

Nathan Hale was a loyal American. He disguised himself as a schoolmaster, slipped through British lines, and collected a great deal of information. But before he could return, he was arrested and sentenced to be hanged without even a trial. Before the hangman knotted the noose around his neck, Nathan Hale said, "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country."



Ann Bates was a Philadelphia schoolteacher who became a British spy. She disguised herself as a peddler, carrying a stock of needles, thread, combs, knives, and medicine.



It wasn't unusual to use a cipher in colonial times. Many people—including Thomas Jefferson—wrote their private letters in cipher. Benjamin Franklin didn't. He said he could never remember the key!

A book code was different from a cipher. The spy and the person to whom he was writing had copies of the same book (usually a dictionary). Numbers were used, and each group of numbers stood for a word. They told where in the book that word could be found. The first number told the page; the second, the line; and the third, which word on the line. The spy would compose the coded message by using his copy of the book. And the other person would figure it out by using *his* copy.

The adventures of many successful spies will always remain secrets. But some famous spies of the Revolutionary War, like Nathan Hale, are still honored for their courage and loyalty. Others, like Benedict Arnold, who betrayed his country, are remembered with scorn.



To cross the Charles River, Paul Revere had to pass very close to the *Somerset*, a British man-of-war armed with sixty-four cannons. The least noise might give him away. At the last minute, he thought of wrapping the oars in cloth to muffle their sound. There was no time to waste, so he asked a lady for her petticoat. She threw it down to him from a window. In later years, Paul Revere would tell his grandchildren that when the petticoat fluttered into his hands, it was still warm.



One if by Land, Two if by Sea

One day, two young men in old brown suits, with red handkerchiefs tied around their necks, strolled out of Boston. They kicked at stones, whistled, and tried to look innocent. But almost everyone they met recognized them for what they were: British spies.

General Gage had ordered spies to scout the countryside toward Lexington and Concord. He thought the colonists had guns and ammunition hidden in the area. And he also suspected that two important leaders of the Sons of Liberty—Samuel Adams and John Hancock—were hiding nearby. It would be a great blow to the colonists' cause if he could capture them. "Until they are sent home prisoners," General Gage wrote, "I fear we shall have no peace."

Finally, his plans were ready. Hoping to surprise the Americans, he gave the order to attack at night on April 18, 1775. But the Americans were ready for him. Two lanterns were hung in the steeple of Old North Church to warn that the redcoats were on the march.





Paul Revere saw the signal, hurried to the Charles River, and was rowed across by a friend. When they reached the other side, Revere borrowed a horse, leaped into the saddle, and galloped off toward Concord to give the alarm.

"The regulars are out!" he yelled, and raced on. The regulars were the British troops. When men heard his shout, they dressed quickly and loaded their muskets.

Meanwhile, the redcoats were hurrying down to the docks. Boats ferried them across the Charles.

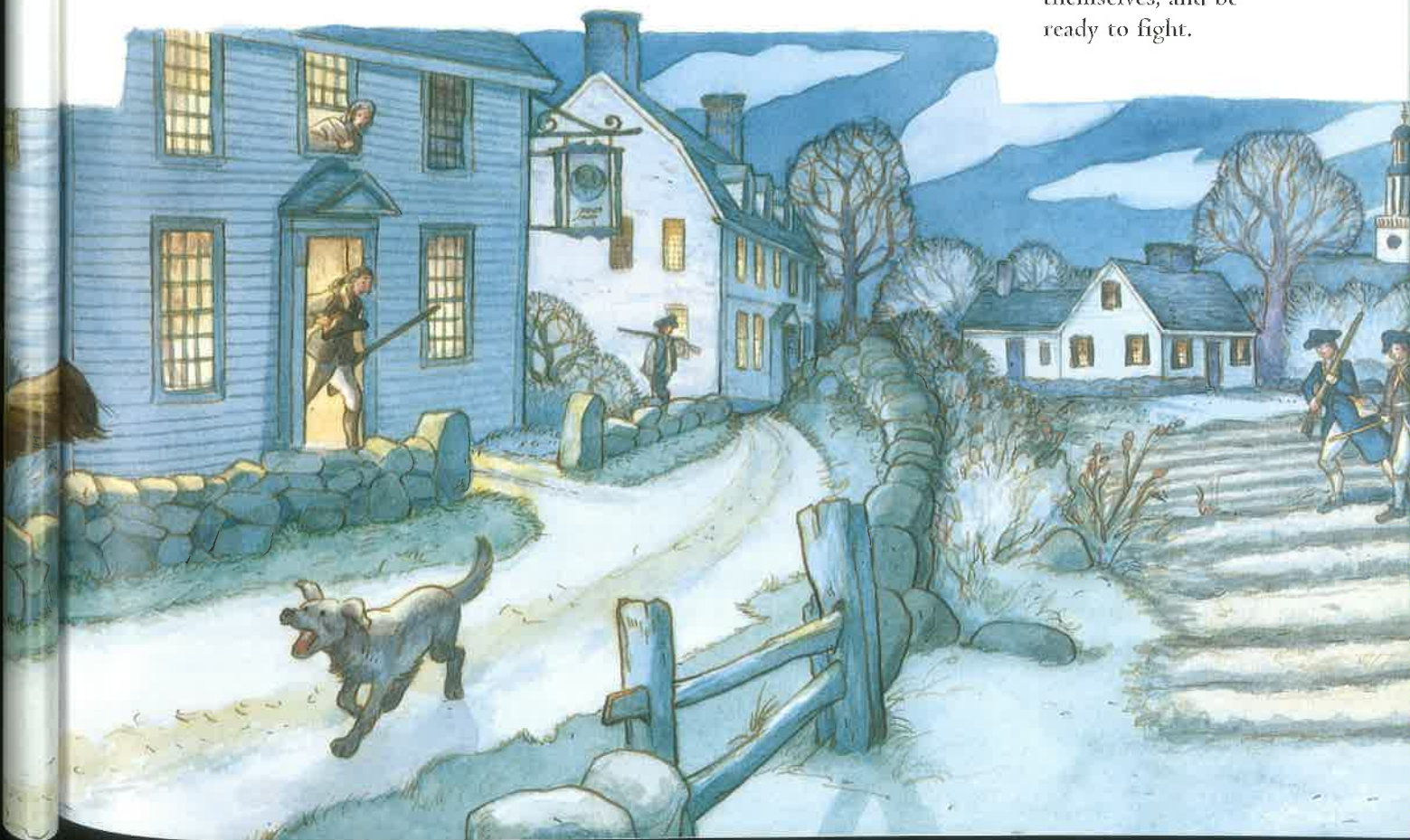
At the other side, there wasn't any dock. To reach land, the redcoats had to jump out of their boats into icy water and thick mud. The first men to wade ashore just stood there, freezing and miserable, until all the rest had arrived. Finally, soaked and muddy, the redcoats marched off, shivering, down the dark road to Lexington.

But as they marched, they heard an unwelcome sound. Church bells were tolling. Drums were beating the alarm.

General Gage's secret attack was a secret no more.



The townspeople of Concord buried their guns and ammunition in haystacks and freshly plowed fields so British spies wouldn't see them. When they received warning of a British attack, they would dig them up, arm themselves, and be ready to fight.





❧ The Shot Heard ❧ 'Round the World

The redcoats marched all night, a distance of sixteen miles. When they reached Lexington at dawn on April 19, 1775, they found a ragged line of minutemen drawn up on the village green.

"Ye villains, ye rebels, disperse! Lay down your arms!" shouted Major John Pitcairn, a British officer.

Suddenly, a shot rang out. Nobody knows which side fired it. This was the first shot of the Revolutionary War.

It is known as "The Shot Heard 'Round the World."

Now all the redcoats raised their muskets and blazed away. When the smoke cleared, eight minutemen were dead, and ten wounded. The rest ran for cover.

The redcoats gave three cheers. Then they wheeled around and marched off to Concord. In the center of town, they chopped down the Liberty Pole and burned it. Smoke billowed into the air.

Meanwhile, minutemen had been gathering on a hill beyond a stream. When they saw the rising smoke, they thought the British were setting fire to the town.



Jonathan Harrington was one of the Americans killed on the green at Lexington. He managed to crawl to the doorway of his house—where his wife and son were watching in horror—before dying at their feet.



Many British officers were wounded during the march back to Lexington. Their uniforms made them easy for the minutemen to pick out. The commander of the British troops, Colonel Francis Smith, a very fat man, was wounded in the leg. But he didn't dare get on a horse because he would be an easy target in the saddle. He had to limp along with his men.

They raced toward a bridge that crossed the stream. The redcoats fired a volley across the water, and two Americans were killed.

"Fire, fellow soldiers, for God's sake, fire!" shouted the Americans' commander, Major John Buttrick.

A volley rang out from the Americans. Seconds later, three redcoats were dead and one was dying. At least ten more were wounded. The rest quickly retreated.

The redcoats formed columns and began marching back to Lexington. But the minutemen took a shortcut. They were waiting in ambush on both sides of the narrow road.

Muskets blazed from behind stone walls, barns, bushes, and houses. As the redcoats marched on, the minutemen ran ahead, took up new positions, and fired again. The terrified redcoats began to run. They dashed into Lexington and flung themselves on the ground, gasping for breath.

They were lucky. A British officer, Lord Percy, had just arrived with 1,000 fresh troops. These new arrivals held off the minutemen while the exhausted soldiers rested. Then they began the long march back to Boston.

It was a nightmare. All along the route, minutemen shot at them from ambush. It was dark by the time they finally staggered into town and reached their barracks.



Don't Fire Until You See the Whites of Their Eyes!

When the sun rose over Boston Harbor on June 17, 1775, sailors on the British warship *Lively* awoke and stretched. Suddenly, one of them shouted in surprise. On a hill across the Charles River from Boston loomed a fort. It had not been there yesterday!

Whistles blew and gunners raced to their battle stations. Soon the *Lively's* cannons were spitting fire and black smoke. Other British warships joined in.

American militiamen had worked secretly all night to build the fort. Now they crouched behind its walls as the British cannons thundered. The noise was terrifying.

Swarms of redcoats arrived from Boston, crossing the river by boat. They lined up in battle formation on the beach. At any moment they would charge.

The Americans defending the fort were desperately short of ammunition. Some who had just arrived from New Hampshire had had to stop and make bullets out of old pipes on their way into Boston.



Some militiamen were frightened. They avoided danger whenever they could. Once, fifteen men used the excuse of having to help a wounded man to the rear.



Dr. Joseph Warren, a beloved American patriot, died at the Battle of Bunker Hill. His body couldn't be recovered until the British left Boston almost a year later. But Paul Revere was able to identify his skeleton, because he had wired two false teeth into the doctor's mouth not long before he died.





Every shot would have to count. Colonel William Prescott, the American commander, told his men, “Don’t fire until you see the whites of their eyes!”

The redcoats trotted up the hill toward the fort, bayonets at the ready. It was absolutely quiet. Suddenly, a stream of gunfire poured out of the fort. The redcoats turned and ran back down the hill.

But when they reached the beach, their officers beat them with swords, forcing them to storm the fort again. And again, a deadly blast of gunfire mowed down the front ranks. The terrified survivors panicked and ran.

The men who were left charged up the hill yet again—and suddenly the firing stopped. The Americans had run out of ammunition. Redcoats swarmed over the walls of the fort, pointing their deadly bayonets. Colonel William Prescott ordered a retreat. He himself was the last to leave the fort.

When the Americans were gone, the British counted their dead. Almost half the soldiers who had set out that morning had been killed or wounded.

The Battle of Bunker Hill showed both sides how terrible war would be. But it was too late to turn back. Even deadlier battles lay ahead.



The British major John Pitcairn—who had fought at Lexington and Concord—was killed during the last charge. He died in the arms of his son, a lieutenant. Altogether, close to a thousand British soldiers died or were wounded in the battle.



Women at War

American women didn't usually fight in the Revolutionary War. But they strongly supported the cause of liberty.

A lady from Philadelphia expressed the feelings of many of her countrywomen when she wrote:

"My only brother I have sent to the camp with my prayers and blessings...had I twenty sons and brothers they should go. Tea I have not drank since last Christmas, nor bought a new cap or gown...and this way do I throw my mite to the public good. I know this, that as free I can die but once, but as a slave I shall not be worthy of life. I have the pleasure to assure you that these are the sentiments of all my sister Americans."



SYBIL LUDINGTON

On the night of April 26, 1777, a messenger on horseback pounded up to the Ludington farm in New York State. He was carrying an important message for Colonel Henry Ludington. British soldiers were planning to attack Danbury, Connecticut, the next day.

Colonel Ludington was not at home. But his sixteen-year-old daughter, Sybil, volunteered to alert her father's troops. She saddled a horse and rode through the countryside all night, knocking on doors and calling out the militiamen.

The next day the British attacked Danbury. They burned the city, but many of their soldiers were killed. The men Sybil had awakened had reached Danbury in time to give the British a real fight.



DEBORAH SAMPSON

A young soldier was wounded in battle. When the doctor examined the wound, he discovered that the soldier was a woman. Her name was Deborah Sampson. Deborah begged the doctor not to give her secret away—and he agreed. She explained that she had wanted very much to fight for American independence. But women were not accepted in the army. So Deborah had disguised herself as a man.



MOLLY PITCHER

Some women went to war with their husbands. They didn't fight in the battles, but they worked in camp—cooking, cleaning, and nursing the wounded. One such woman was Mary Ludwig, usually called Molly. Her husband was a gunner in the First Pennsylvania Artillery.

On a very hot day in June 1778, an important battle took place—the Battle of Monmouth. The soldiers got very thirsty. Molly took some pitchers to a nearby stream. She filled them with cool water and carried them to the exhausted soldiers while the battle raged around them. The men admired her courage and gave her the nickname “Molly Pitcher.”

Later the same day, when Molly's husband collapsed from heatstroke, Molly took his gun and fought for the rest of the battle.

All the soldiers were grateful to Molly. When the war was over, the Pennsylvania Legislature gave her a pension for life.



John Hancock



John Hancock was president of the Second Continental Congress and the first delegate to sign the Declaration of Independence. He wrote his name firmly in large letters. He said, "King George will be able to read *this* without his spectacles!"

His signature became so famous that "John Hancock" has become another term for signature.



The Declaration of Independence

Independence.

To most Americans, it was a beautiful word, but a frightening one. They wanted freedom. But how could they cut their ties of friendship with, and loyalty to, Britain—the Mother Country?

When the Second Continental Congress gathered in Philadelphia on May 10, 1775, many delegates still hoped to avoid war. They drafted the Olive Branch Petition—an appeal to King George from “his Majesty’s faithful subjects in the Colonies.” It was a final attempt to solve the problems between America and Britain peacefully.

But the king refused even to receive the Olive Branch Petition. Instead, he announced that the colonies were in a state of rebellion, and readied his forces for war.

Congress also began preparing for war. Because the colonial militias weren’t strong enough to meet the British army, Congress authorized the creation of a regular army. And it appointed George Washington “General and Commander-in-Chief of the forces raised and to be raised in defense of American Liberty.”

Then the question of independence was discussed. Samuel Adams asked, “Is not America already independent? Why not, then, declare it?” Most delegates agreed with him.

After a long debate, Congress appointed a committee to write a Declaration of Independence. The Declaration was actually written by Thomas Jefferson, who later became the third president of the United States.



Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence in two weeks. He worked standing at his writing desk, which was set on a high table.



Americans had high hopes for the Second Continental Congress. As the delegates from Connecticut rode through New York on their way to the meeting, crowds of people came out to meet them. They unfastened the horses and pulled the carriage through the streets themselves, laughing and cheering.

The unanimous Declaration of Liberty!



In words that are as thrilling today as when they were written in 1776, Jefferson proclaimed the great principles of human freedom:

- All men are created equal.
- They have natural rights, which cannot be taken away from them, to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
- Government must protect these rights.
- If it doesn't, the people can abolish it and create a new government that will "effect their Safety and Happiness."

Copies of the Declaration of Independence were sent by messenger throughout the colonies. It was read aloud on village greens and from the steps of churches.

In one small town in South Carolina, the only person who knew how to read was a nine-year-old boy. He stood up in front of everyone and read the entire Declaration in a loud, clear voice. His name was Andrew Jackson. Many years later, when he was grown up—and America was independent—he would become the seventh president of the United States.

King George, the Declaration stated, had forced unfair laws and taxes on the colonies. Therefore, they now declared themselves independent!

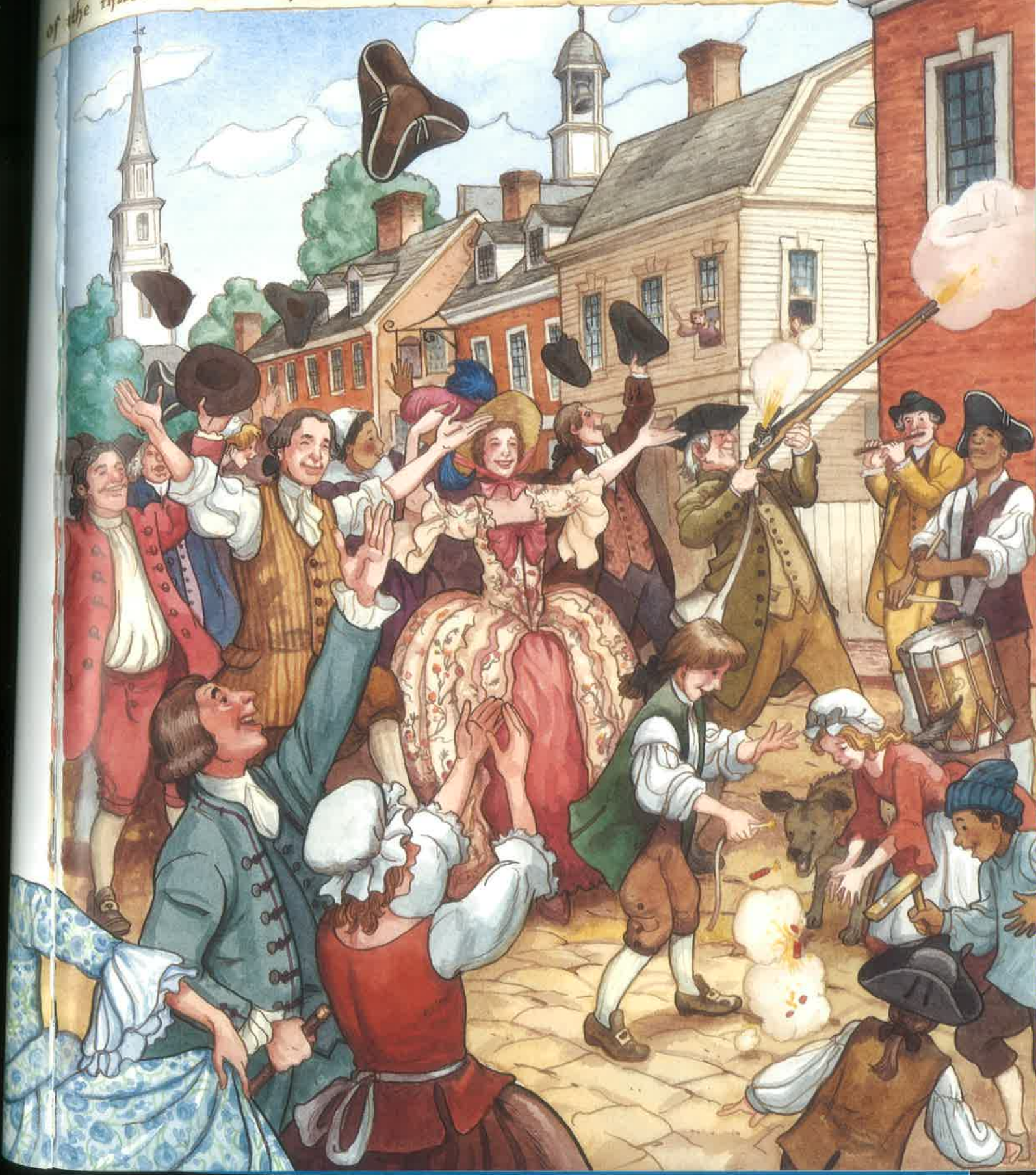
The Declaration of Independence was approved by the Continental Congress on July 2, 1776, and officially adopted on July 4. When people heard the news, they laughed, cried, cheered, set off firecrackers, rang bells, and danced in the streets.

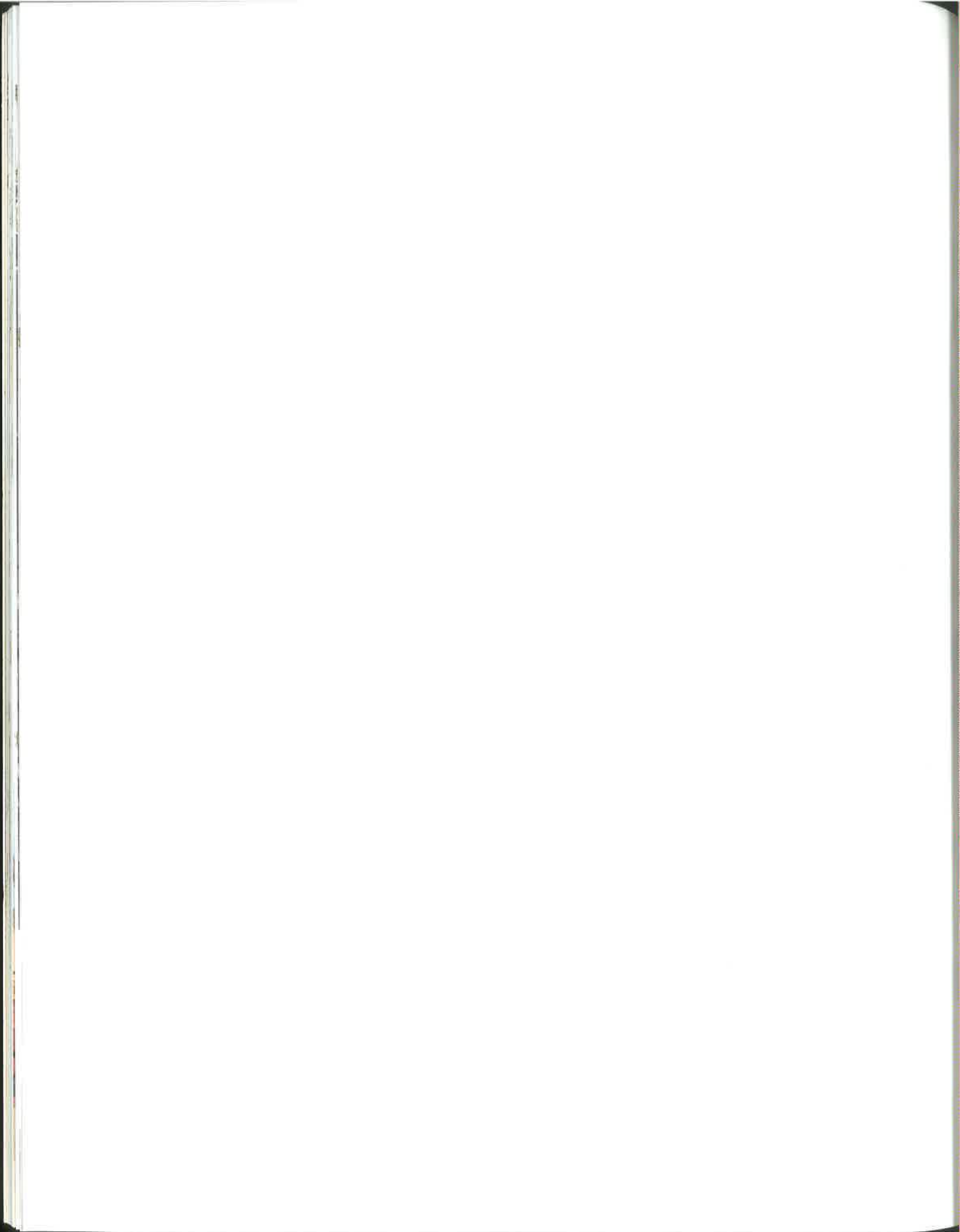
John Adams wrote to his wife: "I am well aware of the toil, and blood, and treasure, that it will cost us to maintain this declaration, and support and defend these States. Yet, through all the gloom, I can see rays of ravishing light and glory. I can see that...posterity will triumph in that day's transaction."



of the thirteen united

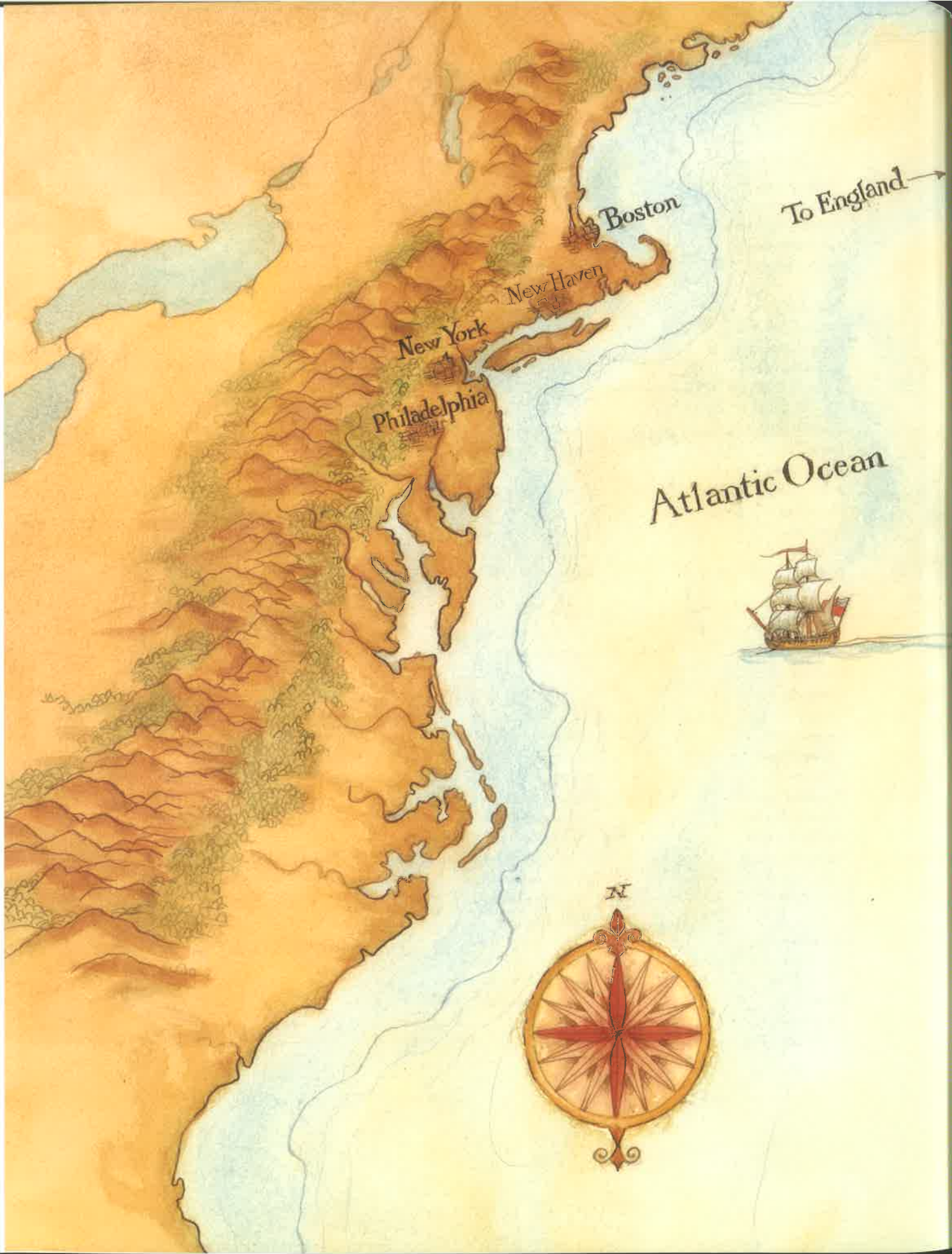
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Atlantic Ocean

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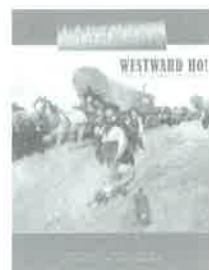
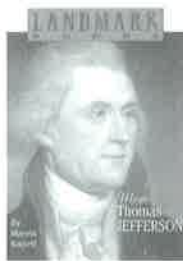
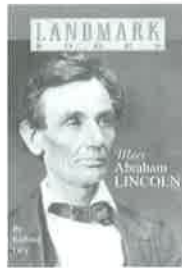
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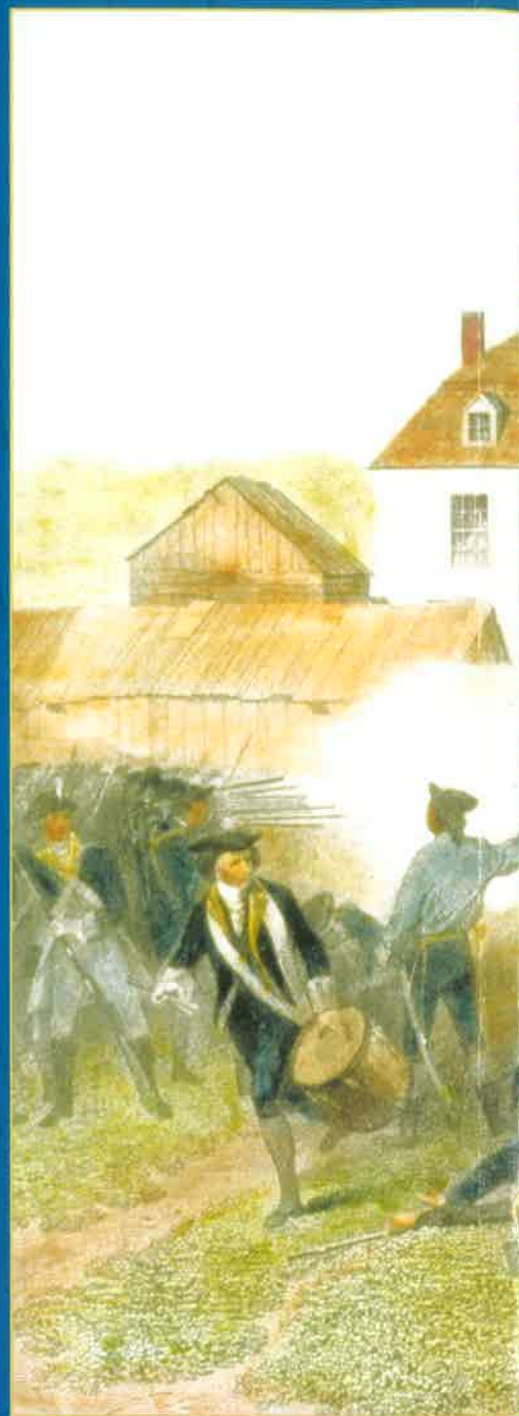
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