

Educator's Guide

REVOLUTIONARY ROGUES:

John André and Benedict Arnold

Did you know that before Benedict Arnold's name became synonymous with the word *traitor*, he was a Revolutionary War hero at the Battle of Saratoga? How did he go from being a hero in 1777 to a disgraced turncoat in 1780? In this fascinating look at Arnold's treasonous act, author Selene Castrovilla reveals the backstory behind Arnold's decision to betray his country.

John O'Brien's engaging illustrations combine with Castrovilla's text to eloquently describe what drove Arnold and John André to conspire together. Students will be riveted as they follow the tale of the plot to capture West Point for the British. This guide is designed to enhance their reading of the book and to encourage them to learn more about the Revolutionary War's heroes and traitors.

Common Core abbreviations used in this guide:

RI—Reading: Informational Text

W—Writing

L—Language

SL—Speaking & Listening

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH

- Who was Major John André? What was his military background? [CCSS Literacy RI 5.1]
- Who was Major General Benedict Arnold? What happened to him at the Battle of Saratoga in 1777? [CCSS Literacy RI 5.1]
- In May of 1779, “four years into the war,” André received a letter unexpectedly. Who sent it? Why did André think Peggy Shippen Arnold played a role in Benedict Arnold's decision to commit treason? [CCSS Literacy RI 5.1]
- “Of course, they would need a secret code to communicate. John labored to create one.” What does “labored” mean? How does the picture illustrate his labor? [CCSS Literacy RI 5.4 and 5.1]
- Over a year later, Arnold sat in a tavern “brewing resentment.” Why was he upset? Why had his work with André taken so long to come to fruition? [CCSS Literacy RI 5.8 and 5.1]
- When André and Arnold were finally set to “meet and settle matters,” Arnold hoped to deliver something extra to the British. What or whom did he have in mind? [CCSS Literacy RI 5.1]
- “Seventeen miles from West Point,” André waited for Arnold. What ship had brought him there? What were his commander's instructions? What would happen if André was caught? [CCSS Literacy RI 5.1]
- When André awoke the day after their meeting, how did he feel when he spied the *Vulture* from his window? What would happen to change his mood? [CCSS Literacy RI 5.1]
- What did Arnold think of André? What did Arnold insist André do? What did André hide in his boots? [CCSS Literacy RI 5.3 and 5.1]
- Look at the illustrations on the pages where Arnold and André are on horseback. How do you know who is who? How can you tell what time of year it is just by looking at the illustrations? [CCSS Literacy RI 5.1]
- Who captured André? What did they plan to do with him? [CCSS Literacy RI 5.1]
- After his capture, to whom did André write a letter? Why? [CCSS Literacy RI 5.1]
- What was Arnold's reaction when he read the note about André's capture? What did he do next? [CCSS Literacy RI 5.1]
- Arnold's crew paddled him out to the *Vulture*. What did Arnold ask his crew to do? What did he do when his crew refused? [CCSS Literacy RI 5.1]
- What happened to André? What became of Arnold? Who was considered a hero? Whose name would always be synonymous with *traitor*? [CCSS Literacy RI 5.1]

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

- Benedict Arnold said: “Self preservation is the first principle of human nature.” What is self-preservation? Do you think Arnold was motivated by self-preservation? What do you think motivated John André? [CCSS Literacy L 5.4 and SL 5.1]
- What did André promise Arnold when they met “on a bed of needles to settle the payment”? Did André keep his promise? How did Arnold feel at the end of the book, sitting “in André's chair, surrounded by André's belongings” at British headquarters? Read the aftermath at the end of the book. To whom is history kinder—André or Arnold? Pretend you are a historian. Write an essay defending either André or Arnold. [CCSS Literacy RI 5.1 and W 5.1]
- “Benedict wrote a letter to Washington, insisting he'd acted out of love for his country. He appealed: protect Peggy . . . He also excused Joshua Hett Smith, who knew nothing of the plot.” Was Arnold telling the truth when he wrote to Washington? Do you think Washington believed him? Why or why not? Read the aftermath at the end of the book. What was Washington's opinion of Arnold? [CCSS Literacy SL 5.1]
- There are several words in the book that may be new to you. Look up the meaning of the following: espionage, intrigue, treason, contempt, martyred, gallant, and valiant. What words are used to describe André in the book? What words are associated with Arnold? [CCSS Literacy L 5.4 and SL 5.1]

EXTRA CREDIT

- John André created a secret code to communicate with Benedict Arnold. Cryptography is the art of writing or solving codes. Take a look at this fascinating video series on cryptography: <https://www.khanacademy.org/computing/computer-science/cryptography/crypt/v/intro-to-cryptography> Try creating your own cipher and writing your own coded messages.
- The author uses several turns of phrase in the book like “standard of living,” “no-man's-land,” and “toast of the town.” These sayings function as a kind of shorthand because they use just a few words to say something that might otherwise take many words. What do these terms mean? What are some sayings that you use?
- “The key fort Benedict Arnold conspired to hand over to the British is now the United States Military Academy at West Point, a renowned and distinguished college and training facility for the U.S. Army.” What are the other service academies in the United States? Where are they located?

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