

# THE SONS OF LIBERTY

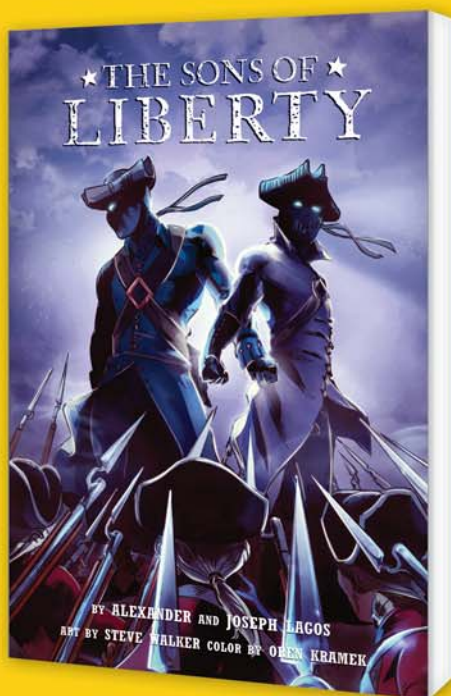


Cover art © 2009 by Nick Haas.

★ A GRAPHIC NOVEL ★  
EDUCATORS GUIDE







**Two runaway slaves gain superpowers in this first of its kind, graphic-novel series!**

## THEMES

- ★ **Historical Fiction: Colonial and Revolutionary America**
- ★ **Heroes & Heroism**
- ★ **Racism & Prejudice**
- ★ **Slavery**

Grades 5 up

Random House PB: 978-0-375-85667-9

HC: 978-0-375-85670-9 *limited edition for graphic-novel collectors!*

GLB: 978-0-375-95667-6

## ABOUT THE BOOK

*The Sons of Liberty* is a fast-paced adventure story in graphic-novel format. Using both illustration and text, it tells the story of two young slave boys who are fed up with being owned, and set out to right the wrongs they see. Because of an experiment they were forced to endure, the boys have developed some amazing abilities that may just make them the most formidable enemies their owners and colonial soldiers will ever see. The engaging format will make history come alive for students in a way they have never experienced before. Developing critical readers and thinkers is of foremost importance in the classroom and the dual genres of historical fiction and fantasy will ask students to separate fact from fiction and form an idea of our early history, all the while enjoying a compelling story.





# BEFORE READING THE SONS OF LIBERTY

## AMERICAN TIME LINE

Before reading any work that has history at its core, it is important to place it in context for students. *The Sons of Liberty* is set prior to the American Revolution and well before the Civil War, yet slavery versus freedom is a large part of the story. Slave stories generally take place during or just prior to the Civil War, so it is important to set students straight on the time line for this story. For example, Benjamin Franklin is featured in this story and readers will rightfully identify him with the colonial period. Students may not know that Franklin had slaves, which was commonplace at the time, since he later joined the abolitionist movement calling for the freeing of all slaves.

### 1607 Colonial America

With the founding of a settlement in Jamestown, the colonial period was issued in. Before long, towns such as Williamsburg (founded in 1632 and known as Middle Plantation) began to spring up as the colonies expanded.

### 1619–1865 Slavery

Slaves were introduced to Jamestown only twelve years after its founding. These slaves were treated like indentured servants, which meant they were freed after working a certain amount of time. In 1705, slaves were described as “real estate,” or as something that is owned, for the first time in Virginia.

### 1753–1763 French and Indian War

The British fought the French and their Native American allies to become the dominant power in the early days of our country.

### 1765–1786 American Revolution

Beginning with the Stamp Act in 1765, Americans began to assert their independence, which ultimately led to severing ties with the British.

### 1861–1865 Civil War

The South seceded from the Union over the issue of slavery among other matters. The North and the South fought for four bloody years before the South surrendered in 1865.

### 1862–1863 The Emancipation Proclamation

Two executive orders issued by Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War granted slaves their freedom.

## VOCABULARY

Below are suggestions for words in *The Sons of Liberty* that can be defined and discussed before reading to give students a sense of what they mean when they encounter them in the text.

**Abolitionist; rival; Dambe; petition; lunatic; slaver; downriver; impudent**

## PREDICTIONS

Have students make predictions about the book by looking at the cover. Why do they think the authors named this book *The Sons of Liberty*? What historical connections can they make to this title? Can you make a prediction about what's to come in the book based on those connections? What feelings does the cover art evoke? Why might the two characters wear masks yet dress like their enemies?

# QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

**Challenge students with questions below.**

- ★ Graphic novels are unique in that they require students to both read the text and to pick up information from the art as well. Without even separating the two, students read through the graphic-novel format and comprehend what is going on. Share *The Sons of Liberty* with them and ask your students to choose a frame from the book and explain what they learned from that frame.
- ★ Ask your students if they enjoyed reading about historical events in a graphic novel. Did they learn as much about the time period as they would have in a traditional historical fiction novel?
- ★ Historical fiction is a genre that takes history and brings it alive for students in a way that a textbook is unable to achieve. In this graphic novel, Benjamin Franklin plays an important role. Make a list of things that Franklin did in this novel (e.g., helped two runaway slave boys, etc.) and go online to find out what is fact and what is fiction.
- ★ Graphic novels are certainly different from standard novels in that the element of art is factored in. Still, there are many similarities that they share. They both have a plot, a setting, characterization, and so on. Using the pictures alone, describe how the illustrator makes you feel about a certain character.
- ★ Even before Brody and Graham display special powers, Benjamin Franklin knows something strange has happened. When he finds the boys after their encounter with William, he notices some marks on their bodies. He also sees William's experimental tool and puts two and two together. He knows the boys were last with William and the marks on their bodies appear similar to the machine William was experimenting with. What do you think William did to those boys? Why?
- ★ There are some pretty ornery characters in this book that benefit from the system of slavery. First there is the plantation owner who mistreats his slaves, Mr. Sorenson. Then there is the slave hunter, Cole Walker. Why is Sorenson interested in regaining his runaway slaves? Why is Cole Walker interested in finding them for him? In either case, do they see the runaway slaves as human beings?
- ★ At one point, Brody quotes Benjamin Franklin, "A special ability, like a gold coin, must be kept in a private pocket and should not be taken out just to show others you have it." Franklin is equating the gold coin, or special ability, with the boys' abilities to jump rivers and fight swiftly and effectively. What was he getting at?
- ★ Graham wants to gain his freedom so he can return to Africa. Brody says that they can be free here. Why do Brody and Graham disagree about this? At this time in history, before the Revolutionary War and the Civil War, did slaves think freedom would ever exist for them in the United States? Were they right?
- ★ The warrior that taught Benjamin Lay the art of Dambe was named Ologun. Ologun says, "Tis better for one to die fighting than to live in chains." What does Ologun mean by that? In 1775, statesman Patrick Henry said something similar. His famous quote is, "Give me liberty or give me death." Ologun and Patrick Henry think along the same lines. Explain the ideas these two men share.
- ★ Graham and Brody develop secret powers and are able to defend themselves against their enemies. These secret powers were brought on by William Franklin's experiment on them. Could this really happen? If a book contains parts that could not happen, what genre are we talking about?
- ★ After Benjamin Lay is badly beaten by Sorenson's son and is lying on his deathbed, he gives the boys the masks shown on the front cover of this graphic novel. Then Sorenson's tobacco barn is burnt down. Who burnt it down and what was the reason for the burning? Was it revenge? Do you think Sorenson deserved it? Why? Why was the arsonist wearing a mask?



## ABOUT THE CREATORS

### ALEXANDER AND JOSEPH LAGOS

are brothers who grew up in Texas.

### STEVE WALKER

teaches comics and sequential art at the Art Students League of New York.

### OREN KRAHEK

is a freelance graphic artist. He was born in Israel and lives in Brooklyn.

## INTERNET RESOURCES

### COLONIAL AMERICA AND SLAVERY

[www.africanaonline.com/slavery\\_timeline.htm](http://www.africanaonline.com/slavery_timeline.htm)

### FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French\\_and\\_Indian\\_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_and_Indian_War)

### AMERICAN REVOLUTION

[www.kidinfo.com/American\\_History/American\\_Revolution.html](http://www.kidinfo.com/American_History/American_Revolution.html)

### THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emancipation\\_Proclamation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emancipation_Proclamation)

### CIVIL WAR

[memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/tl1861.html](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/tl1861.html)

### SONS OF LIBERTY

[www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/sons.htm](http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/sons.htm)

### BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AND SLAVERY

[www.pbs.org/benfranklin/12\\_citizen\\_abolitionist.html](http://www.pbs.org/benfranklin/12_citizen_abolitionist.html)

### DAMBE

[ejmas.com/jalt/2005jalt/jcsart\\_Green\\_0905.html](http://ejmas.com/jalt/2005jalt/jcsart_Green_0905.html)

[www.associatedcontent.com/article/350390/a\\_look\\_at\\_dambe\\_african\\_style\\_of\\_kickboxing.html?cat=37](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/350390/a_look_at_dambe_african_style_of_kickboxing.html?cat=37)

### HESSIAN SOLDIERS

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hessian\\_\(soldiers\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hessian_(soldiers))



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THE SONS OF  
LIBERTY #2  
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Prepared by Joan Kindig, Ed.D., Associate Professor, College of Education, James Madison University, VA.

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