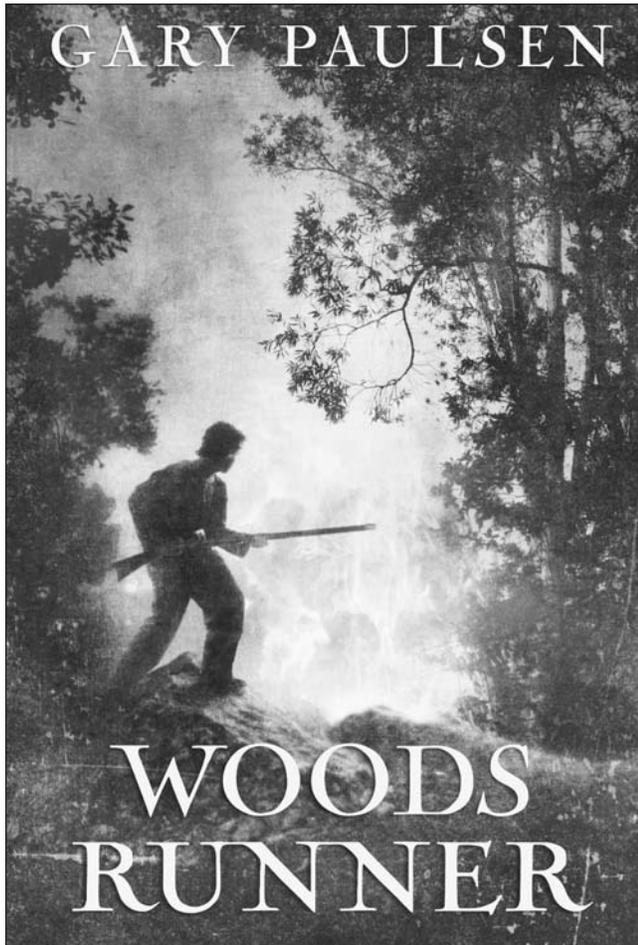


BOOKNOTES

educators guide



Wendy Lamb Books HC: 978-0-385-73884-2
GLB: 978-0-385-90751-4
Listening Library CD: 978-0-307-71032-1

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

Historical Fiction/Revolutionary War
Courage • Survival • Family
Coming-of-Age

GRADES 7 UP

ABOUT THE BOOK

Set during the American Revolution, thirteen-year-old Samuel Smith is thrust into manhood as he makes his way into enemy territory in an effort to rescue his parents from the British.

Thirteen-year-old Samuel Lehi Smith is a child of the woods. He knows how to survive in the forest that surrounds his family's small cabin in the British colony of Pennsylvania, but he knows little about the broader world. The families who live in the wilderness are slow to get news, so they don't know very much about the war that is raging between American patriots and the British in the cities and towns in the east. One day Samuel returns home from the woods and discovers that the British have attacked his home and captured his parents. He uses his survival skills and makes his way into enemy territory on a mission to find and rescue his parents. The horror of the war is all around him, but he ultimately discovers friends and allies who are secretly working for the patriots—people who are willing to show him the way.

“Loss of life through violence always seems to me a terrible waste.”

—Gary Paulsen

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PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Divide the class into five groups and assign each group one of the following topics to research:

Quartering Act Sugar Act Tea Act
Townshend Act Stamp Act

Ask them to consider these questions:

What was the content of the act?

How did the act contribute to the war between American patriots and the British?

Have each group share their findings. Then lead the class in a discussion about the various causes of the American Revolution.

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

COURAGE

On the surface it appears that Samuel has more courage than his parents. Debate whether it took courage for his parents to move to the frontier. How does Samuel learn courage in the woods? Discuss the relationship between courage and fear. How does Samuel deal with fear? What is his most courageous act? How does it take courage for him to trust Abner McDougal?

SURVIVAL

Ask students to discuss Samuel's survival skills. At first the forest was alien to Samuel. At what point does he know that he belongs in the forest? Discuss the relationship between belonging to the forest and survival. How does Samuel know that his parents don't understand the woods? Explain how they lack the survival skills that Samuel develops. How do Samuel's skills aid him in his search for his parents? Discuss how these skills contribute to his ability to rescue them.

FAMILY

Describe Samuel's relationship with his parents. Why doesn't Samuel understand his parents? Discuss the relationship that develops between Samuel and Annie. Samuel rescues Annie after her parents are killed, but when does he actually adopt her as his sister? Discuss the scene when Samuel's mother meets Annie. How do they all realize they need one another? How do his parents understand his decision to join the Morgan's Rifles at the end of the novel?

COMING-OF-AGE

Ask students to discuss the meaning of the term *coming-of-age*. Debate the moment in the novel when Samuel becomes a man. His mother observes the differences in Samuel at the end of the novel. What does she see in Samuel that she hasn't seen in the past? How does Abner McDougal recognize Samuel's manhood?

EFFECTS OF WAR

Samuel is forced into action when the war comes to his family's cabin on the frontier. Debate the lasting effects of the war on Samuel and his family. What about Annie? She seems to have blocked out the massacre on her family. How might the horror of that day affect her in the future? What is Gary Paulsen's attitude toward war?



CONNECTING TO THE CURRICULUM

LANGUAGE ARTS

Samuel Smith pictures his life as “two worlds.” (p. 3) Ask students to write an essay that compares Samuel’s two worlds at the beginning of the novel with his two worlds at the end of the novel.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Have students research the major and minor battles of the American Revolution and plot the sites on a U.S. map. Ask them to record the victories and losses of the American patriots. Ask them to draw a political cartoon after one major victory.

Ask students to write thumbnail biographies for some of the major players on the American patriot side. Such people may include: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Ben Franklin, Benedict Arnold, Paul Revere, John Adams, James Madison, John Hancock, Patrick Henry, Thomas Paine, and John Paul Jones.

SCIENCE/HEALTH

In the historical segments of the novel, Paulsen makes reference to the illnesses and war wounds that the American patriots faced. What are some of the health issues affecting American soldiers in war today? Ask students to write a paper for a medical convention called “War Wounds—Past and Present.”

ART

Ask students to take a look at the painting “Washington Crossing the Delaware” at the following Web site: www.metmuseum.org/explore/gw/el_gw.htm. Instruct them to read how Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze, the artist, uses perspective, light, color, form, motion, and proportion in the work. Which of these elements is the most obvious? Is there an element that is subtle? Discuss the use of symbolism in art. Ask students to write a brief paper about the symbolism in Leutze’s work.

DRAMA

“Paul Revere’s Ride” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow is a commonly recited poem in schools. Ask students to research Paul Revere’s role in the American Revolution, and to condense the information for younger students who are studying the American Revolution in social studies. Then have the class introduce the poem, and perform it as a choral reading for an elementary school class. The poem can be found at poetry.eserver.org/paul-revere.html.

MUSIC

There are many songs that came out of the American Revolution. Ask students to read about some of these songs on the following Web site: americanrevolution.org/warsongs.html. Have them share in class the song that Samuel might have sung after rescuing his parents. Which song might he give to Abner McDougel?



VOCABULARY | USE OF LANGUAGE

Students should be encouraged to jot down unfamiliar words and define them using the context.

Such words may include:

p. 4	<i>canopy</i>	p. 27	<i>stealth</i>	p. 60	<i>fractious</i>	p. 137	<i>gunwale</i>
p. 9	<i>ornate</i>	p. 35	<i>seer</i>	p. 75	<i>salivate</i>	p. 152	<i>abated</i>
p. 9	<i>profile</i>	p. 46	<i>mercenaries</i>	p. 98	<i>lathered</i>	p. 157	<i>ambuscade</i>
p. 10	<i>convulsive</i>	p. 48	<i>shafts</i>	p. 121	<i>infiltrate</i>		
p. 14	<i>sprats</i>	p. 58	<i>disgorged</i>	p. 136	<i>interminable</i>		



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gary Paulsen is the author of many critically acclaimed books for young readers, including three Newbery Honor books. Paulsen is a versatile writer who always brings adventure and survival into his stories, and writes characters that form special relationships with nature, as Samuel Smith does in *Woods Runner*. Gary Paulsen has also published fiction and nonfiction for adults, as well as picture books illustrated by his wife, the painter Ruth Wright Paulsen. The Paulsens live in Alaska, in New Mexico, and on the Pacific Ocean.

INTERNET RESOURCES

**The Gilder Lehrman:
Modules on American History**
www.gilderlehrman.org/teachers/module1/index.html

**History Central:
The Major Battles of the Revolutionary War**
www.historycentral.com/Revolt/battles.html

Gary Paulsen's Official Web Site
www.garypaulsen.com

ON THE WEB

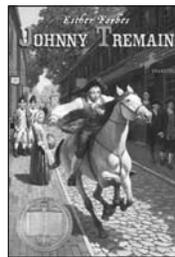
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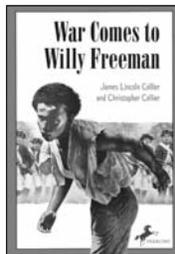
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Toliver's Secret

Esther Wood Brady
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War Comes to Willy Freeman

Paula Fox
Survival • Courage
Grades 5 Up
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