



THE CROSSING CLASSROOM

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Where History Takes The Stage!

Middle School

A RESOURCE GUIDE

THE CROSSING

A small silhouette of figures on a boat, with one figure holding a flag. The boat is on water, and the background is a bright, sunburst-like glow.



WELCOME TO *THE CROSSING CLASSROOM*!

You're the Teacher. You Decide!

The goal of *The Crossing Classroom* is simple: have fun, spark curiosity, and engage your students in one of the most pivotal moments in American history.

You know your students. You know your classroom. Use the resource guide, in conjunction with the Theatrical Concert Script, in whatever way works best for you and your students. You can read the script together, assign parts and turn it into a classroom read-aloud, or break into small groups and have students explore individual scenes. Then get them on their feet! Let students direct, stage, and perform a scene for their classmates.

Have a student who loves to sing? Let them sing! Put on a karaoke track and give them the opportunity to perform for their peers. Have an aspiring actor? Let them dive into a character. Have a student who loves to write or lead? Give them the chance to explore a character's perspective, lead a discussion, or help direct their group.

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You can use the entire script as a class presentation, with the music or without it. Choose one activity from the resource guide, use them all, or let students work in cooperative learning groups and decide how they want to explore the material. The beauty is you decide what works.

The Crossing Classroom is designed to give you choices and flexibility and use what fits your curriculum, your schedule, and your students. The most important thing is to get students reading, listening, performing, discussing, creating, questioning, and thinking.

Let them step into the shoes of the people who lived through this extraordinary time. Let them wonder what they would have done. Let them hear different points of view. Let them discover that history isn't just a collection of dates and names; it is about real people making difficult choices in extraordinary times.

So read it. Perform it. Sing it. Discuss it. Create with it. Make it your own.

And most importantly...
HAVE FUN!





THE SITUATION OF THE REVOLUTION IN DECEMBER 1776

The Struggle for Independence

In December 1776, America's fight for independence was in serious trouble. General George Washington led the Continental Army, but most of his soldiers' time of service was ending on December 31st. The new army being formed to replace them wasn't ready yet.

A String of Defeats

From August through November, Washington's army lost several important battles—at Brooklyn, Kip's Bay, Harlem, White Plains, and Fort Washington. After each loss, his army grew smaller. British forces chased Washington's troops across New Jersey, hoping to find food and warm places to stay for the winter.

Washington wanted to stop the British advance, but other generals and governors wouldn't send him the extra soldiers he needed. Without more troops, the British army was much larger than his.

Crossing the Delaware

Washington had no choice but to retreat. He led his remaining soldiers across the Delaware River at Trenton, moving from New Jersey to Pennsylvania between December 1st and 8th. Washington made a smart decision: he ordered his men to bring every boat from the New Jersey side over to Pennsylvania, or destroy any boats they couldn't move. This meant the British couldn't easily follow them across the river.

Now Washington's army guarded the Pennsylvania side of the river. No one knew if the British would stay in New Jersey for the winter or try to capture Philadelphia, the capital of the Revolution.



CHARACTER COMPARISON CHART FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

Character	Role in the Story	Key Traits	Main Belief or Motivation	How They Show Courage
James	Continental soldier, a farmer	Frustrated, honest	Wants peace and safety but learns to think bigger about freedom	Stays and listens to Paine's words, continues serving despite fear
Thomas Paine	Writer of <i>The American Crisis</i>	Passionate, bold, visionary	Believes all people are equal and must fight for true freedom	Speaks out strongly and challenges people to act
Abigail	Sister of Gabriel; helper in print shop	Emotional, strong, loyal	Honors sacrifice and supports the cause at home	Shares her brother's story and helps print important writings
Gabriel	Young soldier from Princeton	Brave, determined, hopeful	Believes in standing firm for freedom	Endures harsh winter and remains committed to the cause
Margaret	Civilian supporter	Loud, practical, tough	Keeps soldiers focused and motivated	Steps up confidently and supports the troops
Enoch	Soldier from Princeton	Thoughtful, reflective	Inspired by Paine's message of perseverance	Reads and spreads powerful words to others
Jacob	Soldier from New Jersey	Honest, proud, hopeful	Believes freedom should include everyone	Joins the army even when others question his choice
Elizabeth	Print shop owner	Independent, capable, resilient	Keeps the cause alive through printing	Runs her business during wartime and prints <i>The American Crisis</i>
George Washington	General of the army	Serious, determined, strategic	Knows bold action is needed to save the army	Leads troops despite being outnumbered and struggling

SEE BLANK PDF COMPARISON CHART FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

COOPERATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITY

“Voices of the Revolution” Character Summit

Objective:

Students will analyze character perspectives and work collaboratively to understand how different people experienced the Revolutionary War.

01.

STEP 1: ASSIGN GROUPS (4–5 STUDENTS PER GROUP)

Each student takes on one character:

- James
- Thomas Paine
- Abigail
- Jacob
- Washington (or Gabriel/Elizabeth depending on class size)

02.

STEP 2: EXPERT PREP (10–15 MINUTES)

Each student completes a quick “Character Expert Card.”
They must answer:

1. What does my character want most?
2. What is my character afraid of?
3. What does my character believe about freedom?
4. Find one line from the script or lyric sheet that proves this.

(You can have them highlight or underline evidence.)

COOPERATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITY

“Voices of the Revolution” Character Summit

03.

STEP 3: THE CHARACTER SUMMIT (15–20 MINUTES)

Groups imagine they are meeting in December 1776 to answer this question:

“What should we do next to save the American cause?”

Rules:

- Each character must speak at least once.
- Students must speak in character.
- They must support their ideas using beliefs from the text.
- The group must come to one final decision.

04.

STEP 4: GROUP DECISION POSTER (10 MINUTES)

Each group creates a small poster that includes:

- Their final decision
- 2 reasons supporting it
- Which characters agreed and which disagreed with the final decision?
- A short quote from the text

EXTENSION OPTION (HIGH ENGAGEMENT)

Hold a whole class “Continental Congress” where one spokesperson from each group presents their decision. After all groups present, the class votes on the strongest plan but must defend their vote with evidence.



JOURNAL PROMPTS

1. James's Dilemma

- You are James. Write a journal entry about the night you had to decide whether to stay and fight or go home. What thoughts were going through your mind?

2. Power of Words

- Thomas Paine believes words can change history. Write about a time words changed your thinking or someone else's actions.

3. Jacob's Perspective

- Why might Jacob see the Revolution differently from other soldiers? Write from his point of view.

4. The Cost of War

- Abigail shares the story of her brother Gabriel. Why is it important to remember personal stories during big historical events?

5. Risk and Leadership

- Washington chooses bold action even when the army is weak. When is taking a big risk the right decision?



LISTENING ACTIVITY

For the Teacher:

In this section you will find vocabulary and activities for three songs:
These are the Days, On The Wheel of Time & No More Retreat.

“THESE ARE THE DAYS” MIDDLE SCHOOL VOCABULARY

1. Stakes

What can be gained or lost; the risks involved

2. Torments

Severe mental or emotional suffering

3. Despair

A complete loss of hope.

4. Vie

To compete strongly with someone or something

5. Cause

A belief or goal people are willing to fight or work for

6. Just

Fair and morally right

7. Self-evident

So obvious it does not need proof (From Declaration of Independence)

8. Pride

A strong feeling of self-respect or importance; sometimes too much pride can lead to bad decisions

9. Ongoing

Continuing; still happening.





LISTENING WORKSHEET “THESE ARE THE DAYS”

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Listen carefully to the song. Answer the questions using details from the lyrics, the characters, and the mood of the music.

Part 1: What Do You Notice?

1. List three problems the soldiers are facing.

2. Circle the emotions you hear most: hope – fear – doubt – anger – sadness – determination

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3. Which character sounds the most worried? Explain why.

Part 2: Point of View

4. How is James's thinking different from Gabriel's?

5. What does Jacob add to the conversation about freedom?





LISTENING & DRAWING ACTIVITY

Drawing Activity #2: “No More Retreat

Focus: Setting Visualization

“As you listen, imagine you are standing there with them. What do you see?” What season is it? What time of day? What movement can you visualize?

Draw what you are visualizing!

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LISTENING & DRAWING ACTIVITY

TURN AND TALK TO A PARTNER. DESCRIBE HOW THE SETTING AFFECTS THE CHARACTERS IN THE PICTURE? HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL? HOW DO YOU THINK THE SOLDIERS FEEL?



IN CAMP AT VALLEY FORGE.



THE CROSSING CLASSROOM TEAM

TERRI SEGGIO, TEAM LEADER, EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANT & CONTENT WRITER

Terri has been teaching literacy, directing, and choreographing for over 35 years. Mrs. Seggio has given many workshops on enhancing the literacy classroom through the arts to help teachers make literacy come alive in their classrooms. She wrote the curriculum for the Little Toy Inventors Program which is part of the Toy Museum of NY. Currently she is the Chairperson of the Franklin Township Cultural Arts Council and is on the Board of Directors for Project Broadway in NYC. Mrs. Seggio has been recognized by Somerset County as Woman of the Year in Arts & Entertainment, in 2018, and with the Excellence in Arts Education Award, in 2017. She continues to coach students 10 to 25 privately for theatre auditions, and was beyond proud to watch one of her former students win a Tony for best actress in a musical in 2024! She is so proud of the over 50 shows that she has directed and choreographed in her career, and firmly believes “Arts education is vital and builds confidence on and off the stage! All children should experience a standing ovation once in their life!”

JASON ALEXANDER HUZA, CONTENT WRITER

Aselection of Jason’s produced works includes It Happened in Key West (Book & Additional Lyrics). World Premier, Charing Cross Theatre, London, 2018. US Premier, Fulton Theatre, Lancaster, PA, 2024, starring Broadway’s Shereen Pimentel. The Last Match (Book & Lyrics), winner of all 11 NJ Broadway World Awards, including Best Musical and Best New Musical. Concept album featuring Broadway’s Ramin Karimloo released in 2022. East Coast Tour, April-May 2024. Developing works include Esperanza (Book), written with Broadway’s Nicola Vazquez, and Beatrice (Book & Lyrics), written with Broadway's Sujin Kim-Ramsey. Extremely Dumbfounded, recently completed biography of Steve Grillo, longtime Howard Stern Show member. Other projects include Eugene O’Neill’s semi-finalist Dante’s Omission, After Heaven, and The Paradise. Jason lives in Manhattan with his wife, Denise, and three sons. well-deserved reputation as the Greatest Husband and Father in the World.

WILLIAM “LARRY” KIDDER, HISTORICAL ADVISOR & CONTENT WRITER

Larry has taught history for 40 years. He has been an active member of the Association for Living History, Farm, and Agricultural Museums and has served on the New Jersey Living History Advisory Council. He has been a writer and editor for the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area program, Meet Your Revolutionary Neighbors, and has been an active member in organizations such as the Hopewell (NJ) Valley Historical Society, the Ewing (NJ) Historic Preservation Society, the Princeton Battlefield Society, the Washington Crossing American Revolution Round Table, and TenCrucialDays.org. In addition to periodical articles and other short pieces, he is the author of several books on colonial history and the early republic including, Crossroads of the Revolution: Trenton, 1774-1783 (2017), and Ten Crucial Days: Washington’s Vision for Victory Unfolds (2018), Revolutionary Princeton 1774 - 1783(2020), and The Revolutionary World of a Free Black Man: Jacob Francis 1754- 1836.



Thank You

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