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Reflections: A Student Response Journal



Johnny Tremain
Esther Forbes



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Response Journal

To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

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.

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.

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11. Johnny wanders the streets of Boston, hungry and feeling hopeless about finding an apprenticeship because of his useless hand. Boston, now a city, was in the years preceding the Revolution, known only as a town. Because it is so famous, Boston is an easy subject on which to gather information. Use your research to complete the following information about what Boston was like in 1773 and what it is like in the 1990s:

Boston 1700's
Population?

Boston 1990's

Main Business?

How Governed?

Schools?

Main Religion?

Water for homes?

Transportation?

12. On page 65, you will find a reference to "Mr. Hancock's little black slave, Jehu." Though slavery was legal in the colonies in 1773, one does not usually think of slavery as part of the life of New Englanders. Imagine you are a Bostonian who is strongly against slave holding, anywhere in the colonies, because it is immoral. Write an advertisement you will bring to the Boston Observer, to be printed in their paper which tells why you think slaveholding is wrong. You may include a picture, drawing, or cartoon to make it more effective.

Johnny Tremain

18. When Rab visits Johnny in jail, Rab is wearing a medal engraved with a Tree of Liberty. This showed he was a member of the “semi-secret, famous Sons of Liberty” organization working against the Tories. Some of their activities are described on page 85. Imagine that you belong to the Sons of Liberty. Write three other activities you would suggest doing in Boston in 1773 to cause trouble for the Tories.
19. It is hard to believe in this day and age that there actually was a time in our history when a person could be sent to death on the gallows for stealing. As you know, the whole subject of the death penalty is still cause for much division in our society. Some states do not allow it; other states do. Complete the following dialogue, making sure you present both sides of the death penalty argument.

Person 1: Well, I think there are some crimes, killing of children for instance, which deserve the death penalty and more!

Person 2: How about the possibility that maybe the person being blamed...