



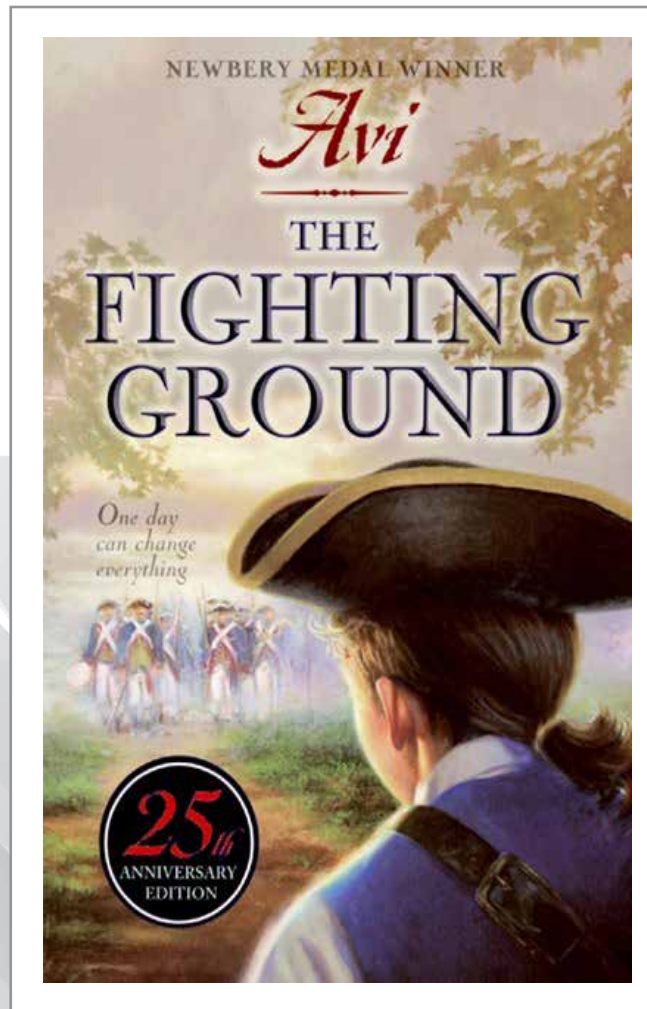
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

The Fighting Ground

Avi



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

The Fighting Ground

Avi

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Detecting fallacies in reasoning

Comprehension

Predicting, comparison/contrast, inference, cause-and-effect

Vocabulary

Word mapping, semantic analysis, synonyms, classifying

Writing

Description, instructions, response log, creative

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, oral reading and pantomime

Literary Elements

Historical fiction genre, point-of-view, personification, characterization, setting, theme, story elements

Summary:

The Fighting Ground is an award-winning piece of historical fiction which details its young protagonist's activities during two days—April 3rd and 4th, 1778—of the American Revolution. There are no chapter headings; instead, the time is noted every few pages—a device which contributes to the sense of immediacy, and conveys the impression that war is not a matter of history printed on a page, but of personal experience.

When the story opens, 13-year-old Jonathan is working with his father on the fields of their farm in New Jersey. Jonathan is eager to serve as a soldier on the “fighting ground” in the war against the British, like his older brother, now in General Washington’s regiment—but his father, recently wounded in battle, keeps putting him off. When a bell suddenly sounds, calling men to arms, Jonathan’s father sends him back to the house to see if there is any news. Jonathan disobeys his father’s instructions not to go beyond the house and runs to the town tavern, where a gruff stranger—the “Corporal”—is organizing an army. After learning that Jonathan can shoot, the Corporal orders him to get a musket from the tavern, and the group marches down the road toward Pennington, where they expect to fight a band of 20-25 British soldiers.

Jonathan talks briefly with a friend of his father’s, and a Frenchman makes some effort at conversation, but the men grow more and more silent, tired, and tense. They stop at a well, where a sullen woman invites them to drink, and continue on to Rocktown, where they wait for reinforcements and for the enemy. The reinforcements never arrive, but the Hessians do. Jonathan finds that war holds none of the romance he had believed. He sees his father’s friend killed, and finds that his gun is caught beneath the Frenchman’s body. In a panic, he runs away and is caught later by a small group of Hessians.

When it begins to rain, the Germans take shelter under a tree then continue their march. Strangely, Jonathan thinks for a moment that he sees the Corporal on the road, but no attempt is made to rescue him, and the Hessians lead him to their destination—a seemingly deserted cabin. A cow moos, and the soldiers send Jonathan out to milk it. Alone, in the shed, Jonathan discovers a small silent boy and takes him inside. Eventually, the boy points out the bodies of the rest of the family, and Jonathan—helped by one of the younger Hessians—buries them.

Section 2,
Pages 22-40

Vocabulary:

humid 24	<i>meandering</i> 25	quarry 29
agitated 29	scrutiny 29	shutters 31
sullenly 31	crest 32	flasks 32
<i>palisades</i> 33	bore 34	objected 34
monotonously 35	fife 35	nape 35
<i>grotesque</i> 36	mechanically 36	gawked 37
relentless 37	stocks 37	cartridge 37
daft 37	crook 38	maneuver 38
ramrod 39	priming 40	<i>advancing</i> 40

How are palisades like hills? How are they different? See if you can find a photograph of some palisades.

Try to extend the chain of synonyms for “grotesque”:

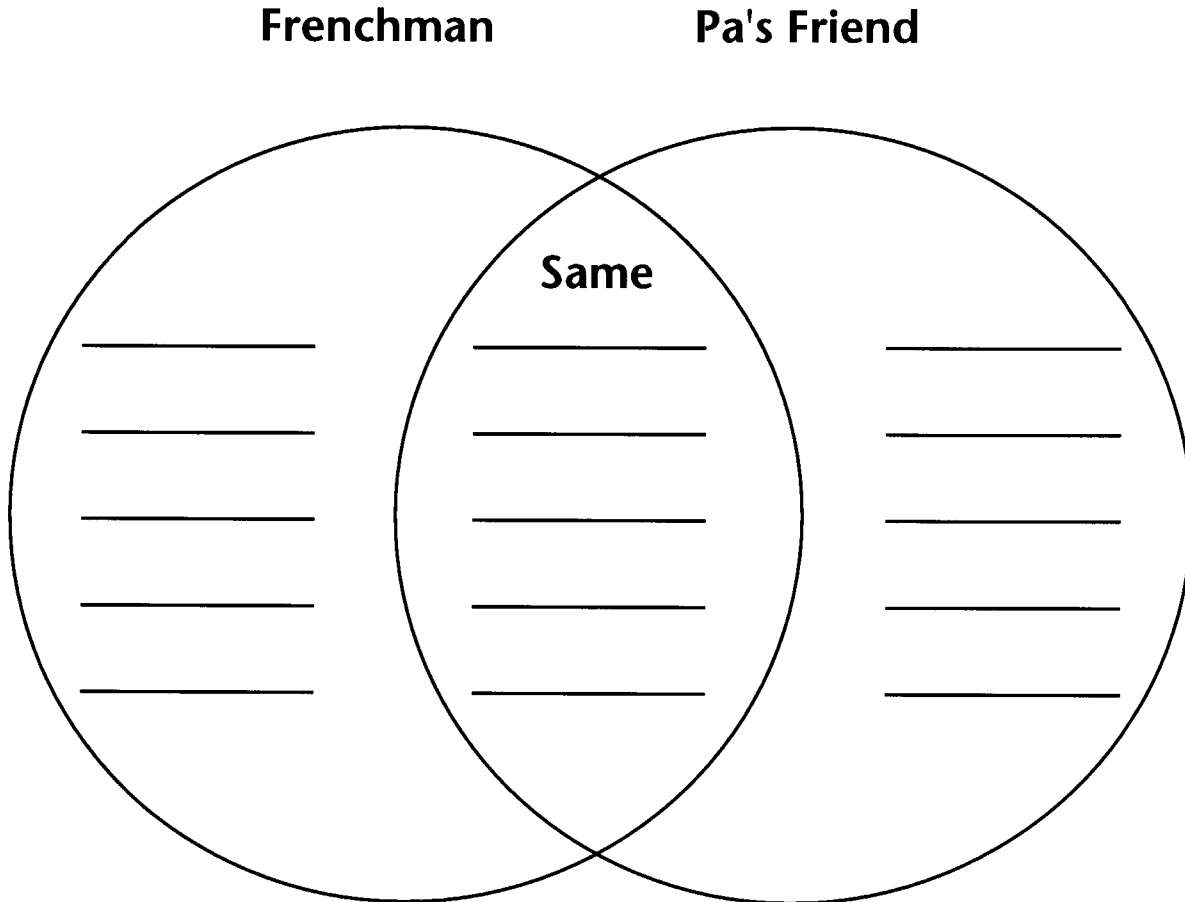
grotesque—ugly—unsightly—

What do “meandering” and “advancing” have in common? How are they different?

Questions and
Activities:

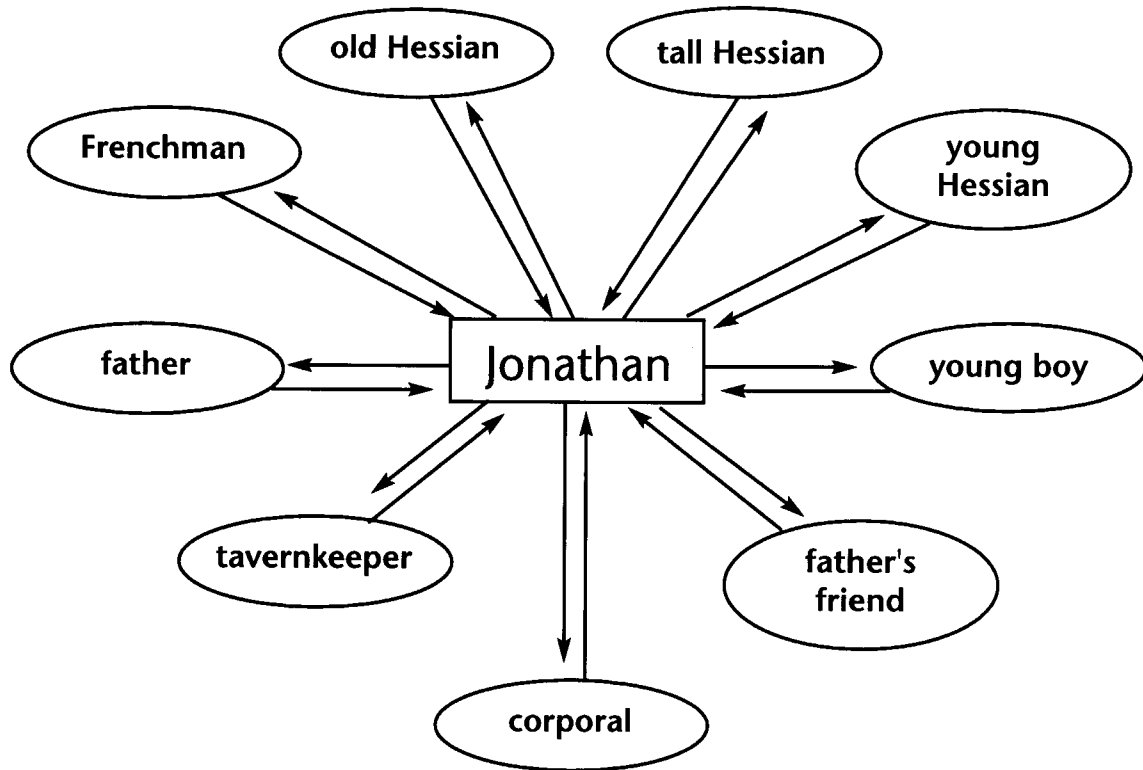
1. What does Jonathan mean when he asks his father’s friend, “What’s it about?” Why doesn’t the man answer? *Jonathan doesn’t understand the tension growing between the men and their leader. Perhaps Jonathan’s father’s friend thinks it will serve no purpose to worry the boy by criticizing their leader.*
2. How does Jonathan feel after his conversation with his father’s friend? Why? *He feels uncomfortable because he has lied about his father’s giving him permission to go along.*
3. Why do the men “look knowingly” at one another when the Corporal fails to explain where the Snyderstown men are? *This confirms their suspicions that the Corporal knew all along that there were not going to be reinforcements.*
4. What kind of man does the Frenchman seem to be? *He seems friendly and sympathetic.* Complete the following character trait chart by listing words and phrases which

describe the Frenchman and Pa's friend. Those which describe *both* should go in the overlapped area.



5. The title of the story is *The Fighting Ground*. You will see that this phrase is used in more than one way in the book. Explain what it means the first time it appears on page 28. "Jonathan wondered how many such hollow steps it would take for them to reach the fighting ground." *The area where the battle will be held.*
6. How does the woman react toward the soldiers? Why? *She ignores them and they seem to make her feel uneasy. Perhaps she resents their intrusion on her property, and the way the war has disrupted daily life, in general.*

6. Complete the following sociogram to show what each character was like, and how each got along with Jonathan. (We have started filling in the sociogram for you.)



7. a) Suppose Jonathan, himself, had told the story. Retell part of the story—such as the part where Jonathan finds the small child—from Jonathan’s point of view.
- b) Suppose you are the young Hessian soldier. Retell part of the story—such as when Jonathan brings in the small child—from your point of view.
8. Setting:
- a) Figure out where you think Jonathan’s family lived and draw a map showing the location of the family’s farm in relation to Trenton, Pennington, Rocktown, and Philadelphia.