The Liberty Pole

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Teacher’s Guide

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Reading Level 4th Grade or Above • Read Aloud For All Ages
Activities Correlated To National Standards

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The Liberty Pole

This story, based on a true event, will give students a unique perspective on the Revolutionary War. This guide will provide you with vocabulary lists, reading comprehension questions, extension activities (History in the Making) and discussion points or journal prompts to enhance the learning experience.

Summary of the Story

The Liberty Pole is based on a true event that took place in Holmes Hole (present day Tisbury) on Martha’s Vineyard sometime between 1775 and 1778. As the story indicates, Tisbury was sympathetic to the patriot cause, but had no choice but to remain neutral in the early years of the war. The women of the town did stage their own "tea party" though, and there were other acts of defiance as time went on, including the raising of the Liberty Pole. Soon afterward the men of the town formed the Sea Coast Defense and actively joined the rebellion. Little is known about the Liberty Pole event other than the fact that three young girls blew it up rather than see it commandeered by a British Man-of-War. In the story, a young woman named Polly Daggett works with her friends to protest what they believe to be the repressive British rule. When the Revolutionary War begins, Polly’s friend Caleb, a young man about whom she cares deeply, is killed and the town erects a flagpole – The Liberty Pole – in his honor. Then British want to use the town’s symbolic flagpole as a mast on their ship. Polly and her friends must act and so they blow up the Liberty Pole.
Chapter 1 – Three Peas

Vocabulary
Have students look up the following words in the dictionary and write the definitions and identify the root word where appropriate. The definitions are provided here for your use.

Wafted: to go gently and smoothly through the air or over water
Passel: a large quantity or group
Countenance: appearance or face
Intolerable: impossible to endure
Exuberance: the condition of being filled with joy

Reading Comprehension Questions
1. Why did the British close the port of Boston?
   They closed the port because the colonists threw tea that was not paid for into the harbor.
   The event was known as the Boston Tea Party.

2. Where does Polly’s father work?
   He works at Allen’s Tavern

3. Why does Polly’s mother call the girls “three peas in a pod?”
   She calls them “three peas in a pod” because they are always together.

History in the Making
The Intolerable Acts were laws passed by the British that many colonists believed were unfair. Have students look back through the chapter to identify some of these acts. Then they can search through the newspaper for an example of a law they believe is unfair. How could they change or rewrite the law to make it fair? You may want them to go online to learn more about the Intolerable Acts.

Talk or Write About It
Polly is a young woman growing up in a turbulent time. She is fortunate to have the support of good friends to help her. Ask your students to talk or write about situations in
which they depend on their friends for support. Do your students think they are living in turbulent times? Why?

Learning Standards: making and interpreting laws, synthesizing information

Chapter 2 - The Freedom of the Colonies

Vocabulary
Have students look up the following words in the dictionary and write the definitions and identify the root word where appropriate. The definitions are provided here for your use.

Bluff: a steep cliff or riverbank
Transient: passing with time
Recuperate: to return to health
Unprecedented: having no previous example
Breech: to break an agreement
Sanctions: penalties for non-compliance with laws

Reading Comprehension Questions
1. How many people live in Holmes Hole?
   There were 225 people living in Holmes Hole.

2. Why did England levy a Stamp Tax against the colonies?
   The British levied a tax to help pay for the French and Indian War

3. Why did Polly start blushing?
Polly adored Caleb and she didn’t realize he was working with her father when she first arrived at Allen’s Tavern.

History in the Making
Many Americans believed the damage between the Colonies and England was beyond repair and that war was inevitable. Have the students use the newspaper to find any wars in the news. Have them decide if war is necessary to solve this conflict or if there are other means for a resolution. They can write an editorial to express their opinions.
Talk or Write About It
Holmes Hole is a small town. How does it compare to the place where your students live? Have them write a side-by-side comparison of life in Holmes Hole and life where they live.

Learning Standards: writing editorials, explaining how nations interact

Chapter 3 - Of Sons and Daughters

Vocabulary
Have students look up the following words in the dictionary and write the definitions and identify the root word where appropriate. The definitions are provided here for your use.

Ebulience: zestful enthusiasm
Perceptible: detectable
Artisans: craftspeople
Reinforcements: additional personnel or equipment sent to support a military action

Reading Comprehension Questions
1. What caused the bump beneath Caleb’s shirt?
He wore the pine tree emblem of the Sons of Liberty under his shirt.

2. Where is the meeting being held?
It will be held at the Daggett home.

3. Why does Papa tell Polly to “Hush?”
He wants her to be quiet because there are British spies everywhere.

History in the Making
Polly wants to join the Sons of Liberty, a group of colonists who are fighting for their freedom from the British. Have the students look in the newspaper for other groups that are fighting for their freedom. They can write a description of the group and its goals.

Talk or Write About It
Caleb wears the Sons of Liberty emblem around his neck. Why do your students think he wears that? Ask students to talk about emblems they wear as necklaces. What do those symbolize? Why do we have symbols? Why do they wear them?
Also allow time for a discussion about some of Polly’s father’s statements about girls. (Such as, “they have wagging tongues.”) What do your students think of these stereotypes about women?

Learning Standards: understanding the roles of groups in government, identifying main idea

Chapter 4 – The Daughters of Liberty

Vocabulary
Have students look up the following words in the dictionary and write the definitions and identify the root word where appropriate. The definitions are provided here for your use.

Admiration: a feeling of pleasure
Pert: trim and stylish in appearance
Fervent: showing great emotion
Solemnly: deeply earnest and somber

Reading Comprehension Questions
1. What is Polly’s idea?
She wants all the women in Holmes Hole to throw their tea in the sea.

2. Why don’t Mrs. Allen and the girls want the men to know about the plan?
If the men don’t know about it, then they can’t be punished for the act.

3. Why does Nell hesitate to join the Daughters of Liberty?
She is afraid there will be a war.

History in the Making
The Daughters of Liberty are planning to protest because the colonists have no say in the rules that are imposed on them by the British. Have the students write a time line of events that led up to the decision to protest. Then they can look in the newspaper for other political events that are happening. Have them write an action plan for arranging one of these events.
Talk or Write About It
Throwing tea into the water is a non-violent method of protest. What other non-violent protest events can your students recall reading about? Are they familiar with Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott, for example? Which do your students think is a more productive form of protest – violent or non-violent?

Learning Standards: understanding alternative resolutions to public issues organizing activities

Chapter 5 – Pews and Steeples

Vocabulary
Have students look up the following words in the dictionary and write the definitions and identify the root word where appropriate. The definitions are provided here for your use.

Reluctantly: unwillingly
Skittish: restlessly active
Frothy: foamy
Menacingly:-threateningly
Begrudgingly: to give with reluctance

Reading Comprehension Questions
1. Why didn’t the British know that the men of the village were meeting?
The British were busy drinking in the inns of Holmes Hole so they didn’t notice.

2. Why do some of the men think that one of the selectmen is a traitor?
That selectman believes that if the people of Holmes Hole remain neutral they can continue to make money from the British and use it to support the colonies. Since he’s not in favor of rebellion, others feel that he is a traitor.

3. Besides making money for the cause, what other reason does Mr. Allen give for remaining neutral?
They will be able to hear the British secrets and other information.

History in the Making
The British Monarchy was suppressing the freedoms of the Americans. Many of those freedoms are guaranteed in the Bill of Rights. The first amendment guarantees the right
to free speech, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, the right to assemble and to petition the government. Have the students explain how some of these rights were not given to the Americans using examples from this chapter. Then they can search through the newspaper for other examples of people exercising their rights.

**Talk or Write About It**

Of all the rights in the Bill of Rights, which do your students think is the most important? Have them discuss this and then to write an essay offering their opinion.

Learning Standards: understanding the Constitution of the United States, writing for fluency

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**Chapter 6 – A Prudent Course**

**Vocabulary**

Have students look up the following words in the dictionary and write the definitions and identify the root word where appropriate. The definitions are provided here for your use.

Unbidden: not invited
Prudent: wise in handling practical matters
Adulation: excessive flattery
Muddled: mixed confusedly

**Reading Comprehension Questions**

1. Why does Polly consider calling off the tea party?
   She thinks it might provoke the British to attack.

2. Why does Polly say she is glum?
   She wants to fight in the war.

3. What important things does Polly have to do?
   She is planning for the Daughters of Liberty to make their stand.

**History in the Making**

Caleb says that Polly should “Just stick to your woman’s work and let the men worry about the important things.” Have the students discuss how Polly reacts to Caleb’s
suggestion. The students can use the newspaper to illustrate how women are doing the same work that men do.

**Talk or Write About It**

In today’s American military, women do many of the same jobs that men do but they are still not supposed to be involved directly in combat. What do your students think about this? If women had been allowed to serve back then, do they think Polly would have wanted to go and fight? Why?

Learning Standards: understanding stereotyping, responding analytically

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**Chapter 7 – Tea Time**

**Vocabulary**

Have students look up the following words in the dictionary and write the definitions and identify the root word where appropriate. The definitions are provided here for your use.

- Proclaimed: announced officially
- Flirtatious: full of playful allure
- Detain: to delay
- Grudging: reluctant to give

**Reading Comprehension Questions**

1. What did the two British Regulars do to stop the march?
   They shouted “Halt!” and held out their guns horizontally to bar the way.

2. What does Nell’s mother tell the Redcoats is in the bundles?
   She says it is refreshments.

3. Why does Captain Chase allow the woman and girls to board the ferry?
   He lets them because his wife threatens him.

**History in the Making**

The British soldiers’ responsibilities include inspecting cargo and preventing the colonists from causing trouble. What other duties are part of a soldier’s responsibility? Have the students skim through the newspaper to find out what soldiers are doing around
the world. What is the objective of their service? Have them write a list of duties and responsibilities.

**Talk or Write About It**
How would your students describe the character and personalities of the women involved in this protest? Are they admirable women? Why?

Learning Standards: recognizing the responsibilities of citizens, writing for different purposes

**Chapter 8 – Tea Overboard**

**Vocabulary**
Have students look up the following words in the dictionary and write the definitions and identify the root word where appropriate. The definitions are provided here for your use.

- Escapade: adventure
- Coffers: financial resources
- Abruptly: suddenly
- Incredulously: disbelieving
- Deflated: to release air from

**Reading Comprehension**
1. What is the name of the British ship?
The name of the ship is the Sovereign.

2. Why did Mrs. Chase want the captain on deck?
She wanted the captain to see and to hear the protest.

3. How did Polly feel during the protest?
She was nervous and her stomach was fluttering.

**History in the Making**
Have the students compare and contrast the different reactions of the British, the protesting women and the men standing on the shore. How did the tea party affect the three groups? Have the students look in the newspaper for a group conflict. They should design a graphic organizer to show the differences between the groups involved.
Talk or Write About It
Why was Polly disappointed in the reaction of the British to the tea protest? What type of reaction was she hoping for? Why do your students think the British did not react that way?

Learning Standards: comparing, contrasting, creating graphic organizers

Chapter 9 – An Uninvited Guest

Vocabulary
Have students look up the following words in the dictionary and write the definitions and identify the root word where appropriate. The definitions are provided here for your use.

Accessibility: approachability
Petulantly: irritably
Jittery: nervous

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Why was the militia formed by the colonies called the “Minutemen”?
They were called the “Minutemen” because they were ready to fight at a moment’s notice.

2. Where does Abel want to be?
He would rather be home on his farm in Yorkshire back in England.

3. Why does Polly think she may be a traitor?
She thinks of Abel as almost a member of the family and not the enemy.

History in the Making
The First Continental Congress voted to stop trade with England and to support the colonists in Boston because England had closed their port. The Congress composed a statement of American complaints -- The Declaration of Rights and Grievances -- and it was addressed to King George. Have the students compile the list of grievances that concern the people of Holmes Hole. The students should then find an article in the newspaper about a problem and write up a list of complaints that need to be addressed.
Talk or Write About It
Ask your students to think about the lesson Polly is learning from her warm feelings about Abel. Why are those feelings hard for her to understand?

Caleb comes in at the end of the chapter and makes an announcement about something that has begun. To what do your students think he is referring?

Learning Standards: evaluating responses to human indignity,

Chapter 10 – War Begins

Vocabulary
Have students look up the following words in the dictionary and write the definitions and identify the root word where appropriate. The definitions are provided here for your use.

Barrage: a concentrated outpouring
Militia: an army composed of ordinary citizens
Munitions: weapons
Sobering: marked by seriousness

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. What were Hancock and Adams planning to attend?
   They were planning to attend the 2nd Continental Congress in Philadelphia.

2. How many American casualties were there at Lexington?
   There were 8 dead and 10 wounded.

3. If the British army is trapped, why isn’t the war over?
   The British still control the seas.

History in the Making
Caleb gives a description of the battles at Lexington and Concord. Ask students to discuss the advantages and disadvantages both the Americans and British have. Have them search through their newspapers to find articles and photos of other battles being
fought. Have the students write their own descriptions of the fighting. Are there any similarities between the war in the story and the war in the news?

Talk or Write About It
Ask students to write a journal entry about this chapter from Caleb’s point of view. Also ask students why the British soldiers are referred to as “Lobsterbacks?”

Learning Standards: writing descriptions, understanding similarities and differences

Chapter 11 – To Arms

Vocabulary
Have students look up the following words in the dictionary and write the definitions and identify the root word where appropriate. The definitions are provided here for your use.

- Agitated: annoyed
- Reprimanded: scolded
- Intentions: course of action one intends to follow
- Skirmishes: minor battles

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Who were some of the young men who joined the fighting?
Some of the young men were Polly’s oldest brother Sam, Maria’s cousin William, and Caleb.

2. Who is the Commander in Chief of the American Continental Army?
George Washington is appointed Commander in Chief.

3. How do the women of Holmes Hole spend the fall?
They make coats for the soldiers.

History in the Making
Polly, Maria and Nell question whether fighting a war is the right thing to do. Challenge your students to decide for themselves when it is acceptable to use violence as a solution. They should find examples in the newspaper to support their point of view.
Talk or Write About It
Ask your students to talk about what their lives would have been like if they had lived in Holmes Hole at the time that this story took place. Would they have wanted to live back then? Why? If they were one of the girls stuck at home while the boys were fighting, how would they have dealt with that? Students can write a fictional letter from Polly to Caleb or from Caleb to Polly.

Learning Standards: making ethical and moral decisions, understanding point of view

Chapter 12 – Bad News

Vocabulary
Have students look up the following words in the dictionary and write the definitions and identify the root word where appropriate. The definitions are provided here for your use.

Treason: violation of allegiance to one’s country
Unique: special
Conceived: formed in the mind

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. What is the name of the pamphlet and who is the author?
The pamphlet is called Common Sense. Thomas Paine wrote it.

2. Why doesn’t Abel want Polly to read Common Sense in front of him?
Abel thinks that reading the material is an act of treason.

3. Why are the people of Holmes Hole so upset?
They are upset because Caleb was killed fighting the British.

History in the Making
Have the students reread the passages in the story that quote and/or refer specifically to the content of Thomas Paine’s Common Sense. In their own words, have them discuss why the document was so important to the colonist’s cause. They can check out the Web site at
www.constitution.org/civ/comsense.htm to read Common Sense in its entirety. The words of Thomas Paine were a powerful inspiration to the colonists. The students can
look through the newspaper for an article that is powerfully written. Have them explain what makes the article so inspirational.

**Talk or Write About It**
Have your students ever lost anyone they cared about? They may want to talk about how that feels and what Polly, Nell and Maria are going through.

Learning Standards: expressing opinions, evaluating writing styles

**Chapter 13 – The Liberty Pole**

**Vocabulary**
Have students look up the following words in the dictionary and write the definitions and identify the root word where appropriate. The definitions are provided here for your use.

Assurances: promises
Benign: not harmful
Furl: to roll up and secure
Donned: to put on (clothing)

**Reading Comprehension Questions**
1. Why did the people of Holmes Hole think Caleb did not die in vain?
The Americans won the battle of Dorchester Heights where he died.

2. What does the flag look like?
The flag has a green tree with a white background.

3. How old was Caleb when he died?
Caleb was seventeen.

**History in the Making**
The green pine tree on the Massachusetts flag symbolizes the Freedom Tree under which the Sons of Liberty often rallied in Boston. Have the students brainstorm a list of important symbols that they are familiar with. Then send the students on a newspaper search for symbols and to identify what each one represents. They can make a chart of the results.
Talk or Write About It
What does the expression, “to die in vain” mean? Ask students to talk about the value of any one person’s life. What would they like to be remembered for after their lives are over?

At the end of the chapter, Polly’s father is agitated. He grabs his gun. What do your students predict will happen next? What do they think he is so upset about?

Learning Standards: understanding historical themes, locating information

Chapter 14 – A Plan Emerges

Vocabulary
Have students look up the following words in the dictionary and write the definitions and identify the root word where appropriate. The definitions are provided here for your use.

Astonishment: shocked surprise
Commandeered: took control of
Distraught: extremely upset
Boisterous: loud and noisy
Travesty: a grotesque imitation

Reading Comprehension Questions
1. What happened to the mast of the Unicorn?
The mast snapped in the storm.

2. Why can’t Mr. Daggett go outside?
The men and boys are under house arrest until the Liberty Pole is taken.

3. What is Polly’s plan?
She wants to destroy the Liberty Pole so the British can’t use it.

History in the Making
Seth Daggett is incensed because the British are going to use the Liberty pole as a mast for the Man-of-War, Unicorn. He knows the colonists could make another Liberty Pole but he is firm in the belief that this Liberty Pole honors Caleb. The students can do a newspaper search for someone who is strong in their principles. What is his/her issue and
why do they hold this belief? The students can also discuss what principles are important to them. What would they sacrifice to defend their principles?

**Talk or Write About It**
Why do your students think the Liberty Pole became such an important symbol? What does it really represent to the people of Holmes Hole? Why can’t they just put up another similar flagpole?

Learning Standard: analyzing social and political issues, justifying a personal belief

**Chapter 15 – Cat on the Prowl**

**Vocabulary**
Have students look up the following words in the dictionary and write the definitions and identify the root word where appropriate. The definitions are provided here for your use.

Obliged: to do a service for  
Fidgeted: to move nervously  
Auger: a hand tool

**Reading Comprehension Questions**
1. Why wasn’t Polly able to open the window at first?  
The window was swollen because of the rain.

2. Why did Polly rip her skirt?  
She needed the cloth to light the gunpowder.

3. What did Maria and Nell bring?  
Maria brought a pan of coals and Nell brought gunpowder.

**History in the Making**
Abel is conflicted about his role as a British soldier dealing with the Daggetts. Have the students write a character analysis of Abel’s behavior. The students should focus on how Abel supports the Daggetts in his capacity as a soldier. The class can use the newspaper to write a character analysis of someone in the news. How does the character and personality of the person impact on the story?
Talk or Write About It
Ask students to consider whether Abel is a hero?

Learning Standards: analyzing characters, using ethics to evaluate conduct

Chapter 16 – Girls Light the Way

Vocabulary
Have students look up the following words in the dictionary and write the definitions and identify the root word where appropriate. The definitions are provided here for your use.

Perplexed: confused
Contemplated: thought about carefully
Disposition: personality

Reading Comprehension Questions
1. Why does Polly think the soldiers won’t notice the hole? The soldiers had too much rum.
2. Why is Polly able to throw the rock into the water? Polly’s brothers taught her to throw.
3. Who suspects the girls are behind the mystery of the Liberty Pole? Abel thinks the girls are responsible.

History in the Making
The Daughters of Liberty were able to delay the ship so it could not fire on the colonists’ troops. Their tiny organization was able to save some lives. Have the class discuss whether or not they approve of the actions that the Daughters of Liberty took. The class can look through the newspaper for other organizations that are fighting for their cause. The students can do an analysis of the organization and its work.

Talk or Write About It
Would the girls of Holmes Hole be considered terrorists? Why?

Learning Standards: analyzing information, understanding how experience affects actions