

Reading Group Guide

Thank you for reading *Gideon's Revolution*.

I'm always happy to visit a book club meeting via Zoom to chat for a little while. If you're interested, let me know via the Contact page and we'll set something up.

Here are some thoughts and questions—provocations for a good discussion.

1. If you were in the DeWint House, Washington's headquarters in Tappan, along with Lafayette, Hamilton, Nathanael Greene, and Benjamin Townsend, how would you make the case for, or against, executing John André? (Be sure not to forget what the British did to Nathan Hale.)
2. Why is Gideon Wheatley so hesitant to become a spy?
3. There is a touching letter from Hannah Arnold to her son, Benedict, while he is at Mr. Cogswell's school. As a deadly distemper sweeps into Norwich, his hometown, she tells her young son that he must not neglect his precious soul, and that God was saying to all, even children, be ready. And with that admonition she includes a pound of chocolate. How did disease undo the Arnold family? What effect might this have had on Benedict Arnold's character that led him to both battlefield heroism and later to treason?
4. What forms the bond between Wheatley and Arnold at the Albany hospital?
5. Early during the Revolution, Mercy Otis Warren writes to her friend Abigail Adams that two men seemed to be destined for greatness, "to the latest posterity, with the laurel on their brow." Indeed, if Arnold had died at Saratoga, he would be celebrated among our greatest national heroes. Here's the big question: What caused Arnold to betray the Patriot cause?
6. As Wheatley stands in the shadows of the staircase, watching Arnold write a letter late at night, what is the argument in favor of assassination? What is the argument against it?
7. Twenty years later, what effect does the ocean crossing have on Wheatley as he prepares to find Arnold and take revenge? What effect does his brief acquaintance with Louisa have on him?
8. In the coffeehouse, what choice does Wheatley make, and why?
9. As Wheatley prepares to address the people gathered on the common in New Ipswich, he recalls his father's last words to him: *Blow ye the trumpets*. Why is that significant to him? For whom, then, does Wheatley "blow the trumpets?" What, metaphorically, does the sound of the trumpets signify?