

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

My Brother Sam is Dead

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Objectives

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

1. infer meanings about characters and events when these are not explicitly stated.
2. define vocabulary words from the text, including vocabulary words relating to the American Revolution and life during this era.
3. point out instances of foreshadowing.
4. relate details about the life of a colonial soldier during the American Revolution.
5. discuss why Life Meeker's death is ironic.
6. point out instances of the following uses of language: simile, cliché.
7. provide details to support the idea that some citizens felt divided loyalties during the Revolutionary War.
8. cite incidents from the story to illustrate the theme that war has a harmful impact on soldiers, civilians, and communities.
9. relate incidents from the story to support the theme that war is unjust.
10. cite incidents from the story to demonstrate the extent to which the novel satisfies the following criteria for historical fiction:
 - The action takes place at least one or two generations before the writing of the novel.
 - An attempt is made by the authors to accurately describe the customs and lifestyle of the time period.
 - The central character in the novel may be subjected to divided loyalties within a larger historical conflict the reader is familiar with.
 - The authors infer from historical records how the people of the time thought and may include characters in the story that are historical figures, as well as fictional characters.
11. discuss this story as a coming-of-age novel for Tim, and relate incidents from the story illustrating his path to adulthood.

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Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Write a brief paragraph describing Tim's everyday life, using at least five of the following vocabulary words: swill, teat, ciphering, holystoning, rushing, shad, johnnycake, seining, sturgeon, heifer.
2. Divide the class into two groups for a mock debate. Using incidents from the story to support their positions, have the two groups debate the following questions:
 - A. Could the Colonists have achieved relief from unjust British rule without fighting the Revolutionary War?
 - B. Should Father have supported Sam's decision to join the army?
 - C. What is Mr. Heron's role in the story? Is he a Tory or a Patriot? Consider the ways he helps the Meeker family and also his involvement in Jerry Sanford's arrest.
3. Using context clues from the text and any supplemental research you may have done, briefly identify each of the following figures from history:
John Adams, John Hancock, Benedict Arnold, King George III, General Putnam.
4. Discuss the conflict Tim feels about each of the following. For what reasons is Tim's loyalty divided between each?
 - Tim and Sam
 - Tim and his neighbors
 - Tim and his father
5. Cite four incidents from the story illustrating the following theme: Man must strive to avoid war because of the harmful impact of war on soldiers, civilians, and the community.
6. Assume Tim is granted permission to make a plea for Sam's life at his court martial. Write a few paragraphs detailing the arguments Tim might use to try and save his brother.
7. One of the themes of this story is that war is unjust. Besides Sam's execution, find and discuss two incidents in this story supporting this theme.

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Study Guide Student Copy

Chapter I

Vocabulary

agitators – persons who try to stir up others to support a cause

constitutes –designated as

garrison – a fortified place

gaudy – bright and showy, but lacking good taste

hundredweight –100 pounds

lascivious – lustful or lewd

Loyalist – a Colonist who was loyal to the British government

Parliament – the national legislative body of Great Britain

pence – the plural of penny

sloth – laziness

store – a place for the storage of supplies

subversion – overthrowing or destroying

swill – garbage, table scraps

teat – the nipple used for milking a cow

Tory - a person who supported continued allegiance to Great Britain

treason – betrayal of one's country

triumphant – victorious

vile – evil or wicked

1. Through context clues, the reader is able to infer or deduce the definitions of many terms from the time period as well as the identity of some real-life historical characters. Based on the following excerpt from this chapter what can you infer about Lobsterbacks, Minutemen, Mr. Adams, and Mr. Hancock?

“Who has beaten the British?” Father said.

Sam shut the door. “We have,” he said, with his back to us as he slipped the latch in place. “The Minutemen. The damn Lobsterbacks marched out of Boston yesterday. They were looking for Mr. Adams and Mr. Hancock and they marched up to Lexington. Some of the Massachusetts Minutemen tried to stop them there in the square, but there were too many British, and they got through and went on up to Concord looking for ammunitions stores. But the Patriots got the stores hidden mostly and they didn't find much. And then when they turned around and went back, the Minutemen hid in the fields along the roads and massacred them all the way back to Boston.” (Pg. 2)

Chapter III

Vocabulary

mumble-the-peg – a children’s game involving a knife

1. In what ways are Tim and his family affected by the War in the summer of 1775?

2. Based on the information in this chapter, what do you know about each of the following historical battles?

Bunker Hill –

Fort Ticonderoga –

3. What is the difference between the *Connecticut Journal* and the *Rivington’s Gazette*?

4. Why does Tim agree to keep quiet if Sam comes back to Redding for a visit?

Chapter V

Vocabulary

cholera – a very serious intestinal disease

ciphering – solving arithmetic problems or codes

consumption - tuberculosis

holystoning – using a large flat piece of sandstone to scour a wooden surface

pitched – closely fought

rushing – using plants to make baskets or chair seats

shad – a species of freshwater fish

skirmish – a brief fight

1. What evidence is there in this chapter that the men who are fighting the British are proud to participate in the War?
2. As the War progresses, the populace begin to feel its effects. List three hardships Tim and his family experience because of the Revolutionary War. What is the worst hardship Tim must endure?
3. Tim concludes that “being a soldier probably didn’t have much glory to it, either, that it was mostly just a lot of hard work.” (Pg. 64) Why then does he envy Sam?
4. Why does Life believe that the Rebels cannot win the War?
5. Briefly identify Mr. Heron. Why does he come to talk to Tim’s father?

Chapter VII

Vocabulary

recalcitrance – refusal to obey authority

hardtack – hard bread in the shape of large wafers

1. Based on the information about Sam in this chapter about, describe the life of a Revolutionary War soldier.
2. Why do Tim's parents fight over Sam's letters?
3. How many miles must Tim and his father travel to reach Verplancks? Why are they making the journey? Study the maps included with the novel. List the cities Tim and his father must pass through on their journey to Verplancks.
4. For what reason does Life wait until just before winter to make the trip to Verplancks?
5. Who are the people called cow-boys?
6. Why would Life prefer not to take Tim on this trip? For what reasons is Tim glad to go?
7. Cite an incident from this chapter to support the following statement: Tim is a brave boy.
8. Why is Tim disappointed when he and his father cross the border into New York?

Chapter IX

1. How does Tim feel about driving the oxen alone while his father scouts ahead looking for raiders?
2. Why does Tim's father look grim when they travel through Ridgebury?
3. For what reasons does Tim decide to pull the oxen to the side of the road? How far is Tim from home at this point in his journey?
4. Left alone in the woods, Tim must make a decision. What action does he decide to take? Briefly summarize the logic he uses to decide on this action.
5. How does Tim fool the cow-boys? What can you conclude about Tim's character from this incident?

Chapter XI

1. How does Susannah react when Mr. Betts asks Tim to ring the church bell to gather the trainband?
2. What is Tim's reaction when he realizes General Wooster and General Arnold are in the tavern? What do they say that surprises Tim?
3. Why does Sam stay away from the tavern until Tim goes looking for him among the soldiers camped across the road?
4. Sam's enlistment is up in two months. Why does he refuse to come home to help with the tavern?
5. A coming-of-age novel is a novel in which the main character or characters grow, mature, or come to understand the world in adult terms. What does Tim come to understand about Sam in this chapter? What does he learn about himself?

Chapter XIII

Vocabulary

adjutant – the administrative assistant to a commanding officer

clemency – leniency or mercy

foreboding – a feeling that something bad is going to happen

trestle – support for a table

1. At first, why does Tim believe he will be able to get Sam out of prison? Why does Tim come to realize that establishing Sam's innocence will not be easy?
2. Betsy asks Tim what will happen to Sam if he is found guilty of stealing the cattle. Tim says they will put him in prison. What evidence is there in the story that Tim does not really believe Sam's punishment will be imprisonment? State a theme for this story based on Tim's understanding of the situation.
3. Susannah goes to talk to General Putnam, hoping to persuade him that Sam is innocent. For what reasons does General Putnam refuse to release Sam?
4. Colonel Read agrees to give Tim a letter to see General Putnam to plead for clemency. Why does Colonel Read believe Tim will be unsuccessful?
5. Find a passage in this chapter to illustrate that Sam keeps his sense of humor even though he knows he is about to die.