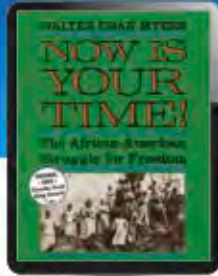


# Lesson

# 14



## LANGUAGE DETECTIVE

### Talk About the Writer's Words

Nouns are words that name people, places, animals, or things. Work with a partner. Find the blue Vocabulary words that are nouns. What clues did you use? Use the nouns to write new sentences.

# Vocabulary in Context

## 1 provisions

Colonial dockworkers unloaded needed goods, or **provisions**, from newly arrived ships in port.



## 2 dexterity

With **dexterity**, or skilled hands, this silversmith makes beautiful bowls.



## 3 aspects

Making frames and weaving fibers are **aspects**, or parts, of basketmaking.



## 4 apprentice

An **apprentice** to a blacksmith was trained to make horseshoes and nails.



- ▶ Study each **Context Card**.
- ▶ Use a thesaurus to determine a synonym for each Vocabulary word.

### 5 **influential**

Printers made books and newspapers that were **influential** in events before the Revolution.



### 6 **contributions**

Harvesting crops was one of many important **contributions** that kids made to the family farm.



### 7 **persuade**

A sign hanging above the door was used to **persuade** customers to enter the shoe shop.



### 8 **authorities**

Judges were the highest **authorities**, or officials, who could settle legal disputes.



### 9 **bondage**

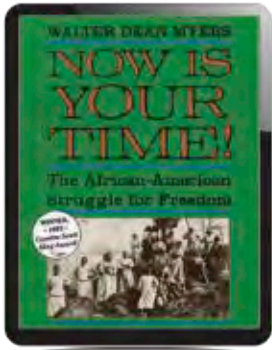
Enslaved people, who were held in **bondage**, were often servants in the homes of the rich.



### 10 **tentative**

These merchants are shaking hands over a **tentative** deal. A contract will make it permanent.





# Read and Comprehend

## ✓ TARGET SKILL

**Sequence of Events** The events in “James Forten” are described in chronological order, or time order. As you read the selection, notice how this **sequence of events** is signaled by the use of dates, references to James’s age, and words such as *after*, *soon*, and *later*. Use a graphic organizer like this one to help you track events as they occur in the text.



## ✓ TARGET STRATEGY

**Summarize** As you read “James Forten,” pause now and then to **summarize**, or retell the main ideas of the text in your own words. Summarizing can help you understand and remember what you read.

## PREVIEW THE TOPIC

### African American History

At the start of the Revolutionary War, about twenty percent of American colonists were of African ancestry. Many were enslaved; fewer were free. Enslaved people sometimes worked on plantations growing cotton or tobacco. In cities, they worked in homes as domestic servants. Free African Americans pursued trades or, if they were educated, entered into business.

In “James Forten,” you will read about the courage of a free African American who fought for his country in the Revolutionary War. Later, as a successful businessman, he worked to secure basic freedoms for all Americans.

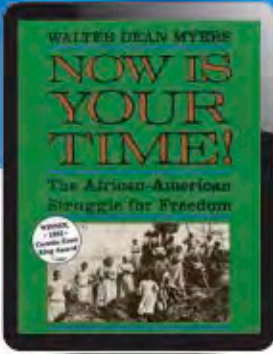


#### Think Pair Share

Think about how people can work together to help each other in difficult times. How do you think free African Americans during the time of slavery would have been able to help others? Share your ideas with a partner. Then discuss how your ideas are alike and different.



# ANCHOR TEXT



## ✓ GENRE

**Biography** tells about a person's life but is written by another person. As you read, look for:

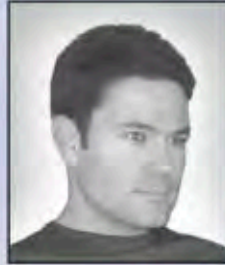
- ▶ events in time order
- ▶ information about what the person accomplished and why he or she is important



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

## Walter Dean Myers

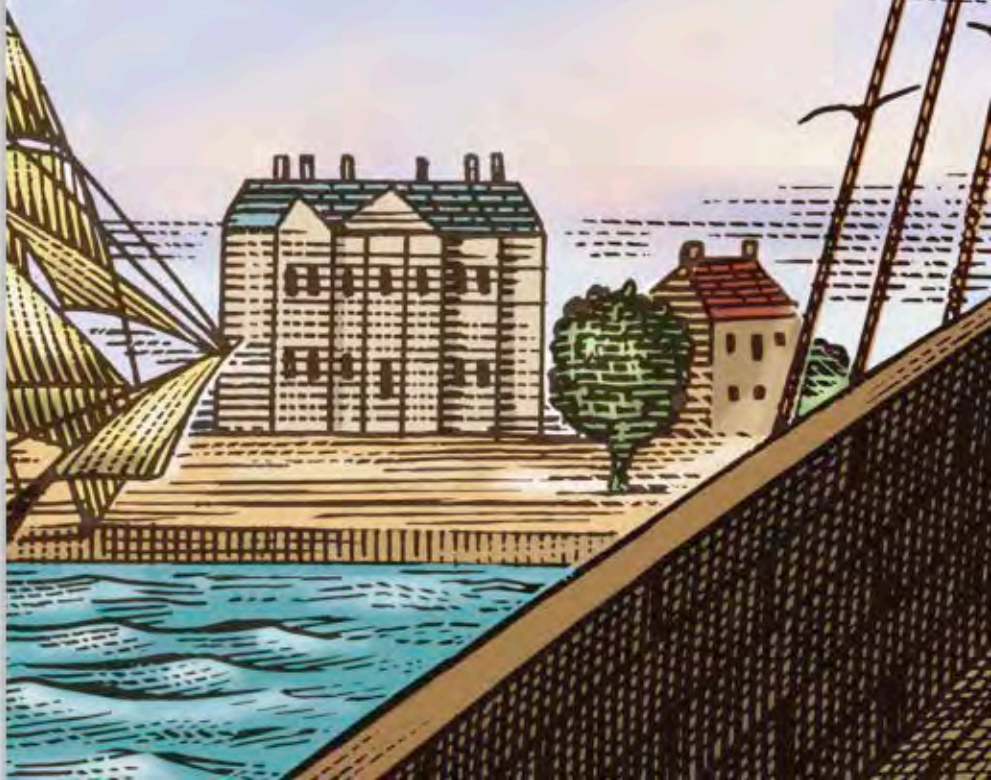
Walter Dean Myers liked to begin each new piece of writing with an outline because, he said, it forced him "to do the thinking." Then he tried to write ten pages a day until he finished a first draft. After that he would revise. Myers wrote over eighty books for young people and won numerous awards, including the Coretta Scott King Award and the Newbery Honor.



### MEET THE ILLUSTRATOR

## Steven Noble

Steven Noble uses a variety of techniques to create his realistically detailed illustrations. These include scratchboard, woodcut, pen and ink, and engraving. He lives in California.



A detailed illustration of a man on the deck of a sailing ship. The man is shown from the chest up, wearing a blue wide-brimmed hat and a red long-sleeved shirt. He is looking upwards and to the right, with his right hand raised towards a rope or part of the ship's rigging. The background shows the complex network of ropes and masts of the ship against a blue sky with a few birds. The style is reminiscent of a comic book or a classic pulp magazine illustration.

# JAMES FORTEN

*from Now Is Your Time!*

by Walter Dean Myers  
selection illustrated by Steven Noble

## ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What events or feelings would lead someone to fight for freedom?

*James Forten was born in Philadelphia in 1766 and grew up during the American Revolution. He overcame great obstacles to become one of the most important African Americans of his time.*



**T**homas Forten, a free African, was employed by Robert Bridges, a sailmaker in Philadelphia. Sail making was a profitable but difficult job. Sewing the coarse cloth was brutal on the hands. The heavy thread had to be waxed and handled with **dexterity**. A person trying to break the thread with his hands could see it cut through his flesh like a knife. But Forten appreciated his job. It paid reasonably well and the work was steady.

Forten helped in all **aspects** of sail making and assisted in installing the sails on the ships the firm serviced. With the income from his work he had purchased his wife's freedom. Now, on this early Tuesday morning, a new baby was due. The baby, born later that day, was James Forten.

Young James Forten's early life was not that different from that of other poor children living in Philadelphia. He played marbles and blindman's bluff, and he raced in the streets. When he was old enough, he would go down to the docks to see the ships.

Sometimes James went to the shop where his father worked and did odd jobs. Bridges liked him and let him work as much as he could, but he also encouraged Thomas Forten to make sure that his son learned to read and write.

The Fortens sent their son to the small school that had been created for African children by a Quaker, Anthony Benezet. He believed that the only way the Africans would ever take a meaningful place in the colonies would be through education.



Thomas Forten was working on a ship when he fell to his death. James Forten was only seven at the time. His mother was devastated, but still insisted that her son continue school. He did so for two more years, after which he took a job working in a small store.

What James wanted to do was to go to sea. He was fourteen in 1781 when his mother finally relented and gave her permission. America was fighting for its freedom, and James Forten would be fighting, too.

He knew about the difficulties between the British and the American colonists. He had seen first British soldiers and then American soldiers marching through the streets of Philadelphia. Among the American soldiers were men of color.



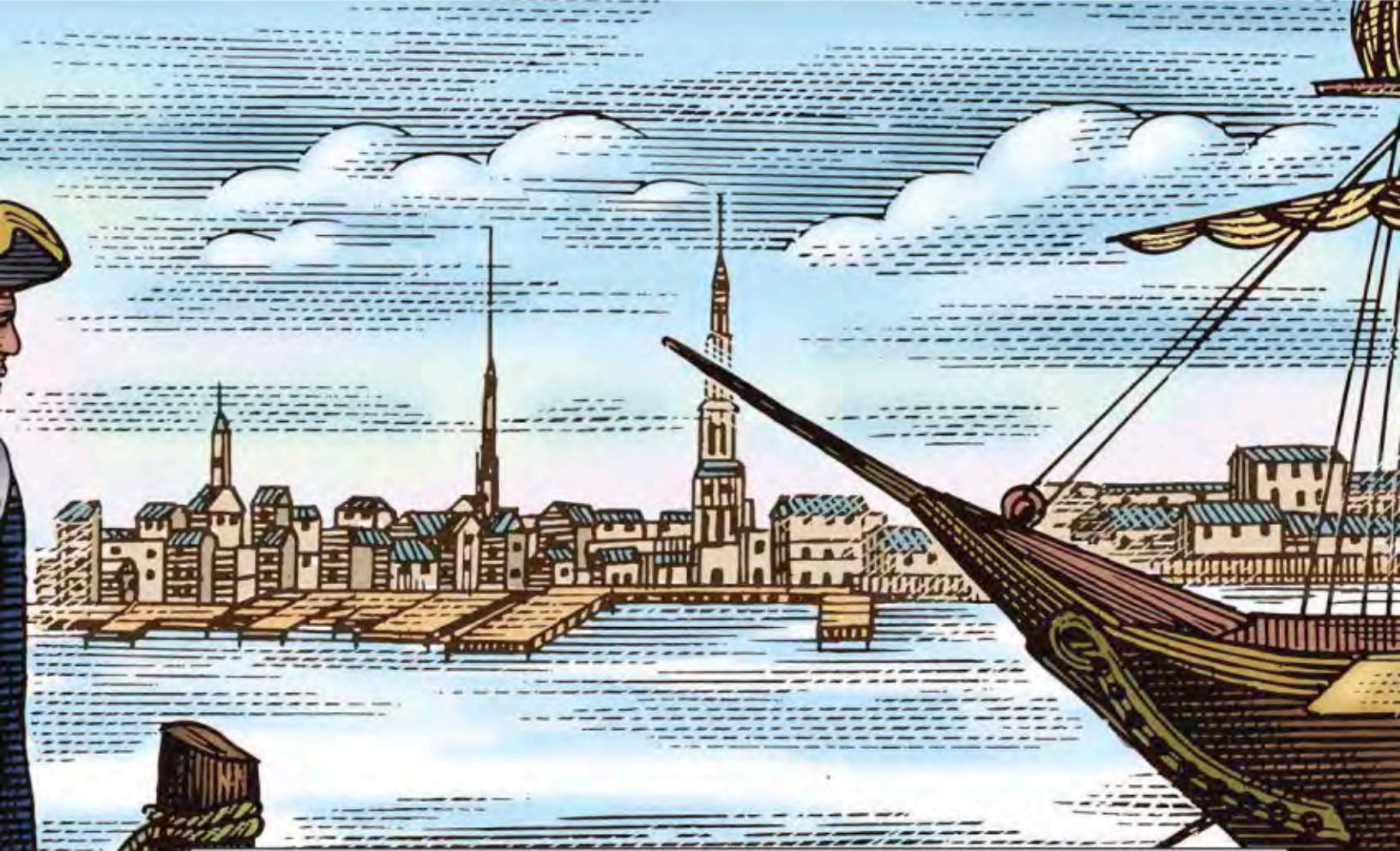


A black child in Philadelphia in the 1700's had to be careful. There were stories of free Africans being kidnapped and sold into slavery. He had seen the captives on the ships. They looked like him: the same dark skin, the same wide nose; but there was a sadness about them that both touched his heart and frightened him. He had seen Africans in chains being marched through the streets, on their way to the South. He never forgot the sight of his people in **bondage**, or accepted it as natural that black people should be slaves.

But the black soldiers Forten saw were something special. Marching with muskets on their shoulders, they seemed taller and blacker than any men he had ever seen. And there were African sailors, too. He knew some of these men. They had been fishermen and haulers before the conflict with Great Britain; now they worked on privateers and navy ships.

#### ANALYZE THE TEXT

**Explain Historical Events** Why are the black soldiers James sees marching on the American side special? What was happening during this time period in history that made their positions in the military unusual?



Sometimes he heard talk about naval battles, and he tried to imagine what they must have been like.

In the summer of 1781, James Forten signed onto the privateer *Royal Louis*, commanded by Stephen Decatur, Sr. The colonies had few ships of their own to fight against the powerful British navy and issued “letters of marque” to private parties. These allowed the ships, under the flag of the United States, to attack British ships and to profit from the sale of any vessel captured.

The *Royal Louis* sailed out of Philadelphia in August and was quickly engaged by the British vessel *Active*, a heavy armed brig sent from England to protect its trade ships.

The *Royal Louis*’s guns were loaded with gunpowder that was tamped down by an assistant gunner. Then the cannonball was put into the barrel and pushed against the powder. Then the powder would be ignited. The powder had to be kept belowdecks in case of a hit by an enemy ship.



Philadelphia harbor as it appeared around the time the *Royal Louis* defeated the *Active*.

**F**orten's job was to carry the gunpowder from below to the guns. Up and down the stairs he raced with the powder as shots from the British ship whistled overhead. There were large holes in the sails and men screaming as they were hit with grapeshot that splintered the sides of the ship. The smell of gunpowder filled the air as Captain Decatur turned his ship to keep his broadside guns trained on the *Active*. Sailors all about Forten were falling, some dying even as others cried for more powder.

Again he went belowdecks, knowing that if a shot ripped through to the powder kegs, or if any of the burning planks fell down into the hold, he would be killed instantly in the explosion. Up he came again with as much powder as he could carry.

After what must have seemed forever with the two ships tacking about each other like angry cats, the *Active* lowered its flag. It had surrendered!

Decatur brought his ship into Philadelphia, its guns still trained on the limping *Active*.

The crowd on the dock cheered wildly as they recognized the American flag on the *Royal Louis*. On board the victorious ship James Forten had mixed feelings as he saw so many of his comrades wounded, some mortally.

The *Royal Louis* turned its prisoners over to military **authorities**. On the twenty-seventh of September, the *Active* was sold; the proceeds were split among the owners of the *Royal Louis* and the crew.

The sailors with the worst wounds were sent off to be cared for. The others, their own wounds treated, were soon about the business of repairing the ship. Forten must have been excited. Once the fear of the battle had subsided and the wounded were taken off, it was easy to think about the dangerous encounter in terms of adventure. And they had won.

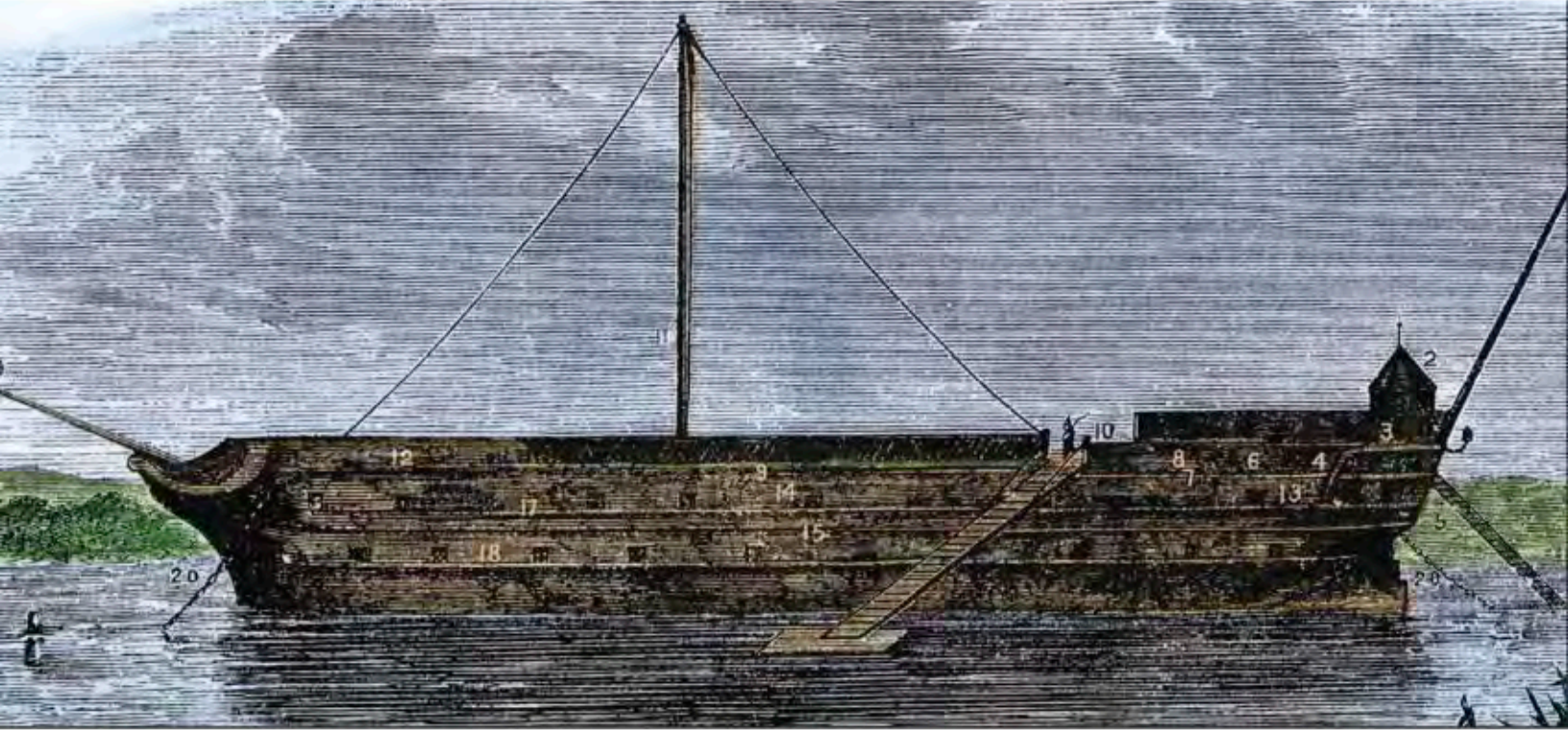


The missing crew was replaced. The ship was checked carefully by its captain and found to be in fine fighting condition. The crew carried more ammunition aboard, more powder, and fresh **provisions**. Once more they sailed for open waters.

On the sixteenth of October, 1781, they sighted a ship, recognized it as British, and made for it instantly. As they neared, a second ship was spotted, and then a third. Decatur turned to escape the trap, but it was already too late. The three British ships, the *Amphyon*, the *Nymph*, and the

sloop *Pomona*, closed in. It was soon clear that the *Royal Louis* had two choices: to surrender or to be sunk.

The *Royal Louis* lowered its flag. It had surrendered, and its crew were now prisoners. Forten was terrified. He had heard the stories of the British sending captured Africans to the West Indies to be sold into slavery. He knew the *Pomona* had sailed back and forth from the colonies to the island of Barbados, where many Africans already languished in bondage. It was a time for dread.



The notorious British prison ship, *Jersey*, which was docked off Long Island, New York.

James was taken aboard the *Amphyon* with others from his crew. On board the British ship Captain Beasley inspected the prisoners. There were several boys among the American crew, and he separated them from the older men.

Captain Beasley's son looked over the boys who had been captured. Many of them were younger than he was. Although still prisoners, the boys were given more freedom than the men, and Beasley's son saw the Americans playing marbles. He joined in the game, and it was during this playing that he befriended Forten.

The result of this tentative friendship was that Captain Beasley did not, as he might have done, send Forten to a ship bound for the West Indies and slavery. Instead he was treated as a regular prisoner of war and sent to the prison ship the *Jersey*.

Dark and forbidding, the *Jersey* was a sixty-gunner anchored off Long Island, in New York. It had been too old to use in the war and had been refitted first as a hospital ship and then as a ship for prisoners. The portholes had been sealed and twenty-inch squares carved into her sides. Across these squares iron bars were placed.

The captain of the *Jersey* greeted the prisoners with a sneer. All were searched under the watchful eyes of British marines. The wounded were unattended, the sick ignored. The pitiful cries of other prisoners came from belowdecks. A few pale, sickly prisoners, covered with sores, were huddled around a water cask. Then came the cry that some would hear for months, others for years.

“Down, Rebels, down!”

They were rebels against the king, to be despised, perhaps to be hanged. Traitors, they were being called, not soldiers of America. James was pushed into a line on deck. The line shuffled toward the water cask, where each man could fill a canteen with a pint of water. Then they were pushed roughly belowdecks.

The hold of the ship was dark. What little light there was came from the small squares along the hull. The air was dank. Some of the prisoners were moaning. Others manned pumps to remove the water from the bottom of the boat.

Sleep was hard coming, and James wasn't sure if he wouldn't

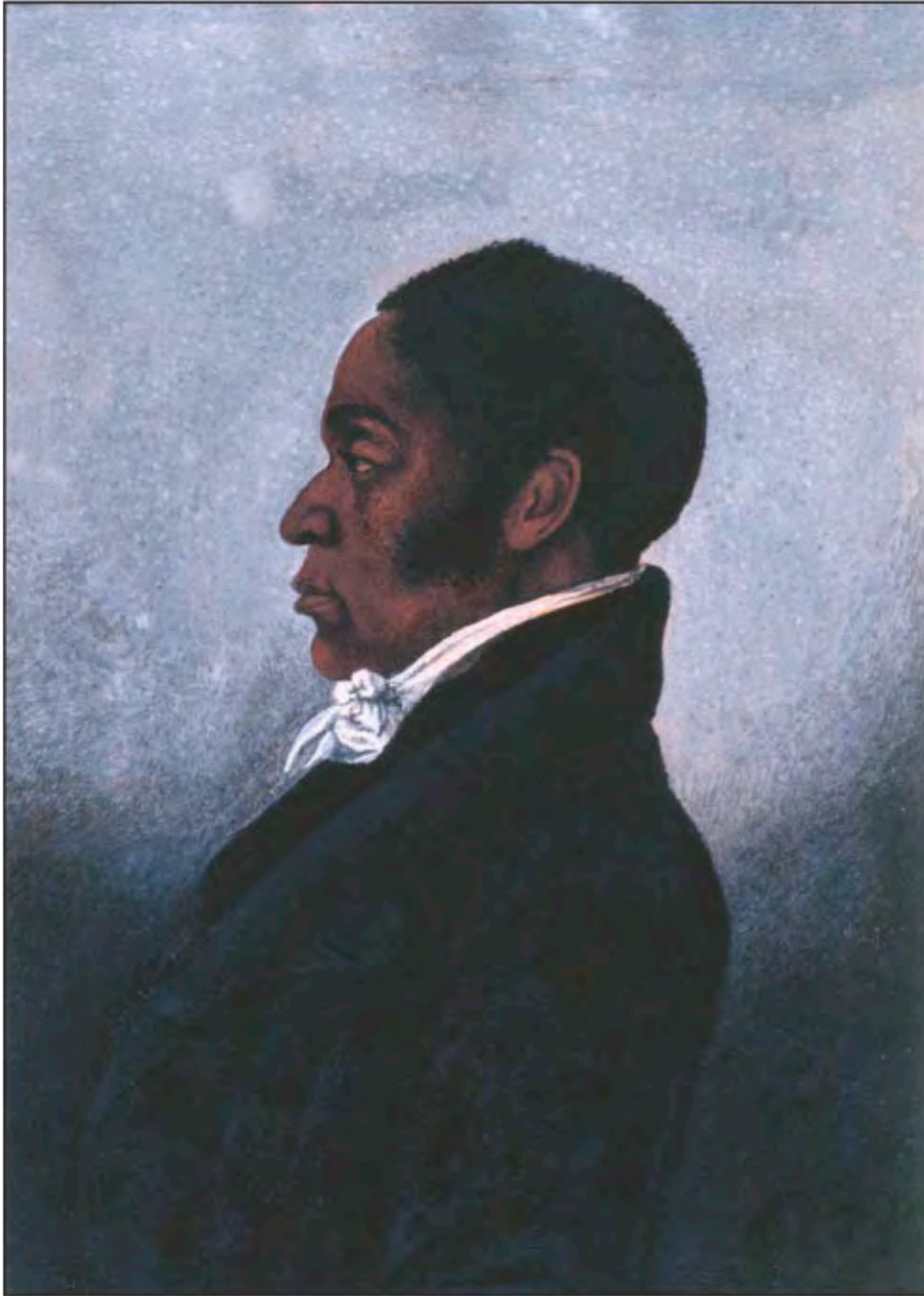
still be sold into slavery. Beasley's son had liked him, he remembered, and the boy had offered to **persuade** his father to take James to England. It would have been better than the hold of the *Jersey*.

In the morning the first thing the crew did was to check to see how many prisoners had died during the night. Many of the prisoners were sick with yellow fever. For these death would be just a matter of time.

Forten later claimed that the game of marbles with Beasley's son had saved him from a life of slavery in the West Indies. But on November first, two weeks after the capture of the *Royal Louis*, the news reached New York that Brigadier General Charles Cornwallis had surrendered to George Washington. Washington had strongly protested the British practice of sending prisoners to the West Indies. It was probably the news of his victory, more than the game of marbles, that saved the young sailor.

#### ANALYZE THE TEXT

**Sequence of Events** How did James Forten come to be on the ship with Captain Beasley's son?



**An unknown artist probably painted this watercolor portrait of Forten during his lifetime.**

**J**ames Forten was not a hero. He did not single-handedly defeat the British, or sink a ship. But he fought, like so many other Africans, for the freedom of America, and he fought well. He was only one of thousands of Africans who helped to create the country known as the United States of America.

In Philadelphia, after the war, James Forten became an **apprentice** to the man his father had worked for, Robert Bridges. Like his father, James was a hard worker. Eventually he would run the business for Robert Bridges, and by 1798 he owned it. At its height the business employed forty workers, both black and white. Forten became one of the wealthiest men in Philadelphia. He married and raised a family,

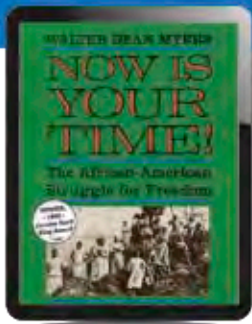
passing on to them the values of hard work he had learned from his father. Forten made several major **contributions** to the sail-making business, among them a method of handling the huge sails in a shop, which allowed sails to be repaired much faster and saved precious time for ship owners. In the coming years he would use his great wealth to support both antislavery groups and the right of women to vote — at a time when over 90 percent of all Africans in America were still in a state of enslavement.

James Forten became one of the most **influential** of the African abolitionists. He spent much of his life pleading for the freedom of his people in the country his people had helped to create.

#### ANALYZE THE TEXT

**Main Ideas and Details** What are the main ideas of this text? How do you know? What seems to be the text's overall main idea?





# Dig Deeper

## Use Clues to Analyze the Text

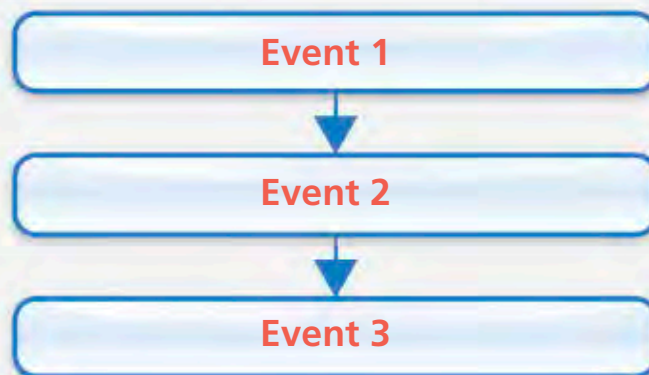
Use these pages to learn about Sequence of Events, Explaining Historical Events, and Main Ideas and Details. Then read “James Forten” again to apply what you learned.

### Sequence of Events

Authors of biographies such as “James Forten” often organize their writing by **sequence of events** to tell the story of a person’s life. Sequence of events refers to the order in which the events take place. This pattern of organization, or **text structure**, helps readers understand what happened in the person’s life and when.

Authors may include dates or tell the person’s age to show the time order of events and how events are related. For example, the author says that James Forten “was only seven” when his father died. Words and phrases such as *after* and *then* also indicate time order.

Use a graphic organizer like the one below to keep track of events as they happen in the text.



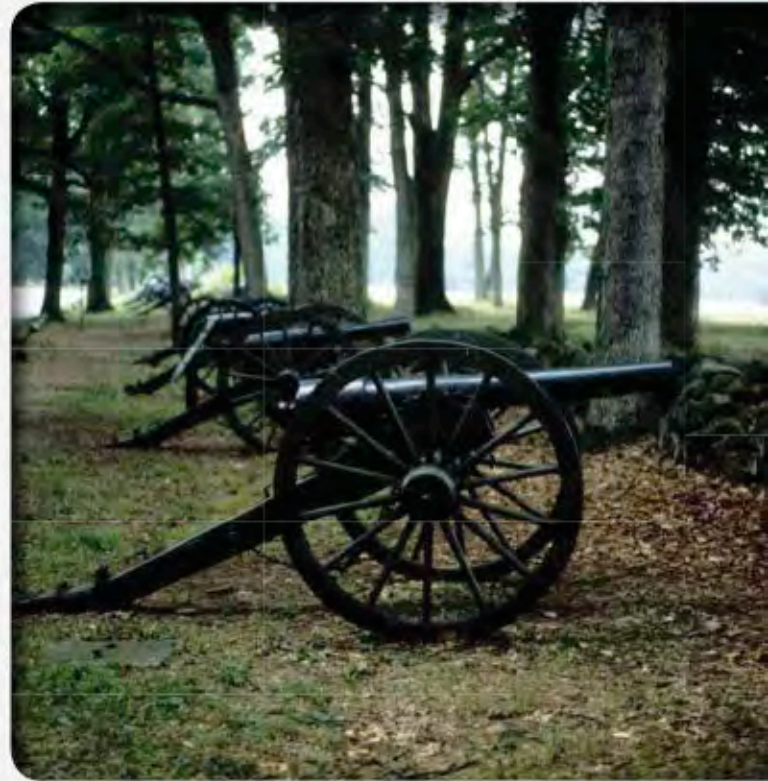
## Explain Historical Events

James Forten lived during an exciting period of history. To fully tell his story, the author must include details of the **historical events** that affected him. Look back at page 429. Here readers learn about the surrender of Brigadier General Charles Cornwallis to George Washington. This event is important because it ended the war. It also saved James from being sold into slavery.



## Main Ideas and Details

The **main idea** of each part of a biography contributes to the overall point the author wants to make about the subject. The author's choice of **details** helps support each main idea. For example, on page 426, the description of the battle between the two ships supports the main idea that James Forten was brave and dutiful. Even though he was in great danger, he continued to do his job of supplying gunpowder.



# Your Turn

## RETURN TO THE ESSENTIAL QUESTION



Review the selection to prepare to discuss this question: *What events or feelings would lead someone to fight for freedom?* As you discuss your ideas with a partner, note your key points. Present a summary of your discussion to the class.



## Classroom Conversation

Continue your discussion of “James Forten” by using text evidence to explain your answers to these questions:

- 1 How did James Forten’s parents influence his life?
- 2 How would you summarize Forten’s war experiences?
- 3 What makes James Forten a good subject for a biography?

## ANALYZE AUTHOR’S PURPOSE

**Roundtable Discussion** Authors of biographies carefully choose details that will help readers “see” the person they are writing about. In a small group, reread the last page of “James Forten.” Why do you think the author included this information about James Forten’s life after the war? As a group, explain how these details affect your view of Forten.



## Performance Task

### WRITE ABOUT READING

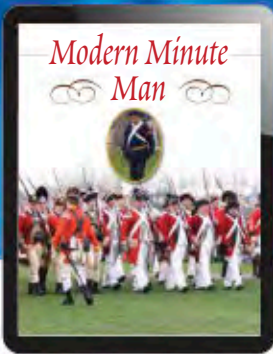


**Response** James Forten went from working in a small store to dodging gunfire on an American vessel battling a British ship. What events led him down this path? Write a paragraph in which you explain how Forten came to serve his country during the Revolutionary War. Support your explanation with quotes and specific evidence from the text.



### Writing Tip

Before you begin to write, jot down the events that you want to include in your paragraph. Make sure they are in sequential order.

INFORMATIONAL  
TEXT
 GENRE

**Informational text**, such as this magazine article, gives factual information about a topic or an event.

 TEXT FOCUS

**Primary sources**, such as the interview featured here, give additional information about the topic and its time period.

# Modern Minute Man

by Marcus Duren

Every year on April 19, Charles Price of Lexington, Massachusetts, is one of seventy-seven modern-day Lexington Minute Men who gather to reenact the events that took place at the Battle of Lexington in 1775. The first shot of the Revolutionary War was fired in this influential battle.

Modern Lexington Minute Men take the same oath as the original ones. Each plays a real person from history. Price plays Prince Estabrook, the only African American who fought in the battle. We asked him about different aspects of the reenactment.





***How did you find information about Prince Estabrook?***

It was quite difficult. For the most part, records weren't kept for slaves. There are some old documents, but some of them are in very poor condition.

***How did it happen that Prince Estabrook was a militiaman?***

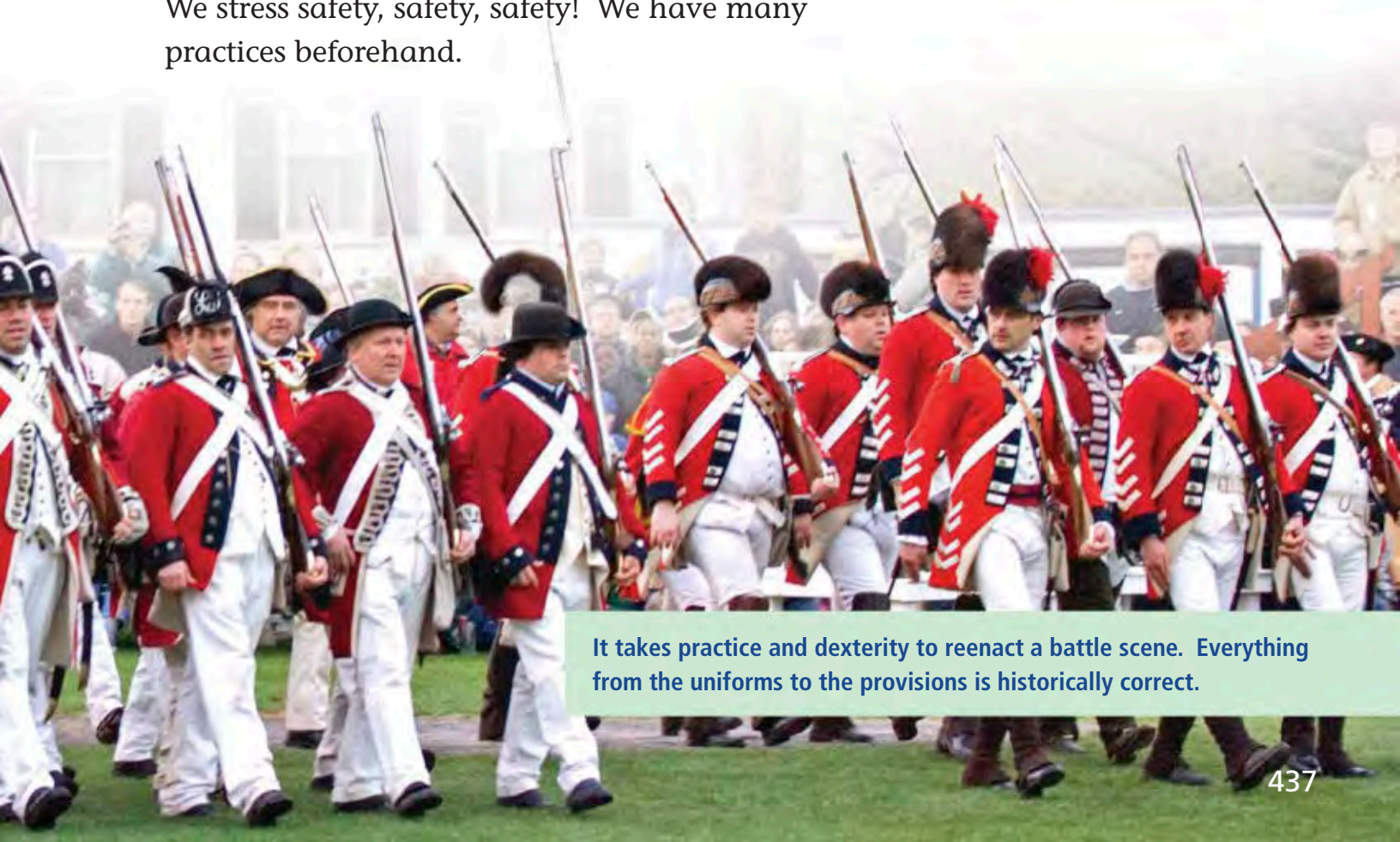
I can only think of two reasons. One, it very well may be that his master sent him out in his place. The other reason is that maybe he felt if he fought he'd get his freedom.

***The reenactment is so realistic! How do you make sure no one gets hurt?***

We stress safety, safety, safety! We have many practices beforehand.



Charles Price as Prince Estabrook



It takes practice and dexterity to reenact a battle scene. Everything from the uniforms to the provisions is historically correct.



Kids are present both as spectators and as reenactors.

***Are there kids in the reenactment?***

We have kids come out to take care of the wounded soldiers. My daughter did it for about ten years.

***What else should students know about the Lexington Minute Men?***

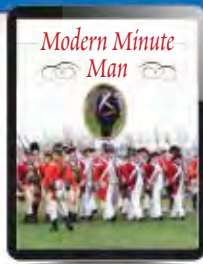
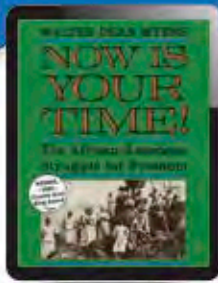
These people risked everything to be out there. If they lost or were captured, they could have been hanged as traitors. I don't think people today realize how much of a chance they were taking. Every one of those people was a hero.



## *Freemen, Slaves, Soldiers*

People of African descent made contributions to the Revolutionary War for different reasons. A freeman could often make better wages as a soldier than he could as a farmer or an apprentice. It was also common for slaves to serve in place of their owners, who chose not to fight.

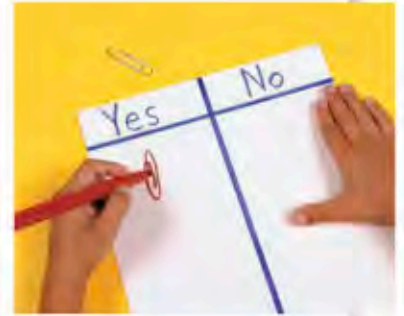
Both the British and patriot armies badly needed soldiers. Authorities on both sides sometimes tried to persuade slaves to enlist by offering them freedom from bondage at the war's end. However, slaves knew that this tentative offer could be reversed if the side for which they fought lost.



# Compare Texts

## TEXT TO TEXT

**Discuss Biographies** Both “James Forten” and “They Called Her Molly Pitcher” (Lesson 13) tell about the lives of real people. With a partner, compare and contrast the two selections. Discuss these elements of each: kinds of details each author includes, pictures each author presents of his or her subject, ways in which the structure of each text is organized. Share your comparison with another pair.



## TEXT TO SELF

**Describe a Contribution** James Forten and Prince Estabrook were ordinary people who made important contributions to history. Think of an ordinary person you know who is making a difference in the lives of others. Write a short composition about his or her contribution. Include details and examples to make your points clear.



## TEXT TO WORLD

**Learn About Reenactments** “Modern Minute Man” describes a military reenactment that takes place each year in Lexington, Massachusetts. Work with a small group to research a historical reenactment in your region or state. Make a poster advertising the event. Then present your poster to another group. Discuss what you learned, and ask questions about information given in each presentation.



# Grammar

**What Are Commas and Semicolons?** Both **commas** (,) and **semicolons** (;) are punctuation marks used within sentences. They help readers understand the meaning of a sentence by clearly separating different parts.

Comma Usage	Example
Separate items in a series, or list	The African soldiers had courage, pride, and dignity.
Set off introductory words and phrases	By 1781, the war was almost over.
Set off the words <i>yes</i> and <i>no</i>	No, we won't have time to visit the war museum today.
Indicate a name used in direct address	Maria, can you imagine being on a ship in the middle of a battle?
Set off a tag question at the end of a sentence	That was an important battle, wasn't it?
Semicolon Usage	Example
Separate items in a series that contain commas	Battles occurred in Lexington, MA; Fort Ticonderoga, NY; and Trenton, NJ.

## Try This!

**Rewrite each sentence on another sheet of paper, using the correct punctuation.**

- 1 Reading biographies is a good way to learn about history don't you think?
- 2 Yes the ship was resupplied with fresh water fruit and cornmeal.
- 3 Well we saw reenactments on May 17, 2011 June 4, 2011 August 5, 2011 and September 9, 2011.
- 4 "Get more gunpowder James and hurry!"

Omitting or misplacing commas and semicolons can confuse your readers. When you proofread your writing, make sure the different parts of your sentences are separated with the correct punctuation marks. Also make sure that you have not inserted commas or semicolons where they do not belong.

### Incorrect Punctuation



Yes our captain, steered the ship safely through high winds strong currents sharp rocks and other obstacles.

### Correct Punctuation



Yes, our captain steered the ship safely through high winds, strong currents, sharp rocks, and other obstacles.

## Connect Grammar to Writing

As you revise your persuasive essay next week, look closely for places where you need to insert commas or semicolons. Correct any errors you find. Using commas and semicolons properly will help make your writing clear and easy to follow.

- ▶ Writing as a Process: Plan and Draft
- ▶ Writing Opinions: Introduction

Reading-Writing Workshop: **Prewrite**

# Opinion Writing

**✓ Organization** Good writers organize their ideas before writing a **persuasive essay**. A graphic organizer can help you identify and organize your opinion and the reasons and details that support it.

For his persuasive essay, Derek chose to write about James Forten. He did some research and took notes about his sources. Then he used an idea-support map to organize his reasons and the supporting details. Later, he revised the map to state his ideas more clearly and to arrange them in a logical order.

Use the Writing Process Checklist below as you prewrite.

## Exploring a Topic

### James Forten During the Revolutionary War

- powder boy on ship
- carried gunpowder to cannons
- captured by the British

Myers, Walter Dean. Now Is Your Time! New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992. pp. 57–62

### James Forten After the War

- leader in Philadelphia
- got 2,500 African Americans to fight the British (War of 1812)
- part of abolition movement
- antislavery newspaper

Ball, Maggie. The Life and Times of James Forten. Denver, CO: Sled Dog Press, 2007. pp. 35–37

## Writing Process Checklist

### ▶ Prewrite

- Did I organize my ideas in a clear and logical way?
- Did I state a clear opinion?
- Did I list reasons to support my opinion?
- Did I include facts, details, and examples to support my points?

Draft

Revise

Edit

Publish and Share

## Idea-Support Map

**Opinion:** James Forten should be recognized for his role in our nation's history.

**Reason:** James Forten worked on a war ship during the Revolutionary War.

**Detail:** He carried gunpowder to be put in the cannons.

**Detail:** He spent several months on a British prison ship.

**Reason:** James Forten was an important leader in Philadelphia after the war.

**Detail:** He got 2,500 African Americans to fight against the British in the War of 1812.

**Detail:** As part of the abolition movement, he gave money to an antislavery newspaper.

### Reading as a Writer

How can Derek's idea-support map help him develop well-organized paragraphs? How could an idea-support map help you draft your persuasive essay?

I took notes about James Forten and used them to create an idea-support map. I listed reasons to support my opinion. Then I added details to support my reasons. This helped me organize my ideas.

