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- Table of Contents
- Introduction to the *LitPlan Teacher Pack™*
- first page of the Study Questions
- first page of the Study Question Answer Key
- first page of the Multiple Choice Quiz Section
- first Vocabulary Worksheet
- first few pages of the Daily Lessons
- a Writing Assignment
- first page of the Extra Discussion Questions
- first page of the Unit Test Section

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TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LITPLAN TEACHER PACK™

for

My Brother Sam is Dead

based on the book by

James Lincoln Collier & Christopher Collier

Written by

Janine H. Sherman

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Note: Some pages are intentionally left blank for purposes of two-sided printing.

A FEW NOTES ABOUT THE AUTHORS  
James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier

COLLIER, James Lincoln (1928- ) and COLLIER, Christopher (1930- ) James and Christopher Collier grew up in Connecticut surrounded by writers, artists, and intellectuals and felt themselves a part of the upper Bohemian mentality. Yet, their forebears were New Englanders and they were raised to an old morality that stressed hard work and the joys of accomplishment. This background gave them the self-discipline that writers need. It never occurred to them not to write, it was what people did. They became writers the way other young people go into the family business.

Christopher felt writing was a very hard way to earn money and found teaching was just as much fun and you could earn more money at it. So, when Christopher was a junior high school teacher he began to think there must be a better way to teach American History. Even though he liked the dull history texts of his era, he realized that most kids need to be able to follow a story to better grasp history. This is why he writes books.

Most of the writing he does helps other historians learn about the past, but he feels grown-ups are very hard to teach new things to, so he writes for kids with his brother. Christopher suspects the writing he does for kids is more effective because his brother, James, knows how to write very exciting stories. Christopher researches all the historical material and presents James a true story with all the detail. They then make up some fictional characters and James writes the true story around those fictional characters.

The Colliers' most famous joint effort is *My Brother Sam is Dead* which gives readers a realistic view of the Revolutionary War as told through the eyes of young Tim Meeker, Rebel Sam Meeker's younger brother. This book was published in 1974, on the eve of the U.S. Bicentennial in 1976. It is a Newbery Honor Book, was designated a Notable Book by the American Library Association, and was nominated for a National Book Award in 1975. A more recent collaboration, *Jump Ship to Freedom*, was named a Notable Trade Book in the field of Social Studies in 1981. *War Comes to Willy Freeman* is a companion book to this novel. Other books written by these two brothers include: *The Bloody Country* (1977) and *The Winter Hero* (1978).

## INTRODUCTION - *My Brother Sam is Dead*

This unit has been designed to develop students' reading, writing, thinking, and language skills through exercises and activities related to *My Brother Sam is Dead* by James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier. It includes twenty lessons supported by extra resource materials.

The **introductory lesson** exposes students to the setting of the novel. It also doubles as the first writing assignment for the unit. Following the introductory activity, students are given an explanation of how the activity relates to the book they are about to read. Following the transition, students are given the materials they will be using during the unit.

The **reading assignments** are approximately twenty-five pages each; some are a little shorter while others are a little longer. Students have approximately 15 minutes of pre-reading work to do prior to each reading assignment. This pre-reading work involves reviewing the study questions for the assignment and doing some vocabulary work for 10 vocabulary words they will encounter in their reading.

The **study guide questions** are fact-based questions; students can find the answers to these questions right in the text. These questions come in two formats: short answer or multiple choice. The best use of these materials is probably to use the short answer version of the questions as study guides for students (since answers will be more complete), and to use the multiple choice version for occasional quizzes. It might be a good idea to make transparencies of your answer keys for the overhead projector.

The **vocabulary work** is intended to enrich students' vocabularies as well as to aid in the students' understanding of the book. Prior to each reading assignment, students will complete a two-part worksheet for approximately 10 vocabulary words in the upcoming reading assignment. Part I focuses on students' use of general knowledge and contextual clues by giving the sentence in which the word appears in the text. Students are then to write down what they think the words mean based on the words' usage. Part II nails down the definitions of the words by giving students dictionary definitions of the words and having students match the words to the correct definitions based on the words' contextual usage. Students should then have an understanding of the words when they meet them in the text.

After each reading assignment, students will go back and formulate answers for the study guide questions. Discussion of these questions serves as a **review** of the most important events and ideas presented in the reading assignments.

After students complete extra discussion questions, there is a **vocabulary review** lesson which pulls together all of the fragmented vocabulary lists for the reading assignments and gives students a review of all of the words they have studied.

Following the reading of the book, two lessons are devoted to the **extra discussion questions/writing assignments**. These questions focus on interpretation, critical analysis and

personal response, employing a variety of thinking skills and adding to the students' understanding of the novel. These questions are done as a **group activity**. Using the information they have acquired so far through individual work and class discussions, students get together to further examine the text and to brainstorm ideas relating to the themes of the novel.

The group activity is followed by a **reports and discussion** session in which the groups share their ideas about the book with the entire class; thus, the entire class gets exposed to many different ideas regarding the themes and events of the book.

There are three **writing assignments** in this unit, each with the purpose of informing, persuading, or having students express personal opinions. The first assignment is writing to inform: students will draw from the information gained in their research on the Revolutionary War to write an informative composition on some aspect of the era. The second assignment gives students the opportunity to express their personal ideas: students will write a narrative account of a journey they have taken or a visit to a relative's house. The third assignment is to give students a chance to persuade: students will pretend to be Tim Meeker trying to convince his brother Sam to come home once he has satisfied his enlistment.

In addition, there is a **nonfiction reading assignment**. Students are required to read a piece of nonfiction related in some way to *My Brother Sam is Dead*. After reading their nonfiction pieces, students will fill out a worksheet on which they answer questions regarding facts, interpretation, criticism, and personal opinions. During one class period, students make **oral presentations** about the nonfiction pieces they have read. This not only exposes all students to a wealth of information, it also gives students the opportunity to practice **public speaking**.

There is an optional **class project** (The Redding Repository) through which students will have the opportunity to contribute to the compilation of a class newspaper.

The **review lesson** pulls together all of the aspects of the unit. The teacher is given four or five choices of activities or games to use which all serve the same basic function of reviewing all of the information presented in the unit.

The **unit test** comes in two formats: all multiple choice-matching-true/false or with a mixture of matching, short answer, and composition. As a convenience, two different tests for each format have been included.

There are additional **support materials** included with this unit. The **unit resource section** includes suggestions for an in-class library, crossword and word search puzzles related to the novel, and extra vocabulary worksheets. There is a list of **bulletin board ideas** which gives the teacher suggestions for bulletin boards to go along with this unit. In addition, there is a list of **extra class activities** the teacher could choose from to enhance the unit or as a substitution for an exercise the teacher might feel is inappropriate for his/her class. **Answer keys** are located directly after the **reproducible student materials** throughout the unit.

## UNIT OBJECTIVES - *My Brother Sam is Dead*

1. Through reading *My Brother Sam is Dead*, students will gain understanding of the themes of decision-making, courage, and family values.
2. Students will develop an awareness of Sam and Tim's individuality and examine their own.
3. Students will do background research on the Revolutionary War to provide meaning to the historical and geographical references made by the author.
4. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the text on four levels: factual, interpretive, critical and personal.
5. Students will be given the opportunity to practice reading aloud and silently to improve their skills in each area.
6. Students will answer questions to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the main events and characters in *My Brother Sam is Dead* as they relate to the author's theme development.
7. Students will enrich their vocabularies and improve their understanding of the novel through the vocabulary lessons prepared for use in conjunction with the novel.
8. The writing assignments in this unit are geared to several purposes:
  - a. To have students demonstrate their abilities to inform, to persuade, or to express their own personal ideas  
Note: Students will demonstrate ability to write effectively to inform by developing and organizing facts to convey information. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to persuade by selecting and organizing relevant information, establishing an argumentative purpose, and by designing an appropriate strategy for an identified audience. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to express personal ideas by selecting a form and its appropriate elements.
  - b. To check the students' reading comprehension
  - c. To make students think about the ideas presented by the novel
  - d. To encourage logical thinking
  - e. To provide an opportunity to practice good grammar and improve students' use of the English language.

READING ASSIGNMENT SHEET - *My Brother Sam is Dead*

<b>Date Assigned</b>	<b>Chapter Assignments</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
	<b>1-2</b>	
	<b>3-5</b>	
	<b>6-8</b>	
	<b>9-10</b>	
	<b>11-12</b>	
	<b>13-Epilogue</b>	



UNIT OUTLINE - *My Brother Sam is Dead*

<b>1</b> Library Nonfiction Assignment	<b>2</b> Work Session Writing Assignment 1	<b>3</b> Introduction Materials PVR Ch 1-2	<b>4</b> Study ?s 1-2 PVR Ch 3-5 Oral Rdg Eval	<b>5</b> Study ?s 3-5 Writing Conf
<b>6</b> Decision-making PV Ch 6-8	<b>7</b> Read Ch 6-8	<b>8</b> Writing Assignment 2	<b>9</b> Study ?s 6-8 PVR Ch 9-10	<b>10</b> Study ?s 9-10 Dramatization
<b>11</b> PVR Ch 11-12 Individuality	<b>12</b> Writing Assignment 3	<b>13</b> Study ?s 11-12 PVR Ch 13- Epilogue	<b>14</b> Study ?s 13-End Courage	<b>15</b> Extra Discussion Questions
<b>16</b> Extra Discussion Questions	<b>17</b> Vocabulary Review	<b>18</b> Unit Review	<b>19</b> Test	<b>20</b> Project

Key: P = Preview Study Questions V = Vocabulary Work R = Read

## LESSON ONE

### Objectives

1. To give students background information for *My Brother Sam is Dead*
2. To give students the opportunity to fulfill their nonfiction reading assignment that goes along with this unit
3. To give students practice using library resources
4. To give students the opportunity to write to inform by developing and organizing facts to convey information.

### Activity

Assign one of each of the following topics to a small group of your students or individually. Distribute Writing Assignment #1. Discuss the directions in detail. Take your students to the library so they may work on the assignment. Students should fill out a "Nonfiction Assignment Sheet" for at least one of the sources they used, and students need to submit these sheets with their compositions. Answer any questions they may have about filling out this form.

1. Where and why was the American Revolution fought?
2. What issues were important to both sides?
3. Name the major battles of the war.
4. What was the sentiment of the country concerning this conflict? Was there more than one central train of thought? What factors influenced these opinions?
5. What were the troops called on both sides?
6. How did these troops dress respectively?
7. Who were the major leaders in both armies? Did they survive the conflict? If so, did they go on to seek public office? Which office and whom?
8. What was the result of this conflict? How did this influence the future of this nation?
9. What locations and personalities are associated with this era in New England?
10. How did most people make a living prior to this war? Did the war change that? If so, in what way?
11. At what age did youngsters go to college in this country during this era? Was there equal opportunity for girls and boys educationally and otherwise?
12. Were racial and societal prejudices prevalent during this time in history? Please explain.
13. What role did religion play during this time period?
14. Examine the history of British rule from the establishment of the New World.
15. Who ruled Great Britain at the time of this conflict. What was his feeling about it? Were the members of Parliament in agreement with this ruler?
16. Did the outcome of this conflict affect our relationship with other European nations? How?
17. Why did James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier, the brothers, write this novel?
18. Create a timeline for the Revolutionary War.
19. What was the purpose of the British Prison ships? How many were there and where did they stay?

## WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 - *My Brother Sam is Dead*

### PROMPT

You are going to read a story about a family torn apart by war. It is told through the eyes of Revolutionary Rebel Sam Meeker's younger brother, Tim Meeker. Tim must stay home and help the family while his older brother marches off in a flurry to fight the Lobsterbacks.

You have been assigned a topic about which you must find information. You are to read as much as you can about that topic. During the next class session, you will be asked to share the information you discovered with the class. All class members will take notes on the various topics covered. Drawing from this information, you will relate what you have learned by writing an informative composition on some aspect of the Revolutionary War.

### PREWRITING

You will go to the library. When you are there, use the library's resources to find information about your topic. Look for books, encyclopedias, articles in magazines- anything that will give you the information you require. Take a few notes as you read to help you remember the facts. After you have listened to other class members share and gathered your information, make a little outline, putting your facts in order.

### DRAFTING

You will need an introductory paragraph in which you introduce your topic.

In the body of your composition, put the "meat" of your research- the facts you found or heard in paragraph form. Each paragraph should have a topic sentence (a sentence letting the reader know what the paragraph will be about) followed by an explanation, examples, or details. In this case, you need a separate paragraph for each of the subtopics mentioned above.

Write a concluding paragraph in which you summarize the information you found and conclude your report.

### PROMPT

After you have finished a rough draft of your paper, revise it yourself until you are happy with your work. Then, ask a student who sits near you to tell you what he/she likes best about your work, and what things he/she thinks can be improved. Take another look at your composition keeping in mind your critic's suggestions, and make the revisions you feel are necessary.

### PROOFREADING

Do a final proofreading of your paper double-checking your grammar, spelling, organization, and the clarity of your ideas.