

LEAGUE *of* AMERICAN TRAITORS

Educator's Guide

Includes Common Core Standards

Dear Educator,

History is awesome—but most teens don't agree. Ten years teaching middle school has taught me that getting kids to engage with the past in an awesome way takes work. That's literally *the* reason I wrote this book.

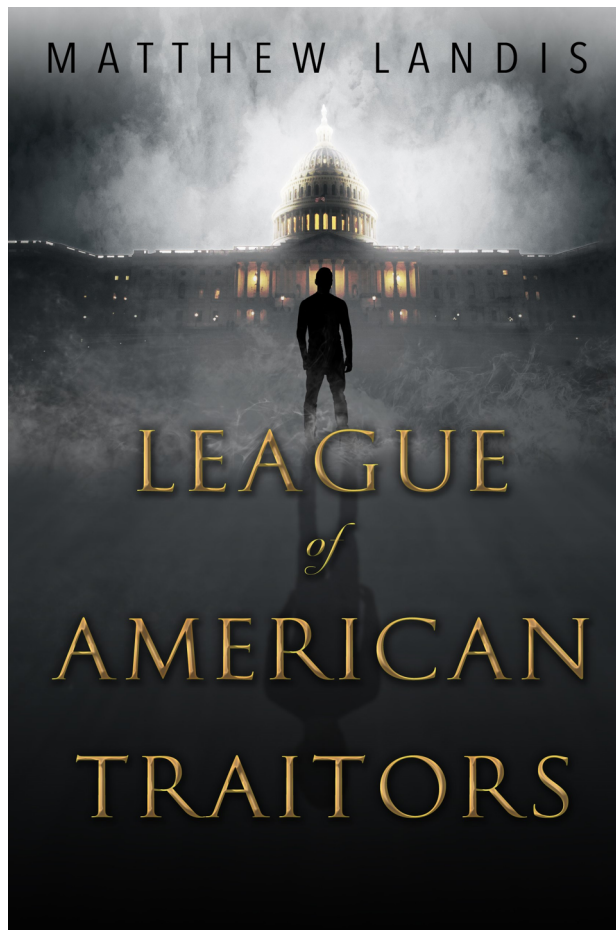
To make history relevant to my students, I wanted to bring it to their modern arena. In a way, I was attempting to trick them into giving the past a chance by asking this question: Wouldn't it be cool if you were a direct descendant of George Washington? Personally, I'd legit brag about that. But what if you were related to somebody who was on the other side of that war...like Benedict Arnold, who betrayed the Patriots and has become the most famous traitor in American history? To me, that seemed like a really cool question that deserved a story. So I wrote it.

This book is not historical fiction. Instead, it's a contemporary thriller laced with historical implications. Students will learn a TON about the Revolutionary era; I altered only what was absolutely necessary to my story. But they will do so in a familiar, modern setting, allowing them to grapple with big conflicts that stretch across time through the vantage point of a teen they can readily identify with.

I can't thank you enough for checking this story out. I hope the guide is helpful to you and your students, and please feel free to reach out to me at author.matthewlandis@gmail.com with comments, questions, or school visits. Thanks again!

- Matthew Landis, owner of an American flag suit





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ABOUT THE BOOK

THE PAST COULD KILL YOU.

When seventeen-year-old Jasper is approached at the funeral of his deadbeat father by a man claiming to be an associate of his deceased parents, he's thrust into a world of secrets tied to America's history—and he's right at the heart of it.

First, Jasper finds out he is the sole surviving descendant of Benedict Arnold, the most notorious traitor in American history. Then he learns that his father's death was no accident. Jasper is at the center of a war that has been going on for centuries, in which the descendants of the heroes and traitors of the American Revolution still duel to the death for the sake of their honor.

THE FUTURE WILL COST YOU.

His only hope to escape his dangerous fate on his eighteenth birthday? Take up the research his father was pursuing at the time of his death, to clear Arnold's name.

Whisked off to a boarding school populated by other descendants of notorious American traitors, it's a race to discover the truth. But if Jasper doesn't find a way to uncover the evidence his father was hunting for, he may end up paying for the sins of his forefathers with his own life.

PRAISE FOR *LEAGUE OF AMERICAN TRAITORS*

"National Treasure meets Hamilton... Landis's book will give you the punchy, suspenseful dose of our nation's past you've been desperate for."

-Bustle

"Matthew Landis deftly weaves secret societies, ancient conspiracies, and American history into an unputdownable modern-day thriller, perfect for fans of Dan Brown...Landis's debut is the real deal."

-Lynne Matson, author of the bestselling Nil trilogy

League of American Traitors is criminally clever and wickedly funny. This is a thriller with historical depth and modern appeal. Landis is an author to watch out for. "

-Tiffany Schmidt, author of the Once Upon a Crime Family series

"League of American Traitors packs adventure, humor, and a conspiracy-laced dose of American history into a three-shot duel."

-Kristen Lippert-Martin, ITW Finalist for *Tabula Rasa*

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Discuss with students some of the most famous people from the Revolutionary era. Have them choose a specific person and list several things they did that made them so memorable. Then, direct students to read the secondary source [“Benedict Arnold Commits Treason”](#) and examine a primary source [cartoon](#) of Benedict Arnold. Afterward, have students cite textual evidence as they share what Arnold did and how Patriots reacted.

⇒ CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-12.1-2 – Key Ideas and Details

⇒ CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6-12.7 – Research to Build and Present Knowledge

POST-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does Jasper handle the death of his parents? Imagine you’re him: Would you do the same? If not, how would you process such tragic events, back-to-back?
- Why is it so hard for Jasper to accept that his dad had been secretly trying to save him from having to duel?
- Why is the concept of “honor” so important to the True Sons of Liberty? Do you agree with their reasoning? Why or why not?
- Cyrus tells Jasper, “We all die. The question is, what will we die pursuing, and is that cause worthy of our lives?” Do you agree that there can be causes worth dying for? Name a cause, and do you agree with it?
- What role did Colton’s ancestry play in his family deciding to leave the True Sons of Liberty and help the League?
- Why is Byron’s membership in the League especially unfair, considering his ancestry?
- Is Kingsley furthering the violence by training students, or just preparing them for reality of their futures?
- Why does Nora refuse to pick up a gun? Do you agree with her reasons?
- Discuss the unhealthy ways that Nora tries to deal with her guilt. How do these methods change throughout the book?
- Why did Sheldon strike a deal to betray the League, but then risk his life to help Jasper escape his duel? What would you have done in the same situation?
- Was Jasper justified in killing Sheldon? Why or why not?
- How was Jasper killing Sheldon any different than Nora seeking out and winning an early duel?
- At the conclusion of the trial, how “innocent” of treason was Arnold in your mind? Cite some of Jasper’s evidence to back up your answer.

⇒ CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6-12.1-3 – Key Ideas and Details

⇒ CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6-12.6 – Craft and Structure

WRITING/RESEARCH PROMPTS

- The characters in this story offer different opinions on the issue of killing. Explain which character you agree with most, and argue why that is the correct view using a real-world example.
- Constantine Tallmadge tells Jasper that “people don’t want to see the flaws in their own houses, or their pasts. They want them to stay neat and tidy.” Pick one “flaw” from American history that people ignore and argue why, specifically, facing that difficult historical truth is so hard.
- In *The Count of Monte Cristo*, the novelist Alexandre Dumas wrote that, “The difference between treason and patriotism is only a matter of dates.” Use Arnold’s real-life treachery as an example to support this statement.
- In the 1700s and 1800s, men of higher social class often settled disputes through duels—Alexander Hamilton and President Andrew Jackson being two of the most famous examples. Choose one of these men, and explain how dueling impacted their personal and political life, as well as their legacy in modern America.
- Based on the real-life circumstances of Arnold’s betrayal, support or argue against this statement: “Benedict Arnold’s decision to betray America was justified based upon his circumstance.”

⇒ CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-12.1 – Text Types and Purposes (Argument Writing)

⇒ CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-12.2 – Text Types and Purposes (Informative Writing)

FURTHER READING AND INTERNET RESOURCES

Murphy, Jim. *The Real Benedict Arnold*. New York: Clarion Books, 2007.

- This award-winning book is perfect for teens wishing to explore Arnold’s life and treason. I relied heavily on this book while writing *League*.

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/benedict-arnold-turned-traitor-american-revolution-180958786/>

- This *Smithsonian* article by Historian Nathaniel Philbrick is perhaps the *best* explanation of the complex reasons that ultimately led Arnold to betray America.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/0006183135>.

- This recently released CIA report on the psychology of treason is fascinating, complete with a formula for teens to see if they are the type of person likely to commit treason.

⇒ CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-12.10 – Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity