

Teacher's Guide for

**THE CARTOON CHRONICLES OF AMERICA:
ROAD TO REVOLUTION!**

By Stan Mack and Susan Champlin

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ABOUT THE BOOK:

Nick and Penny are two kids caught up in the unfolding events of Boston in 1775. It is a dangerous but exciting time when regular citizens dare to defy the British Empire. Nick and Penny will bring this pivotal episode in American history to life for young readers, even reluctant ones.

INTERVIEW:

1. ***What was the most difficult aspect of the research in bringing this story to life?***

Probably climbing the narrow wooden stairs to the top of Old North Church on a 104-degree day! (Actually, that was fun, too.) This was part of our research in Boston, as we tackled the true challenge of the book: Fitting our fictional characters in among the real people who walked the streets of revolutionary Boston. We did a lot of reading, of course, but it was invaluable to actually be there and see what Nick, Penny, Paul Revere and Dr. Warren would have seen—including the Old South Meeting-house and Paul Revere's house.

2. ***Which comes first in a graphic novel: the images or the words?***

Creating a graphic novel is sort of like making a movie: First we outline our story in words, then we convert the story into dialogue and sketches. Then, in words and pictures, we decide what our characters look like, how they act and dress, what the streets of 1775 Boston look like. By the end, the words and pictures are inseparable—and the story can only be told, and appreciated, through both.

3. ***What can fans look forward to next?***

We've got a great story coming up set during the Civil War. Our heroes are Annabelle, the daughter of a plantation owner in Virginia, and Sam, a young slave who escapes to the North and later returns to Confederate-occupied Virginia to search for his father. Annabelle stays at the plantation, battles the evil slavemaster, and oversees the plantation's conversion into a hospital for wounded Rebel and Union soldiers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Who are Penny and Sarah? What are their lives like under the British occupation of Boston? How is Penny's father different from Sarah's?
2. Who is Nick? Do you think he is a good person or a scalawag? Is Penny a Tory? How do you know?

3. How does Nick upset the Redcoats? Why do you think Penny comes to his aid? Would you?
4. Describe what happened at Dr. Warren's speech. What important decision do Nick and Penny make after this event? Why?
5. What does Penny overhear in the stable? Who can they trust to tell? Would you be willing to spy for a cause? Which ones? Do you think you would've been a Tory or a Patriot? Why?
6. Why did Penny's father keep the truth from her? Why do parents do this? How does Nick help the patriots at Old North Church?
7. Explain what happened at Lexington Green. Why is this event so pivotal to the cause? What does it show you about the British?
8. Why does Penny stay in Boston? How is Nick changed by the historical events unfolding? Do you think the people of that time had any clue how important these events would turn out to be?
9. Why does Penny disguise herself as a boy? What does she learn when she reaches Nick again? How is Nick helping the cause? Who do you think is most changed as a person from the events in the novel—Nick or Penny? What makes you say so?
10. How does Penny get close enough to spy on General Burgoyne? Why do kids make especially good spies? How does Nick escape capture in Boston?
11. Explain what happened at the Battle of Bunker Hill. Why was this an important battle for the Revolution? What price did Dr. Warren have to pay? In the end, what happened to Nick and Penny? Predict what you think will happen next.
12. Which scene in the book is your favorite? What does the graphic novel format add to your understanding of the time that a typical novel could not? What makes a great graphic novel?

PROJECTS:

Language Arts:

Write letters from Nick and Penny after the closing of the novel. Be sure to stay within their characters as you write.

Reading:

Divide a plain white piece of paper into thirds. At the top of each column list the following words: Facts, Questions, Responses. As you read the novel list at least five in each category. Responses can be connections you have made from the reading to your own life, something from the contemporary world, or to some prior knowledge you have on the topic. Discuss in small groups.

Art:

Create a new scene for Nick and Penny set five years after this one takes place. How have things changed for them? What is America like now?

-or-

Create a book trailer based on the novel.

Music:

Here's a great resource for a lesson based on music of the American Revolution:
http://www.pbs.org/ktca/liberty/tguide_5.html

-or-

Have students write their own lyrics or compose a tune (with a program like GarageBand) to capture the sentiment of their favorite scene.

History:

Create a timeline of the major events from the American Revolution. Highlight turning points in the war which led to the American victory.