

# THE FREE AND THE BRAVE



TEACHING RESOURCES



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# For the Teacher

This guide consists of lessons to assist you in using *The Free and the Brave* in your classroom. The guide is written in a chapter-by-chapter format and includes a synopsis, pre-reading activities, a list of characters, and comprehension questions, as well as supplementary activities to be used at the end of the book.

The novel and its accompanying guide can be used in a number of ways. Students reading at the same level might participate in a small-group guided reading of the book, returning to it over several weeks as they read and discuss it with the teacher. The entire class might read the book and discuss it in small groups using literature circles or reciprocal teaching. The teacher can then use the suggested questions to guide students in their discussions. Comprehension questions can be answered orally or in writing. Students should be encouraged to support their answers with evidence from the text. Students might keep a notebook of their responses throughout the year, which can then be used for progress monitoring and assessment purposes.

Using this guide can help you as a teacher create more active readers. Students who are encouraged to think about their reading, make inferences, compare and contrast events and characters, and notice author's language will read more closely and carefully. They will become more thoughtful readers, and their reading comprehension will improve. Working on this in the context of authentic literature helps to inspire a motivation and love for reading.

## Synopsis

In the summer of 1814, the British are advancing on Baltimore Harbor, where Jacob Franks and his family live. Jacob Franks and his friends help the war effort by digging trenches and building ramparts. They bring kosher food to the Jewish soldiers of Fort McHenry, where they watch the epic Battle of Baltimore and the raising of the American flag over the fort the next morning. It is after this battle that Francis Scott Key pens “The Star Spangled Banner,” which later becomes the national anthem.

## Pre-Reading Activities

Use one or more of the following activities to introduce the novel.

1. **Predictions:** Have students preview the book by reading the title, the author, and looking at the illustration on the cover. Have they read any other books by the same author? What do the words “the free and the brave” remind them of? What do they notice in the cover illustration? What do they think this book will be about?
2. **Building Background:** *The Free and The Brave* takes place during the War of 1812. Give students background information on the War of 1812, including a map of the United States from this time period and the key role of Baltimore Harbor during this war.
3. **Genre Focus:** *The Free and the Brave* is a work of historical fiction. This means that it’s based on real historical events and set in a historical time and place. Historical fiction often includes a mix of real and fictional characters. As students read this book, have them create a chart of characters and then identify each person’s significance as well as whether he is fictional or real.
4. **Social Studies:** Have students take notes on the treatment of different minority groups (Jews, former slaves, Quakers) in the United States during this time period. As they read the novel, students can gather evidence from the novel for the treatment of each group.
5. **Geography:** Have students locate Baltimore on a map. Let them trace the major rivers that will be referenced in the book, such as the Patuxent River and the Patapsco River. Find Fort McHenry. Discuss the significance of Baltimore to the war effort.
6. **Art/culture:** Students can research different American patriotic songs, such as “Yankee Doodle Dandy,” “America the Beautiful,” and “You’re a Grand Old Flag.” For each song, students can find out who wrote the song, when it was written, and what its significance is.
7. **Social Studies:** Have students review “The Star Spangled Banner.” Then discuss the meaning of each stanza and generate questions. After reading the book, return to these questions and see which can be answered with information gathered from reading the book.

# Characters

**Jacob Franks:** twelve-year-old boy who wishes he could join the Fencibles; delivers kosher meat for Mr. Etting each morning; smart, brave, and patriotic; the story's main character

**Solomon Etting:** Jacob's boss; owner of the kosher food service for which Jacob makes daily deliveries; patriotic and kind

**Jeremiah Oglesby:** Jacob's Christian friend who joins him on some deliveries; curious and loyal

**Nathan Franks:** Jacob's father; limps so can't join the Fencibles; owns a carpentry shop where he repairs furniture for the fort; patriotic and determined

**Rebecca Franks:** Jacob's mother; takes in the Gomez guests without question; prepares for Rosh Hashanah despite the war around her; brave and kind

**Roger Biddle, William Johnson:** believe the Baltimoreans should give up their harbor instead of trying to fight the British

**Gratz Family:** Jacob's aunt and uncle, who come from Philadelphia for the High Holy Days

**Gomez Family:** family from Virginia who stay at the Frankses for Shabbos with their nephew Abraham; describe the burning of Washington

**Major Armistead:** commander of Fort McHenry during the Battle of Baltimore; ordered a garrison flag and a large flag to fly over the fort

**Abraham Gomez:** fourteen-year-old nephew of the Gomez family who comes with them to the Frankses; becomes friends with Jacob and joins him on his deliveries; talented, smart, and patriotic

**Mr. Oglesby:** Jeremiah's father; tells the Jews the news about recruitment for the Fencibles; flees Baltimore for Pennsylvania because he's afraid of the British

**Captain Joseph Nicholson:** leader of the Baltimore Fencibles

**Mendes and Philip Cohen, Samuel Etting:** Jewish boys who join the Fencibles; recipients of Jacob's kosher food deliveries at the fort

**Harold Comden:** leads the meeting to encourage new recruits to the Fencibles; destroys his fishing boats to block the British boats from coming too close

**Henry:** freed slave who wants to fight the British; looking for his lost friend, Will

**Mr. Connors:** one of the leaders of the Vigilance and Safety Committee; directs Jacob to help dig trenches and build ramparts; flees Baltimore from the advancing British army

**Francis Scott Key:** Joseph Nicholson's brother-in-law; lawyer who negotiates for the release of an American prisoner of war; writes the poem that becomes "The Star Spangled Banner"

# Chapters 1–3

## Synopsis

Jacob senses something different in the air during these few days at the end of August. People are worrying about the eight thousand British troops sailing up the Patuxent River toward Baltimore Harbor. Meanwhile, Jacob's mother is preparing for Rosh Hashanah and for possible guests coming up from the South. Although Jacob and his friend Jeremiah are too young to join the Fencibles, Baltimore's volunteer militia, they follow a loaded wagon to Fort McHenry, where they watch some soldiers preparing the fort for war.

## Vocabulary

**shifted** (p. 12): *He shifted some of the items in the cart for better balance, then moved on toward the next house on his list.*

**jabbed** (p. 14): *"Read that!" Jeremiah said as he jabbed his finger at the headline in the middle of the page.*

**militia** (p. 15): *Jacob stood up straighter speaking of the local militia. He couldn't wait to be old enough to join them.*

## Questions

1. *Literary device:* In the first few pages of the novel, the author creates a mood of tension and worry. What details does the author include on pages 10–13 of the book to create this mood? Make a prediction: What might they be worrying about?
2. Jacob describes Major Armistead's troops and wishes he could join the Fencibles. What are the Fencibles, and why does Jacob wish he could join them?
3. Mrs. Weiss always asks Jacob to "show me the tag." What does the tag say, and why might Mrs. Weiss insist on seeing it each morning before she accepts her delivery?
4. Compare and contrast Mr. Biddle's feelings about the war with the British with those of Mr. Etting and Mr. Franks. Why might they each feel differently?
5. *Character:* What kind of person is Mrs. Franks? What do her actions, speech, and thoughts at the beginning of the book convey about the type of person she is?
6. *Quotable quote:* At the end of Chapter 3, the soldier who meets Jacob tells him, "Glad to hear there's plenty of patriotism here. But you're boys and you can't get mixed up in the work of men." Explain what the soldier meant when he said this. What is the patriotism that he sees here? And what is the work of men to which he is referring?

# Chapters 4–6

## Synopsis

Jacob delivers food to his father’s carpentry shop and listens in on a conversation where his father and other men discuss their feelings about the British. The next morning, the Gomez family, together with their nephew Abraham, arrive at the Frankses’ house to spend Shabbos. They tell the story of their escape from Washington and of the British destruction of the capital.

## Vocabulary

**grimy** (p. 32): *All the men moved toward the front of the shop to watch out the grimy front window.*

**crockery** (p. 33): *He wondered if their sails were being torn to twisted shreds and their coffee mugs thrown to the deck in a pile of shattered crockery.*

**debris** (p. 33): *And if any of the stray debris was left in front or behind the Frankses’ shop, Jacob would be the one charged with cleaning it up.*

**scorched** (p. 36): *Jacob looked at Mr. Gomez’s weary face and at the scorched wagon and at the boy inside the carriage staring hard at him.*

**imposition** (p. 36): *“I hope it won’t be too much of an imposition on your family.”*

**flitted** (p. 36): *While the Gomez family unpacked their bags and Jacob’s mother flitted about like a butterfly, bringing pillows and pointing here and there for extra blankets, Jacob slipped away and headed directly to Jeremiah’s house.*

**tattered** (p. 45): *Everyone took their places at the table, and Mr. Franks read from the tattered prayer book that his father had brought with him to the New World and then passed on to him.*

## Questions

1. Describe the British burning of Washington in as much detail as possible.
2. When Jacob and Jeremiah discuss the burning of Washington, they repeat the words “the president’s house” three times. Why do they repeat this again and again, and what does it show us about their feelings and thoughts?
3. *Literary device*: What mood does the author create at the end of Chapter 6? Contrast this with the mood of the rest of the chapter.
4. *Creative writing activity*: Think about how Abraham Gomez feels in these chapters. Write two diary entries from his perspective, one from August 26, the day he arrived in Baltimore, and one written after Shabbos, August 27.

# Chapters 7–9

## Synopsis

At services on Friday night, the congregation discovers that Abraham is a learned boy, and enjoys Jacob's addition to Abraham's *dvar Torah*. After Shabbos, the Jewish community gathers for a small *melaveh malkah*, which is interrupted by Mr. Oglesby's entrance. Mr. Oglesby announces that Major Armistead has asked Mr. Nicholson for the Baltimore Fencibles to help at Fort McHenry. Abraham tries to join the Fencibles, but is sent home since he comes without his father's permission.

## Vocabulary

**stifling** (p. 48): *But on stifling hot days when he would much rather be outside than leaning over the table trying to remember the Hebrew letters, Jacob didn't feel very lucky.*

**lingered** (p. 53): *Jacob lingered for a moment as he filled his plate to hear what news he could catch.*

**dally** (p. 53): *Jacob had no more room on his plate and no more excuse to dally, so he moved toward the door...*

**recruits** (p. 56): *"They're signing up new recruits at the dry goods store tonight and tomorrow or however long it takes to get enough."*

**perched** (p. 57): *Mr. Etting stood from where he had been perched against the window ledge, moved to the center of the room to shake Mr. Oglesby's hand, and invited him and Jeremiah to share in the treats...*

**declined** (p. 57): *Mr. Oglesby declined the treats and gave Jeremiah a look that seemed to command agreement.*

## Questions

1. Describe Abraham Gomez based on information in these chapters as well as in Chapter 6. Compare and contrast him with Jacob Franks.
2. Mr. Oglesby tells the Hebrews gathered at the Etting house that Major Armistead has asked Joseph Nicholson for the Baltimore Fencibles to help at Fort McHenry. Who is Major Armistead? Who is Mr. Nicholson? What is their relationship?
3. At the Saturday night meeting in Chapter 9, Mr. Harold Comden begins his speech by describing how his father and uncle fought in the Revolutionary War. Why does he mention this and how does it connect to the current war?
4. At the end of Chapter 9, Jacob notices someone else entering the meeting. Who is this man and why might he be there?
5. *Creative writing activity*: Create a sign advertising the need for new recruits to the Fencibles. Who should sign up? Why? Where and when should they report to duty?



## Chapters 10–12

### Synopsis

Although Mr. Franks desperately wants to join the Fencibles, his limp prevents him from being able to fight. Jacob hears about anti-Semitism for the first time, when Mendes Cohen tells him that Hebrews can't run for public office. Abraham and Jacob meet Henry, who claims to be a freed slave, and then find him working at Mr. Franks's shop. Then they deliver an order together to Fort McHenry.

### Vocabulary

**insisted** (p. 65): *"You don't understand, Rebecca," Jacob's father insisted.*

**earnestness** (p. 65): *"No one questions your patriotism or earnestness, Mr. Franks."*

**accompanied** (p. 66): *He had accompanied Mr. Franks home from the meeting and stopped off to make sure that Jacob had gotten back safely.*

**ajar** (p. 72): *Jacob watched as his friend strode toward the barn, peeked in the slightly ajar door, then hurried around the back.*

### Questions

1. Describe the argument between Nathan Franks and his wife at the beginning of Chapter 10.
2. Explain what Nathan Franks means when he says, "They'll let us fight, but they won't let us sit in the room and make the laws." What does this mean?
3. Jacob and Abraham are unsure whether Henry is truly a freed slave or whether he is the runaway slave advertised in the newspaper. What do you think? Why?
4. Mr. Franks is extra-busy at his carpentry shop these days. Why?

# Chapters 13–15

## Synopsis

Jacob reads President Madison’s proclamation calling all citizens to help the war effort with their “hearts and hands” and wishes he could do something to help. He, Henry, and Abraham start helping with the trenches and ramparts intended to prevent the British from entering the city. They then discover what Henry is doing in Baltimore now and why he so badly wants to fight the British. Jacob and his mother both make sacrifices toward the war effort.

## Vocabulary

**proclamation** (p. 84): *There was a proclamation from the president of the United States, President James Madison.*

**emerged** (p. 86): *When he emerged again from the back room, he was accompanied by Mr. Connors — one of the leaders of the Vigilance and Safety Committee.*

## Questions

1. Explain President James Madison’s proclamation. What does it mean for people to “unite their hearts and hands”? What might the people of Baltimore do with their hearts and with their hands to help the war effort?
2. Mr. Connors asks for the boys’ help building ramparts. What are ramparts, and how might they help keep the British away from Baltimore?
3. Chapter 14 gives more information about who Henry really is. Clarify what his background is and why he is now in Baltimore.
4. What had happened to Henry’s friend Will before the British came along, and what happened to him afterward?
5. Henry asks Jacob and Abraham if they have papers proving that they are freed slaves. Jacob answers, “In this country, we don’t need any papers.” How does this connect to what Mendes Cohen said at the end of Chapter 10?
6. The Franks family are all involved in the war effort with their “hearts and hands.” Explain how each member (Mr. Franks, Mrs. Franks, and Jacob) uses his hands to physically aid in the war effort.
7. Jacob asks his mother how she can prepare for Rosh Hashanah with the British on their way. Analyze her answer to this question. What does it tell us about her character and beliefs?

## Chapters 16–18

### Synopsis

The Franks family sits down to their Shabbos dinner with Henry as a guest, and the Oglesby family comes to say goodbye. They are leaving Baltimore since they are afraid of the British. The next morning the prayers are emptier than the week before, and Jacob notices that many families seem to have fled Baltimore. On Sunday morning, the Fencibles are called to report to the fort. When Jacob and Abraham walk toward the fort, they see the British ships blocking the mouth of the Patapsco River and wonder how America could possibly defeat them. Jacob agrees to bring kosher food to the Jewish men stationed at the fort.

### Vocabulary

**intricate** (p. 102): *It slid around and back and through and out, and as Jacob listened he suddenly imagined watching his mother weaving the most intricate and delicate patterns of lace.*

**sparingly** (p. 103): *Mr. and Mrs. Franks ate more sparingly. They ate like two people who had more on their minds than the supper in front of them.*

**gait** (p. 109): *They made their way at a quick, steady gait over the streets of Baltimore.*

**wrath** (p. 111): *But then how would America escape the wrath of all those ships?*

**resumed** (p. 112): *He had resumed the same quick pace as he headed in the direction of the fort.*

**provisions** (p. 114): *“Solomon is getting provisions ready for all of them.”*

**intently** (p. 115): *Mr. and Mrs. Cohen watched Jacob intently as he stood.*

### Questions

1. *Literary device:* At the beginning of Chapter 16, the author compares Abraham’s music to intricately patterned lace. Explain this comparison. How does it help us visualize his music?
2. When the Oglesby family stops in to say goodbye, Mr. Oglesby says, “I can see you’re real patriots. Americans.” What makes him say this? What has the Franks family done that has given him this impression?
3. As Jacob says goodbye to his friend Jeremiah heading for Pennsylvania, Jacob says, “The British know where Pennsylvania is, too.” Explain what he means by this.
4. Describe how Jacob feels when he nears Federal Hill and sees the British ships in Baltimore harbor. What does he decide he must do?
5. What does Mr. Cohen ask Jacob to do? Why?
6. When Mr. Cohen offers to pay Jacob for taking food to the Jewish men at the fort, he refuses. He then thinks of his mother’s look when he asked what she was being paid for her sewing. Why does he think of his mother now?

# Chapters 19–21

## Synopsis

Jacob and Abraham continue making their daily delivery to the fort. They are at the fort when it's attacked by British cannon fire, and then return once more, this time with sacks instead of a wagon.

## Vocabulary

**savored** (p. 122): *Just as yesterday, all three savored the hot black coffee before examining the rest of the provisions and deciding what to eat right away.*

**subsided** (p. 128): *Eventually, the rain subsided and he was feeling drowsy enough to sleep.*

**momentary** (p. 138): *Then, in a momentary pause, Jacob caught the sounds of a horse and wagon out front.*

## Questions

1. Samuel Etting tells Jacob and Abraham, “You boys should be honorary Fencibles.” Why?
2. Who is Captain Nicholson’s brother-in-law, and why is he out on a ship with the British?
3. *Quotable quote:* Jacob’s aunt says, “If we changed our plans because the British thought they could just come in and take back this country, it would be as good as us just giving it to them.” Explain what she means by this.
4. Why are the Baltimore boatmen chopping holes in their boats’ hulls and sinking them in the Baltimore Harbor?
5. Why does Mr. Etting send the boys to the fort with cotton sacks instead of with their usual wagon?

## Chapters 22–25

### Synopsis

Jacob and Abraham are at the fort as it comes under British attack. Jacob returns to the fort early the next morning in the midst of heavy British cannon fire. He dozes off and wakes up to silence. The battle has ended, and the large American flag is flying above the fort. Francis Scott Key docks at the harbor and brings with him a poem he wrote that night, “The Star Spangled Banner,” which ultimately becomes the national anthem.

### Vocabulary

**barrage** (p. 143): *“You came here — in the middle of the worst barrage anyone inside this fort has ever even heard of — to bring us some bread and cheese.”*

**lured** (p. 147): *Startled awake with every crack of lightning or screeching rocket, then lured back to sleep by the smoke and low rumbles of thunder.*

**glimpse** (p. 150): *Jacob tried to get a glimpse of what was on it.*

**perilous** (p. 160): *“It was a perilous fight, wasn’t it, Jacob?”*

### Questions

1. When Jacob and Abraham are at Fort McHenry, they roll a barrel of gunpowder. Clarify how dangerous and how helpful that action actually was.
2. Describe Jacob’s feelings when he woke up to quiet and saw the large American flag flying above the fort.
3. Jacob wonders to himself, *Why would a man like Francis Scott Key, who could rescue people out of the hands of the British, waste his time with writing poems?* How would you answer this question?
4. Jacob realizes that many people in Baltimore can be called “free and brave.” List some of them and explain why they are “free and brave.”
5. Once the war is over, some aspects of life in Baltimore do not return to what they were before. Discuss these.

# Supplementary Activities

Use one or more of the following activities to conclude the novel.

## Music

Abraham plays different kinds of music for different occasions throughout the story. Listen to each type of music that he plays and then consider when he plays it. How is each type of music different? How does each one match its occasion?

## Creative Writing

- Story Continuation: Write a scene that might happen next if the story continued.
- Letter Writing: Write a letter from Abraham Gomez to his parents in Virginia, in which he describes the events at the Battle of Fort McHenry.
- Newspaper: Design the front page of a newspaper published on September 14, 1814.

## History

Review the author's note at the back of the book. Create a historical timeline of events up to and including the defense of Fort McHenry.

Debate: Throughout the book, many Baltimoreans decide to flee the city while others decide to stay. Find evidence to support each of these decisions, and stage a debate on the merits of the two sides.

## Research/Craft

There were two flags displayed at Fort McHenry during the epic battle of September 13–14, 1814. Research what these flags looked like. How were they similar to and different from today's flag? Explain those differences. Recreate one of those flags to show what they looked like.

# Story Map

Characters: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Setting:**

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**Problem:**

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**Goal:**

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Beginning → Development  
→ Outcome

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**Resolution:**

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