



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1997 Volume II: American Children's Literature

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## **Change AllLife, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 97.02.01  
by G. Casey Cassidy

My curriculum unit has been designed with a primary focus on American Revolutionary War events which occurred in Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York. Two of our novels, *Johnny Tremain* and *The Fifth of March*, will examine Revolutionary Boston through the dramatic experiences of both a young apprentice silversmith who is caught up in the wartime effort with famous characters such as John Hancock, John and Samuel Adams, and James Otis, and a fourteen-year-old indentured servant who works for the household of John and Abigail Adams while searching for her place in this emerging nation. Both central characters, Johnny Tremain and Rachel Marsh, play pivotal roles in their efforts to help the colonials in their quest for liberty and freedom.

Our third novel, *My Brother Sam is Dead*, will examine the British occupation of farmlands, town commons, and major roadways in southwestern Connecticut as the “lobsterbacks” prepare to march through Connecticut to participate in battles in upstate New York and Canada. Our major character Tim Meeker becomes an important messenger for the Patriot cause as he rides from township to countryside, relaying information concerning British troop movements to the Patriot hierarchy. Tim also has to resolve family and personal issues as he is torn by his father’s loyalty to the Crown and his brother Sam’s desire for liberty.

This literature-based unit will seek to bring to life many important occurrences and events which led to the Boston Massacre and to the American Revolution. These actions were necessary for America to be freed from British rule. Ordinary people sought to unite together for the good of all. Together they were able to defeat the British and to gain “liberty and justice for all”.

(Recommended for Literature and Social Studies, grade 8)

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