## *HENRY AND THE CANNONS: AN EXTRAORDINARY TRUE STORY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION*

## By Don Brown

Illustrations by Don Brown

## Louisiana Young Readers’ Choice Nominee 2016

**Grade 3-5**

Submitted by Kimberly Vincent, Student

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**Title:** *Henry and the Cannons: An Extraordinary True Story of the American Revolution*

**Author:** Don Brown

**Publisher:** Roaring Brook Press

**Pages:** 30

**SUMMARY**

This non-fiction title shares the story of Henry Knox, a young Boston bookseller, who offered to retrieve the artillery from Fort Ticonderoga, a task George Washington thought impossible. Nonetheless, this plump businessman and his fellow patriots managed to transport 59 cannons weighing 120,000 pounds over 300 miles of rough terrain in time to provide the fire power needed to drive the British from Boston in 1775. The appealing watercolor illustrations and descriptive text introduce new vocabulary and a new hero for young readers.

**AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY**

Don Brown is an author and illustrator well-known for his non-fiction historical picture books and biographies. He has won many state and small awards, and, most notably, his 2001 work *America is Under Attack: September 11, 2001: The Day the Towers Fell* was named a 2012 Children’s Notable Book by ALSC. He and his family live in New York.

Biographical information taken from the author’s website at <http://www.booksbybrown.com/>

Accessed October 8, 2014

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Author and Illustrator website: <http://www.booksbybrown.com/>

**OTHER TITLES BY AUTHOR**

*Dolley Madison Saves George Washington* (2007)

*Let It Begin Here!: April 19, 1775: The Day the American Revolution Began* (2010)

*Teedie: The Story of Young Teddy Roosevelt* (2009)

# RELATED TITLES

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

*Henry Knox: Bookseller, Soldier, Patriot* by Anita Silvey

*Let It Begin Here!: Lexington & Concord: First Battles of the American Revolution* by

Dennis Brindell Fradin

**CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**

**Language Arts:**

* Have students break into small groups to write a script, to perform before the rest of the class, about a journey of their own, including descriptions of the terrain they travelled, obstacles they overcame, and the people they met.
* Have students break into small groups and create a short Readers’ Theater version of the book.
* Have students write a short story about the children living during the American Revolutionary War and their contributions.
* Discuss how illustrations can support, reflect, clarify, or contribute to the text. Have the students illustrate the aforementioned story and bind their work into books. Discuss the types of bindings and books, as well as literacy rates, of Henry Knox’s time and what effect that had on booksellers’ business and clientele. Show examples of the types of books Knox may have had for sale.

**Social Studies:**

* **Geography:** Have students locate Fort Ticonderoga, New York, and Boston, Massachusetts on the map. Have the students calculate the distance between the two and discuss the types of landscape. Give younger students the actual mileage. How would each terrain present a problem in transporting the artillery? Have the students suggest solutions to those problems.
* **History:** Have students choose from a selected list of important figures in the American Revolutionary War to create a presentation for the class. Have students dress in appropriate costume or bring another visual aid.

**Art:**

Have students draw and decorate a map of the route Knox and his men travelled.

**Math:**

Discuss rounding numbers. Take the actual miles between the two locations from the geography activity or provide the numbers yourself. Have the students divide the number of miles travelled by the number of days travelled to determine the average number of miles travelled per day. Do this for both the trip to and from Fort Ticonderoga and compare the numbers.

**Vocabulary:**

Cannonball

Caravan

Fortress

Glade

Heave

Lug

Manhandle

Overlook

Relish

Route

Scant

Scramble

Snatch

Troop

Trudge

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What compelled Henry to move the cannons? Please provide evidence from the book to support your answer.
2. Why did Washington believe that cannons would help him defeat the enemy? Please provide evidence from the book to support your answer.
3. Why did Washington believe it was impossible to transport the cannons and why did Henry think otherwise? Please provide evidence from the book to support your answer.
4. How did Washington contribute to the plot of this story? Please provide evidence from the book to support your answer.
5. To what degree did Henry’s belief in his abilities to be a soldier affect his actual performance and where or how did he gain that confidence? Please provide evidence from the book to support your answer.

**RELATED WEBSITES**

# The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History: Dragging Cannon from Fort Ticonderoga to Boston, 1775

<http://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/war-for-independence/resources/dragging-cannon-from-fort-ticonderoga-boston-1775>

This website provides a brief summary of the actions of Henry Knox and his contributions to the American Revolutionary War. It includes an excerpt of a primary source: a letter written by Henry Knox to George Washington about transferring the cannons. Discussion questions are also provided with the creation of a free account.

# Historic Valley Forge: General Henry Knox

<http://www.ushistory.org/valleyforge/served/knox.html>

This website provides a brief biography of Henry Knox, from birth to death, with special attention paid to his military and political career. Links are provided for additional information on the American Revolutionary War and related important figures. A “For Kids” link on the top navigation bar leads to crossword puzzles, a word game, an interactive cartoon and a matching game.

# Smithsonian: Myths of the American Revolution

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/myths-of-the-american-revolution-10941835/?all>

This article by historian John Ferling examines seven myths of the American Revolutionary War. Includes links to related content on the Smithsonian website.