

John, Paul, George, & Ben
By Lane Smith
Illustrated by Lane Smith
Copyright date 2006
Hyperion Books

About the author:

Lane Smith is a well known author and illustrator. His is most famous for illustrating *The Stinky Cheese Man* and *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs*. Lane is originally from Oklahoma, but his family moved to California when he was small. Lane worked, during college, at Disneyland to help make money to support himself. When he graduated from college he moved to New York and he and his wife now live in Connecticut. He has been a consultant on several projects, including *James and the Giant Peach*.

Author's Homepage: www.lanesmithbooks.com/

"Lane Smith"

Publisher's webpage: Hyperion Books For Children
<http://www.hyperionbooksforchildren.com/>

Publisher's webpage for the author or author's books:

<http://www.hyperionbooksforchildren.com/authors/displayAI.asp?id=407&ai=a>

Other Web Resources:

Lane Smith interview

<http://www.readingrockets.org/books/interviews/smith>

Lane Smith Wikipedia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lane_Smith_\(illustrator\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lane_Smith_(illustrator))

Lane Smith at Penguin Group

http://us.penguin.com/nf/Author/AuthorPage/0,,0_1000029880,00.html

Awards:

A New York Times Bestseller

A New York Times Notable Book

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A New York Times Best Illustrated Book of the Year

A Publishers Weekly Bestseller

A Book Sense Summer Children's Pick

A School Library Journal Best Books of 2006

Horn Book Fanfare List – Best books of 2006

A Quills Award Nominee

A Child Magazine Best Book of the Year

An Oppenheim Toy Portfolio Platinum Book Award Winner

A Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year

A National Parenting Publication Gold Award Winner

A Parenting Magazine Best Book of the Year

A St. Louis Post Dispatch Best Book

The Columbus Dispatch Top 20

New York Daily News Jolly Good Books Round Up

A San Francisco Chronicle Best Book

Merit award in Children's Trade Hardcover (Bookbinder's Guild New York Book Show)

A Miami Herald Best Book

A Blue Ribbon Book from the Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

Winner of the 13th Annual Zena Sutherland Award for "Best Text" and "Best Overall"

2008 Virginia Readers' Choice Award (Elementary Level)

Best Children's Author – 2007 Connecticut Book Award

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ALA Notable Video (for the Weston Woods animated adaptation)

Annotation:

Title: John, Paul, George, & Ben

Author: Lane Smith

Smith, L. (2006) *John, Paul, George & Ben*. New York: Hyperion.

Lane Smith introduces children to five (not four, as the title suggests) famous men in American history in a hilarious way. He tells readers about myths and legends about each of the famous men, but at the same time imparting important information. There is even an added bit at the end that dispels the myths that Lane Smith has put in the book. The illustrations are created in a variety of mediums that add to the historical feel of the book. The illustrations look worn, as they would if they were created back when the famous men lived.

Genre:

This book is written is historical fiction.

Point of View:

The book is written in the third person point of view.

Theme:

The theme from the story is learning about our historical figures and their contributions to our country.

Conflict:

The author has put in slight conflicts for each person in the book. For example, he writes about George Washington chopping down the cherry tree.

Conflict Resolution:

Lane Smith offers actual facts about what really happened as opposed to what is commonly believed.

Characters:

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John Hancock: The reader finds out why he signed his name so big and why he was important to the Declaration of Independence.

Paul Revere: Readers find out, with a funny anecdote, (although untrue) interesting facts about Paul Revere and his midnight ride.

George Washington: The reader may be surprised at some of the facts about George Washington, and how some previously thought to be true tales are not.

Benjamin Franklin: Benjamin Franklin had a saying for everything and some of those sayings are included in the book.

Thomas Jefferson: Thomas Jefferson had many inventions, and some of those inventions are told about in the book.

Setting:

There were multiple settings, each one changing with a setting that fits each historical character.

John Hancock was in a classroom

Paul Revere was in Boston, in the North Church and at his job

George Washington was on his family's estate.

Benjamin Franklin was in multiple areas with his peers.

Interest level/Reading Level:

RL 3.7 Interest Level: 1 - 4

Booktalk:

Paul Revere, George Washington, and Benjamin Franklin, but how much do you really know about these men? In the book, John, Paul, George, & Ben we are allowed to dive into more interesting facts than the history books give us. For example, did you know that Paul Revere always spoke *really* loud? Did you ever

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wonder why John Hancock's name is so big on the Declaration of Independence?

Answers to these questions and many more interesting facts about all these men, and Thomas Jefferson too, are located in this book. The author, Lane Smith, gives a deeper glimpse into the lives of these fascinating people. He also puts to rest some myths that are associated with these famous figures in history. The pictures are simple and yet colorful, so they are fun to look at.

The author also offers some extra facts about John, Paul, George, Ben, and Thomas at the end of the book. In fact, there is a whole page at the end of the book that gives extra tidbits about some of the stories in the book. If you think history books are boring, but want to know more about one or all of these famous figures, then this is the book for you!

Discussion questions:

Pre -reading questions:

- Who are John, Paul, George, & Ben?
- Why are they important in history?

Post -reading question:

- What was the most interesting story about the historic men?
- How would you compare the bits of information at the end with what is written in the book? Were they more or less interesting?

During reading questions:

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Pages 1– 2 What do you suppose the author meant when he said that John was a BOLD lad?

What is a lad?

Pages 3 – 4 John Hancock wrote his name larger than any of his other classmates. Do you suppose this is why the author said that he had great self confidence? Why or why not?

Look at his classmates and teacher in the picture, how are their reactions different from one another?

Pages 5 –6 Why was it important for the author to tell us about Paul’s membership in the bell ringing club?

How would our knowing that Paul was a noisy lad help us understand his place in history?

Pages 7 – 8 The author said that Paul had to be loud just to hear himself talk, and why would that be ok at home and at play, but not at work?

Pages 8 – 9 Why does the lady in the picture look so horrified when Paul is yelling about her extra large underwear? Why is that funny?

Look at the man on the next page, how does his expression tell you how he is feeling toward Paul?

Pages 10 – 11 Why does the illustrator make the words coming out of Paul’s mouth bigger than the other words on the page?

Pages 12 – 13 What stories have you heard about George Washington? Do any of them have to do with him being honest? Which one(s)?

Pages 14 – 15 George is hiding something behind his back in this picture. What do you suppose it is and why is it important to his story?

Pages 16 – 17 The famous story about George Washington chopping down his family’s cherry tree and not being able to lie about it is made funny by the illustrations on these pages. How do you know that to be true?

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Pages 18 – 19 What does it mean to be clever?

What does the saying “Fish and visitors STINK after three days” mean?

Pages 20 – 21 Let’s look at the sayings on these pages. What do you suppose they mean?

Pages 22 – 23 Look at Ben in each picture. What do the expressions on his face tell you about what he thinks of his sayings?

Pages 24 – 25 Why are the letters on these pages so big?

Pages 26 – 27 What does it mean to be independent?

Pages 28 – 29 It says that the class made a palm tree. What are the two meanings of palm on this page?

Pages 30 – 31 What does the word independently mean?

Pages 32 – 33 Why are John, Paul, George, Ben, and Tom called the “Sons of Liberty”?

Pages 34 – 35 There are some words that are in all capital letters. Why are certain words written this way about each of the men?

Pages 36 – 37 What is an epilogue?

Pages 38 – 39 Which story in the true and false section is the most interesting?

Definitions:

- Independent: likes to do things on their own, not with others (pg.1)
- Lad: a boy or youth. (pg.2)
- Refreshing: pleasingly fresh or different (pg.3)
- Belfry: a bell tower, either attached to a church or other building or standing apart (pg. 7)

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- Breeches: knee-length pants (pg. 9)
- Kindling: material that can be readily lit, used in starting a fire (pg. 16)
- Quarrels: to make a complaint; an argument (pg. 19)
- Interpose: to place between; cause to intervene (pg.19)
- Neoclassical: belonging to a revival of classic styles or something that is held to resemble classic styles, as in art, literature, music, or architecture (pg. 21)
- Dullard: A stupid, insensitive person (pg. 23)
- Pursued: to continue; go on with (pg. 24)

Indiana Academic Standards:

Social Studies:

3.2.5, 3.2.6, 5.1.9, 5.1.10, 5.1.11, 5. 1.12, 5.1.13

English/Language Arts:

3.1.5, 3.1.6, 3.1.7, 3.3.3, 4.1.6, 4.1.7, 4.2.1, 4.3.5, 4.3.7, 5.3.8, 5.3.5,

Anticipation Statements:

- It is always better to be honest.
- It is always better to do things your own way.
- Doing something that is for the best is always easy.
- Sometimes when you believe in something it really tests your determination.

Art Medium used:

The illustrations were hand drawn with pen and ink. The textures were created by a variety of techniques, among them, oil paint on canvas and sampled surfaces from handmade parchment papers and weathered pulp boards. The

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collage elements are facsimiles of eighteenth century ephemera. They were combined on a Mac. (Smith)

“If you like John, Paul, George, & Ben, you’ll love:

Madam President by Lane Smith

Now & Ben: The Modern Inventions of Benjamin Franklin by Gene Barretta

Big Plans by Bob Shea

How Ben Franklin Stole the Lightning by Rosalyn Schanzer

George vs. George: The American Revolution As Seen From Both Sides by
Rosalyn Schanzer

The Big Elephant In the Room by Lane Smith

The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Ridiculous Tales by Jon Scieszka and Lane
Smith

Cross-Curricular connections:

Art: Students can draw a picture of something significant in one of the character’s lives, such as Paul Revere’s ride, one of Ben Franklin’s inventions, or anything else they want to illustrate from the story that struck them

Materials needed: Art materials i.e. pencils, crayons, markers, chalk,
paint, paper

IN State Standard:

3.3.3 Determine what characters are like by what they say or do
and by how the author or illustrator portrays them.

Writing: John Hancock took great pride in his penmanship. The students could write a letter to a congressman or the President with an idea of something that needs changing.

Materials needed: Addresses of President Obama

Addresses of Congressman/woman

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Writing supplies

IN State Standard:

3.5.3 Write personal, persuasive, and formal letters, thank-you notes, and invitations that:

- show awareness of the knowledge and interests of the audience.
- establish a purpose and context
- include the date, proper salutation, body, closing, and signature.

Book Activities:

Activity 1:

Partner/Whole Class Activity

Students will choose two characters from the book to compare and contrast. Using the attached handout they will create a chart about the two people and then will present the information to the class. We will create a larger Venn diagram as a class about the characters. We will probably need 2 Venn diagrams.

IN Standard: 2.2.7 Interpret information from diagrams, charts, and graphs.

2.2.5 Restate facts and details or summarize the main idea in the text to clarify and organize ideas.

Activity 2: We could, as a class, make a T chart with the items from the story that we think are facts and which we think are fiction. There could be a culmination of the activity after we read the book because there is a page in the book dedicated to whether or not some of the things written about the characters in the book are true. Students could then choose one fact or fiction element to illustrate and we could create a class book.

IN State Standard: 2.3.6 Recognize the difference between fantasy and reality.

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Bibliography:

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<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/>

Smith, Lane. John, Paul, George & Ben. New York : Hyperion, 2006.

http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/westonwoods/study_guides/john_paul_george_ben.pdf

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=974#wr