn about Paul Revere? (L) (Page 55)
- Summarize the events of the next day or so? (L) (Page 54 through 59)
- Who are the “minute men”? Why are they so called, according to Stan Mack? (L) Why are they really called “minute men” (See Vocabulary)? (L) (Page 56)
- What is the outcome at Lexington? (L) This event has become known as the Battle of Lexington. Explain why you do or don’t consider this an appropriate name. (I) (Page 57)
- Explain how the tide of the battle turns. (L) (Page 59)
- The British retreat to Boston along the same road on which they came. The farmers hide behind rocks and trees on either side of the road and open fire as they pass. Why are the British yelling “Show yourselves!” and “Fight by the rules!” (I) (Page 60)
- What effect does this first set of battles (Lexington and Concord) have on the people who live in the countryside? On King George? (L) (Page 61)

Set 7

Page 64-76, top

- On p. 64, which reason Stan Mack gives for the selection of George Washington as the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army is most likely just for the sake of humor? (I) (Page 64)
- Why do you think it was important to select a general from the South? (Hint: Most of the activity of the rebellion up to that point had been in Boston.) (I) (Page 64)
- We learn that the colonists “decide to fortify Bunker Hill, which guards the Charles River. Bunker Hill is a hill. The Charles River is a river. What does it mean to say that a hill guards a river? And, what might it guard the river from? (I) (Page 65)
- What pleases British General Howe? (L) (Page 65)
- What “class issue” does Carl bring to our attention? (L) (Page 66)
- On page 67, the narration says “The traditional European soldier is about to meet Daniel Boone,” what is meant by that? (For your information, Daniel Boone served in the Revolutionary War, but in Kentucky, not Massachusetts. He wasn’t anywhere near Breed’s Hill.) (I) (Page 67)
- What is the outcome of the battle on Breed’s Hill? (L) What does it mean to say that this was an “awesome psychological victory? (I) (Page 68)
- Who are the people Washington finds when he assumes control of the army? What problems do they seem to present to him? (L) (Pages 68 and 69)
- Which two famous Americans compete with each other to steal British cannons from Fort Ticonderoga in upstate New York? (Pages 70 and 71)
- What is the goal of sending Montgomery and Arnold to Canada? What happens to them on the outskirts of Quebec City? (L) (Pages 71 to 73)
- What is Henry Knox’s success? (L) (Page 74)
- Remember that a “Tory” is a loyalist. And yet a Tory, General Howe, decides to retreat from Boston and go to New York, where there are a lot of Tories, to “finish them off”? Why? (I) (Page 74)
- Many students of American history have the impression that by 1775, all Americans wanted independence. Explain the conflicts among the Americans. (L) (Page 75 and 76)
- J On page 76, we learn that many colonists felt hereditary succession, the idea that a king or queen got to be monarch by being the son or daughter of the former king or queen, was good and right, although that idea might seem silly or even obnoxious to many Americans.

- 1. Can you imagine why a British subject might have deeply embraced the belief that hereditary succession was good and right?
- 2. Can you think of a tradition or practice in which you believe deeply might seem silly or wrong to another person?

Set 8

Page 76, bottom- 83

- What three subjects does Tom Paine write about? (Page 77)
- What was “Common Sense”? What was the effect of “Common Sense” on its readers? (L) (Pages 77 to 79)
- What does the narrator mean when he says “Radicalism becomes fashionable”? (I) (Page 78)
- How do the “future founding fathers” criticize “Common Sense”? (L) (Page 79)
- What do men like John Adams fear might happen if too many people believe in the sentiments expressed in Tom Paine’s pamphlet? (I) (Page 79)
- According to Carl, what is the new definition of the word “revolution”? (Page 79)
- What does delegate Richard Henry Lee propose at the meeting of representatives (called the Second Continental Congress)? (L) (Page 80)
- What is the response to Lee’s proposal? (L) (Page 80)
- One of the colonial delegates states the reason a declaration should be actually composed. What is it? (L) (Page 80)
- What do we learn about Thomas Jefferson? (L) What seems to be contradictory about him? (L) (Page 81)
- We learn from one of the delegates that there is a part of the draft of the Declaration that can’t be blamed on the British. What is it? (L) (Page 82)
- On what document do the delegates vote on July 4, 1776? (L) Why was that cause both for celebration and for dread? (I) (Pages 82 and 83)
- What does Carl mean? (I) (Page 83)
- J- Does it make sense to you that the Americans would let other European countries know that they would appreciate help (in the form of money, weapons or soldiers) in their coming fight against England? Why or why not?

Set 9

Page 84-100

- While the woman looks at the list of people who are exempted from being drafted into the army, the man has an eye on a line from the Declaration of Independence. What point is Stan Mack making by putting these two ideas in the same place? (I) (Page 84)
- From where are the mercenaries sent by England? For what purpose? (I) (Page 85)
- Who wins the battle on Long Island (called both “The Battle of Long Island” and “The Battle of Brooklyn”, since Brooklyn is the part of Long Island on which the battle was fought)? (L) (Page 85)
- J- Over the course of the book so far, there have been several places in which the plight of the white Americans has been compared to that of black Americans. Review them and write a paragraph in which you describe the irony of those two situations. (Review pages 15, 19, 38, and 86)
- To where do the Continental soldiers escape? (L) (Page 86)
- How do the soldiers in the rebel army respond to the bombardment and attack of the British on Manhattan? What is Washington’s response to that? (Page 88)
- What are the opinions of Generals Washington and Lee about the individualistic attitude of the civilians (that is, non-professional soldiers) in the Continental army? (L) (Page 89)
- What happens to the army and the independence movement in the winter of 1776? (L) (Page 90)
- What fraction of the population was for the war? Against it? Neutral? (L) (Page 90)
- What does Tom Paine mean when he writes “These are the times that try men’s souls.” (I) (Page 90)
- Why does the British General Cornwallis leave the front and return to New York just when things look the most desperate for the rebels? (I) (Page 91)
- Why does Washington (and his army) cross the Delaware into New Jersey? (L) Does he accomplish his goal? (I) (Page 92 and 93)
- Why might some Indians join the war on the side of the British? (L) (Page 94)
- Why did the British general, Burgoyne, bury the dead soldiers in such a way that the animals gnawed at their arms and legs? (L) (Page 95)
- Why are Burgoyne’s eyes popping out? What does he fear? (I) (Page 96)

- J- Ben Franklin is listed, among other things, as a “constant philanderer,” meaning that he often had affairs with other women in spite of the fact that he was married. Given what we already know about Franklin’s accomplishments, how does this information affect your opinion of him?
- What battle strategy proves successful for the rebel soldiers? (L) (Page 98)
- Why does France decide to help the rebels? (L) (Page 99)
- What do the Articles of Confederation do for the new country in 1777? (L) (Page 100)

Set 10

Page 101-117

- Why do you think the narrator shows us both the soldiers at Valley Forge as well as General Howe? (I) (Page 101)
- What are the problems endured by the rebel soldiers at Valley Forge in the winter of 1777? (L) (Pages 101-102)
- Meanwhile, in other places, how are things improving? (L) (Page 103)
- How are some people taking advantage of their new economic freedom? (I) (Page 104)
- How much is Stanislaw asking for a pair of shoes? What is Stan Mack's point? (I) (Page 105)
- What is the German officer Von Steuben's effect on the rebel army? (L) (Pages 105-106)
- Why does King Louis XVI of France, later a victim of revolution in his own country, sign an alliance agreement with the new little country (the US)? (L) (Page 106)
- What motivates enslaved Africans to fight on the side of the British? On the side of the rebels? (L) (Page 107-110)
- J- There have been instances all through American history when African American soldiers formed their own regiments because of prejudice. Find out about the black participation in other armed conflicts (the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, World War I and World War II). Why do you think black soldiers, in almost every war, fought for a country that did not afford them equal rights, and segregated them, even in battle?
- What is it that the man is telling his listeners in the bottom panel? Why is he telling that story about American Indians? (I) (Page 111)
- Why do you think Carl tells us about the barbaric practice of making boots out of human skin? (I) (Page 111)
- How does the narrator describe the Iroquois Confederacy? (L) What is the point in providing that detailed a description of this culture? (I) (Page 112)
- What is Washington's "scorched earth policy"? What do you think Washington was trying to accomplish? (L) In what way does this campaign backfire? (I) (Page 113)
- What effect does the Articles of Confederation have on Indians? (L) (Page 114)

- So there were contradictions among the goals of the Patriots and those of African Americans and Indians. What were the contradictions to which “women are waking up in their own lives”? (I) (Page 114)
- How did some women support the war for independence? (L) (Page 115)
- Why are the common people and the soldiers suffering economically during the war? (L) (Pages 116 and 117)
- Businessmen want to charge whatever they want for their merchandise. Customers want the government to set prices. Explain the logic of this. (I) (Page 117)

Set 11

Page 118-131

- Why is Benedict Arnold so angry? (L) (Page 118)
- How does a gang of bandits uncover a treasonous plot involving Arnold? (L) (Page 119)
- What had Benedict Arnold been planning to do? (L) (Page 119)
- J- In the US today, treason and espionage are among the relatively few crimes considered capital offenses, that is, you may be executed if you are convicted of those crimes (although that has not happened for a long time). Do you feel that what Benedict Arnold did should have been punishable by execution? Imprisonment for life? Something else? Should the US have gone after him the way, more recently, the US pursued Osama Bin Laden? Explain.
- What happens to the Continental Army at Charles Town, South Carolina and then under the leadership of General Gates? (L) (Pages 120 and 121)
- Why do the local fighters, Nathaniel Greene and the “Swamp Fox” decide to split up their forces and use “guerilla” tactics against the British in the South? What is the outcome? (L) (Pages 122 to 124)
- What (possibly surprising) information do we learn about Thomas Jefferson? (L) (Pages 124 and 125)
- J- Jefferson was a great man of equally great contradictions, many of which are pointed out by Stan Mack on these pages. Jefferson’s racism is couched in what he probably believed was science. He catalogs the differences he feels separate the races, to which Stan Mack refers in “Query #14” of his Notes on the State of Virginia. In the same document, he criticizes Americans for the institution of slavery, and, as Stan Mack points out, he dies a slaveholder. It might be interesting to discuss or have your students write about one or both of these questions:
 - 1. Is there any way that Jefferson could NOT have considered himself a hypocrite?
 - 2. If a person who has done things that are great and beneficial also does things that are despicable, should he/she still be considered great in history?
- Why does Washington decide to go to the South? (L) (Page 126 and 127)
- How were the French allies involved at Yorktown, Virginia? What happens there? (L) (Pages 127 to 129)
- What becomes official in 1783? How? (L) (Page 130)

Set 12

Page 134-147

- What are the four “money problems” ? (L) (See the checks on pages 135 and 136.)
- What is the consequence of states printing more of their own money to ease economic problems? (L) (Pages 136 and 137)
- Why are tensions rising between laborers and professionals like bankers, lawyers and doctors? (I) (Pages 137 and 138)
- Why do you think Alexander Hamilton calls the common people “the Beast”? (I) (Page 139)
- Why are the farmers getting progressively more and more angry? (L) (Pages 140 to 144)
- How is Shay’s Rebellion put down? (L) (Page 145)
- Explain Thomas Jefferson’s comparison of Shay’s Rebellion to “manure.” (I) (Page 146)
- What are some of the other important men of the day thinking at this time? (L) (Page 146)
- How does that rebellion lead to a Constitutional Convention? What is a constitutional convention? (I) (Page 147)
- J- This is a good time for a discussion of federalism vs. states’ rights. Americans are so used to states being parts of a nation that it might be hard for them to imagine that at one time, many of the founders favored a very loose confederation of different countries (states), and that those beliefs were carried on through the Civil War period, and, by some, right up to today. It might clarify things for your students to compare Europe today to the early years of our republic to consider what countries/states get out of banding together, and what price they pay.
- What do we learn about Alexander Hamilton and James Madison? (L) (Page 147)

Set 13

Page 148-166

- What are the three different goals of the representatives that come to the convention? (L) (Page. 148)
- What were the different ideas about:
 - a. how representatives should be chosen?
 - b. what form the government should have?
 - c. slavery, and how much slaves should be considered part of the population?
- (L) (Pages 150 and 151)
- How long is the new Constitution? (L) (Page 152)
- One of the complaints about the new Constitution is that there is no list, or bill, of rights that citizens will have. Alexander Hamilton's response is, "We don't need to be reminded that the sun shines." What does he mean? (I) (Page 153)
- Who got to vote? (L) (page 154)
- What powers did the Constitution give to the central government? (L) (Page 155)
- Who were the "Anti-federalists"? (L) (Page 156)
- Why does James Madison feel that diversity of opinion is a good thing? (L) (Page 156 and 157)
- The narrator describes the new country as "a strong republican government with an aggressive market economy." What does this mean? (I) (Page 161)
- The Constitution is amended (added to) by the First Congress to add the Bill of Rights the founders thought, at first, was unnecessary. What are some of the rights it guarantees citizens? (L) (Page 163)
- Carl tells us, "It's also true that people with better lawyers get more out of the system." Do you think he is praising or criticizing the system when he says this? Explain. (I) (Page 164)
- What issues are not settled in the Constitution? (L) (Page 165)
- According to the narrator, how does the Constitution help citizens even if it does not address all the issues? (I) (Page 166)

- J- The book ends with Stanislaw, Stan Mack's Revolutionary War alter ego, running for political office. His journey through this historical period may be considered one of the pursuit and fulfillment of the American Dream. Students can tell his story in one-sentence episodes by checking the following pages: 13-14, 16, 18, 27, 32-33, 47, 61, 84, 91, 101-105, 117, 136, 157-58, 166.
- This might be a good opportunity to talk about what the term American Dream means. Is it the same for everyone? How has it changed in the last hundred or so years?