

Spy of the American Revolution

As a secret agent, James Lafayette helped America outsmart the British and win the war.

About the Story

Lexile® Measure 910L

For qualitative complexity factors, go to *Scope Online*.

Learning Objective: to identify key ideas and details in a narrative nonfiction article

Featured Skill: key ideas and details

Additional skills covered in this lesson plan: text features, text structure, critical thinking

Essential Questions:

- What is a revolution?
- Can an individual make a difference?
- How does belief influence action?

Standards:

The article and its suite of support materials support these Common Core Anchor Standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.7, W.2, SL.1, SL.2

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to *Scope Online*.



Your Teaching Package

Find your full suite of support materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Audio:

- Article read-aloud
- Text-to-speech
- Vocabulary

Video:

- Bringing History to Life: Hero of the American Revolution

Differentiated Articles:

- Lower-Lexile version
- Spanish language version

Connected readings from the *Scope* archives:

- “Blood, Smoke, and Freedom”
- *The Midnight Ride of Sybil Ludington*

Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice
- Video Discussion Questions
- Discussion Questions
- Featured Skill: Key Ideas and Details
- Choice Board
- **Core Skills Workout:** Summarizing,* Text Features, Nonfiction Elements
- Lesson Plan Slide Deck
- Quiz*

*Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

1. Prepare to Read (20 minutes)

Preview Vocabulary (10 minutes)

- Project the Google Slides version of **Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice** on your whiteboard. Review the definitions and complete the activity as a class. Highlighted words: *devised, intelligence, petition, rouge, tribute*. Audio pronunciations of the words and a read-aloud of the definitions are embedded on the slides. Optionally, print the PDF version or share the slideshow link directly to your LMS and have students preview the words and complete the activity independently before class.

Watch a Video (10 minutes)

- Watch the video “Bringing History to Life: Hero of the American Revolution,” in which students meet Stephen Seals, who portrays James Lafayette—the subject of the article students are about to read—at Colonial Williamsburg. Have students respond to the **Video Discussion Questions** (available in your Resources tab) in small groups or pairs.

2. Read and Discuss (45 minutes)

- Invite a volunteer to read the As You Read box on page 4 or at the top of the digital story page.
- Read the article once as a class. (*Differentiation: Share the lower-Lexile version or the Spanish version of the article.*) Optionally, have students listen to author Steve Sheinken read the article aloud while they follow along. The **audio read-aloud** is located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View.
- Divide students into groups to read the article again and respond to the following **Discussion Questions**, also located in the Resources tab.

Discussion Questions

(15 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

- How did James convince the British to trust him?** (key ideas and details) *James approached the British with a compelling story. He explained that he had been born into slavery nearby and had just escaped from his enslavers. He said he had valuable information to offer and wanted to join the British side. Because the British wanted the intelligence that James could offer, they were willing to take a chance on him. After proving himself by working as a servant or waiter for British commanders, James was promoted to working inside General Cornwallis's headquarters, where he was able to listen in on important meetings and sneak looks at secret information.*
- In the section "Joining the Fight," author Steve Sheinkin explains why the Americans were dangerously close to losing the war. Why is this information important?** (text structure) *Knowing that American troops were at a low point and not strong enough to defeat the British through direct attacks helps readers understand the importance of James's role in outsmarting the British. If James hadn't uncovered secret information, including Cornwallis's plan to move his force to Yorktown, the outcome of the war might have been different.*
- What information from the article does the map "Siege of Yorktown" help illustrate?** (text features) *The map helps illustrate a major turning point in the war. It shows what is explained in the section "A Trick and a Race" about how French and American forces were able to surround Cornwallis on land and water and force him into surrendering.*
- How might being a double agent have made spying easier for James? How might it have made spying more difficult?** (critical thinking) *Answers will vary. Students might say that as a double agent, James didn't have to sneak around as much in order to travel back and forth between sides. On the other hand, being a double agent added an extra layer of risk. Being a double agent also meant that James was under pressure from both sides of the war.*
- What does historical interpreter Stephen Seals mean when he says, "James Lafayette's story is an American story"?** (critical thinking) *Answers will vary. Students may say that Seals is referring to the fact that James's efforts helped win the war, and as a result, helped America come into existence. Seals might also mean that James exemplifies the American spirit of working hard to achieve a goal, standing up for what you believe in, and fighting for change.*
- Why is it important to remember stories from the past like this one?** (critical thinking) *Answers will vary. Students might say stories like this one are important because they help us understand how our country came to be, and that it is important to remember and honor the people who have played a part in our country's story and who have fought for our freedom—especially people like James, who was not free himself.*

3. Write About It: Key Ideas and Details

(45 minutes)

- Have students complete the **Featured Skill Activity: Key Ideas and Details**. This activity prepares them to respond to the writing prompt on page 10 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page:

Imagine that James Lafayette kept a secret diary about his activities as a spy. Write one of the diary entries. Be sure to give it a date.

- Alternatively, have students choose a task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of culminating tasks. (Our Choice Board options include the writing prompt from the magazine, differentiated versions of the writing prompt, and additional creative ways for students to demonstrate their understanding of a story or article.)

Support for Multilingual Learners

These questions are designed to help students respond to the text at a level that's right for them.

Yes/No Questions

Ask students to demonstrate comprehension with a very simple answer.

1. Was James Lafayette a spy for the Americans? *Yes, he was.*
2. Was James a free man at the start of the war? *No, he wasn't.*
3. Did the British commanders trust James? *Yes, they did.*
4. Did General Cornwallis surrender to American generals? *Yes, he did.*
5. Were James and the Marquis de Lafayette friends? *Yes, they were.*

Either/Or Questions

Encourage students to use language from the question in their answer.

1. Were the French helping the Americans or the British? *The French were helping the Americans.*
2. Did James give misleading information to the Americans or the British? *He gave misleading information to the British.*
3. Was Washington's army too big or too small? *His army was too small.*
4. Did Washington surround Cornwallis in New York or in Virginia? *Washington surrounded Cornwallis in Virginia.*
5. Was James freed right after the war or years later? *James was freed years later.*

Short-Answer Questions

Challenge students to produce simple answers on their own.

1. Why was America losing the war? *America was losing the war because the Americans were in debt and couldn't pay their soldiers. Also, their forces were not strong enough.*
2. How did James honor the Marquis de Lafayette? *James honored the Marquis de Lafayette by taking his last name.*

Language Acquisition Springboard: Fill in the five “W” words while reading, then use the answers to generate questions after reading.

Who? (Which person or people is this article mainly about?) *James Lafayette*

What? (What event does this article describe?) *James working as a spy to help the Americans win the American Revolution, in particular by passing on information that allowed the Americans to defeat the British in Yorktown, Virginia*

When? (In what year did this event occur?) *1781*

Where? (In what place or location did this event take place?) *the British colony of Virginia in what is now the United States*

Why? (What was the cause of this event?) *James informed the Americans that General Cornwallis was planning to move his forces to Yorktown, which gave the Americans the opportunity to come up with a plan to surround Cornwallis's forces and defeat them.*

Connected readings from the Scope archives:

Stories about the American Revolution:

- Narrative Nonfiction: [“Blood, Smoke, and Freedom”](#)
- Drama: [The Midnight Ride of Sybil Ludington](#)