

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE®

SPIES: JAMES ARMISTEAD LAFAYETTE

TEACHERS' DISCUSSION GUIDE: GRADE 5–8

BEFORE READING

Overview on Historical Fiction

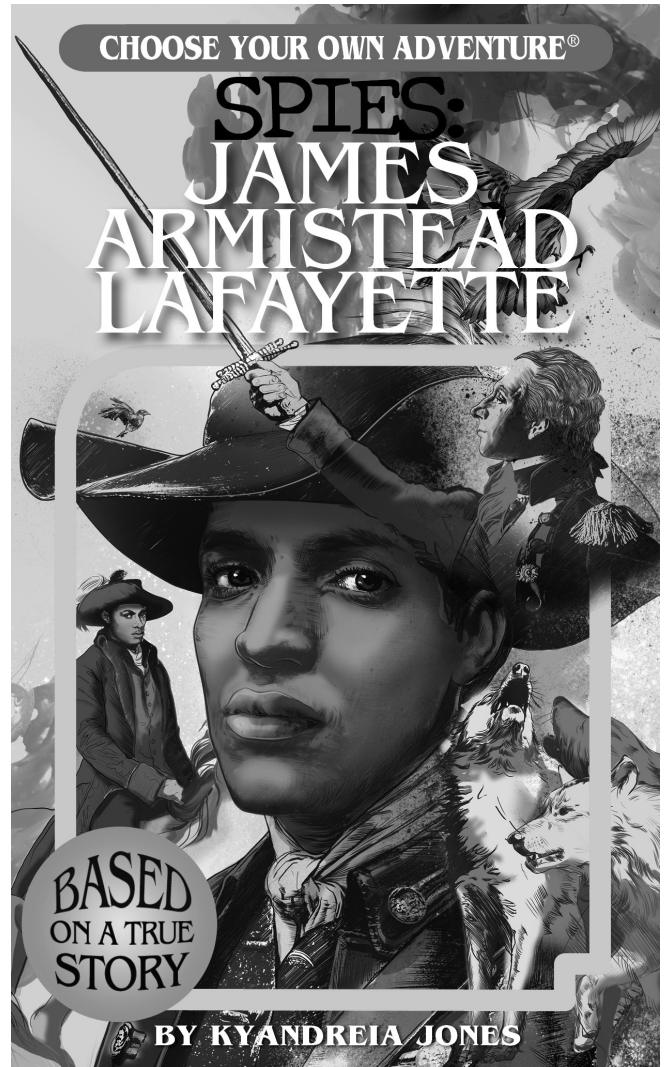
- Define “historical fiction” in your own words.
- How does historical fiction combine imagined elements and real historical events?
- When you read historical fiction, do you prefer to learn about things from the past or to think about how things might have ended up if historical events had gone a different way?
- What is the value of learning about history through fiction rather than from a textbook?
- How do writers help us imagine the past?

Background on James Armistead Lafayette

James Armistead Lafayette lived during the American Revolutionary War, which lasted from 1775–1783. Consider the following questions:

- What role did people of color have during the American Revolutionary War?
- Who were the main historical figures who influenced the outcome of the American Revolutionary War?

The life and spy activity of James Armistead Lafayette is explored in *Choose Your Own Adventure SPIES: James Armistead Lafayette*.



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Before reading, have students do some quick research (10–15 minutes) and put together a PowerPoint on what they learn about James Armistead Lafayette. After reading, have the students go back through and add a slide for each new fact they learned.



A TIMELINE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR AND SLAVERY:

Review the timeline below and discuss in small groups. Assign one of the following events to each group. Have each group research their event and explain why it played an important role in American history.

1619 **The White Lion lands in Virginia.** The Dutch ship the *White Lion* is the first slave ship to arrive at the colonies, bringing 20 enslaved people to Jamestown and forcing them to farm the land.

1765 **Great Britain passes the Stamp Act.** The Stamp Act forces the American colonists to pay taxes to Great Britain. The British are able to enforce this act by stamping many goods that are being imported and exported through the colonial ports.

1767 **Great Britain passes the Townshend Acts.** The Townshend Acts are a series of laws passed by the British government in order to force the colonists to pay additional taxes. Among other things, the colonies now have to pay taxes on tea and paper.

1770 **Colonists begin to oppose taxation.** “The Sons of Liberty,” a group of colonists in New York, decide to fight back against the unfair taxation. In the same year, the Boston Massacre occurs: a deadly riot in which British soldiers shoot and kill several colonists during a brawl in Boston.

1773 **The Boston Tea Party occurs.** A group of American colonists dump nearly 50 tons of tea into Boston Harbor in order to protest the new taxation laws.

1774 **Great Britain passes the Intolerable Acts.** The Intolerable Acts are a series of laws passed by British Parliament in order to punish the colonists for the Boston Tea Party. The acts are meant to take away the colonists’ rights even further.

1775 **April 15 – The Revolutionary War begins.** In Massachusetts, the first shots of the war are fired.

1775 **June 14 – The Continental Army is formed.** Thousands of volunteers from across the colonies come to fight against the British. This includes people of all races and ages, but only men are able to fight on the battle lines.

June 17 – The Battle of Bunker Hill occurs. The Continental Army faces the British troops in Charlestown. The colonists lose the battle, but they still see it as a moral victory.

1776 **The colonies declare independence.** The Declaration of Independence is signed by Congress, declaring America’s freedom.

1777 **Vermont becomes the first state to ban slavery entirely.**

1778 **France aligns with the colonists.** After a harsh winter at Valley Forge, the Continental Army sees several victories, prompting France to support the colonists.

1781 **The Battle of Yorktown occurs.** This is the last battle of the American Revolutionary War. A large British army is defeated by American and French troops.

1783 **The Revolutionary War ends.** The Treaty of Paris is signed, and the war officially ends.

1831 **The Underground Railroad begins.** Safe house networks manage to bring as many as 100,000 people to freedom from slavery over the next several decades.

1861-1865 **The American Civil War occurs.** The Civil War is fought between the Northern and Southern United States.

1863 **The Emancipation Proclamation is signed.** President Lincoln signs the Emancipation Proclamation, officially freeing all enslaved people.

1865 **Slavery is officially abolished in the US Constitution.**



BEFORE READING: THEMES AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

After reviewing the timeline of the American Revolutionary War, discuss the following questions.

- What role does power play during wartime? What is the difference between authority, citizenship, and lack of freedom?
- What rights did the British have that the colonists did not before the United States of America was formed?
- Define “freedom” in your own words. Should everyone have the right to freedom?
- Does “freedom” have the same definition all over the world? Has it always had the same definition throughout history?
- What was life like for people of color during the American Revolutionary War, and how was this different from the lives of white people? Did people of color have any rights or freedoms?
- When is it okay to break the rules?
- What does the government do to extend its rule over citizens in wartime? Does the role of the government change during times of war?
- Is it okay to use ideals and principles to justify actions? Should individuals have the same accountability as governments?
- What does it take for an idea to bring change?
- What are some other examples of individuals and groups fighting for freedom throughout history?
- What was the impact of the American Revolutionary War on the rest of the world?
- How has war changed throughout the course of history? How has it remained the same?



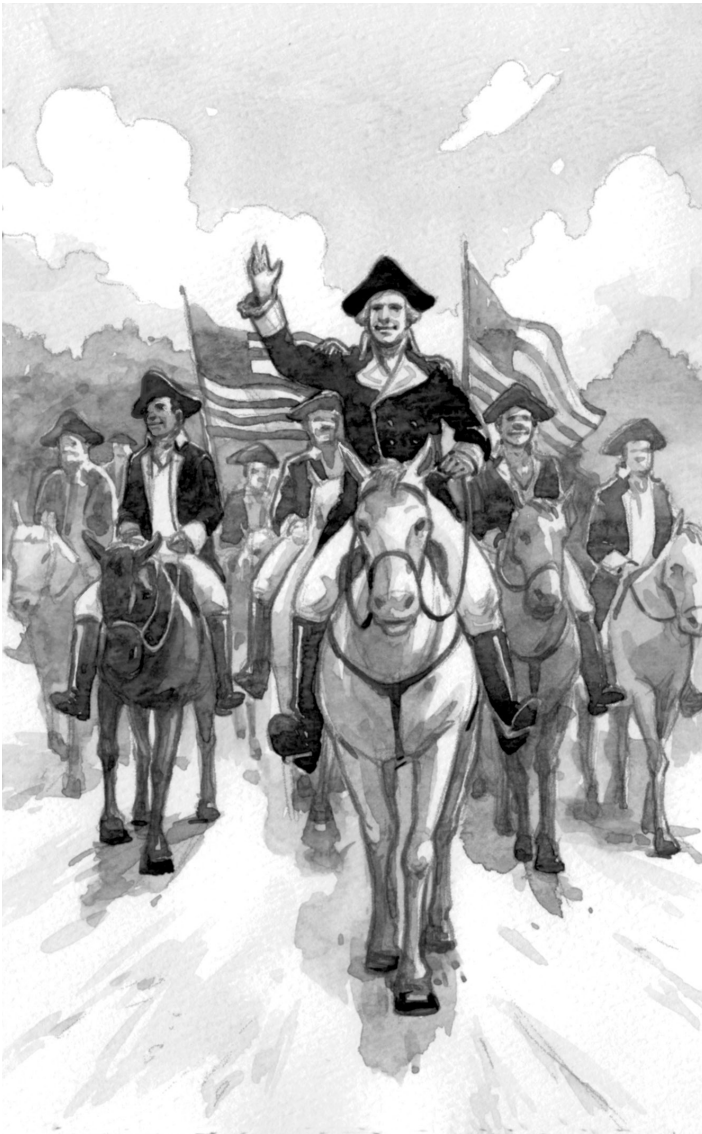
WHILE READING: KEEP A READING JOURNAL

In this *Choose Your Own Adventure SPIES* book, you will have the opportunity to “step into the shoes” of people from the past and learn about their personal barriers and accomplishments during the Revolutionary War. As you read the adventures, you will have the opportunity to alter your life’s path and change your fate by following different parts of the book. As you make personal choices on where to go, keep a Reading Journal. Write down the choices you make and how this affects the outcome of your journey. As in real-life situations, you can always learn from your mistakes. If you decide to change your trajectory by reading a different passage, go ahead and turn back time! This is your story...YOU are James Armistead Lafayette!



AFTER READING: FURTHER DISCUSSION

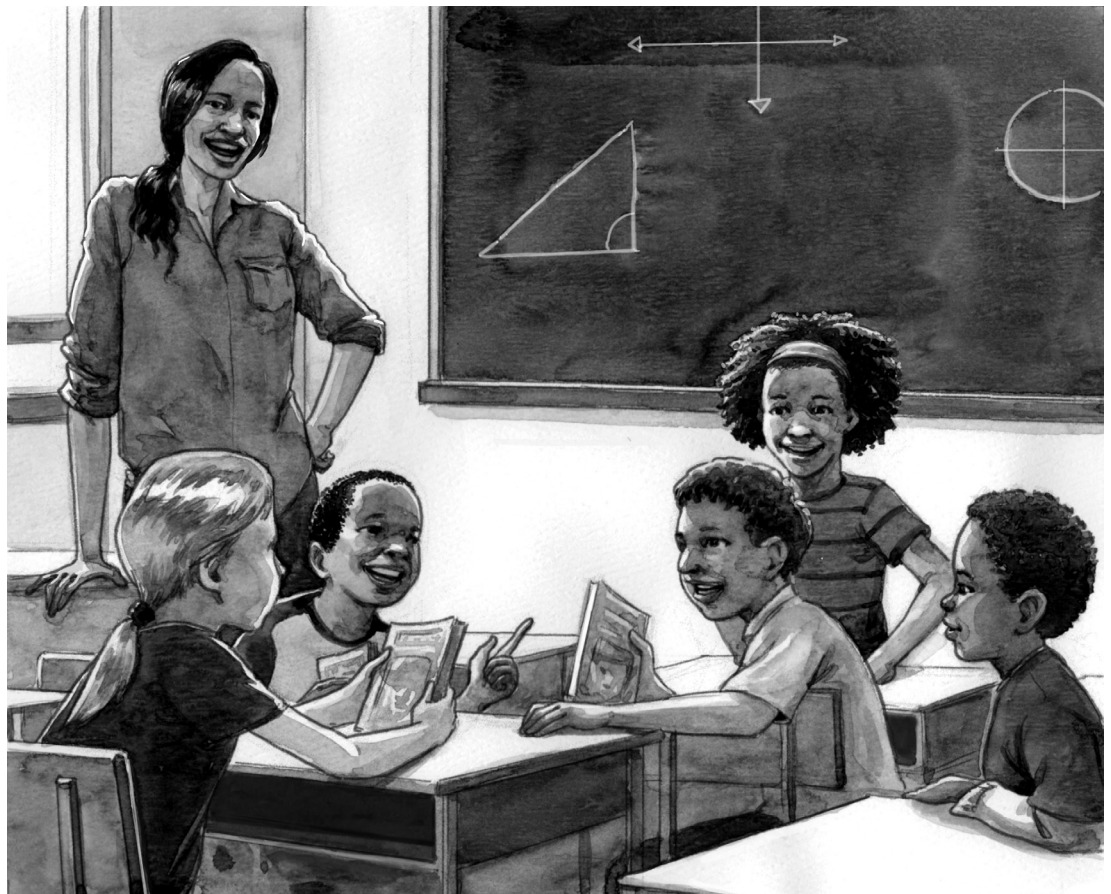
- Create a list of historical characters from the story who were involved in the Revolutionary War. How did the fictional characters differ from the historical figures?
- Compare and contrast the 1700s with the present day. What has changed? What has remained the same? What role might you have played during this time period? What role would have been outside of your reach?
- How does James Armistead Lafayette change throughout the book? Describe the changes from the beginning of the story to your ending. What did YOU, as James, learn?
- What made James Armistead Lafayette a good spy? What, if anything, made him a bad spy?
- Discuss how James Armistead Lafayette took the name of Marquis de Lafayette. Why did he change his name? Would you have done the same thing?
- How did James Armistead Lafayette influence the outcome of the Revolutionary War?
- Medicine plays a role in this book. How many people died during the Revolutionary War? What were some causes of death outside of the battlefield?



- Research a character from *Choose Your Own Adventure SPIES: James Armistead Lafayette*. Find a partner who researched a different character and describe to one another what you each learned from your character's struggles and accomplishments. Does this person deserve to be recognized as a famous person in American history?
- When you got to "The End" for the first time, what happened from start to finish? Compare and contrast with a partner who ended up at a different ending than you did.
- Go back and read through different story lines. After you get to "The End" again, think about what your favorite outcome was.
- Compare and contrast two books from the *CYOA SPIES* series on their approaches to historical perspectives, personal obstacles, and historical events. Consider: *Choose Your Own Adventure SPIES: Mata Hari*.

CONDUCT FURTHER RESEARCH ON THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION & THE KEY CHARACTERS FROM THE BOOK

- Who was James Armistead Lafayette? Consider why there is not a lot of information about this American hero. How did race play a role in deciding what went into history books? How has that changed throughout the course of history?
- Think about how spies operate outside of the rest of society. What role did spies play in the American Revolution? Research other spies from this time period on both sides of the war.
- What kinds of information did spies gather during this time period? How did spies communicate? How has spying evolved with the advent of new technologies?
- Is it fair to have spies? Do moral rules change during wartime? What fundamental morals must always be maintained?
- What are some of the risks that spies faced during the Revolutionary War? Do those challenges still exist today?
- What intel did spies provide during the Revolutionary War?
- Imagine the outcome of the Revolutionary War if James Armistead had never joined the Continental Army. How does your version of the colonies differ from author Kyandrea Jones's version?
- How were people of color treated differently during the war? Did people of color continue to have the same rights after the war that they did during it?
- Why was slavery able to continue even after the American Revolution?
- How was Marquis de Lafayette one of the first advocates of civil disobedience?



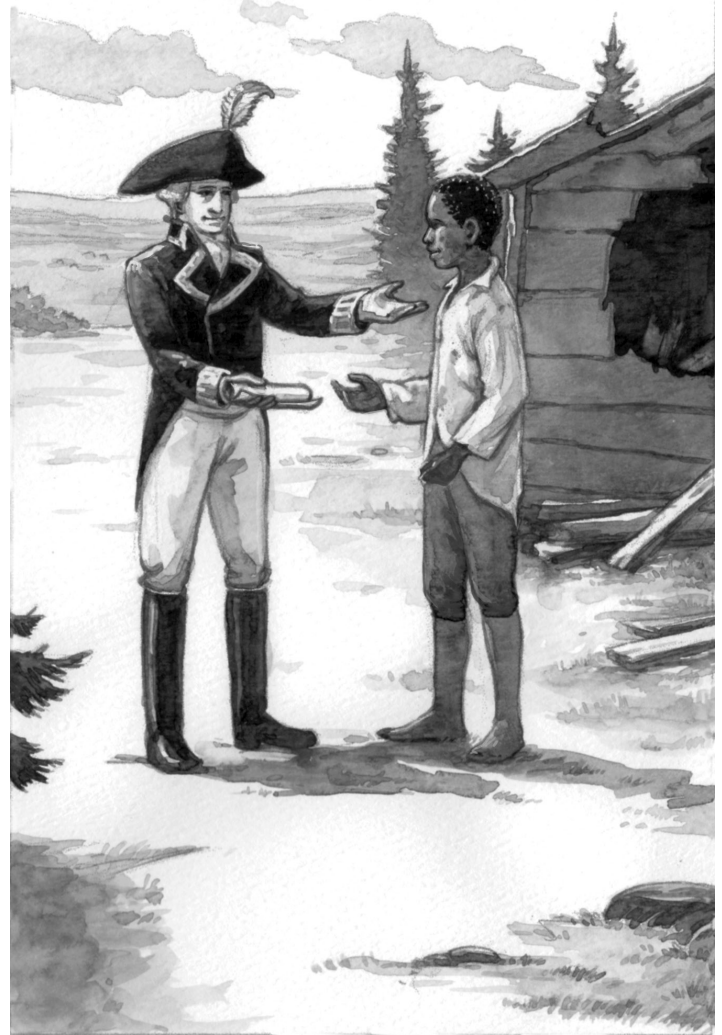
AFTER READING: ACTIVITIES

1. Create a PowerPoint presentation on one of the following topics:

- What was life like for African Americans during the Revolutionary War?
- James Armistead Lafayette was raised on a tobacco plantation. What were tobacco plantations like? What were the roles of enslaved people on these plantations? What kind of different tasks were performed by men, women, and children? How did tobacco plantations differ from other kinds of plantations (e.g., sugar plantations)?
- Research a famous runaway slave. Were they able to escape successfully? Where did they go? Did they change their name? Did they use the Underground Railroad for help?

2. James Armistead Lafayette was able to transmit secret messages during the war using a code. With a partner, create a secret code and then present it to the class, explaining how it works.

3. Song was very important to enslaved people, providing a way to tell each other stories and preserve their culture and history orally. With a partner, research a traditional slave song and present it to the class with an explanation of its cultural significance.



4. Write a short story about one of the ways in which the outcome of the Revolutionary War would have been different had James Armistead Lafayette not been a spy.



5. Write a spy letter to General George Washington. Imagine how you would transmit the letter and what he would have written back. Consider that the letter might be intercepted—what steps would you take to avoid the information getting into the hands of the enemy?

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Kyandreaia Jones is a Posse Miami Scholar and a creative writing major at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York. She was born and raised in South Florida. When she thinks of home she likes to muse that she is in a “sunshine state of mind.” Jones’s poetry and prose have been published in various college literary publications and magazines such as *Red Weather*, *Grasping Roots*, *The Black List Journal*, and *The Underground*. Opportunities like having her first short story “At Home” published by Living Spring Publishers in *Stories Through the Ages, College Edition 2017* inspired Jones to take her writing to new heights. Working for *Choose Your Own Adventure* has been the highlight of Jones’s career and she cannot wait to see what other adventures await her! Jones values reading, writing, laughing, and promoting universal kindness.

