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SECONDARY EDUCATION

The British Are Coming

The Graphic Edition, Volume 1

By RICK ATKINSON
Adapted by NORA NEUS
Illustrated by FEDERICO PIETROBON

Ten Speed Graphic | Paperback | 9780593799321 | 272 pages | \$26.99
Also available in eBook format

Guide written by Ronell Whitaker,
Assistant Principal & ELA Educator

ABOUT THE BOOK

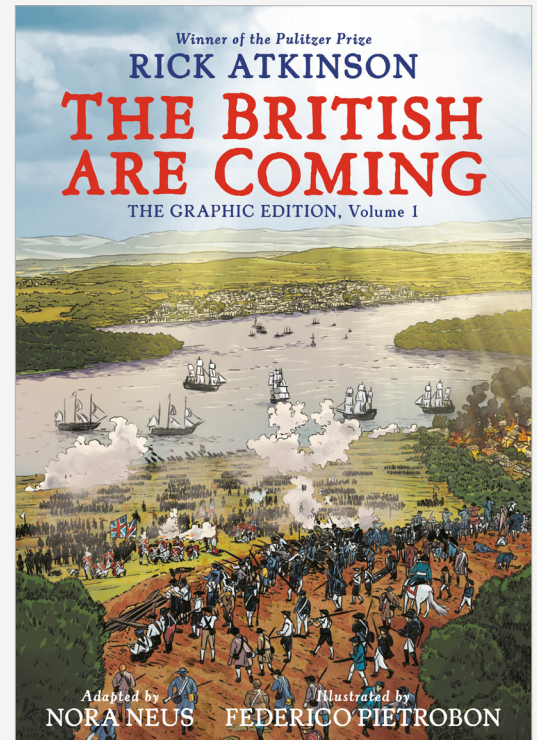
From the battles at Lexington and Concord in the spring of 1775 through the Siege of Boston in 1776, American militiamen and the newly created Continental Army take on the world's most formidable adversary: the British Empire. The gripping saga is alive with astonishing characters: Henry Knox, the former bookseller with an uncanny understanding of artillery; Nathanael Greene, the blue-eyed bumpkin who becomes a brilliant battle captain; Benjamin Franklin, the self-made man who proves to be the wiliest of diplomats; and George Washington, the commander in chief who learns the difficult art of leadership when the war seems all but lost. The story is also told from the British perspective, making the mortal conflict between redcoats and rebels all the more compelling.

Full of riveting details and iconic stories, *The British Are Coming* is a tale of heroes and knaves, of sacrifice and blunder, of redemption and profound suffering. Expertly rendered in gripping graphic novel-style artwork, the battle for our nation's independence is brought to life like never before. Discover the first act of America's creation in this vividly illustrated graphic history.

Teacher's Guide

Includes:

**IMPORTANT GRAPHIC NOVEL/COMIC
TERMS, READING A GRAPHIC NOVEL/
COMIC, PRE-READING ACTIVITIES,
CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES, and
OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER
READING & VIEWING**



ABOUT THE CREATORS

Rick Atkinson is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of seven previous works of history, including *The Long Gray Line*, the Liberation Trilogy (*An Army at Dawn*, *The Day of Battle*, and *The Guns at Last Light*), and *The British Are Coming*, the first volume of the Revolution Trilogy. He has won numerous awards, including Pulitzer Prizes for history and journalism.

Nora Neus is an Emmy-nominated producer, author, and freelance journalist with bylines in CNN, *The Guardian*, *Teen Vogue*, *Vice*, *Politico*, *The Washington Post*, and more. She is the author of two history books for adults, *24 Hours in Charlottesville: An Oral History of the Stand Against White Supremacy* and *24 Hours at the Capitol: An Oral History of the January 6 Insurrection*, as well as two graphic novels for young readers.

Federico Pietrobon studied at the Milan School of Comics and began his career as a colorist. He has collaborated with major European publishers including Glénat, Soleil, Le Lombard, and Les Humanoïdes, illustrating and coloring a wide range of works including *Deep*, *Alice Matheson*, *Escape This*, and *The History of Italian Cuisine in Comics*. Other projects include the Heavy Metal series *Death Defied* and the graphic novel *Le Zoo de Brussane*.

NOTE TO TEACHERS

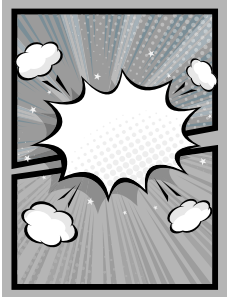
The visual nature of comics often makes for a faster reading experience, but it would be a good idea to encourage students to slow down and focus on the visual language of the book as well as the text. Visual literacy is a powerful skill, and having students strengthen their abilities in this area will only add to their understanding and enjoyment of this text. Also, keep in mind when grappling with this material that you and your students will be asked to examine images and topics that may be difficult for them to navigate without proper preparation and support. If you have your own community norms and discussion protocols in place, you may be in a good place already. However, teachers looking for more support may want to consider resources like Matthew R. Kay's *Not Light, but Fire: How to Lead Meaningful Race Conversations in the Classroom* and Lorena German's *Textured Teaching: A Framework for Culturally Sustaining Practices*. While both texts are more centered on culturally responsive pedagogy, both offer great resources on having conversations in class around challenging topics.

IMPORTANT GRAPHIC NOVEL/COMIC TERMS

Bleed	Images that run outside the border of the panel.
Captions	Contain information about a scene or character.
Speech Bubble	Contain character dialogue; communication between/among characters. The pointer/tail signifies who is speaking.



IMPORTANT GRAPHIC NOVEL/COMIC TERMS

Graphic Weight	A term that describes the way some images draw the eye more than others, creating a definite focus using color and shading in various ways.
Gutters	Space between panels where the reader infers movement/ action between panels.
Panels	Space between panels where the reader infers movement/ action between panels.
Sound Effect	Words that show sound is happening. 
Splash Page	One image or panel that takes up an entire comic page. 
Thought Balloons	Contain a character's thoughts. 
Writer	Individual who writes the story and has the overall vision of how the story will go. They write the dialogue and how the story will progress.
Penciler	Primary artist. This person takes the script and draws the comic. They draw the comic in pencil which then gets inked and colored later on.
Creator(s)	The entire creative team on a book (writer, penciler, inker, colorist, letterer, etc.) who came together to collectively tell and present the story. All of their decisions work together to influence the end product of a comic/graphic novel.

READING A GRAPHIC NOVEL/COMIC

Captions

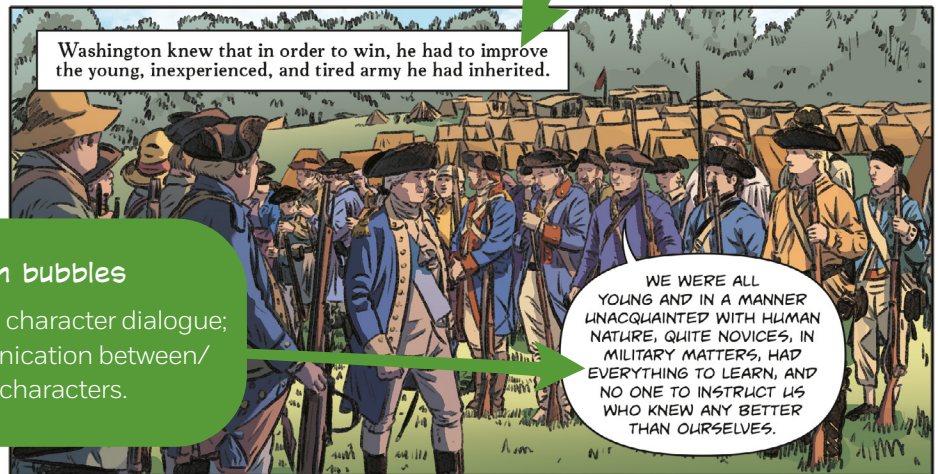
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about a scene or character.

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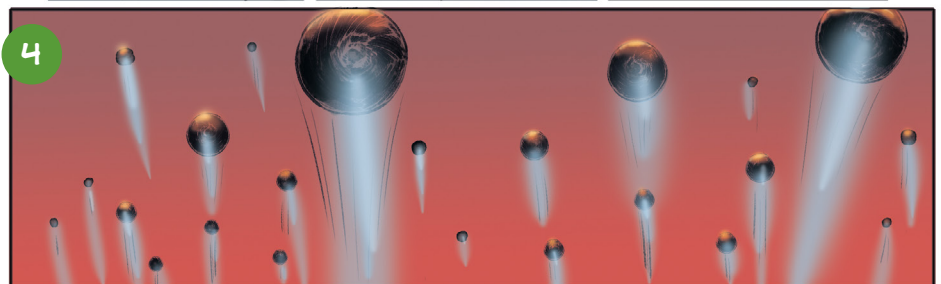
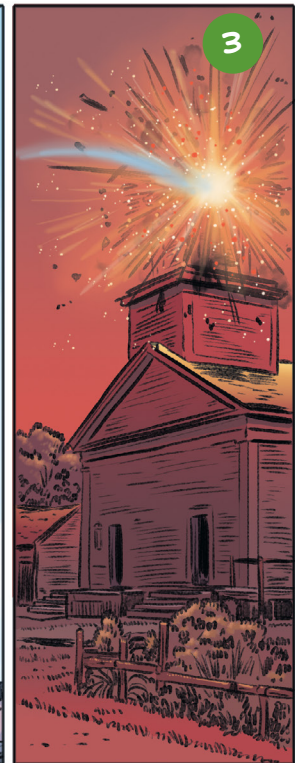
Panels

Squares or rectangles that
contain a single scene/image.

READING A GRAPHIC NOVEL/COMIC

Remember: Read from left to right,
and prioritize top to bottom.
The panels below are numbered
for reading order.

Start reading the highest or
most left text first. Especially when
more than one person is speaking.



READING A
GRAPHIC NOVEL/COMIC

Now you give it a try. Number the panels in their correct reading order.



PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

PAIRED TEXT PRE-READING

Read Thomas Paine's *The American Crisis* alongside King George III's *Proclamation of Rebellion*. Discuss how these two writers use language and rhetoric to frame the conflict for their audience. How does the King's description of a rebellion differ from Paine's description of resistance?

MYTH VS. TRUTH

The Revolutionary War is heavily mythologized in American culture. Throughout the text, a more grounded view of these larger-than-life historical figures is presented. Create a chart to track each person's myth versus how they are portrayed in the text. We've listed some below, but you should add any other people or events you've heard about.

Person/Event	Myth	Reality
Paul Revere		
Boston Tea Party		
George Washington		
Battle of Bunker Hill		

MAPPING LOGISTICS

Use Google Maps, Apple Maps, or any other navigation tool to chart the distance between many of the points of interest. For example, Colonel Benedict Arnold traveled 270 miles in 45 days from Massachusetts to Quebec by flat boat and largely by foot. Using modern infrastructure this trek would take six hours by car. Have students discuss how the lack of modern infrastructure and modern transportation could have impacted communication, supplies, troop health, and any other things they may notice.

READING COMICS AND GRAPHIC NOVELS ACTIVITY

1. Have students reflect on their experience with graphic novels. Have they ever read a graphic novel, comic, or manga? If yes, what did they like and/or dislike about the experience? If no, what do they anticipate they will like/and or dislike about reading a graphic novel? How is it different than reading a prose book? How is the reading experience different between graphic novels and a prose book? How might the reader have to think differently to read a graphic novel than when they read a prose book?

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

- For students who are familiar with reading the graphic medium, have them reflect on how reading a historical or nonfiction graphic novel/comic compares to reading a fictional story in the same format. What is the difference? How are they similar? What is the impact on the reader in each instance? How might the creators handle the texts differently?

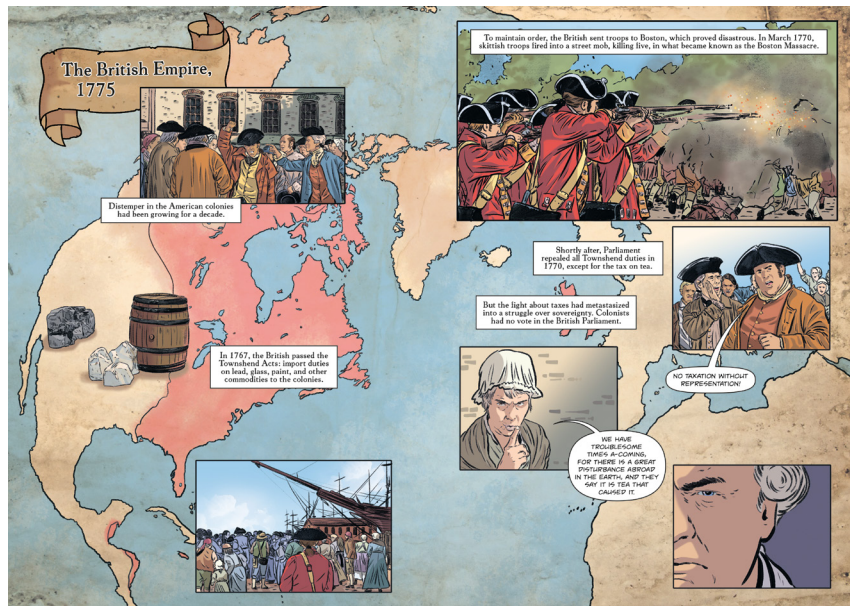
GLOSSARY

While some of these terms are not directly in the text, they are important concepts to know when interacting with and thinking about the text:

- Characterize
- Artillery
- Blockade
- Militia
- Myth
- Primary source

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- The book opens with a splash page establishing the setting at the onset of the book. How do the creators visualize the state of affairs in the colonies and in Britain?



- How is the scale of the British military machine established through pages 22–26?
- Look at the gutters and paneling during the attack at Lexington. How does the structure convey the chaos of the British attack? Which panels best convey the brutality of the battle? Explain.
- Early in the book, there is mention of how the militias were hastily formed and outmatched. What visual cues differentiate the professional British soldiers from the colonial militias?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

5. Many times, the creators signify the use of primary sources in dialogue. What impact does that have on you as the reader? How does the artist visually distinguish direct quotes from historical primary sources (like letters, diary entries, or official reports) from standard dialogue or narration?
6. Which panels best capture some of the ways the militia had some advantages in fighting the war on their home terrain?
7. How does the artist use a splash page to visualize the way news and information traveled throughout the colonies?
8. When George Washington is introduced, how is he visually characterized? How do the other people describe him?
9. Without relying on text, how does the artist depict the devastating impact of large armaments during the battles?
10. How do the visual depictions of the battles compare to your previous ideas about the Revolutionary War?



11. On pages 82–84, the commanders of each force describe the situations of their respective fighting forces. Compare the living conditions of the British camp and that of the American soldiers.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

12. How does the artist's use of lighting, color, and setting highlight the devastation of the various battles in the book?
13. As the Americans decide whether to attack Canada, what are some of the pros and cons the text lays out for this course of action?
14. When the British armada arrives, how is scale used to make the reader feel the Continental Army's impending doom?
15. How does the pacing of the panels speed up or slow down to reflect the disposition of the American soldiers as they approach Fort Ticonderoga? How does that compare to their assault on Fort St. John?
16. Focus on Montgomery's facial expressions. How is his realization of his own tactical errors visually communicated?
17. How do the creators depict the toll of travel on both forces throughout the book? What are some examples from the text? What were some of the challenges the American forces faced?



18. Track the visual deterioration of the American army as they head into Canada. How do their uniforms and postures change from earlier in the book?
19. How does the artist depict the civilian reaction to the occupying forces throughout the book? Look at the background characters.
20. Why does the Earl of Dunmore's plan to free rebel slaves to fight for Britain fail?
21. What might be ironic about the failure of Dunmore's plan on the part of Americans?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

22. The creators use maps throughout the book for various purposes. What overall effect does the inclusion of these visual artifacts have on your experience as a reader?
23. How do the panels build suspense as the Battle of Boston builds and concludes?
24. How does the concluding imagery summarize the impact of the war on both countries?
25. If you had to choose a single panel from the book that best defines the rebellion's will to survive, which would it be? Why?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

THE POWER OF THE GRAPHIC NOVEL FORMAT

Analyze how the conventions of the graphic novel medium (e.g., paneling, color, visual metaphor, word balloons, visual juxtaposition of eras) are essential to the storytelling in *The British Are Coming*. Choose at least three distinct visual techniques and explain how they effectively convey themes, emotional depth, or the complex, nonlinear structure that a traditional prose novel might struggle to achieve.

FROM PRIMARY SOURCE TO PANEL

Create your own short comic further exploring primary sources from the time like the Olive Branch Petition or one of King George III's speeches. For students who are truly hesitant to draw, this can be modified to a comic script. Here is a link to a comic script template (www.comicsexperience.com/scripts) as well as an example script (prhlink.com/examplescript) from Fred Van Lente's *Archer and Armstrong*, provided by Comics Experience. If you have access to technology, there are multiple online templates to use (you can even use Google Docs/Slides, Apple Pages/Keynote, Microsoft Word/PowerPoint to create the traditional panel grids), but students can just as easily separate their paper into boxes themselves.

PASSING ON THE LEARNING

Write a mini-unit pitch on how you would use the graphic novel to teach one of the following concepts: **a.** The horrors of linear warfare, **b.** the impact of logistics in history, **c.** reimagining the founding myth. Deliver your pitch as if you are presenting it to a school board or department head, persuasively arguing for its intellectual and historical value.

MYTH VS. REALITY

Have students listen to songs from the musical *Hamilton* ("You'll Be Back," "Right Hand Man," "Guns & Ships," "Stay Alive," and "Farmer Refuted" are some examples). Ask them to compare the musical's upbeat, stylized myth-building with the grim, desperate reality depicted in the graphic novel. Students should create a T-chart or write a short comparative essay analyzing how each medium portrays the leadership and psychological states of Washington and King George, as well as the overall attitudes of the colonists.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

REVOLUTIONARY ROLEPLAY

Assign students the task of taking on a role of either a key figure in the Revolutionary War, a soldier on either side, or civilian, and have them debate the ideas presented in primary source documents from the time period (speeches, the writings of Thomas Paine, etc.). Students should embody the arguments that their role would make. An extension of this idea could be to have students keep these same roles and debate current issues as we've gone deeper into the "American Experiment."

**OPPORTUNITIES
FOR FURTHER
READING & VIEWING**

- *Hamilton: An American Musical* by Lin-Manuel Miranda
- *Rebellion 1776* and *Chains* by Laurie Halse Anderson
- *Turn: Washington's Spies* on AMC
- *The American Revolution* by Ken Burns on PBS

**ABOUT THIS
GUIDE'S WRITER**

Ronell Whitaker is a high school assistant principal and former ELA teacher for Community High School District 218 in Oak Lawn, Illinois. He has 20 years of education experience, and is a champion for comics in the classroom. He has presented across the country at conferences and conventions on the virtues of comics in the classroom. He is a founding member of the Lit-X Teacher Cohort. Ronell believes in comics, and he likes to think that comics believe in him.

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