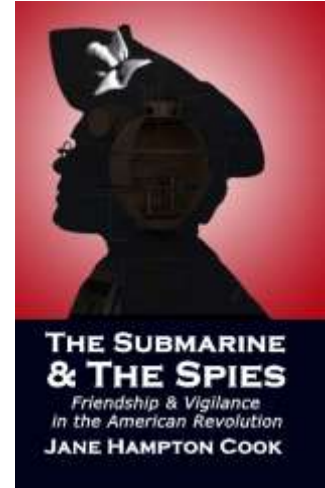


Study Guide & Hero's Journey for *The Submarine and the Spies*

The United States of America will celebrate its 250th anniversary in 2026. This provides a unique opportunity to delve more deeply into the Revolutionary War through to better understand those who lived loudly for liberty and the threat of tyranny.

The Submarine and the Spies is an historical fiction novel adapted from a true story for ages 12 and up. Three friends from Yale College must leave their world of classical education to fight tyranny in the American Revolution. Their heroes' journey places them on the battlefield, in the shadows as a spy, and underwater in a submarine.



Heroes' Journey

Departure: The Normal World—Connecticut in 1772

The Submarine and the Spies starts in the year 1772. David Bushnell, Nathan Hale, and Benjamin Tallmadge are Yale College classmates who are content studying classical education in New Haven, Connecticut, where they study the trivium of grammar, logic, and rhetoric as well as Christianity. They also take time for recreation, such as kicking a football over Yale's elm trees.

In addition to being an advanced classical scholar, Benjamin's special skills are athleticism and the ability to keep a secret. Nathan is athletic, agile, and able to quickly think on his feet. While he wishes he was physically taller and stronger like Nathan and Benjamin, David is an engineering genius who has been experimenting with inventing an underwater mine and a submarine.

Though all three share the same politics and concerns about America's deteriorating relationship with England, David accepts the likelihood of war against England earlier than Benjamin and Nathan. He answers the call of the hero's journey much sooner than Nathan and Benjamin.

1. What do the three competitions reveal about the character traits of David, Benjamin, and Nathan?
2. What are David Bushnell's strengths and weaknesses?
3. What are Benjamin Tallmadge's strengths and weaknesses?
4. What are Nathan Hale's strengths and weaknesses?
5. Name two examples of a theme in the book, self-sacrificing friendship. How is the foreshadowed early in the story?

The Call: Departure Into Adventure

David answers the call to make his invention earlier than Nathan and Benjamin answer the call to join the military.

6. Though David, Nathan, and Benjamin share the same political concerns about the American colonies' deteriorating relationship with England, what is different about David that makes him more convinced that war is coming?
7. Does Nathan play a mentor role for David? Why or Why not?
8. What does Nathan give David? What does it symbolize?
9. How do David, Nathan, and Benjamin feel about Benedict Arnold?
10. What are Benedict's positive traits? What are his negative traits? Is he a good or bad character or is he nuanced and complicated?
11. Benedict Arnold gives Nathan and Benjamin a chance to join his militia. Why do they refuse? Are they against the cause or do they sense something untrustworthy in his character?
12. Why was Nathan Hale a "bad" friend to Benjamin? What does this say about Nathan's plans and hopes for his future?
13. What news in 1774 convinces David that he needs to spend the time and money to build his submarine?
14. What happens in 1775 that convinces Nathan and Benjamin to join the Continental Army?

Initiation: Trials, Tests, Enemies, Death

After the British Fleet arrives in New York in the summer of 1776 and the Continental Congress declares independence from England, all three heroes realize there is no turning back to their old way of life. All three find themselves in the "belly of the whale," but only two of them come out alive.

15. What two events take place in 1776 that show the three heroes that there is no turning back to their old way of life?
16. What does Nathan do to show that Connecticut and New York have a new identity as states instead of colonies?
17. What does Elizabeth Hallam's letter to Nathan in 1775 foreshadow?
18. What trial does Benjamin experiences in late August 1776? What happens to resolve this trial?
19. How does Ezra Lee return to the story?
20. How does David find himself in the "belly of the whale" in September 1776?
21. What trial does Nathan face in September 1776? Why does he accept a special assignment for George Washington?
22. What does Nathan say as he meets his fate?
23. How does Nathan's death affect Benjamin?
24. How does the failure of the Turtle affect David? Was it a complete failure? If not, what did he accomplish?

The Return: Reward, Rebirth, Return, Freedom to Live

Benjamin is so distraught over the loss of his friend Nathan that he cannot speak of his death. He only does so once, at a significant moment in the American Revolution.

George Washington entrusts Benjamin as his top spymaster and rewards David for his submarine invention by officially bringing him into the military through an elite engineering corps.

25. What role does General Washington play in this story?
26. Why would Benjamin agree to become Washington's spymaster after what happened to Nathan?
27. How does Nathan's death inform Benjamin's approach to being a spymaster?
28. What does David do to continue the fight against the British?
29. Who captures David?
30. What does David and Benjamin's return to New Haven signify?
31. How are David and Benjamin different when they return to Yale to see if it was burned?
32. Why does David give Benjamin Nathan's watch?
33. What new position does General Washington give to David as a reward for his vigilance as an inventor?
34. When Benjamin interrogates John André, why does he bring up Nathan Hale?
35. When Benjamin returns home, how is he different? How is his home different?
36. What is Benjamin protecting when he attacks the fort on Long Island? What is Long Island to Benjamin?
37. What reward does Benjamin receive for his valor on Long Island?