**My Brother Sam is Dead**

American Revolution

From: UCI History Project, Nicole Gilbertson, 2014

**History Standards: 8.1**

Students understand the major events preceding the founding of the nation and relate their significance to the development of American constitutional democracy.

**CCSS Standards: Reading, Grades 6-8**

1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

**Writing, Grades 6-8**

2. Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes.

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

9. Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis reflection, and research.

**Guiding Question:**What does the novel *My Brother Sam is Dead* illustrate about the Revolutionary Era?

**Overview of Lesson:**The reading questions below cover the entirety of the novel. These questions can be answered orally or in writing at the end of each chapter. A timeline of the novel is also attached for reference.

**My Brother Sam is Dead**

Chapter 1

1. What do you learn about Sam in the first chapter?
2. Identify the narrator and explain his attitude towards Sam.
3. Describe Mr. Meeker’s reaction to Sam’s uniform.
4. How does Tim feel about the secrets Sam shares with him?
5. Describe what happens when Mr. Meeker discovers that Sam wants to take Brown Bess.

In your own words, retell what happens in chapter 1.

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Chapter 2

1. What does Tim mean when he says that there are about “six sides” to the issue of independence from Great Britain?
2. How does Tim meet Sam again?
3. Why is Betsy Read helping Sam?
4. How does Sam explain his desire to fight?
5. What do Sam and Betsy ask Tim to do?

6. Why doesn’t Tim tell his father that Sam has taken Brown Bess?

In your own words, retell what happens in chapter 2.

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Chapter 3

1. What does Tim find surprising about the war?
2. Why don’t the Meekers talk about Sam?
3. How does Tim feel about working in the tavern?
4. What does Betsy bring Tim?
5. Why is Tim eager to see Sam?

In your own words, retell what happens in chapter 3.

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Chapter 4

1. How does Tim react to the news that Sam has returned?
2. What makes it difficult for Tim to go see Sam?
3. What happens when Continental soldiers visit the tavern?
4. Explain Tim’s plan to save his father from the Continental soldiers.
5. Describe the conflict that develops when Tim tries to take the gun.
6. Why does Sam refuse to tell the officer that his father does not have the gun?

7. How does Tim persuade Sam to return to the farm?

In your own words, retell what happens in chapter 4.

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Chapter 5

1. What makes the war real for Tim?
2. How does Tim feel about Sam now?
3. What are some of the details that are learned about Mr. Heron?
4. How does Tim react to Mr. Heron’s offer to pay him for delivering letters?
5. How does Tim’s father react to Mr. Heron’s offer to pay Tim for delivering letters?
6. Why does Life Meeker curb his temper when he and Tim argue about delivering the messages?

In your own words, retell what happens in chapter 5.

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Chapter 6

1. Why was Time willing to lie to his father in order to run the errand for Mr. Heron?
2. What is confusing about Mr. Heron’s political allegiance? What side do you think he is on? (you may have to read a little of Chapter 5 to help answer)
3. When Tim meets Betsy, she is reluctant to give him any information about Sam. Why does she mistrust Tim?
4. Why does Betsy fear that the message Tim carries will harm Sam?
5. What does Betsy do when Tim refuses to break the seal?

In your own words, retell what happens in chapter 6.

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Chapter 7

1. How does Tim handle his failure to deliver the letter?
2. What do Sam’s letters reveal about the condition of the Continental Army?
3. Why do Tim’s parents argue about Sam’s letter?
4. Describe the yearly cattle drive and its importance to the Meeker’s business.
5. Why is Tim’s father reluctant to take his youngest son on the cattle drive?

6. How do the cow-boys justify taking the Meekers’ cattle?

7. How is the conflict with the cow-boys resolved?

In your own words, retell what happens in chapter 7.

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Chapter 8

1. How does Mr. Platt describe the “lawlessness” in the North Salem area?
2. What did Ezekiel Platt predict would be the outcome of the war and the future for rebels like Sam? Why did he feel this way?
3. Describe Tim’s reaction to the Hudson.
4. What factors does Mr. Meeker consider when choosing the way to return to Redding?
5. Why don’t the Meekers stop at Green’s Tavern while passing through Ridgebury?

In your own words, retell what happens in chapter 8.

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Chapter 9

1. Describe the Meekers’ plan for continuing their journey.
2. How does Tim discover that something has happened to his father?

 3. Why did Tim decide to take the wagon back to the tavern rather than search for his father?

4. How does Tim deal with the cow-boys?

In your own words, retell what happens in chapter 9.

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Chapter 10

1. Describe Susannah Meeker’s reaction to her husband’s disappearance.
2. How does Tim’s life change after his father’s capture?
3. Why doesn’t the increase in their business help the Meekers make money?
4. Why don’t Tim and his mother expect much help from Sam?
5. Describe how Tim changes after his father’s disappearance.

6. How does the British raid on Redding affect Tim’s opinion about the war?

In your own words, retell what happens in chapter 10.

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Chapter 11

1. Describe the confrontation between Captain Betts and Tim’s mother.
2. Why is Tim surprised by what he overhears about Mr. Heron?
3. How is the condition of the Continental troops described?
4. How does Sam’s reunion with his family come about?
5. Why does Sam refuse to come home?

6. What does Tim come to understand about his brother?

In your own words, retell what happens in chapter 11.

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Chapter 12

1. What do the Meekers learn about Life Meeker’s fate?
2. What happened to Tim’s friend Jerry?
3. Describe the change in Betsy?
4. What is Tim’s final decision about choosing sides in the war?
5. Why did Tim prefer to sell the cattle to the British rather than the Patriots?

6. Why did Sam advise Tim to slaughter the cows? What does this reveal about the availability of food?

In your own words, retell what happens in chapter 12.

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Chapter 13

1. Why is Sam blamed for stealing the Meeker’s cattle?
2. Why are the Meeker’s attempts to help Sam unsuccessful?
3. Describe Susannah Meeker’s reaction to Sam’s situation.
4. How does Colonel Parsons attempt to explain Sam’s sentence to Tim?

In your own words, retell what happens in chapter 13.

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Chapter 14

1. How does Tim feel after General Putnam refuses his plea for clemency?
2. How does the narrator describe Susannah Meeker’s reaction to Sam’s execution?
3. Explain Tim’s plan save Sam.
4. What is the outcome of Tim’s plan?

In your own words, retell what happens in chapter 14.

# My Brother Sam is Dead

Battles of Lexington and Concord:

 On April 19th, 1775, the British sent troops from Boston to investigate the allegation that the colonists were stockpiling weapons in Concord, Massachusetts. During their march to Concord, they encountered Lexington militia men bearing arms and gathered in the town common. Firing began and the British killed eight colonists before continuing their march. Although the British were successful in discovering and destroying some of the military stockpiles in Concord, they were the target of colonial militia men who fired on them from protected vantage points in the forests as they marched back to Boston. The British sustained many deaths and injuries.

Battle of Bunker Hill:

 William Prescott, the commander of the colonial forces in the Boston area in 1775, had fortified Breed’s Hill with the hope of using it as a strategic vantage point to drive the British troops from Boston. On June 17th, 1775, the British, recognizing the threat, attempted to drive the Americans off Breed’s Hill and nearby Bunker Hill. The first attempt failed, but a subsequent attempt was successful probably due to the American’s lack of ammunition. Although the colonial forces eventually were dislodged, this relatively untrained band of farmers caused more than twice as many losses as they suffered themselves.

Battle of Fort Ticonderoga:

 American militia men from western Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont’s “Green Mountain Boys” under the command of Benedict Arnold and Ethan Allen attacked the British held Fort Ticonderoga in Eastern New York. On June 10th, 1775, the small British command surrendered without firing a shot.

Battle of New York:

 In July 1776, British General Howe landed on Staten Island with an army of 34,000 men in order to uproot General George Washington and his troops in New York City. Washington placed some of his troops in Brooklyn Heights to protect New York harbor, but his divided troops could not withstand the British attack. Washington and the American troops had to evacuate Manhattan, and were forced to winter on the Delaware River near Princeton, New Jersey, while the British gained control of New York City.

**Sam Adams:**

Radical leader of the patriots in Boston. He was in favor of organizing the colonists to work together against England. Adams set up the “Committees of Correspondence” which helped the colonists keep in touch with each other and organize their protests.

**Benedict Arnold:**

American Revolutionary general. He was responsible for the capture of the British at Fort Ticonderoga. Because he felt that his services to the army and his country were not fully appreciated, in 1780 he plotted with the British to betray West Point in return for an officer’s commission in the British army and $6300 pounds. When his treason was discovered, Arnold fled West Point and was received into the British army. He died in disgrace in London, England in 1801.

**Aaron Burr**

Respected and ardent patriot during the Revolutionary War. He served as Vice President under Thomas Jefferson. His reputation was damaged after he killed Alexander Hamilton in a duel in 1804.

**John Hancock**

Boston merchant and patriot. He and Sam Adams were the leaders of the Boston radicals, helping to foment opposition to the British and rally support for the Revolutionary War. His signature is prominent on the Declaration of Independence.

**Israel Putnam**

American Revolutionary commander who also served previously in the French and Indian War. He was active in pre-Revolutionary agitation. Putnam volunteered after the battles at Lexington and Concord, and he was appointed a major general in the Continental Army. From 1778-1779 he was in charge of recruiting for service in Connecticut.

**David Wooster**

An American Revolutionary officer. He was a major general of the Connecticut militia, and was mortally wounded in action at Ridgefield, Connecticut in 1777.

***Timeline of major events in the novel***

 April **1775**---------

 Battle of Lexington and Concord Sam leaves Yale and joins the Patriots

 May 1775 ---------

2nd Continental Congress:

Army is raised with Washington

as commander-in-chief

 June 1775 ----------

Battle of Bunker Hill

 November ----------

Sam returns with Continental soldiers to disarm
Redding

 December ----------

Patriots seize Fort Ticonderoga

 January **1776** --------

 First food shortages; prices rise

 April 1776 -----------

 Tim fails as Mr. Heron’s messenger

 July 1776 ------------

Declaration of Independence September ----------

British occupy New York City November -----------

Meekers’ trip to Verplancks.
Father taken prisoner

 April **1777**  ---------- Redcoats in Redding; prisoners taken

 June 1777 ---------- News arrives of father’s death

Continental Army winter quarters at Valley Forge

1777-1778

 December ----------- Sam returns to Redding with Colonel Parsons

 **1778**

 February ------------- Sam executed