

Teacher's Guide

Daniel at the Siege of Boston 1776

by Laurie Calkhoven

About the Book

Engaging young readers in the suspense and drama of the American Revolution is the compelling story of Daniel Prescott, who spies on soldiers quartered at his father's tavern during the Siege of Boston. After war breaks out and his father joins General Washington's troops, Daniel confronts questions of fear, loyalty, and trust as he crosses enemy lines in the fight for justice and freedom. Supplemental to history units or as stand-alone reading, this book invites discourse on the emotions and struggles of war.

About This Guide

This guide offers an ala carte menu of discussion questions and learning activities for students with a wide range of skills and background knowledge. **Essential Questions** focus thinking on relevant themes and issues. The **Before Reading** prompts build interest and curiosity to maximize comprehension. **For Discussion** questions check knowledge and understanding of what students have read; advanced questions challenge them to apply and evaluate what they've learned. **Activities** for completion during and after reading promote cross-curricular learning and address multiple intelligences. Through the **Author Interview**, students explore the writer's perspective on her work.

Essential Questions

- What constitutes courage?
- How do people decide whom they should trust?
- To what extent is fear a flaw, and to what extent is it necessary?
- Under what circumstances might it be acceptable to not tell the truth?
- Under what circumstances is rebellion justified? What kinds of rebellion achieve the most meaningful results?
- Under what circumstances is war justified? What sacrifices are made during times of war?
- What responsibilities come with independence?
- How should people decide who deserves their loyalty?

Before Reading

- Imagine you woke up tomorrow to find that enemies had cut off your town or city from the rest of the world: no traffic in or out, no television or internet, no communications of any kind, no way to get food or supplies. Together or by yourself, list or journal all the ways in which your life would change. How would you get information? Food? Supplies? How would it feel to live in a place that is “under siege”?
- Working together, brainstorm a list of some of your fears. Discuss what your fears have in common. Is there anything good about being afraid?
- Working together, make a three-columned chart with the following headings: Lying, Spying, and Spreading Rumors. Dividing your chart in half, tell on one half what makes these behaviors wrong, and on the other half, list any circumstances under which these behaviors could be excused. After reading, revise your chart, citing examples from the book.
- Either as a group or in a journal entry, discuss this statement: “Sometimes people aren’t what they seem.” Using examples from books, television, and movies, make a list of people who turned out to be different than they first appeared. As you read this book, add to the list and discuss it with the class.
- What do you know about the American Revolution? Make a chart with three sections. Label the sections “Know,” “Want to Know,” and “Learned.” Fill in the “Learned” section during and after reading the book.
- Listen to some music from the American Revolution, including the song “Yankee Doodle.” Describe the music: What instruments do you hear? How does it make you feel? What does it make you think of? After reading the book, listen again. What new feelings, connections, and ideas do you now get from the music?

For Discussion: Knowledge

- Which soldiers were called “Lobsters”?
- Who loses the staring contest?
- Who causes Ensign Keaton to fall, breaking the egg he was to take to the meeting?
- Master Richardson is Daniel’s teacher. What work do he and Daniel both do for the Sons of Liberty?
- Which student brings news to the class that the first shots were fired?
- Describe how Daniel uses the boot scraper to communicate with Master Richardson.
- What is Daniel studying on Stockdale’s desk when two British soldiers come upstairs?
- Master Richardson says he is privately tutoring whom?
- Who is Star?
- Which Patriot leader, whom Daniel recognizes from his speeches, dies at the Battle of Bunker Hill?
- At Bunker Hill, which vital supply do the Patriots run out of?

- Who is Sarah?
- What rumor does General Washington ask Daniel to spread?
- With what does Daniel's mother replace his buttons when he goes to his father's camp?
- What use does Josiah find for Sarah's carrot?
- When Master Richardson leaves Boston, to whom is Daniel supposed to give information?
- What disease makes Sarah sick?
- Who tells Daniel the truth about Master Richardson?
- What battle plan does General Washington get from Daniel and his lucky shooter?
- What causes the British to finally leave Boston?

For Discussion: Understanding

- What happens during the Boston Massacre?
- Name at least three significant differences between Josiah Henshaw and Daniel Prescott.
- Describe two events that lead Daniel to think he lacks courage.
- Why does Colonel Stockdale tell Ensign Keaton to bring an egg to the Sons of Liberty meeting?
- Who are the Redcoats?
- While in Boston, how do Daniel and his father help the Sons of Liberty?
- Where does the war start? Who starts it?
- What does it mean to be "under siege"?
- Why is Daniel's Aunt Abigail worried?
- Describe how Daniel gathers and passes along information. Why do you think he is able to escape detection?
- When Daniel visits the Patriot camp, what changes in his father does he notice?
- How does Daniel feel about staying with his father for the battle?
- Why do the soldiers dig at Breed's Hill?
- Why doesn't Daniel pick up wounded soldiers on the way home from Bunker Hill?
- The new flag raised in the Patriot camp on January 1, 1776 confused the British. Why?
- Describe the warnings exchanged between Daniel and Josiah.
- In what ways do the Frontiersmen frighten Daniel?
- When Daniel can't find the barber and delivers a message himself, why does he swear an oath to never return alone to the Patriot camp?
- As a warning, what does Colonel Stockdale show Daniel?
- What makes Daniel conclude that Colonel Stockdale has a heart?
- How does Daniel feel about Sarah? How do you know?
- What news causes Daniel to break his oath and return to the Patriot camp alone?
- What excuse does Master Richardson make for his wrongdoing?

For Discussion: Application and Evaluation

- What is treason? Describe an event from the book that could be labeled treason, and explain how it might be viewed differently by someone on the other side of the conflict.
- What is tyranny? What actions by the King of England made the colonists accuse him of tyranny?
- Daniel repeats Dr. Warren's words over and over: "However difficult the combat, you never will decline it when freedom is the prize." What does Dr. Warren mean? Do you agree? Why or why not?
- Why do the colonists think the tax on tea is unjust?
- Why does Daniel's father have to serve British soldiers? Would that happen in our country today? Explain, with reference to the concept of "quartering."
- Describe Daniel's mixed feelings when his father joins the army and goes off to fight. How would you feel (or how have you felt) if one of your parents went off to war?
- Explain the meaning and consequence of Master Richardson's question, "What good is liberty if we all die of starvation?" Do you agree with him? Does his thinking justify his actions? Why or why not?
- Which of his actions do you think should make Daniel feel most ashamed? Which of his actions do you think should make him feel most proud? Explain your choices.
- What causes Daniel to question whether he should continue to trust Master Richardson? How do you decide whom you should trust?
- Spreading untrue rumors is usually considered wrong. What justified it in Daniel's case?
- "Only the foolhardy are unafraid," Daniel's father tells him. Explain what he means and tell whether you agree or disagree, using one example from the book and one from modern times.

Activities

- Research the first ten amendments (the Bill of Rights) of the U.S. Constitution. Many of these rights were a direct response to injustices the colonists suffered under the King of England. Pick two of these amendments and discuss why, based on his experiences in the book, Daniel might have been glad to see these rights made into law.
- Label a modern-day map of Massachusetts with the story events that took place in Lexington, Concord, Salem, and Boston.
- Create a slideshow or living museum featuring the patriots mentioned in the book: Samuel Adams, George Washington, John Hancock, Crispus Attucks, Paul Revere, Dr. Joseph Warren, and Israel Putnam. Let each character speak for himself, telling what role he plays in the conflict and how his actions influence Daniel Prescott.

- Make a chart showing which characters are on the side of the British and which are on the side of the colonists. Include a visual representation for those who switched sides.
- Create a visual that contrasts the differences between the British and colonial soldiers and camps before General Washington took charge.
- Some Patriots urge independence from Britain, while others feel independence would be too drastic. Using characters from the book, decide which side each might be on and stage a debate on whether independence should be the goal of the war. Each side should use specific examples to support their position.
- Using details from the book, create a visual representing life in Boston before and during the siege.
- Create a map or a game showing Daniel's "Road to Courage." Include the hazards, obstacles, and achievements Daniel faces as he struggles to do what's right.
- Design and present awards to honor the most courageous, the most compassionate, the most helpful, the most honest, and the most dastardly characters in the book. Justify your choices.

Author Interview

When creating fiction surrounding a real-life event, how do you decide which facts must be left as they happened and which can be changed for the sake of the story?

As a writer, my first responsibility is to tell a good story. It's also very important, when writing historical fiction, to remain true to the facts. All of the facts in *Daniel at the Siege of Boston, 1776* are accurate. There are some things, however, that I left out because they didn't serve the story. When Daniel went to the Patriot camp, for instance, he would have had to pass through a few layers of command before he reached General Washington. That would have been boring to read about!

What do you like best about Daniel?

I love the fact that Daniel does what he believes is necessary, even in the face of fear. I also like the fact that Daniel changes and grows over the course of the novel. In the beginning, he feels exactly as his father does about the English. By the end of the novel, after being without his father at home for many months, Daniel comes to his own conclusions about liberty and independence. He becomes his own man.

Daniel struggles with fear. How have your own experiences with fear helped you understand how he felt?

We all struggle with fear ranging from “nerves” when we have to do something we’ve never done before (like give a speech), or the terror we feel when we believe we’re in danger. I lived in New York City on September 11, 2001, when terrorists attacked the World Trade Center. For days afterward, it felt like the city was under siege. I relied on memories of that very scary time when I wrote about Boston and Daniel’s fear.

Why would someone read historical fiction rather than reading about what “really” happened?

Historical fiction can shed a light on time periods and bring them to life in a way that nonfiction often can’t. Historical fiction portrays ordinary children who are caught up in extraordinary events. In most nonfiction, only the leading figures of the time are described, and then only in a few sentences. Fiction puts the real people back into history.

The Siege of Boston happened long ago. Why does it matter to us today?

The Siege of Boston was the opening phase of what would become known as the American Revolution. Our country—the United States of America—was born during that revolution. The foundation of our democratic government and our Bill of Rights are in a large part based on England’s actions during the Siege of Boston. We can’t understand our present without understanding our history.