

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

Johnny Tremain

by Esther Forbes

Copyright © 2003 by Prestwick House, Inc., P.O. Box 658, Clayton, DE 19938.
1-800-932-4593. www.prestwickhouse.com Permission to copy this unit for
classroom use is extended to purchaser for his or her personal use. *This material,
in whole or part, may not be copied for resale.*

ISBN: 978-1-60389-579-8

Item No. 202324

I-Up and About

1. The Colonial period in American history refers to the years when the thirteen original colonies were being settled until the Revolutionary War. As *Johnny Tremain* opens, we know immediately what early morning life is like in the colonies before Independence in the town of Boston, Massachusetts. It is summer 1773. Draw a picture of Hancock's Wharf and the area around it. On your picture show the following things:
 - Boston Harbor
 - cats
 - a malt house
 - the Lapham house
 - a stable with a horse
 - ships
 - a church and steeple with weathervane
 - a barn with a cow
 - the road leading to Boston Common
 - the community water pump
2. The three apprentice boys' life with Mr. Lapham, his daughter-in-law, and her family in their tiny house certainly seems hectic in early morning. Think about early morning in your own home. Compare the activities in the Lapham home, as the day begins, with those in your home. Write these comparisons as a list of things, but each of them must be written in a complete sentence. The first is given as an example:

Comparing my home with the Lapham home:

- A. In our home the water would come out of a faucet, instead of us having to go down Hancock's Wharf and pump it into water buckets and pitchers.

Response Journal

3. Apprenticing, as you are learning, is the way in Colonial times that a boy (girls were not usually apprentices) could learn and master a trade. This would train him to earn his livelihood when he grew up. Johnny's mother apprentices him to Mr. Lapham before she dies. Most boys have no choice about their placement, but Johnny wants to be a silversmith like Mr. Lapham and so is happy to be his apprentice. Imagine you are a boy or girl who could become an apprentice, and you could choose which kind of arts, crafts, business, etc., to which you would be apprenticed. Your choice must be work that would be possible in Boston in the 1770s. Write a letter to a Master telling him why you want to do the kind of work he is a Master of and why you would be a good apprentice to him. Begin your letter as follows:

Master, Sir,

Ever since I can remember, I've wanted to...

4. Johnny's actions in this chapter certainly show a great deal about his personality. He does things that are not very commendable, but his good points are also shown. List as many of his actions in this chapter as you can, but at least six. Beside each of them, write what you think that shows about Johnny's true character. Follow the format in the example below:

Johnny's Action

1. He bosses around the other apprentices.

What this Shows

He thinks he is better than they are.

Johnny Tremain

5. Though *Johnny Tremain* is a work of fiction, you will meet many people who were historically real throughout the novel. John Hancock is such a person. He played many roles in America's struggle for independence. Throughout your education, you will be using the skill of research to find information and to broaden your knowledge. Now would be a good time to improve your research skills. Choose one of the following real people from this novel: John Hancock, Paul Revere, Samuel Adams, James Otis, Josiah Quincy, or Dr. Joseph Warren. Using the Internet, encyclopedias, biographies, and general history books about the American Revolution, write three facts from each source about the person you have chosen to research. Give the name of the source where you found your information. Use the following format:

My Research Person: _____

From the Internet at (web site) I learned:

From the (name) Encyclopedia I learned:

From a biography titled _____ by _____ I learned:

From a history book titled _____ by _____ I learned:

II—The Pride of Your Power

6. In Colonial times, the rules about doing no work whatsoever on Sunday were strictly kept by most religious people. Johnny is choosing to break this rule in order to finish fixing Mr. Hancock's sugar basin. Even up to the 1970s in our country, many businesses were not open on Sunday. Today, most businesses are open, and even religious people work on Sunday and think nothing of it. Where do you stand on what is good and what is not so good about working on Sundays? Write two paragraphs expressing your opinion of both the good and bad points of Sunday openings and work.

Response Journal

7. The scene where Johnny's hand is burned by the hot molten silver is painful to read. One can almost feel the pain he experiences once the initial shock of the contact of the burning silver on his skin begins to wear off. Johnny's burn is treated with old-fashioned methods by the town midwife, Gran' Hopper.

Make a list of things you would do if you awoke one night and smelled smoke. Put the items in order if importance.

8. The aftermath of the burn on Johnny's hand is disastrous. He can no longer use his right hand. This means he can no longer be an apprentice silversmith, or indeed never do any craftsman's work again. The other apprentices, Dove and Dusty, treat him harshly. Johnny is understandably angry and bitter and refuses to forgive Dove for being responsible for the burn, even when Mr. Lapham asks him to. Imagine the time is the present, and this same thing happened to a young man working in a silversmith's shop. He decides to sue Dove for causing him bodily harm. You are the young man's lawyer. Write the summation you would present to the jury at the close of the trial where one million dollars is being sought in compensation. Write at least 100 words. Begin your summation:

Ladies and Gentlemen of the jury, this previously strong and whole young man sits before you with a ruined hand and a future...

Johnny Tremain

9. Johnny, once so confident and proud of his abilities, is now desolate at the blow he has received. He is now, along with being bitter and angry, feeling worthless because of his ruined hand. One's feeling of self-worth is a very fragile thing. Imagine that you have a cousin in another state who also burned her hand which, as a result, has become useless. Write an email to that cousin telling her, not only how sorry you are, but that you also understand her loss and offer some advice.

III—An Earth of Brass

10. September 1773 finds Johnny unable to find work, and sleeping in the Lapham's "birth and death room," which is really no more than a closet. He is also almost starving because he does not wish to take food from the poor Lapham family without working for it. Though Johnny did not choose his hand injury, he did choose to live on the streets. Some boys and girls today also choose to run away from their homes and live an existence as ragged as Johnny's. Imagine you are asked to write a plea to homeless young people all over the country to call their families. Your writing will run as part of a one-minute commercial on all the major networks. The commercial will show freezing, hungry young people huddled against a brick building in New York. Your words will be voiced-over the televised images in the commercial. Limit what you write to 50-75 words.