

Viewing Guide for *THE PATRIOT* starring Mel Gibson
Captain Wasserman US History

Name: _____ Date _____ Period _____

1. **AFTER OR MIDWAY THROUGH THE FILM:** The film opens with a shot of a tomahawk and Mel Gibson's character (Benjamin Martin) saying: "I have long feared that my sins would return to visit me, and the cost is more than I can bear." What sins is Gibson's character referring to? (go down to question 40 for help with this)
2. What is a post rider?
3. Where is the children's mother?
4. What is the setting of the film (time and place)?
5. Who are the Continentals?
6. What is the modern name of Charles Towne?
7. What is the mood of the people in Charles Towne at the beginning of the film?
8. **RESEARCH QUESTION:** In your own words, describe the French and Indian War. When, where, why, between whom, its beginning and how it ended.
9. Why is the Declaration of Independence expected to be issued from Philadelphia – why not Washington, D.C.?
10. What does it mean that "eight of the thirteen colonies have levied money for the support of a Continental army?" What does "levied" mean, and what is the significance of those numbers?
11. What does Colonel Harry Burwell mean when he says that "If you value independence you must vote for war. It has come to that. There is no other way."? Was there anything the colonists had done to try and avoid this war?
12. What is the significance of Colonel Harry Burwell's statement: "This is not a war for the independence of one or two colonies, but for the independence of one nation."?
13. Who is the "tyrant 3000 miles away"?

14. Mel Gibson's character, Benjamin Martin, says: "Why should I trade one _____ away, for 3000 _____ one mile away? An _____ legislature can _____ a man's rights as _____ as a _____ can."
15. What does the above sentence mean – what two forms of government is Martin comparing? What is he saying about both forms of government?
16. "But mark my words, this war will _____ be fought on the _____, or on some distant battlefield, but amongst us. Among our _____. Our _____ will learn of it with their own _____. And the innocent will die with the rest of us."
17. What does that statement mean – how will this war with England be different from the French and Indian War?
18. What do you think of Benjamin Martin's declaration: "I will not fight. And because I will not fight, I will not cast a vote that will send others to fight in my stead." Is this a cowardly or an honorable decision? **Explain** your thoughts.
19. How old is Thomas?
20. When does his dad say he can enlist to fight?
21. What is Thomas' objection to this?
22. What are dispatches?
23. What is important about Gabriel being a "uniformed dispatch rider" carrying "a marked case"? Why does Benjamin Martin insist to the British colonel that this means his son cannot, by the rules of war, be hanged as a spy?
24. What is the point of destroying Martin's home, and seizing his livestock and servants?
25. What does "aim small, miss small" mean?
26. What is the term for an American colonist who supported the British side in the Revolutionary War?
27. Why does Colonel Tavington distrust the colonial captain?
28. Why does Charlotte tell Benjamin, "You've done nothing for which you should be ashamed"?
29. What does Benjamin mean when he replies, "I've done nothing. And for that, I am ashamed"?

30. Why does Benjamin say, “That Gates is a damned fool. He’s spent too many years in the British army. Going muzzle to muzzle with Redcoats in open field – it’s madness. This battle was over before it began”?
31. What does Lord/General Cornwallis mean when he says that fighting “these rustics” almost takes the honor out of victory? Who are the “rustics”? Why does Cornwallis despise them?
32. Why is Benjamin Martin skeptical about the French promise to send troops and munitions to the Continental Army?
33. What is Martin’s task as a colonel in the Continental militia? What is he supposed to do and why?
34. What will Lord Cornwallis receive as a reward, and from whom, for winning the war?
35. What does Cornwallis mean when he tells Colonel Tavington, “This is how His Majesty rewards those who fight for him as gentlemen”?
36. Explain what Lord Cornwallis means when he says, “His Majesty, like history, judges us not only by the outcome of the war, but by the manner in which it was fought. . . We serve the Crown, and we must conduct ourselves accordingly. Surrendering troops will be given quarter, and these brutal tactics must stop.” Use specific details from the film in your answer and explain what the term “quarter” means..
37. Explain what Cornwallis means when he says, “These Colonials are our brethren. And when this conflict is over, we will reestablish commerce with them.”
38. What does the minister mean when he says “A shepherd must tend his flock. And at times, fight off the wolves.”
39. How does Benjamin Martin prove to his French companion that the tavern was “the right place” to recruit militia men?
40. What does Benjamin do with Thomas’ toy soldiers?

41. Explain why Benjamin tells Gabriel, “They’re exactly the sort of men we need. They’ve fought this kind of war before.” Include the following in your answer:
 - a. what kind of war is he referring to?
 - b. what is the difference between the men Gabriel has recruited, and the men Benjamin has found?
 - c. what kind of war will these militia men be fighting, as opposed to the kind of war the “regulars” will fight?

42. What does the Frenchman mean when he tells the southern militia man, “Your sense of freedom is as pale as your skin”? ALSO: What has provoked (caused) this exchange?

43. What is the difference between the American militia and the British army? Include details from your textbook as well as Benjamin Martin’s and Lord Cornwallis’ comments.

44. What does Cornwallis mean when he tells Colonel Tavington that Tavington himself has “created this ghost -- your brutality has swelled” the ranks of the American militia? Also, who is this “ghost”?

45. What are “bundling bags” and what were they used for?

46. What was Fort Wilderness, and what happened there? (look back at question 1) Who were the enemies that Benjamin Martin and his men were fighting then?

47. What is the *real* basis for Lord Cornwallis’ objection that Martin’s militia is specifically targeting British officers? What reason does Martin give Cornwallis for deliberately targeting British officers during every battle?

48. What bargain does Cornwallis make with Tavington?

49. What is the significance, according to Benjamin Martin, of the North Star? What relevance does this have to modern soldiers?

50. According to the film, why did the Americans place the militia at the center of the line in the last battle?



The Patriot Extra Credit Research Questions

Do NOT write on this sheet – use your own paper. Restate the questions in your answers.

As always with extra credit and research work, cite your sources! Answer all questions in your own words, and use complete and correct sentences.

- i. **EXTRA CREDIT RESEARCH QUESTION:** The character of Colonel Tavington is based on a real British officer. Who was this man and what happened to him? Did this officer ever burn a colonial church crammed with civilians? What atrocities was he accused of committing?
- ii. **EXTRA CREDIT RESEARCH QUESTION:** Where did the custom of “bundling bags” come from? How long were they used in this country? Was their use confined to one particular region?
- iii. **EXTRA CREDIT RESEARCH QUESTION:** What was the difference between Cornwallis’ surrender and Robert E. Lee’s surrender at the conclusion of the Civil War?
- iv. **EXTRA CREDIT RESEARCH & ANALYSIS QUESTION:** Analyze and compare the American colonies’ actions in declaring independence from England with South Carolina’s actions in 1861. Address in what ways the two cases were alike, and in what ways different. How were the causes that led to secession or independence similar? How were the results different? Form a conclusion about whether or not you believe either the colonists or the South had the right to declare independence from their mother countries. Support your conclusion with specific details and theories of government (like the Contract v. the Compact Theory of government, John C. Calhoun’s views of government, the 1832 Ordinance of Nullification, and anything else you feel will support your conclusion.