



Barre Book Group, 2011-12

“This Mighty Scourge”: Teaching the Civil War as a Focal Point in American History

Book Group Facilitator: Christine Smith, Spaulding High School.

This monthly book discussion series combines young adult historical fiction, memoirs, a stunning book of Civil War photographs, and a graphic novel to bring forth issues central to our Nation’s history, beginning with the American Revolution and continuing through to World War II.

Note: There is no final project; No stipends; All books provided.



Dates: Wednesdays, October 12, November 9, December 7, February 8, March 7

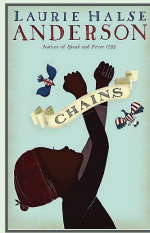
Time: 3:45 – 5:45

Location: Barre Town Elementary/
Middle School Library

Registration: Free, online at:
www.learningcollaborative.org/register.htm

Session 1: Freedom for Whom?:

Reading: Laurie Halse Anderson, *Chains*—set in New York City at the beginning of the American Revolution, *Chains* addresses the price of freedom both for a nation and for individuals. Isabel tells the story of her life as a slave caught between Loyalists and Patriots. YA Fiction



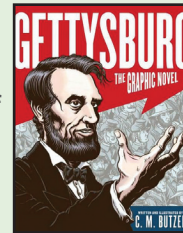
Session 2: Vermonters in Battle:

Reading: Clifton Wisler, *Mr. Lincoln’s Drummer*—When his Pa joins the Union army as a soldier, 11-year-old Willie goes along as a drummer boy. As the Army of the Potomac marches through Virginia, their war consists mainly of camp life, discomfort, and retreat, though they see action at Lee’s Mill and Malvern Hill. Willie meets Lincoln twice and receives the Congressional Medal of Honor. YA Fiction

Reading: Don Wickman, *A Very Fine Appearance: The Vermont Civil War Photographs of George Houghton*—stunning Civil War photographs and excerpts from soldiers’ diaries capture the very marrow of Vermonters’ infantry experience during the War Between the States.

Session 3: Gettysburg:

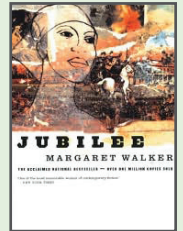
Reading: C. Butzer, *Gettysburg: The Graphic Novel*—starting with Civil War battle scenes that showcase the fury of battle with a terrifying immediacy and moving through to Lincoln’s address itself, first-time author/illustrator Butzer brings home the sentiment behind the history-making cemetery dedication with a substance and reality that is both necessary and very timely. Combining words from actual letters of the time with accessible and expressive art, he introduces young readers to the idea that they may owe something to those who sacrificed all they had for democracy. YA



Reading: Matilda Alleman, *At Gettysburg; or What a Girl Saw and Heard at the Battle* Tillie was a young girl of 15 and a resident of Gettysburg during the Battle of Gettysburg. During the first day of fighting, Tillie’s father moved her out of town to a farm, thinking she would be safer there. It turned out that Tillie ended up right behind the Union lines on the second and third day. The farm where she stayed became a field hospital, and this young girl witnessed much suffering and death. Later in life, Mrs. Alleman wrote an account of what she saw, and it is considered a very accurate and excellent first hand source. YA/Adult

Session 4: Forty Acres and a Mule? Reconstruction:

Reading: Margaret Walker, *Jubilee*—the true story of Vvry: the child of a white plantation owner and his black mistress. Vvry bears witness to the South’s antebellum opulence and to its brutality, its wartime ruin, and the promises and perils of Reconstruction. Adult



Session 5: The Segregated South

Reading: Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*—the first volume in the author’s autobiographies. After their parents’ separation, young Marguerite (her given name) and her brother, Bailey, are sent to live with their strong-willed grandmother in Stamps, Arkansas, deep in the segregated South. Angelou also describes her time spent with her other grandmother in St. Louis, as well as her young adulthood in San Francisco. The overall time period of the book overlaps that of World War II. High School/Adult