

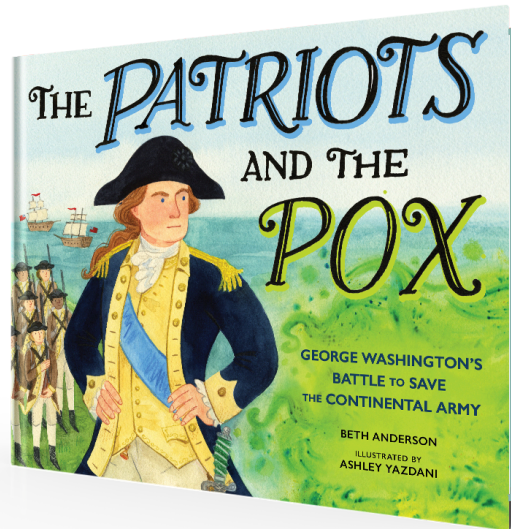
EDUCATOR GUIDE

THE PATRIOTS AND THE POX: George Washington's Battle to Save the Continental Army

Written by Beth Anderson
Illustrated by Ashley Yazdani

ISBN: 9781662681240 HC
\$19.99 US/\$25.99 CAN
ISBN: 9781662681257 eBook
Published by Calkins Creek

Grades: 2–5
Ages: 7–10



ABOUT THE BOOK

This nonfiction illustrated book for young readers reveals the true, and often overlooked, story of General George Washington's brave decision to inoculate his troops against smallpox during the American Revolution.

1775: General George Washington and his ragtag army are preparing to battle the powerful British military when the first attack comes—from an enemy that is invisible and deadly—smallpox!

The disease wreaks havoc on his troops, foils his plans, and threatens to extinguish hope for independence. Desperate to get smallpox under control, Washington faces an agonizing decision—one that could either destroy his army or save it. He knew what he had to do, but how? The fate of a nation was on the line.

Here is a new look at a founding father that uniquely shows what some historians call Washington's most important strategic decision of the war. His battle against smallpox deepens understanding about the complexity of the revolution and connects to the present with the vital role vaccines continue to play.

This unforgettable story is not only about the war for independence but also about independence from disease, the power of science, and how George Washington laid the foundation for public health in the United States.

EDUCATOR GUIDE

THE PATRIOTS AND THE POX George Washington's Battle to Save the Continental Army

PRAISE

"Anderson has a keen eye for U.S. history's lesser-known stories, and she distills her account into bite-size details, moving quickly through time as she imparts nuggets of historical wisdom... A relevant and insightful tale of courageous leadership and epidemic prevention."—*Kirkus Reviews*

"While concentrating on Washington's decision to insist on smallpox inoculation, this well researched book portrays him as a leader who gathered useful information and used it in ways that protected his soldiers and his country... (an) appealing history book."—*Booklist*

"This unique approach to the story of the American Revolutionary War will inspire thought-provoking and relatable discussions about the complexities of life that are not always visible; it is a positive addition to curricula on war, history, and inoculation science."—*School Library Journal*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Prereading:

- What do you already know about the Revolutionary War? Look at the cover and read the title. What details do you notice? What do you think the story is about? Make some predictions. What questions do you have?
- Read the quote on the title page. What does it tell you about George Washington?

After Reading:

- Why do you think the author refers to smallpox as an "enemy"?
- Why was Washington so afraid of the disease?
- In several spreads you can see how the army had to travel long distances on foot. How would smallpox make travel difficult?
- How would smallpox complicate military strategies and battles?
- How did all the losses in and around New York City affect the men's attitudes? Do you think attitudes can also be "an invisible enemy"? How?
- Why was it so important to keep Washington's inoculation program secret?
- There are several points where Washington could have given up. Which crisis do you think was the worst? Why do you think he didn't give up?
- Return to your predictions. Were you correct? Have your questions been answered by the story? What would you like to know more about?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Character: traits, motivation, feelings

- Using textual evidence, discuss why Washington refused to inoculate his troops in the beginning of the war.

EDUCATOR GUIDE

THE PATRIOTS AND THE POX George Washington's Battle to Save the Continental Army

- Then consider why he changed his mind and was willing to risk inoculating his men against smallpox. Read the quote in back matter from Washington's letter to William Shippen, Jr, director of the military hospital. How do Washington's own words help us understand his decision to inoculate the men?

Use Story Context [Think, Pair, Share]

- How is smallpox a weapon?
- Can inoculation also be considered a weapon? Why or why not?

CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

Use Context Clues to Determine Meaning: Tier 3 vocabulary

Reread sentences or paragraphs to find clues to understanding these words:

- Immunity:
George understood the dangers of the disease—and the horrors. His pox-scarred face was proof he had immunity. He'd never suffer from it again. Most of his men didn't have that protection.
- Inoculation:
The challenge of keeping smallpox out of camps worried him. But his other option—inoculation—was like opening the door and inviting the enemy in. A drop of live virus inserted in a tiny cut usually caused a mild case of smallpox—enough to produce immunity. But the danger of spreading the disease came with it. George would have to hospitalize inoculated troops for a month. If one careless soldier broke quarantine, the virus could spark an epidemic.
- Quarantine: This word also appears in the above text. What context clues have already appeared on previous pages to aid understanding?
- Contagion: Though the word contagion only appears in back matter, what clues in text and art support understanding of the concept?

Story Elements [Discussion or quick-write]

- Theme: What is the most important idea or theme you found in the story? Support your choice with textual evidence. How does it connect to your life?
- Setting: Authors and illustrators do research when they create historical stories. What details do you notice in the art that help you understand the time and place? Which scene is your favorite? Why?

Word Choice: Figurative Language

- Alliteration: the repetition of initial consonant sounds in nearby words

EDUCATOR GUIDE

THE PATRIOTS AND THE POX George Washington's Battle to Save the Continental Army

Alliteration is often used in titles, such as *The Patriots and the Pox*. What other examples of alliterative book titles can students name? What are some benefits of using alliteration? Can they think of another title for the story that uses alliteration? Explore the main text for more examples of alliteration.

- **Simile**: a comparison of two unlike things using *like* or *as*

Discuss the similes below from the story. Determine the two ideas being compared and examine the author's word choices. Then have students use the Tier 3 words from the Context Clues section above to create their own similes.

But his other option—inoculation—was like opening the door and inviting the enemy in. News of the failure hit George like a cannon blast.

- **Metaphor**: a comparison of unrelated things that does not use *like* or *as*.

Metaphors may state one thing *is* the other, or use words, like verbs, to imply the two things are the same. Advanced students can explore the extended metaphor of smallpox as an enemy and the use of military imagery to create it throughout the story.

Example: *It [smallpox] invaded bodies.*

INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS

Words and Pictures:

- How do words and illustrations work together to help you understand the dangers of contagion in the army camps?
- Use text and art to compare and contrast Washington's first attempt at inoculation with what he did the second time at Valley Forge. What problems arose with his first plan? How did he improve the process?



Compare and Contrast [whole class or small group]

- In the story, George Washington faces two enemies. Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the British military with smallpox.
- Draw conclusions: What was the greatest strength and weakness of each?

EDUCATOR GUIDE

THE PATRIOTS AND THE POX George Washington's Battle to Save the Continental Army

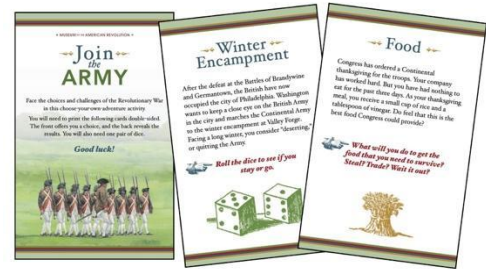
Cause and Effect [whole class or small group]

- Use “smallpox infection,” the main problem in the story, as the starting piece to build a cause and effect chain or web. Writing all the ideas on strips of paper, students generate a cause and an effect for the infection. Various scenarios are possible. Continue to build on each end of the chain, considering further causes and effects to extend and connect. Then link the strips to create a paper chain of cause and effect. This can be as simple or complex as you want to make it. Adjust as appropriate for students by providing options to make it easier or accepting multiple connections causing the chain to branch or loop.
- Another option is to use sticky notes on a white board and draw lines to connect causes and effects, creating a web as students insert and connect ideas in multiple ways.



Write in Response to Reading: [Role play in journals]

- Use the card game from the Museum of the American Revolution to respond to a situation as soldiers in the Continental Army. Each student weighs options and possible actions in response to the situation they are “dealt.” What would they do? Write a journal entry as the soldier.



<https://www.amrevmuseum.org/play-our-join-the-army-card-game>

EXTENSIONS

Maps + Math

The Continental Army traveled on foot, carrying sixty pounds of equipment and supplies in all kinds of weather conditions. Use a map and math skills to determine how many miles per day the army of 19,000 men marched from Boston to New York City.

- Use a scale of miles or online search to determine the distance. [approximately 220 miles]
- They left Boston April 4, 1776, and arrived in New York City April 13. [10 days]
- How many miles did they travel each day?

For more math, download “The Math of Cause and Effect with Smallpox” activity for the book.

Express and Support Opinions [writing, discussion, or debate]

- For many of the colonists, the words “freedom,” “independence,” and “liberty” meant that individuals didn’t have to obey British rules and could do whatever they wanted. As people from mostly small towns in thirteen separate colonies, they didn’t have experience acting as a nation.

EDUCATOR GUIDE

THE PATRIOTS AND THE POX George Washington's Battle to Save the Continental Army

- How was that a problem for George Washington and the army? (for example: they come and go as they please, break quarantine, self-inoculate, ignore sanitary practices)
- Consider our lives today. How can we balance individual liberty with liberty for all?

ONLINE RESOURCES

- Mount Vernon. [Lessons in Leadership Video Series: George Washington and Smallpox](#)
Visit mountvernon.org/education for more educator resources.
- WHO [World Health Organization] video: [History of Vaccination: Smallpox Vaccines](#)

Guide written by Beth Anderson