

Johnny Tremain



By

Esther Forbes

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

Johnny Tremain

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About the author: Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit novelstudies.org.

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Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on 1 chapter of *Johnny Tremain* and is comprised of five of the following activities:

- Before You Read
- Vocabulary Building
- Comprehension Questions
- Language Activities
- Extension Activities

Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to:

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

A principal expectation of the unit is that students will develop their skills in reading, writing, listening and oral communication, as well as in reasoning and critical thinking. Students will also be expected to provide clear answers to questions and well-constructed explanations. It is critical as well that students be able to relate events and the feelings of characters to their own lives and experiences and describe their own interpretation of a particular passage.

A strength of the unit is that students can work on the activities at their own pace. Every activity need not be completed by all students. A **portfolio cover** is included (p.7) so that students may organize their work and keep it all in one place. A **Student Checklist** is also included (p.6) so that a record of completed work may be recorded.

Themes which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include The American War of Independence, personal growth, courage and persistence, patriotism, loyalty and friendship.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homonyms
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *anagrams*
7. Listing compound words
8. Identifying parts of speech
9. Identify *personification*.
10. Identification of root words

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Complete Five W's Chart
4. Complete a Plot Outline for a Sequel
5. Identify the climax of the novel.

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Identify the protagonist/antagonist
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Compare characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Create a poem
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete an Observation Chart
9. Complete a KWS Chart
10. Create a friendly letter.

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Create a comic strip

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Synopsis

The year is 1773; the scene is Boston. Johnny Tremain is fourteen and apprenticed to a silversmith. He is gifted and clever and lords his talent over the other apprentices – until tragedy strikes. A crucible of molten silver breaks and the silver spills over Johnny's right hand. The hand is so badly burned, it's useless – and now, so is Johnny.

Since he is no longer able to become a silversmith, Johnny's life takes a new path, one that will bring him in touch with Paul Revere, John Hancock, Samuel Adams, and other Boston patriots and with all the exciting currents that will lead to the Boston Tea Party and the Battle of Lexington. Johnny's dream of being a silversmith may be dead, but he has discovered a new dream that will make him a part of American history. [The Publisher]

Author Biography

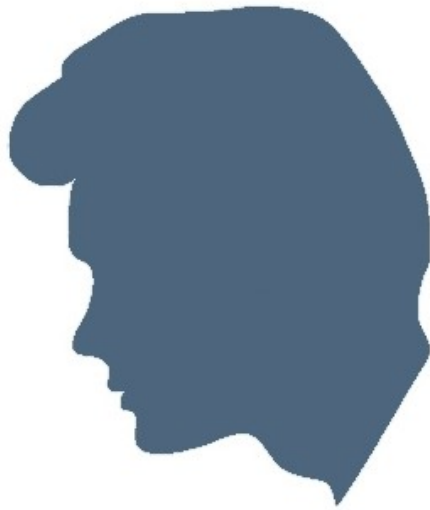
Esther Forbes

Esther was born in Westborough, Massachusetts in 1891. After attending college in her home state and university in Wisconsin, Esther returned to Worcester where she began working for the editorial department of Houghlin Mifflin Company. In 1926 she married, left her editor's position and moved to New York City.

Her first novel, *O Genteel Lady!* was published in 1926. Following her divorce in 1933 she returned to Worcester where she continued to write, including a biography of Paul Revere, "*Paul Revere and the World He Lived In*, which won her a Pulitzer Prize in 1942. The following year her best-known work, *Johnny Tremain* was published. Esther died in 1967 at the age of 76.



Johnny Tremain



By Esther Forbes

Name:

Johnny Tremain

By Esther Forbes

Chapter I



Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The main character of *Johnny Tremain* is, of course, Johnny Tremain, a fourteen-year-old boy whose misfortune thrusts him into the center of some of the most important events in American history. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you’ve seen. What do you think makes for an especially interesting **protagonist**?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

subdued	formidable	pious	reverie
unobtrusive	protuberant	sarcastic	innumerable

1. Father O'Reilly is a very _____ priest.
2. At last Mr. Lapham raised his _____ eyes.
3. The two little boys tried to be as _____ as possible around their cranky sister.
4. The amount of sardines caught by the fishermen was _____.
5. Charlotte was quite _____ after being scolded by the teacher.
6. The two huge defensemen proved to be a _____ pair.
7. “Try not to say anything _____ to make him upset,” his father suggested.
8. Chamberlain awoke from his _____ just in time to see his laptop disappear.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of the story at the beginning of Chapter One?

2. How would you describe Johnny's personality?

3. Match each character in the left column with the correct description in the right column.

1	Johnny Tremain		a	Handsome in a coarse-grained, red-face way.
2	Dove		b	Thirsted for elegance.
3	Dusty		c	Hair of gold.
4	Mr. Lapham		d	Bullied by Johnny.
5	Mrs. Lapham		e	Middle-aged and stout.
6	Cilla		f	The novel's protagonist.
7	Isannah		g	Eleven years old.
8	Madge		h	Venerable and dignified.
9	Dorcas		i	A mite spindly, but coming along fine.

4. Johnny is _____ years old when the story begins.

5. Why might it be dangerous for Johnny to treat Dove and Dusty so badly?

6. What plans did the Lapham family have for Johnny?

7. What was there about Johnny that concerned Mr. Lapham?

8. Why was Johnny asked to be present when Mr. Hancock gave his order to Mr. Lapham?

9. What was there about the Hancock order that Johnny found so difficult?

10. What clues did Johnny have that indicated that he might be related to Lyte?

Language Activities



A. Many authors enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here is such an example from Chapter One: Old Mr. Lapham had worked well...



Using your imagination, create your own examples of **alliteration** from the following topics. Each example must contain a minimum of three words.

A beautiful set of earrings.	
A noisy fish market.	
Your choice.	

B. **Personification** is giving human qualities to something that is not human. The following is an example from Chapter One: *The fine clothes seemed a little pathetic.*

Describe how this last sentence is an example of personification.

Create your own example of personification.

As you continue to read through the novel be on the lookout for other examples of this literary device. If you should find one, come back to this question and enter it below.

C. Cinquain Poems

A Cinquain poem has five lines and most often does not rhyme. Write two Cinquain poems about both **Johnny** and **Cilla**, using what you know about them from this chapter.

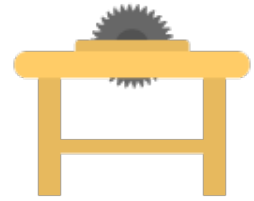
<p>Line 1 is one word. Line 2 is two words. Line 3 is three words. Line 4 is four words. Line five is one word.</p>	<p><i>Santa Saint Nick Long white beard Christmas Eve present-giver Jolly</i></p>
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Johnny

Cilla

D. Anagrams

An **anagram** is a word that is formed by changing the order of the letters of another word. For example, the letters in the word **WAS** can also form the word **SAW**. Follow these directions to form the anagrams:



a) read the clue in the right-hand column.

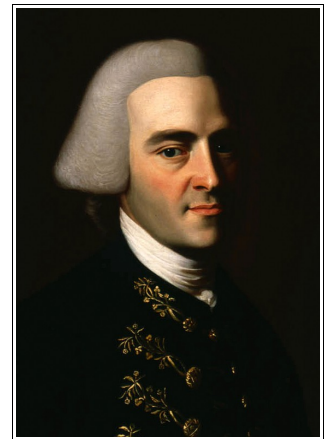
b) Using the word in the left-hand column move the letters around in any order, but you must use all the letters. All of the words in the left-hand column can be found in the first chapter of *Johnny Tremain*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
great		Shred.
pride		You might do this with a potato chip.
touch		Good manners.
table		Sound of a sheep.
remote		"Falling star."
remarks		Sometimes used for art work.
master		Creek.

E. John Hancock

Although John Hancock was an important patriot of the American Revolution, today he is best known for his stylish signature on the Declaration of Independence.

John Hancock plays a rather important role in the early chapters of this novel. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet investigate the life and accomplishments of this important figure. From the information gathered, write a one page report on Mr. Hancock on a separate sheet of paper. Your report should include personal information about this person (birthdate, place of birth, death date), accomplishments, how he achieved fame, etc.



Extension Activity



A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words



Use the three boxes to describe and illustrate the beginning, middle and end of this chapter.

Beginning Picture:	Beginning:
Middle Picture:	Middle:
Concluding Picture:	Concluding: