

REVOLUTION 250: READING AND WRITING WITH THE CAPTURE OF FORT TICONDEROGA

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“Ethan Allen Takes Fort Ticonderoga:” A Reading and Writing Lesson

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Overview

GRADES 7 – 12. In this reading and writing lesson, students will review facts about Fort Ticonderoga, view and critically examine historic pictures of the Fort and a map, and recognize the Fort’s strategic importance in colonial and revolutionary America; they will read primary sources related to Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys’ capture of the Fort in 1775, and an excerpt from *The Remarkable Cause* used as a short story; and they will demonstrate their understanding of Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys’ capture of the Fort in a narrative, argumentative, or explanatory writing.

Essential Questions

1. Why should we be thinking about the Revolutionary War at this time?
2. What is Fort Ticonderoga? Why was it important during the American Revolutionary War?
3. What role did Ethan Allen take in capturing this Fort from the British?

Students will

- observe and review in class discussion the handout “Facts and Images about the Founding and History of Fort Ticonderoga,” using a three-column chart: Observe - Reflect - Question/Learn.
 - An alternate to the three-column chart is the Primary Source Analysis Tool from the Library of Congress,
https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/documents/Primary_Source_Analysis_Tool_LOC.pdf
- read an excerpt from the primary source *A Narrative of Ethan Allen’s Captivity*.
- read a chapter titled “Ethan Allen Takes Fort Ticonderoga” from *The Remarkable Cause: A Novel of James Lovell and the Crucible of the Revolution* by Jean C. O’Connor, where Ethan Allen, imprisoned in Halifax, describes to James Lovell and other prisoners how he and the Green Mountain Boys captured the Fort from the British on May 10, 1775.
- read as an option the primary source *Lieutenant Feltham’s Report to Lieutenant General Gage* which gives another account of the event and provides for comparison in a close read.

- write a narrative taking on the role of a participant in the Fort’s capture or in the story “Ethan Allen Takes Fort Ticonderoga” to present their understanding of Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys’ capture of the Fort in the first offensive action of the Revolutionary War,

Learning Objectives

- ◆ Students will gain understanding about the founding and history of Fort Ticonderoga and recognize its strategic importance in colonial and revolutionary America.
- ◆ Students will read a book excerpt used as a short story, titled “Ethan Allen Takes Fort Ticonderoga,” that brings to life the character of Ethan Allen and his retelling of the capture of the Fort with the Green Mountain Boys.
- ◆ Students will engage in close readings of primary sources related to Ethan Allen’s capture of Fort Ticonderoga. They will recognize the contribution of authentic primary sources to understanding of history.
- ◆ Students will understand how the capture of Fort Ticonderoga by Ethan Allen benefitted the American cause, and gain an appreciation of the character of Ethan Allen.
- ◆ Students will respond to one of three writing prompts to demonstrate their understanding of Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys’ capture of the Fort from the British in the first offensive action of the Revolutionary War.
- ◆ Writings may be brief (paragraph length) or essay length, completed by following the writing process: prewrite, draft, edit, revise, finalize.

Materials

- ◆ Handout: **Facts and Images about the Founding and History of Fort Ticonderoga**, with historical pictures (may use as a whole class discussion).
- ◆ Optional Primary Source Analysis Tool from the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/documents/Primary_Source_Analysis_Tool_LOC.pdf
- ◆ Optional Teachers’ Guide with sample questions to use with the Primary Source Analysis Tool to guide students to observe, reflect and question the images, also from the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/documents/Analyzing_Primary_Sources.pdf
- ◆ Excerpt from *A Narrative of Col. Ethan Allen’s Captivity*, primary source
- ◆ “Ethan Allen Takes Fort Ticonderoga,” a book excerpt from *The Remarkable Cause: A Novel of James Lovell and the Crucible of the Revolution* used as a short story.
- ◆ *Lieutenant Feltham’s Report to General Gage*, optional primary source
- ◆ Handout: Writing for Ethan Allen Takes Fort Ticonderoga

Day 1. (Note: younger students may require more time to complete the lesson.)

1. As preparation for reading, **students review the handout Facts and Images about the Founding and History of Fort Ticonderoga**, taking notes on a three-column chart: Observe, Reflect, and Question during a class discussion guided by the teacher. Questions may include these: What do you notice in this image? What purpose did the artist (or photographer) have here? What questions do you have about this image? Or, instead of the chart, students may use the Primary Source Analysis Tool from the Library of Congress
2. A “Teacher’s Guide” for the Primary Source Analysis Tool may be found at the Library of Congress.
3. Students will read a selection from the primary source *A Narrative of Ethan Allen’s Captivity* in which he describes the taking of Fort Ticonderoga; they will consider the accompanying questions.

Day 2

1. Students will read “Ethan Allen Takes Fort Ticonderoga,” an excerpt from *The Remarkable Cause: A Novel of James Lovell and the Crucible of the Revolution*, used as a short story. Here Ethan Allen describes the capture of Fort Ticonderoga to James Lovell, Boston schoolteacher, in a British prison in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1776, the year following his taking of the Fort. Students will answer clarifying questions.
2. An optional primary source reading is *Lieutenant Feltham’s Report to General Gage*; this reading will allow students to consider how and why this British officer’s report of the capture of Fort Ticonderoga differs from that of Ethan Allen.

Day 3

- ◆ In the summative assessment for the lesson, students will write a paragraph, a short essay, or a full well-developed essay, from one of the Alternative Essay prompts given in the handout Writing for “Ethan Allen Takes Fort Ticonderoga,” given following the story “Ethan Allen Takes Fort Ticonderoga.” Writings will demonstrate students’ understanding of Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys’ capture of the Fort from the British in the first offensive action of the Revolutionary War, and the importance of the Fort’s capture.
1. Writings may be narrative, argumentative, or explanatory.

The writing may be brief or fully developed. Additional days may be required, depending on the students’ levels and whether the full writing process is followed.

Extension Ideas

- Visit a museum in person or virtually and see exhibits that relate to the Revolutionary War
- Create poetry bringing to life subjects that relate to Ethan Allen’s capture of Fort Ticonderoga or the Revolutionary War
- Explore more images of Fort Ticonderoga and the Revolutionary War on-line.

“Ethan Allen Takes Fort Ticonderoga”

A Reading and Writing Lesson. Accompanying Primary Source.

Jean C. O'Connor

From *A Narrative of Col. Ethan Allen's Captivity*, written by Col. Ethan Allen, 1846.

The introduction to *A Narrative of Col. Ethan Allen's Captivity* gives us the following description of the leader of the Green Mountain Boys:

“Ethan Allen proved a zealous and strenuous supporter of the cause. Whether in the field or the council—whether at home, a freeman among the mountains of Vermont, or loaded with the manacles of despotism, in a foreign country, his spirit never quailed beneath the sneer of the tory, or the harsh threats of insolent authority. A stranger to fear, his opinions were ever given without disguise or hesitation: and, an enemy to oppression, he sought every opportunity to redress the wrongs of the oppressed” (4).

In the first offensive action of the American Revolutionary War, Ethan Allen follows orders he had received from Connecticut to lead his Green Mountain Boys to capture Fort Ticonderoga from the British on May 10, 1775. He is accompanied by Captain Benedict Arnold, commissioned for the same purpose by the Massachusetts Committee of Safety. Allen refuses to yield command to Benedict Arnold, but allows him to accompany his group.

A NARRATIVE OF COL. ETHAN ALLEN'S CAPTIVITY

Ever since I arrived at the state of manhood, and acquainted myself with the general history of mankind, I have felt a sincere passion for liberty. The history of nations, doomed to perpetual slavery, in consequence of yielding up to tyrants their natural-born liberties, I read with a sort of philosophical horror; so that the first systematical and bloody attempt, at Lexington, to enslave America, thoroughly electrified my mind, and fully determined me to take part with my country. And, while I was wishing for an opportunity to signalize myself in its behalf, directions were privately sent to me from the then colony, (now state) of Connecticut, to raise the Green Mountain Boys, and, if possible, with them to surprise and take the fortress of Ticonderoga. This enterprise I cheerfully undertook; and, after first guarding all the several passes that led thither, to cut off all intelligence between the garrison and the country, I made a forced march from Bennington, and arrived at the lake opposite to Ticonderoga, on the evening of the ninth day of May, 1775, with two hundred and thirty valiant Green Mountain Boys, and it was with the utmost difficulty that I procured boats to cross the lake. However, I landed eighty-three men near the garrison, and sent the boats back for the rear guard, commanded by Col. Seth Warner, but the day began to dawn, and I found myself under a necessity to attack the fort, before the rear could cross the lake; and, as it was viewed hazardous, I harangued the officers and soldiers in the manner following: —

“Friends and fellow soldiers, You have, for a number of years past been a scourge and terror to arbitrary power. Your valor has been famed abroad, and acknowledged, as appears by the advice and orders to me, from the General Assembly of Connecticut, to surprise and take the garrison now before us. I now propose to advance before you, and, in person, conduct you

through the wicket-gate...and, inasmuch as it is a desperate attempt, which none but the bravest of men dare undertake, I do not urge it on any contrary to his will. You that will undertake voluntarily, poise your firelocks.”

The men being, at this time, drawn up in three ranks, each poised his firelock. I ordered them to face to the right, and at the head of the center-file, marched them immediately to the wicket-gate aforesaid, where I found a sentry posted, who instantly snapped his fusee at me: I ran immediately towards him, and he retreated through the covered way into the parade within the garrison, gave a halloo, and ran under a bomb-proof. My party, who followed me into the fort, I formed on the parade in such a manner as to face the two barracks which faced each other.

The garrison being asleep, except the sentries, we gave three huzzas which greatly surprised them. One of the sentries made a pass at one of my officers with a charged bayonet, and slightly wounded him: My first thought was to kill him with my sword; but, in an instant, I altered the design and fury of the blow to a slight cut on the side of the head; upon which he dropped his gun, and asked quarter, which I readily granted him, and demanded of him the place where the commanding officer kept; he showed me a pair of stairs in the front of a barrack, on the west part of the garrison, which led up to a second story in said barrack, to which I immediately repaired, and ordered the commander, Capt. De la Place, to come forth instantly, or I would sacrifice the whole garrison; at which the Capt. came immediately to the door, with his breeches in his hand; when I ordered him to deliver the fort instantly; he asked me by what authority I demanded it: I answered him, “In the name of the Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress.” The authority of the Congress being very little known at that time, he began to speak again; but I interrupted him, and with my drawn sword over his head, again demanded an immediate surrender of the garrison; with which he then complied, and ordered his men to be forthwith paraded without arms, as he had given up the garrison. In the mean time some of my officers had given orders, and in consequence thereof, sundry of the barrack doors were beat down, and about one third of the garrison imprisoned, which consisted of the said commander, a Lieut. Feltham, a conductor of artillery, a gunner, two sergeants, and forty-four rank and file; about one hundred pieces of cannon, one thirteen inch mortar, and a number of swivels. This surprise was carried into execution in the grey of the morning of the tenth day of May, 1775. The sun seemed to rise that morning with a superior lustre; and Ticonderoga and its dependencies smiled on its conquerors, who tossed about the flowing bowl, and wished success to Congress, and the liberty and freedom of America.

After taking control of Fort Ticonderoga and all of Lake Champlain, Ethan Allen participated in a failed attempt to capture Montreal, was captured, and sent to prison in England. From there he was transported to the Hollis Street jail in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He described meeting James Lovell in the jail and befriending him.

“...since it was Mr. Lovell’s misfortunes and mine to be prisoners, and in so wretched circumstances, I was happy that we were together as a mutual support to each other, and to the unfortunate prisoners with us.”

Questions:

1. From this reading, how would you describe the character of Ethan Allen?
2. Why do you think Ethan Allen chooses not to mention the captain sent to lead the capture of the Fort by the Massachusetts Committee of Safety?
3. How many years after the event does he write this?
4. What is his likely purpose in writing?

Allen, Ethan. *A Narrative of Col. Ethan Allen's Captivity*. Fourth ed., Burlington: Chauncey Goodrich, 1846, Google eBook, p. 11—15, 68.

“Ethan Allen Takes Fort Ticonderoga”

A Reading and Writing Lesson. Optional Primary Source: British Lieutenant Feltham's Report to his Superior Officer, General Gage.

Jean C. O'Connor

Lieutenant Feltham's Report to Lieutenant General Gage

New York, June 11th 1775

Sir: Capt Delaplace of the 26th regt has given me directions to lay before you in as plain a narrative as I can the manner of the surprisal of the fort of Ticonderoga on the 10th May with all the circumstances after it that I thought might be of any service in giving your Exy any light into the affair. . . the 10th of May, on which morning about half an hour after three in my sleep I was awaken'd by number of shrieks, & the words no quarter, no quarter from a number of arm'd rabble I jump'd up about which time I heard the noise continue in the area of the fort I ran undress'd to knock at Capt Delaplace's I step[ped] back, put on my coat & waist coat & return'd to his room, there being no possibility of getting to the men as there were numbers of the rioters on the bastions of the wing of the fort on which the door of my room and back door of Capt Delaplace's room led, with great difficulty, I got into his room being pursued from which there was a door down by the stairs in the area of the fort, I ask'd Capt Delaplace who was now just up what I should do, & offer'd to force my way if possible to our men, on opening this door the bottom of the stairs was fill[e]d with the rioters & many were forcing their way up, knowing the Commg Officer lived there, as they had broke open the lower rooms where the officers live in [the] winter, and could not find them there, from the top of the stairs I endeavour'd to make them hear me, but it was impossible, on making a signal not to come up the stairs, they stop'd, & proclaim'd silence among themselves, I then address'd them, but in a st[y]le not agreeable to them I ask'd them a number of questions, expecting to amuse them till our people fired which I must certainly. . . thought would have been the case, after asking them the most material questions I could think viz by what authority they entered his majesties fort who were the leaders what their intent &c &c I was inform'd by one Ethan Allen and one Benedict Arnold that they had a joint command, Arnold informing me he came from instructions recd from the congress at Cambridge which he afterwards sh[o]wed me. Mr Allen told me his orders were from the province of Connecticut & that he must have immediate possession of the fort and all the effects of George the third (those were his words) Mr Allen insisting on this with a drawn sword over my head & numbers of his followers firelocks presented at me alledging I was commanding officer & to give up the fort, and if it was not comply'' with, or that there was a single gun fired in the fort neither man woman or child should be left alive in the fort Mr Arnold begg'd it in a genteel manner but without success, it was owing to him they were prevented getting into Capt Delaplace's room, after they found I did not command. Capt Delaplace being now dress'd came out, when after talking to him some time, they put me back into the room they placed two sentry's on me and took Capt Delaplace down stairs they also placed sentrys at the back door, from the beginning of the noise till half an hour after this I never saw a Soldier, tho' I heard a great noise in their rooms and can not account otherwise than that they must have been seiz'd in their beds before I got on the stairs, or at the first coming in, which must be the case as Allen wounded one of the guard[s] on his struggling with him in the guard room immediately after his entrance into the fort. I have the honour to be, gentleman, your most obedient humble servant,
JOCELYN FELTHAM

Questions:

How does Lieutenant Feltham's account of the capture of Fort Ticonderoga differ from that of Ethan Allen?

Consider Lieutenant Feltham's purpose in writing to Lieutenant General Gage. Why is his account likely different from that of Ethan Allen?

Taken from *Chronicles of Lake Champlain: Journeys in War and Peace* by Russell P. Bellico (Fleischmanns, N.Y.: Purple Mountain Press, 1999), pages 198-201. Retrieved from Fort Ticonderoga, <https://www.fortticonderoga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/The-Capture-of-Fort-Ticonderoga.pdf>

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Middle School

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.6

Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.9

Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/ social studies.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7

Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8

Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.2

Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.2.B

Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

High School

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.6

Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.7

Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6

Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.2

Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.2.B

Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.6

Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.3

Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6

Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.2

Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.2.B

Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

(Note: Many other Writing Standards may be applicable depending on whether the writing is fully developed or brief.)

NARRATIVE WRITING

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. APPENDIX A, p. 23-24

Narrative writing conveys experience, either real or imaginary, and uses time as its deep structure. It can be used for many purposes, such as to inform, persuade, or entertain.... In history/social studies, students write narrative accounts about individuals. They also construct models of what happened, selecting from their sources only the most relevant information.

C3 FRAMEWORK: COLLEGE, CAREER, CIVIC FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL STUDIES

Middle School

D2.Geo.2.6-8. Use maps, satellite images, photographs, and other representations to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions, and changes in their environmental characteristics.

D2.Geo.4.6-8. Explain how cultural patterns and economic decisions influence environments and the daily lives of people in both nearby and distant places.

D2.His.1.6-8. Analyze connections among events and developments in broader historical contexts.

D2.His.3.6-8. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to analyze why they, and the developments they shaped, are seen as historically significant.

D2.His.6.6-8. Analyze how people's perspectives influenced what information is available in the historical sources they created.

High School

D2.Geo.2.9-12. Use maps, satellite images, photographs, and other representations to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions and their political, cultural, and economic dynamics.

D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.

D2.His.3.9-12. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context. D2.His.6.9-12. Analyze the ways in which the perspectives of those writing history shaped the history that they produced.

D2.His.10.9-12. Detect possible limitations in various kinds of historical evidence and differing secondary interpretations.

D2.His.11.9-12. Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.