

## “GIVE ME LIBERTY”

### SAMPLE LESSON PLAN RECOMMENDED FOR TEACHERS GRADES 7- 9

#### *Cross-curriculum opportunity for Teachers of Language Art/English and Social Studies*

**(Language Arts/English)** Using “Give Me Liberty” as a core text and to cross the curriculum to social studies instruction

**(Social studies)** Using “Give Me Liberty” to create awareness of the life of mid-18<sup>th</sup> century Americans and the early stages of the American Revolution

**For students in grades 7 though 9** in English/Language Arts, use as a core text for a unit on “historical fiction” or “coming of age” narratives. For students in Social Studies, partner with English/Language Arts instruction and pair with textbook and multi-media representations of Colonial life and the early phases of the Revolutionary conflict.

**Rationale for using “Give Me Liberty” as a core text.** This is a coming-of-age historical fiction set in Virginia at the opening of the Revolutionary War; accordingly, the novel’s meticulously researched content will support the students’ appreciation of historic events in and around Williamsburg, Virginia. (Williamsburg is a well-known focal point for study of Colonial America; the novel’s various reference points include a series of famous persons, a pivotal battle near Williamsburg and Norfolk, public and private buildings, and roads and gathering places there.)

*The novel presents a rich opportunity for cross-curriculum instruction.* The post-reading activity suggested here – using the novel as a “field guide” for a trip to Williamsburg -- is only one way for teachers of English/Language Arts and teachers of Social Studies to align their curricula. (See “Suggestions for Additional Activities” at the end of this lesson summary.)

***IMPORTANT NOTE: The “lesson” below is better described as an expanded activity undertaken during an excursion to Colonial Williamsburg. Extended preparation is suggested – potentially as much as a whole unit of content study, ending with the “advance preparation” described below.***

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#### **Objective/SWBAT (Literature):**

*(See objectives for Social Studies)* Students will expand their awareness of how literature – in this case a thoroughly-researched historical fiction – can help the reader to understand the “coming-of-age” narrative, including specific “rites of passage.” Students will appreciate how an authentic historical fiction allows the reader to engage the imagination while simultaneously enhancing understanding of actual historical events. *(See “specific support for social studies below for ways in which the novel supports the value of oral and written language.)*

### **Objective/SWBAT (Social Studies):**

*(See objectives for Literature)* Students will expand their understanding not only of day-to-day Colonial life but also the nature of social, moral, and political change that gave birth to the American Revolution.

Using the novel as a guide, students will be able to identify a population of people, places, and influences of the Colonial world. They will also see how the “facts” of history can be re-interpreted by later generations, including -- in this case -- the author of a work of fiction.

**Specific support for use of the novel in the curriculum.** When providing instruction on the Revolutionary War, teachers may emphasize facts regarding the Boston “Tea Party” and Lexington and Concord. *Give Me Liberty* focuses on the other hotbed of colonial dissent -- Williamsburg -- the place where leaders of the Revolution penned the words that justified and incited the “shot heard round the world.” *(Cross-curriculum tie: Using “Give Me Liberty in the Language/English classroom helps students to appreciate the “power of words”; a tie to Paine’s “Common Sense” is suggested.)*

Today it is hard for students to recognize what a radical notion it was that each human being -- no matter how poor or “lowborn” -- had the innate right and ability to govern himself. It was a hope, a leap of faith in ordinary people that would throw out kings and turn the world upside down. Without the words of Thomas Jefferson or Patrick Henry, the courageous risks taken by the Sons of Liberty in the Boston Tea Party might have been interpreted as mere vandalism by an unruly rabble.

Beginning with Williamsburg’s public vigil against the Crown’s closing of Boston’s port, the novel details how the words and philosophies of leaders like Patrick Henry first frightened, then prodded, and finally inspired their colleagues in the House of Burgesses to join against the Crown. Answering his call, frontier patriots came to the capitol to join the regiments preparing to fight. On their hunting shirts, they embroidered Henry’s galvanizing words: “Liberty or Death.”

The novel’s plot features events such as Lord Dunmore ordering a raid and booby-trapping the Gunpowder Magazine. It explores the disturbing irony that slaves who ran away joined the British forces because the Redcoats offered them freedom if they fought. (At that time, the rebelling Americans did not.)

As educators may know, these circumstances culminated with the Battle of Great Bridge in December 1775, a skirmish some historians equate in importance with Lexington and Concord. There, just south of Norfolk, the patriots managed to defeat British grenadiers, keeping them from bottling up the Chesapeake Bay. Had the British forces succeeded in this effort, they could have cut the colonies in half, potentially ending the Revolution at its inception.

***It is at this point that Give Me Liberty reaches a climax:*** two friends -- a young fifer with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Virginia Regiment and a runaway slave who has chosen to fight with the British -- have to face off in combat. The situation is portrayed accurately and sympathetically in the novel without commentary; accordingly, students can consider the paradox of colonialists fighting for their own liberty while denying it to others, and the manipulation by the British of an enslaved population desperate for freedom.

### **Background knowledge for educators:**

Visiting Colonial Williamsburg, whether in person or through virtual experiences on the internet, provides a unique medium for study of the people, thought, and struggle of the time.

As a part of the preparation for this lesson, educators are encouraged to consult the “History and Education” pages within the website for the Foundation: <http://www.history.org/>

## Prior Learning

Students in Language Arts/English have completed (or about to complete) the historical novel, "Give Me Liberty" by L.M. Elliott.

Students in Social Studies have already read (or are reading) the grade level and curriculum texts associated with colonial America and the early phases of the Revolution.

## Materials

1. A copy of Give Me Liberty for each student (or enough copies for students to work in pairs during the activity).
2. Access to print and electronic sources available in the school's library (media center); access to a computer with internet access at home. This will provide valuable preparation for students embarking on a "tour" of Williamsburg.

## Advance Preparation:

1. Teachers are advised to use a "learning inventory" or similar tool to assess the students' recent learning of the institutions, locales, leadership, events, customs, and daily realities of colonial times, particularly at Williamsburg. (The "inventory" can be expanded outside of curriculum as much as needed to provide a more specific sense of Williamsburg as a center of Revolutionary thought and actions.)

The following may be relevant and can be included as preferred by the teacher. *All topics are referred to in "Give Me Liberty."*

The town of Williamsburg (also, Jamestown and Yorktown)  
The Rappahannock, James, and York rivers, the Chesapeake Bay  
Plantations and plantation life in colonial times  
The institution of slavery prior to the Revolution  
The life of African-Americans  
Original American populations (Shawnee)  
Indentured servitude  
Literature (*Gulliver's Travels*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and more)  
Writers John Locke, Alexander Pope, and Thomas Paine  
King George and Parliament  
Governance in Colonial Williamsburg  
Lord Dunmore, the royal governor of Virginia  
The House of Burgesses  
The Continental Congress  
The Boston "Tea Party"; the Stamp Act; resistance and sedition  
Policies of non-importation, non-consumption, non-exportation  
The Quartering Act  
George Washington, prior to the Revolution  
Thomas Jefferson, prior to the Revolution  
Patrick Henry  
George Wythe  
Peyton Randolph  
James Monroe (in his youth, as a student at William and Mary)  
John Marshall (as a young officer with the Culpeper Minutemen)  
The Battle of Great Bridge  
The Virginia Capitol, the Gunpowder Magazine  
Fifers and drummers in the Continental armies

2. Before the “tour” begins, the teacher should work in conjunction with librarian/media specialists to identify sources of text, illustration, examples, etc. for a selection of areas that may be of interest to the students. The following are suggestions for consideration:
  - a. Reading and language (books and newspapers; polite conversation and “slang”)
  - b. Crafts and handiwork of the colonial town; carriage-making
  - c. Employers and employment; wages; leisure time
  - d. Stores, their wares; shopping habits
  - e. Household management; roles of father, mother, children, servants
  - f. Men’s and ladies’ dress, for both household and formal situations
  - g. Horses, including training, racing, breeds, stable management, and saddle-making
  - h. Regional foods and cooking of the time; popular beverages; taverns
  - i. Music, including flute, “fife and drum” and popular songs of the time.
  - j. Games played at the time, both indoors and outdoors.
  - k. Armaments, from artillery to muskets, pistols, and swords
  - l. Design and construction of homes, public buildings
  - m. Medicine and medical treatment of the times
  - n. Teachers, reading/writing (“ciphering”); books and materials
  
3. **Recommended activity.** Prior to the beginning of the “tour,” the teacher and media specialist could set up individual “topic tables” for some of the areas chosen from the above lists. (Space in the school library is recommended.) In a lesson of its own, students would “visit” tables to complete prepared learning inventories. Pairs or small groups of students could form in “expert teams” to present findings to each other.

**The outline for the Post-reading Activity is as follows:**

*A culminating post-reading activity*

**“GIVE ME HISTORY”: A TOUR OF FACT AND FICTION  
IN COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG**

1. **The objective of the “Give Me History” tour is to visit and explore the actual setting of the novel**, illustrating the claim that well-researched historical fiction truly does involve facts from history. (For teachers of social studies classes, this is an excellent opportunity to supplement their students’ knowledge of ideological change, military actions, important documents and texts, and other curriculum content. Students will see, hear, and touch history by visiting the restored structures and enjoying the impersonations of famous figures offered at this well-interpreted site.)
  
2. **Travel time and proximity.** All of the sites related to the novel can be found in Colonial Williamsburg and immediately adjacent locations (such as Yorktown and Jamestown). Colonial Williamsburg is less than three hours southeast of Washington, D.C. by car or bus. Teachers located in the central parts of Virginia, including Richmond and Charlottesville, can reach the site in approximately the same time; the same is true for teachers from eastern North Carolina. Those from Maryland, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia should allow four to five hours.

## Preparation for teachers

Educators planning a visit to Williamsburg are advised to first consult the Williamsburg Foundation website. The site provides a comprehensive overview of Colonial Williamsburg and provides support to teachers visiting with their students.

Visit the site:

<http://www.history.org/>

The website offers information in the following general areas:

On-site museums (including a guide to multiple facilities)  
History and Education (featuring “Life in the 18<sup>th</sup> century”)  
Multi-media presentations (slideshows, audio, video, and blogs)  
Research (providing references to original publications and documents)

The site provides practical guidance for teachers planning a trip with students, including program packages and costs.

<http://www.history.org/history/teaching/groupTours/>

The site also provides on-line interactive tools, such as the “Tour of the Town.” This device is highly recommended for teachers planning this activity, in conjunction with other displays and text explaining the configuration of the entire site.

<http://www.history.org/visit/tourthetown/>

## Preparation for students

Students should use print and electronic resources available at the school in conjunction with the Williamsburg website to create a comprehensive map of the town. Students can work individually or in pairs. (Note: It is important for students to create a map themselves and not simply print one from a website or photocopy from a book) These hand-drawn version maps are needed for the “tour,” a photocopy should be supplied to the teacher in case the original is lost. Important: The back of the map should be left blank; this will be important during the tour itself.

## The methodology for the activity

***The activity as designed should last for approximately four to six hours, depending on the teacher’s preference.***

**Part 1.** (Allow one hour or more) The students, in the pairs formed earlier, will need to have their town of Williamsburg map in hand. The teacher should check before the bus leaving on the trip, and, as a safety measure, create a notebook with copies of all student maps.

***Locate a starting point in Colonial Williamsburg – to create a basic understanding of the town and its history.*** A good starting point is the end of Duke of Gloucester Street, in front of the Capitol building, facing west in to Colonial Williamsburg. Starting at the Capitol building offers a choice starting point for live interpretation by costumed Colonial Williamsburg guides, involving a tour of the building. This experience creates set for the next step (see phase 2, below).

*Additional preparation: The teacher is advised to coordinate with the education support services at Colonial Williamsburg to schedule an interpreter to be on hand. This would provide a valuable orientation for entire site.*

*Additional preparation: The teacher can supply “blank” maps indicating road names only. Some of the maps created by students may not be sufficiently detailed.*

**Part 2. When the initial orientation phase is over, take students to a central location within Colonial Williamsburg;** recommended is the open square behind the Courthouse (consult your own map, or download from the Colonial Williamsburg website). This will be the home base for exploration and a gathering point for students to congregate at regular intervals. Make sure that each student can identify the square on their maps for the sake of their own orientation

[Provide rest break]

**Part 3. Tell the students that they will refer to their maps with a specific focus in mind – to locate sites described in “Give Me Liberty.”** (Option for extension: In addition, students could learn as much about famous colonial figures mentioned in the book, and record what they learn to share with others later. This is one way to encourage interaction with costumed guides, who often have anecdotes to tell. This can be particularly effective on a day when famous colonial figures including Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Peyton Randolph, Lord Dunmore and others are on location.)

Students should be provided with a list of objectives taken from the novel. Some of the sites included could include:

The carriage maker’s shop (Edan Maguire) ad the home of Elkanah Deane  
Publication office for The “Rind-Pinkey” *Virginia Gazette*  
A shop selling or repairing musical instruments  
The house of George Whythe  
Bruton Parish  
Governor’s Palace  
Duke of Gloucester Street  
The town prison (“jaol”)  
The Raleigh Tavern  
The Gunpowder Magazine  
The Palace Green  
Prince George’s Street  
The College of William and Mary (the Wren Building)

Students will find that many of the locations are on their maps already.

**Part 4.** Let the pairs go out to complete the assignment. Students who are confident enough to work independently should start right away; students with less confidence could be told to achieve one objective, and then check in with you at “home base” before going out seeking the next objective. For students who need additional support, ask teachers or volunteers on the trip to accompany these pairs. (To provide adequate support for this part of the activity, one adult per pair will be needed; anticipate taking as many as four to five volunteer adults on the tour.)

*Students should be reminded that people in colonial costumes are there to help. Encourage them to ask these individuals for information, particularly those that they see in public areas or on the streets.*

**Part 5.** Students should gather at the “home base” within an hour. (Additional preparation: Each student should carry a watch or cell phone to check time. Form a circle and ask students to share anything of interest that they discovered in the “tour” so far that may entertain or inform the class.

[Provide rest break/lunch]

**Part 6. The teacher will ask students to continue to work in the original mapping pairs to investigate two topics from list (2) in the lesson’s original “advance preparation” section above.** The teacher will explain that the objective for each student pair is to seek out information on topics which can be recorded in note form on the back of the map. Assign the topics or allow the students to select themselves.

Provide an example. Say:

“If you have been assigned “stores” and “music,” you would have to visit stores in the town and describe them on the back of the map. You can visit stores right here on (example) street. Next, ask the storeowners or interpreters you see dressed in colonial for help on where you can find out about musical instruments. Don’t be afraid to ask people in costume for help – they are there to answer any questions you have and to give directions.”

Check for understanding – show an example of the finished product which you have prepared in advance.

4. (The choices are repeated here):
  - a. Reading and language (books and newspapers; polite conversation and “slang”)
  - b. Crafts and handiwork of the colonial town; carriage-making
  - c. Employers and employment; wages; leisure time
  - d. Stores, their wares; shopping habits
  - e. Household management; roles of father, mother, children, servants
  - f. Men’s and ladies’ dress, for both household and formal situations
  - g. Horses, including training, racing, breeds, stable management, and saddle-making
  - h. Regional foods and cooking of the time; popular beverages; taverns
  - i. Music, including flute, “fife and drum” and popular songs of the time.
  - j. Games played at the time, both indoors and outdoors.
  - k. Armaments, from artillery to muskets, pistols, and swords
  - l. Design and construction of homes, public buildings
  - m. Medicine and medical treatment of the times
  - n. Teachers, reading/writing (“ciphering”); books and materials

### **Concluding phase:**

*There are many options at this point and the teacher is encouraged to be creative.*

1. Recommended: A final “share time” involving students working in small groups of two pairs each; small groups can be formed over until all students have shared their findings or have received information from other pairs. The objective is to complete a record of all findings.
2. Provide “free time” to explore Colonial Williamsburg on “day two,” if that has been planned. The learning emphasis, if needed to provide structure, could be the requirement that each student find three costumed personages to “interview” on their own life and experiences.
3. Creation of a master map in the classroom for bulletin board display involving all students or as assigned to a small group looking for “extra credit.”

## **“GIVE ME LIBERTY”**

### **Additional Lesson Activities and Out-of-Class Assignments**

**Language Arts and English.** *Use these activities as part of a unit addressing curriculum objectives, including: “elements of the novel” (development of setting, character, conflict, theme, tone, etc.), “rites of passage,” “coming of age,” and “the archetypal hero.” Employ these activities to promote critical reading skills; to promote writing and oral language skills; and the use of context clues to decode new vocabulary.*

**Use a graphic organizer** to help students identify changes in setting (time and place), characters (physical description and internal conflict), conflicts (problems to be solved by protagonist and other characters), and themes (“lessons learned” by protagonist and other characters). Use individual desk work, pair work, group share among small groups, and independent work outside of class to complete the organizer chapter by chapter.

**Write a reader-response log** in which the student assumes the role of the protagonist or any main character and uses personal responses to describes events in the form of a diary, including dates, locations, characters, key events, both factual and fictional.

**Create a reader-response scrapbook.** Similar to “reader response log,” this variation would include illustrations, old photographs, maps, etc. .

**Design and produce a wall display** of a map depicting locations described in the novel, including a key which describes the most significant events, both historical and fictional. (Note: See “extra credit” project suggested above in “Concluding phase.”)

**Perform “storybook theater” presentations** in which small groups are responsible for presenting the complete content of passages or whole chapters. Use independent work and class discussion to identify key “episodes” (involving major conflicts, including responses by the protagonist and other characters which represent “rites of passage” in the context of “coming of age”). Within groups, students self-select roles including a director, narrator, characters, and special effects (for sounds or lighting). Students stage presentations in which all words in the text are read aloud and actions are dramatized.

**Write a new scene for the novel** in the style of the author. Select plot elements that are referred to but not described in detail by the author in the narrative, or ask students to imagine entirely new scenes.