

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

## April Morning

by

### Howard Fast

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### Book Information

Howard Fast, April Morning  
Quiz Number: 728  
Bantam Books, 1983  
ISBN 0-553-27322-1; LCCN  
202 Pages  
Book Level: 6.1  
Interest Level: UG

A boy endures a baptism by fire and becomes a man during the bloody Battle of Lexington, April 19, 1775.

**Award:** NCTE Notable Children's Books in the Language Arts

**Topics:** Community Life, Freedoms; Popular Groupings, College Bound; U.S. States/Regions, Kentucky; Wars, American Revolutionary War

### Main Characters

Adam Cooper a fifteen-year-old boy, who must grow up quickly during the Battle of Lexington

Granny Adam's grandmother

Joseph Simmons Adam's distant cousin

Joshua Dover another distant cousin of the Coopers

Levi Cooper Adam's eleven-year-old brother

Moses Cooper Adam's father, who has strong opinions about everything

Mrs. Cartwright an older woman from Adam's village

Ruth Simmons Joseph's daughter and Adam's friend

Sarah Cooper Adam's mother

Solomon Chandler a colonist from Lincoln Town who fights with Adam against the redcoats

### Vocabulary

**blasphemous** irreverent

**cantankerous** irritating or difficult to deal with

**catarrh** inflammation of the mucus membranes

**conciliative** an act to pacify or reconcile

**salient** prominent

**victuals** food for people

### Synopsis

Adam Cooper is a fifteen-year-old boy growing up in Colonial America. He lives with his family in a small village in Massachusetts. Adam is constantly trying to please his father, but he always falls short of this goal. Adam has decided that his father does not love him, and probably never will, because he is not good enough. Moses Cooper, Adam's father, has joined many other Colonial men to form the Committeemen. The Committeemen are both a political group interested in preserving their rights as free colonists, as well as a militia ready to fight for those rights. Adam longs to join them, but is prevented from doing so by his father, who says Adam is unable to offer proof that he is a man.

When the village receives word that the redcoats are marching toward Lexington and Concord, the Committeemen gather to assert their rights. Adam joins the men and boys waiting to sign the muster book and is allowed to join the Committeemen. When the redcoats arrive, the Committeemen are hoping to be able to state their case, but are fired upon instead, and the fighting begins. Adam's father is killed in the initial attack, but the other men support Adam in his attempt to stand as one of them. The story covers just a day and a half in the life of a young boy at the start of the Revolutionary War, but we see how his views of war are changed forever.

### Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

#### Initial Understanding

Why did Adam hide in the Harringtons' smokehouse?

*He was afraid of being shot, he was in shock after seeing his father killed, he was confused about where to go and what to do ....*

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### Literary Analysis

How was the war that Adam fought in different from a war today?

*Answers may include: different weapons, different tactics, different communication and organizational methods, different technologies, etc.*

### Inferential Comprehension

After he signed the muster book, Adam's one desire was to be alone? Why?

*He wanted time to think about what he had just done, he wanted time to sort out his many confused feelings, he wanted to think about what this meant for his future....*

### Constructing Meaning

Solomon told Adam, "Let it hurt, but become strong in the sorrow." What did he mean?

*Correct answers may include: don't take pleasure in killing a man, do what you must do, and use regret to help make yourself strong.*

**Understanding Characterization** Although the book covers only a day and a half in Adam's life, the reader can see how his view of life has changed with the start of the war. As a class discussion or writing assignment, have the students identify some of Adam's views at the start of the book and compare/contrast them with his views at the end of the book.

**Recognizing Details** The story is historical fiction. The details help make the story interesting and help the reader picture the action (i.e. why different tactics are needed when fighting with a musket instead of a rifle). The details of the story would have been much different if the story was science fiction. Have the students write a short paper describing one scene from the story in a science-fiction setting. Encourage them to use detail to make the scene interesting and believable.

## Teachable Skills

**Recognizing Setting** The story takes place during Colonial times. Have the students research life in Colonial Massachusetts and compare it to their lives today. This could be done through individual reports, drawings, models, etc.; or the students could be divided into groups, with each group researching and presenting a different aspect of Colonial life (foods, occupations, weapons, family life, etc.).

**Understanding Literary Features** The theme of the story is how one boy's life is changed with the coming of war. Although students may not have experienced a war firsthand, there are always events in their lives that have contributed to changing them. Have the students identify such an event (the birth of a sibling, the death of someone they knew, moving, starting school, etc.) and describe how the event changed them both positively and negatively.