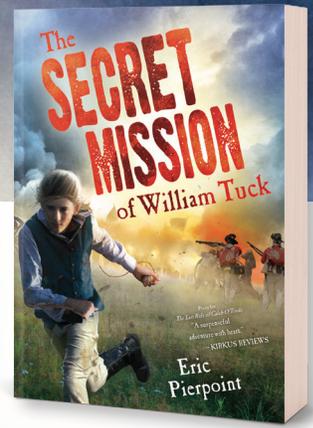


# The Secret Mission of William Tuck

## By Eric Pierpoint

A Common Core State Standards Aligned Activity Guide for Grades 4, 5, and 6



*Note: The activities in this guide align with Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts for grades 4, 5 and, 6, but standards for other grades may also apply.*

Prepared by We Love Children's Books

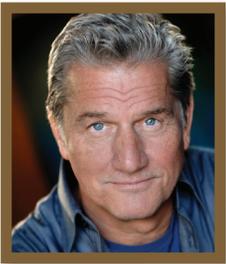
## ABOUT THIS BOOK

William Tuck is set on justice. For his brother killed by British soldiers, for his friend Rebecca's father held prisoner by the redcoats, and for the countless other rebel Americans struggling beneath the crushing weight of British rule.

The whispered words of a dying man give William a mission he can't afford to fail. He bears a secret message intended for the leader of the rebel army. His friend Rebecca disguises herself as a boy, and she and William embark on an epic journey that draws them into a secret network of spies, pits them against dangerous gunmen, and leads them on a quest to find General George Washington himself.

The War of Independence blazes across the pages of this action-packed novel and keeps readers on the edge of their seats until the very last battle.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Eric Pierpoint is an award-winning author of historical fiction for middle grade readers. His first novel *The Last Ride of Caleb O'Toole* won the MPIBA award for best children's book and *The Secret Mission of William Tuck* has received a prized *Kirkus* starred review. He is a veteran Hollywood character actor whose credits include dozens of film and television productions. Eric was born in Redlands, California, raised in Washington, D.C., and now lives happily in the beautiful and rustic hills of Topanga, California. "Here, there's nothing but owls, crickets, and coyotes. I can just put my feet up and write!"

## PRAISE

"The familiar events and historical figures surrounding the birth of the United States are made personal in this riveting story of one boy's unparalleled courage... Richly detailed and exhilarating."

—*Kirkus Reviews*, STARRED REVIEW

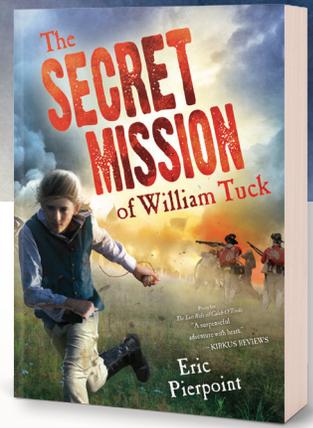
"The fast pace combined with nonstop violence and unflinching descriptions of unsavory aspects of 18th-century medicine and combat will engage readers who may not normally choose historical fiction. Instructive end notes provide an extension to the novel."

—*School Library Journal*

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## PRE-READING QUESTIONS

What do students know about the Revolutionary War? Have they read any other books about it? Have they seen TV shows or movies? What do they know about life in Colonial America? Discuss what things they have seen or read. As they read the book encourage them to notice how this book is the same as the stories they know and how it is different.

The book students are about to read is filled with many examples of bravery, on a personal level and on a national level. Discuss with students what it means to be brave and provide examples. Are there times when they've had to be brave?

Many characters in this book are passionate about the cause of independence for the Colonies from Great Britain. Have students ever felt passionate about a cause? Have they ever stood their ground and fought for what they believed in?

## VOCABULARY

Prepare a sheet with three columns and instruct students to keep an eye out for new words, or words used in an interesting manner, as they read the book. When they find such a word they should copy down the passage in which it was used, including the page number, in the first column. In the second column, they should define the word or phrase from context. Then they should look up the dictionary definition and record it in the third column. Break students into pairs to review their word choices and practice using them in sentences with each other. When they are done, come together as a class and discuss favorite vocabulary words from the small group sessions. What words and phrases are part of the language of the period in which the book is set? Why do students think the author chose a particular word instead of one similar in meaning?

RL 4.4, 5.4, 6.4

RF 4.4, 5.4

SL 4.1, 5.1, 6.1

L 4.4, 4.6, 5.4, 5.6, 6.4, 6.6

## POST-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

### A QUESTION OF CHARACTER

In the course of this book, we learn a great deal about William Tuck. He is a complex character, motivated by his belief in the Patriot cause, personal grief over the death of his brother, and the desire to help the new friends he meets on his quest. Have students pretend they are the spy hunter Shaw and write a profile of William Tuck from his point of view—that of a loyal subject of the Crown, dedicated to fighting rebel spies. Be sure students draw on all four sources of character information—what he looks like, what he does, what he says, and what others say about him—when writing the profile. How does Shaw's viewpoint change how William Tuck's character is described?

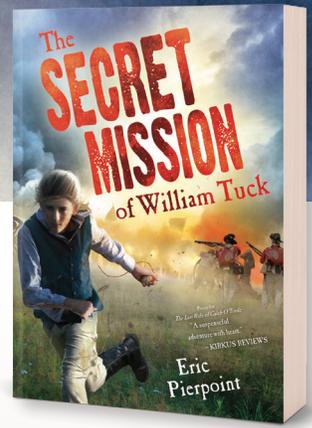
RL 4.1, 4.3, 4.6, 5.1, 5.6, 6.1, 6.6

W 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.10, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.10, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.10

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### YANKEE DOODLE MAPS

William and Rebecca travel a great distance through Colonial America on their mission to bring their secret message to General Washington. Using the Internet, library, or other resources, obtain a Colonial-era map of the area. Break the class into groups, one per chapter or several chapters, and have them read their section closely to determine where the action of their chapter takes place. Come together as a class and have each group trace the path covered in their section, describing how the children traveled and why they went where they did. When you are done, review a modern map and trace their route on it. How would their journey have been different in the modern day?

RL 4.1, 4.3, 4.7, 5.1, 5.3, 5.7, 6.1, 6.5

SL 4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5, 6.1, 6.2, 6.4, 6.5

### THEMATICALLY SPEAKING

Working as a class, discuss the major themes in *The Secret Mission of William Tuck*. One of the main themes in this book is bravery. As a class, track the theme of bravery through this story. Identify the moments in the book when characters exhibit bravery. What motivates them to be brave? After preparing their thoughts through this discussion have each student explore one of the other themes from the book in an essay. Remind students to cite specific evidence from the book to show how the plot, the setting of the book (both in place and in time), and the characters and their interactions communicate this theme. Do students feel the author is trying to express a specific opinion about this theme, or just exploring it? Break students into pairs to exchange their papers and edit and revise them based on peer feedback before submitting a final version.

RL 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2, 6.5

W 4.1, 4.4, 4.5, 4.9, 4.10, 5.1, 5.4, 5.5, 5.9, 5.10, 6.1, 6.4, 6.5, 6.9, 6.10

SL 4.1, 5.1, 6.1

### GIVE ME LIBERTY OR GIVE ME DEATH

Patrick Henry wrote many pamphlets and spoke passionately about the cause of liberty. At one point, Rebecca quotes him, saying “Give me liberty or give me death.” On page 105, Peter Francisco, the Hercules of Virginia, is talking to William and Rebecca about his adventures in the Revolution. He says, “Once you’ve heard the words of Patrick Henry and the like, you do things you never thought possible.” What does this mean? What examples of heroic acts do we see in the story?

RL 4.1, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.5

SL 4.1, 5.1, 6.1

### A PIVOTAL MOMENT: LOYALIST VS PATRIOT

William and Rebecca were part of the American Revolution when many in the Colonies were fighting for freedom. During their journey, they encounter both Loyalists and Patriots. As a class, discuss the different attitudes expressed by colonists on both sides of the fight. How does the author develop their points of view? What reasons does the book give for the colonists on both sides feeling the way they do? Do these arguments make sense to the reader? What are the attitudes of the British soldiers in this book? The members of the Continental Army? Be sure to cite specifics from the text.

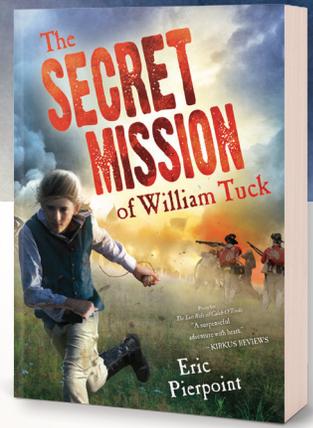
RL 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.6, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.6

SL 4.1, 5.1, 6.1

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### A PIVOTAL MOMENT: SLAVERY

During their journey, William and Rebecca encounter many slaves. How is slavery depicted in this novel? Come together as a class and review William's interactions with the different slaves he come across. How do William and Rebecca's attitudes differ, and why? Be sure to look at the encounters from the viewpoint of the slaves as well. How did they feel about the Revolutionary War? How does the author convey the wide variety of attitudes toward slavery at this time through the different characters' experiences and points of view?

RL 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.6, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.6

SL 4.1, 5.1, 6.1

### HISTORICAL FICTION: THE WAY IT WORKS

As a class, discuss the process of writing and reading historical fiction. How is reading historical fiction different from reading a nonfiction book about the subject? What do readers get from *The Secret Mission of William Tuck* that they don't get from a nonfiction book or a biography? What can historical fiction teach more easily than other sorts of books about history? When writing historical fiction, what things can the author do that someone writing a text book can't? What are the most important things an author needs to research in order to write good historical fiction? (e.g., transportation methods, food, clothing, patterns of speech, etc.) What did students learn about the American Revolution from this book that they did not know before? What is the most important thing students learned from this book? Could that have been communicated as effectively by a work of nonfiction?

RL 4.1, 5.1, 6.1, 6.9

SL 4.1, 5.1, 6.1

### HISTORY: REAL PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS

This book gives the reader insight into colonial life during the American Revolution. We meet soldiers, drummer boys, doctors, and more. The book describes the personalities and professional skills of these people in detail. In addition, many of the characters in this book were real people who lived and fought during the American Revolution. These details make the book immersive, and are educational for the reader. As a class, discuss these elements. Have each student select their favorite period activity, occupation, historical person, or event from the book for further research. Using the Internet and library resources, have students write a research paper on their chosen topic. The paper should include an assessment of how accurate the depiction was and specific citations showing how the author conveyed historical details about the person or topic through the story. Break students into pairs and have them revise and edit their paper based on peer feedback. Establish a template for students to follow and have them enter their papers into the computer. Publish these final pieces into a collection entitled *The History behind the Story*.

RL 4.1, 5.1, 6.1

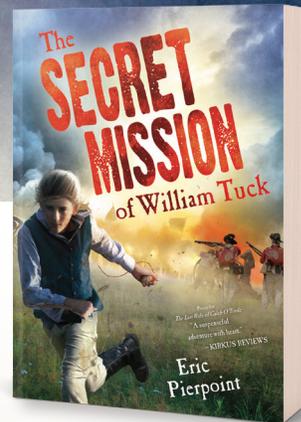
W 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.10, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8, 5.10, 6.2, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8, 6.10

SL 4.1, 5.1, 6.1

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### GRUDGE MATCH: THE CONTINENTAL ARMY VS THE REDCOATS

The army that opposed the British in the Revolution was called the Continental Army. Come together as a class and discuss the Continental Army. What sorts of units made up the Continentals? What was their training and how were they organized? What other army fought with them? How did these armies compare? Why did the Colonists enlist—what were they fighting for? What were they fighting against? How did the Continental Army differ from the British Army? How did they treat each other during battle and after they were captured? Discuss the concepts of prison ships, prisoner exchanges, and granting “parole” to enemy soldiers. Be sure students cite specifics from the text and encourage them to use library and Internet resources to explore these topics further. If there are any Revolutionary War reenactment groups in your area, they could provide an impressive addition to the students’ learning experience.

RL 4.1, 5.1, 6.1

W 4.7, 5.7, 6.7

SL 4.1, 5.1, 6.1

### VISUALIZING THE SECRET MISSION OF WILLIAM TUCK

The Secret Mission of William Tuck is an action-packed adventure story that lends itself to a visual treatment. Have students select a section of the book and create a graphic novel or comic book-style version of it. Break them into small groups to share their work with each other, discussing what part of the book was illustrated, why that scene was chosen, and what details and elements were included. Come together as a class to discuss the challenges they encountered in converting a text novel to an illustrated format. What is different about telling a story this way? What was easy to do? What was hard? Put the pieces in the proper chronological order and create a classroom display. Working with the help of an adult, have students digitize their graphic novel pages and publish a class version of The Secret Mission of William Tuck: Graphic Novel Edition.

RL 4.1, 4.3, 4.7, 5.1, 5.5, 5.7, 6.1, 6.3, 6.5

W 4.5, 4.6, 5.5, 5.6, 6.5, 6.6

SL 4.1, 4.5, 5.1, 5.5, 6.1, 6.5

### ALLIES AND ENEMIES

William and Rebecca encounter many interesting characters on their quest, some help them on their way and some try to stop them. Break students into small groups and have them make a list of the people our heroes encounter, identifying them either as “allies” or “enemies.” Come together as a class and share these lists. In what ways did people help them succeed in their mission? There are situations where William and Rebecca think they are being helped by an ally, only to be betrayed. Review these instances of betrayal. Does the author provide any clues that something is going to go wrong? Do William and Rebecca become suspicious? How do these episodes contribute to the plot of the story?

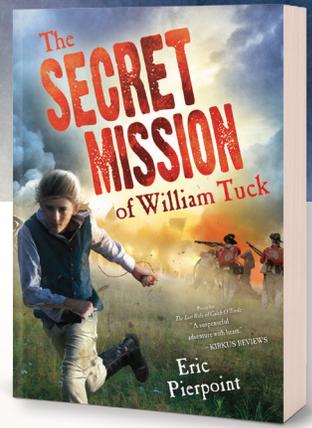
RL 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.5

SL 4.1, 5.1, 6.1

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### CODES AND SECRET MESSAGES

Codes and secret messages were very important to the patriots and their cause during the Revolution and are very important to the plot of this story. Some codes are described in detail and used in the plot—such as the thirty-five code. Others are referred to in passing, such as the Culper Code. There are also many methods of sending concealed messages—from hiding notes in roasted chickens to using invisible ink. As a class, review the different sorts of codes and secret messages that William and Rebecca encounter during their adventures. How do codes differ from secret messages? What secret messages were sent in this book, and how were they sent? Break students into pairs and have them create messages for each other using the thirty-five code. Was it easy or hard to encrypt messages in this way? Students can also try to write “secret messages” of their own by using lemon juice and making the letters appear using a light bulb or other heat source. Was it difficult to write a note using this method? Encourage students to explore this topic further using Internet and library resources.

RL 4.1, 4.3, 5.1, 5.3, 5.5, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.5

W 4.4, 4.7, 5.4, 5.7, 6.4, 6.7

SL 4.1, 5.1, 6.1

### REVOLUTIONARY READER'S THEATER

Break students into small groups and have them review the book. Have each group select an important scene that would work well when read aloud. Come together as a class to share the scenes each group has selected. After ample practice have each group present their scene to the rest of the class, arranging the performances in sequential order. Encourage students to use distinctive voices when reading their characters' parts. Use this exercise to discuss how the scenes work together, how the plot unfolds in this series of chosen episodes, and how the characters respond to events and change.

RL 4.1, 4.3, 4.7, 5.1, 5.3, 5.5, 6.1, 6.3, 6.5, 6.7

RF 4.4, 5.4

SL 4.1, 5.1, 6.1

### READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

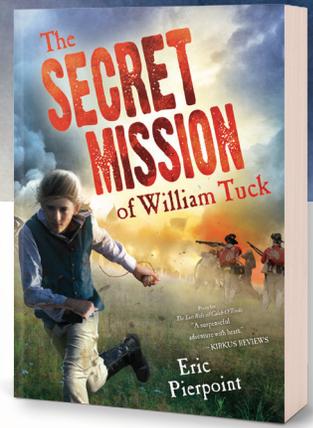
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1. What pivotal moment makes William leave his family and join the Continental Army?
2. What is William's role in the Continental Army? What is the importance of a drummer boy? How did he learn his skills?
3. In William's first battle, he helps a dying soldier. What happens in this encounter and how does it set his course for the rest of the story?
4. What clues did William and Rebecca have that made them suspicious at the Pendleton estate?
5. After being captured by Shaw at the Pendleton estate, where was William imprisoned and what were the conditions?
6. How does William escape the prison ship, and who helped him?
7. What message did William carry and why was it crucial to the success of the Revolution?
8. How did Washington respond to the message William carried? Why was he suspicious?
9. Describe the final encounter between William and Captain Scroope. How did it end?
10. How did William's family fare during the war? What was the farm like when he left? What was it like when he returned?

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Visit the *Common Core State Standards* website to read about the individual standards listed in this guide:

<http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards>

## INTERNET RESOURCES

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<http://www.ericpierpoint.net/> ~ Author Eric Pierpoint's official website. Look for more information about him and his books.

[http://www.ducksters.com/history/american\\_revolution.php](http://www.ducksters.com/history/american_revolution.php) ~ Look here for a wealth of information for kids regarding the American Revolution, including information about the events, people, battles, and more.

<http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/northamerica/after1500/history/revolution.htm>  
Succinct summary of the American Revolution for kids.

<http://www.revolutionary-war.net/> ~ A colorful, storytelling overview of the American Revolutionary War, with biographies of the founding fathers, little-known facts, and information on the spies, soldiers, women, and other famous Americans involved in the War for Independence.

<http://mrnussbaum.com/american-revolution/> ~ Another good site filled with information, including timelines, biographies, interactive battles map, and additional resources for teachers and students.

<http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Comic-Book> ~ Great instructions for making a comic strip!

<http://www.aaronsherp.com/rt/Tips.html> ~ Tips for performing Reader's Theater by Aaron Shepard—includes information regarding scripting, staging, and reading.