

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

Johnny Tremain

by Esther Forbes

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Johnny Tremain

Objectives

By the end of the unit, the student will be able to:

1. relate the major incidents in Boston that led up to the start of the American Revolution.
2. discuss how the author weaves actual people and real events into a historical novel.
3. compare and contrast flat and round characters.
4. point out how the setting of this novel influences the plot.
5. define and identify literary terms such as simile, metaphor, and foreshadowing.
6. define the term “trite” and explain why a trite image should be avoided in writing.
7. trace throughout the novel Johnny’s growing political consciousness.
8. list and discuss those elements of the novel which indicates it is a ‘coming of age’ theme.
9. write a character sketch of Johnny Tremain.
10. identify and discuss the symbols found in this novel.
11. discuss the following themes that appear in this novel:
 - the sin of pride and virtue of humility
 - tolerance for other’s faults
 - acceptance of ourselves with our imperfections and handicaps.
12. explain why the British insisted on collecting a very small tax, and why the colonists refused to pay such a negligible tax on tea.
13. point out why this novel could be said to have a patriotic theme and why such a theme was so important in 1942, the year the novel was published.

Johnny Tremain

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. A historical novel is one in which actual events and people interweave with imagined occurrences, conversations, and characters. Johnny Tremain was not an actual person who lived during the Revolutionary War. He was invented by the author. By having a fictional character who faces the challenges of war, is the reader more or less able to understand its historical importance? Explain your answer in a three paragraph essay.
2. The author includes real people from American history in *Johnny Tremain*. For example, she portrays Paul Revere as an uplifting, intelligent, brave person, while Lieutenant Gage is shown as bumbling, indecisive, and fearful. James Otis is depicted as both insane and brilliant. Using any three personality traits, these or others, write a two page essay describing similarities and differences between any two of the historical characters of *Johnny Tremain*. Use passages from the novel to support your essay.
3. Johnny Tremain is the main character. As such, he is the one person who is involved in most of the action of the novel. We know more about him and his personality than any other character. In an essay of one to two pages, describe Johnny's personality, using any of the following traits: immaturity, self-confidence, bravery, confusion, love, fear, cleverness, admiration, and hopelessness.
4. Johnny's desires, hopes, and beliefs change throughout the book. The novel begins with a boy who thinks too highly of himself and of his talents and who insults and is cruel to those around him. The novel ends with Johnny as a young man, less sure of his fate and future in the upcoming war, but more mature and more knowledgeable about other people. The metamorphosis Johnny undergoes makes this a coming of age novel. In a one-paragraph essay, list and explain some specific incidents that enable Johnny to grow and to progress toward adulthood.
5. Some novels are plot-driven, novels whose plot progresses through actions that occur. Other novels progress through character development. *Johnny Tremain* does both. Write an essay that explains how events in the novel change Johnny, and how Johnny influences events.
6. Rab is a person who does not change much throughout the novel; neither does Isannah. They are known as static characters. However, Johnny, Cilla, even Mrs. Lapham, as a minor character, do change. They are characters who evolve, grow, and adapt to their environment. Write a short essay comparing these two types of characters, static and dynamic, by focusing on two specific characters from the novel.

Johnny Tremain

Study Guide Student Copy

Chapter One

hovel – shack	pious – religious, pure
lowed – moored	gruel – a thin porridge
pertly – high spirited, jaunty	genteel – well-bred, polite
breeches – pants	expound – to speak
lank – thin	splayed – spread or turned out
flaccid – limp	gadroon – molding
autocratic – bossy	twopence – two pennies
brackish – salty	reverie – daydream
reveled – enjoyed	gnarled – twisted
conventional – usual	garland – wreath
formidable – arousing fear or dread	intricate – delicate
apoplectic – extremely angry	protuberant – bulging
ethereal – highly refined, delicate	unobtrusively – not noticeable
prissy – prim, fussy	repousse – a raised design
artisan – laborer, craftsman	august – admirable
crucible – a holder in which to melt silver	
flagon – a container for drink	
venerable – old, wise	
settle – bench	
whist - quiet	
crew – cawed	

1. With whom does Johnny live and why?
2. What is special about Isannah?
3. Which verse of the Bible is used to apply to Johnny?

Chapter Five

discomfiture – frustration or disappointment
syllabub – a drink made of milk and wine
seditious – inciting rebellion
suave – smoothly agreeable and courteous
equitation – the art of riding a horse
cavort – to bound or prance about
reveled – took great pleasure or delight
ardent – strong enthusiasm
dawdle – take more time than necessary
atrophying – withering or deteriorating
imperturbable – calm and collected

fagots – twigs
hippogriffs – monsters
fatuous – foolish
anon – later
enigmatic – puzzling
abet – encourage
sorrel – brownish red color
enmity – intense hatred
catechism – fundamental beliefs
orgy – uncontrolled indulgence

1. Johnny knows that his cup is worth four pounds on the open market but figures he can get twenty pounds for it from Mr. Lyte. What happens when Johnny goes to Lyte's office? What is revealed about Mr. Lyte's character?
2. When Johnny leaves Lyte's office, to whom does he go for guidance and support?
3. Under what circumstances is Johnny able to begin a new life?
4. Because Johnny is delivering for *The Boston Observer*, where is he able to live?
5. After Johnny begins living with the Lornes, he sees Cilla and Isannah at the town pump. Why are they there? How does Johnny feel about seeing them?

Chapter Seven

paroxysm – sudden outburst of emotion
gesticulating – making gestures
wharfinger – one who owns a wharf
inundate – to cover with water
scepter – a staff held as a symbol of authority
suet – fat used for making tallow
commandeer – to force into military service
curry comb – comb for brushing a horse
wench – young woman or girl
tether – tie up, usually a horse or the rope that tethers
provincials – people not fashionable or sophisticated
rendezvous – a meeting a prearranged place and time

lascivious – expressing lust
jerkin – type of jacket
nicker – neigh softly
respite – short rest
ogress – female monster
patronize – support or sponsor
oratory – art of public speaking
fretted – to cause to be uneasy

1. How do the British react to the Boston Tea Party?
2. What effect does this punishment have on the thirteen colonies? How does Sam Adams react?
3. What will happen to the members of the Observers' Club if their names are known?
4. Describe how the atmosphere in Boston changes, almost on a daily basis.
5. Why is Rab so keen on getting a gun?

Chapter Twelve

muck about – to spend time idly
gloating – expressing great pleasure
bedraggled – wet or limp
ghastly – inspiring shock or horror
skirmish – minor battle
harried – disturbed or distressed
invincible – incapable of being defeated
gibbet – device used for hanging a person
desolate – deserted

unalterable – impossible to change
weaned – to detach from
knapped – to break or chip
disconsolate – extremely dejected
aloof – reserved and remote
surfeited – to feed to excess
stench – foul odor

1. Why is Johnny able to walk and talk with British soldiers without being noticed?
2. Why are the townspeople in the shadows whistling “Yankee Doodle”?
3. How does Johnny get to Charleston?
4. How does Johnny describe the difference between the way the British and Colonial soldiers look?
5. What happens to Rab, and how does Johnny find out?