

# Building Literacy Skills Using Mentor Texts

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Bermuda Educational Network  
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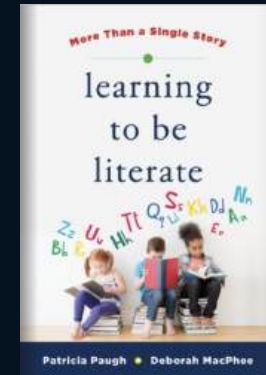
# Agenda

- Hello and Connect
- Reading dense texts - overview
- Before Reading Activities
  - Predicting from a Visual
  - Predicting the Main Idea
  - Readers' Questions
- Break
- During Reading Activities
  - Vocabulary – “Action to Thing”
  - Lifted Sentences -- “Juicy Sentences Strategy”



# Who is your presenter?

- Educator Prep – elementary literacy at Umass Boston (20 years)
- Elementary teacher – Grades K, 1, 3, 6 and Reading Support (20 years)
- Dedicated to classrooms that are joyful and challenging
- Book author, journal editor
- Mother and Grandmother to 4 and 6 year old Smiths Parish kids
- Lifelong lover of libraries
- Dedicated gardener (indoors and outdoors)
- Contact me: [patricia.paugh@umb.edu](mailto:patricia.paugh@umb.edu)



# Who are you?

- Quick connect with the room.
- Teacher?
- Level?
- Worked with BEN field experiences?





# Overcoming the “slump”...reading dense texts

Some facts:

- As they approach middle primary students meet more variety of texts.
- Text become more complex and packed with information
- Vocabulary words are longer and more abstract
- Sentences become longer with groups of noun phrases and multiple clauses.
- All these are packed with information.
- More students may begin to experience difficulty
- This has been called “the slump” (Chall et al., 1990)

# Examples:

- Literature:
- “The *blossom-laden branches* swayed *rhythmically* in the *light spring breeze*.”
- Science:
- “A compressed air rocket launches// when air escapes downward,// pushing the rocket in the opposite direction//and causing it to go forward.”
- History:
- “You probably know// that the violence of the British tyrants// has forced citizens of America,// your brother colonists into arms.”

# Strategies that “stick”



- Think about learning in your past (in or out of school) that “*stuck*” – were unforgettable and led you to want to learn more.
  - What were factors?
- Learning sciences\* tell us:
  - Opportunities to develop language and literacy through a *process of use* builds and connects synapses in the brain.
  - Synapses form neural networks for that knowledge to *transfer* and be sustained for new learning.
  - Good teaching visibly guides the reflection on learning as part of the process – META.

\*Brown et al. (2014), Hammond (2020), National Research Council (2000)

# Context: BEN Horizons Field Experience

- P5 Expedition to St. George's to study and reenact *The Gunpowder Plot*
- Lessons connect with SS, EL, and ICT standards
- Lesson plans include EL connections:
  - Writing opinions, diary entries, composing a message (letter or digital media text).

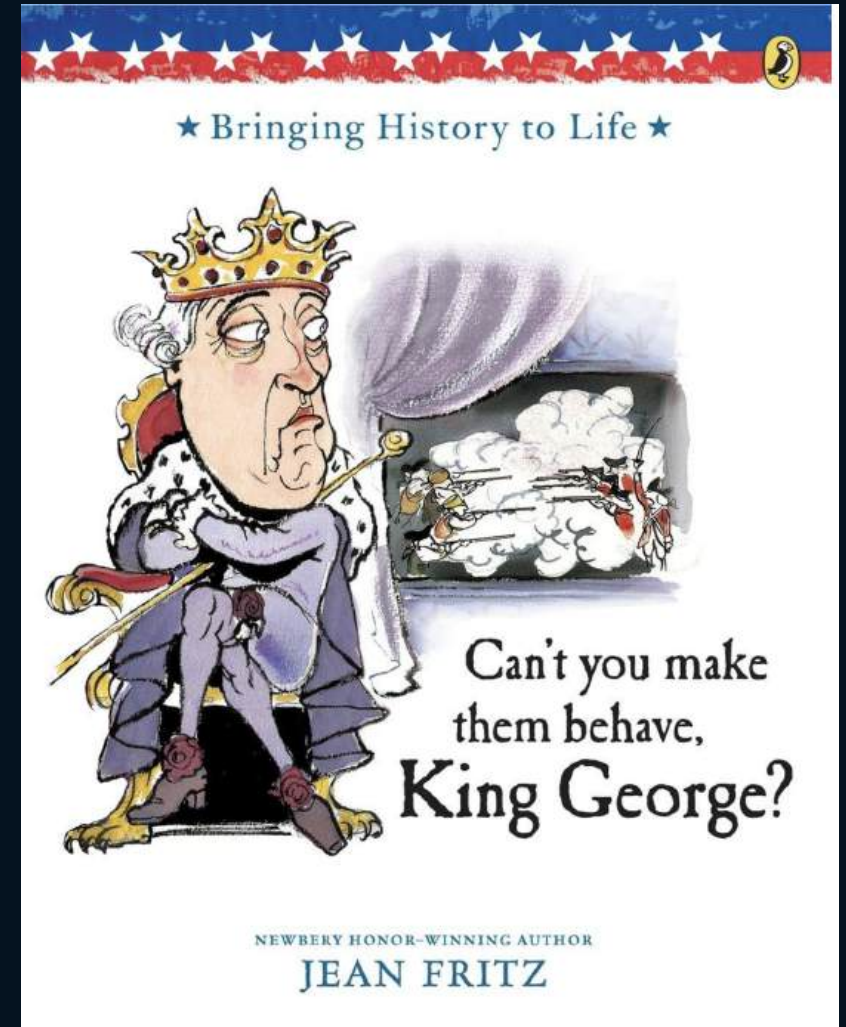




## Context: BEN Horizons Field Experience

Reading connections:

- The Gunpowder Plot - Summary
- Letter from George Washington to Bermuda to negotiate for gunpowder.
- Can't You Make Them Behave King George by Jean Fritz



# Context: BEN Horizons Field Experience

## Selected Lesson Plan Vocabulary

Embargo

Sympathetic

Famine

Magazine

Peace treaty

Colony

Independence

Sanctions

Negotiate

Trade

Merchant

Revolution

Explosive



# “Before Reading” Strategies\*

- Predicting from a Visual\*
- Predicting the Main Idea\*
- Sequencing Illustrations or Diagrams

\*Pauline Gibbons (2015). Scaffolding Language Scaffolding Learning. Heinemann.

# Predicting from a Visual\*

Show key illustrations from the text and give children time in pairs or groups to say what they think the topic is about. For example, give learners the picture of the boat sitting under Fort Catherine and talk about what they notice and what they think is going on. As children talk about the picture the teacher collects their ideas and their words. We build on this suggestions by introducing some new vocabulary in the context of the conversation.

The conversation continues in this way, until based on the learners' ideas, much more the technical vocabulary and language structures used in meaningful context grew out of what the children may know and notice.

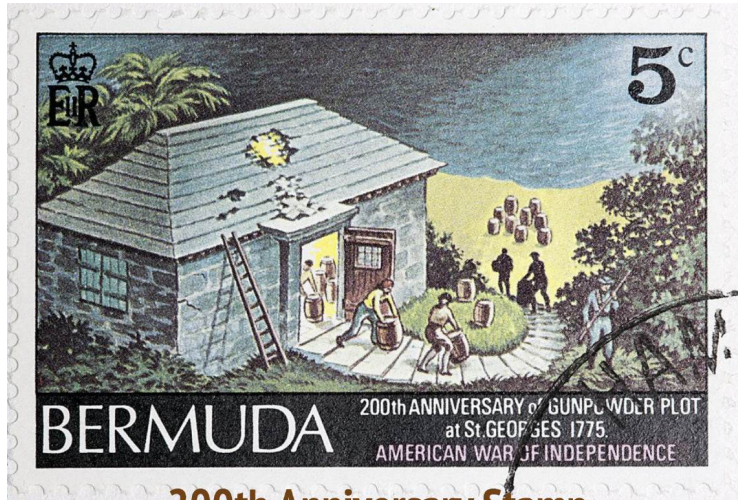
This can be integrated into the BEN [See, Think, Wonder](#) routine – basically capturing the words connected to learners' talk. Also this is a very different way of preparing for a text than simply pre-teaching a vocabulary list.

\*Gibbons, pp. 147-48









200th Anniversary Stamp

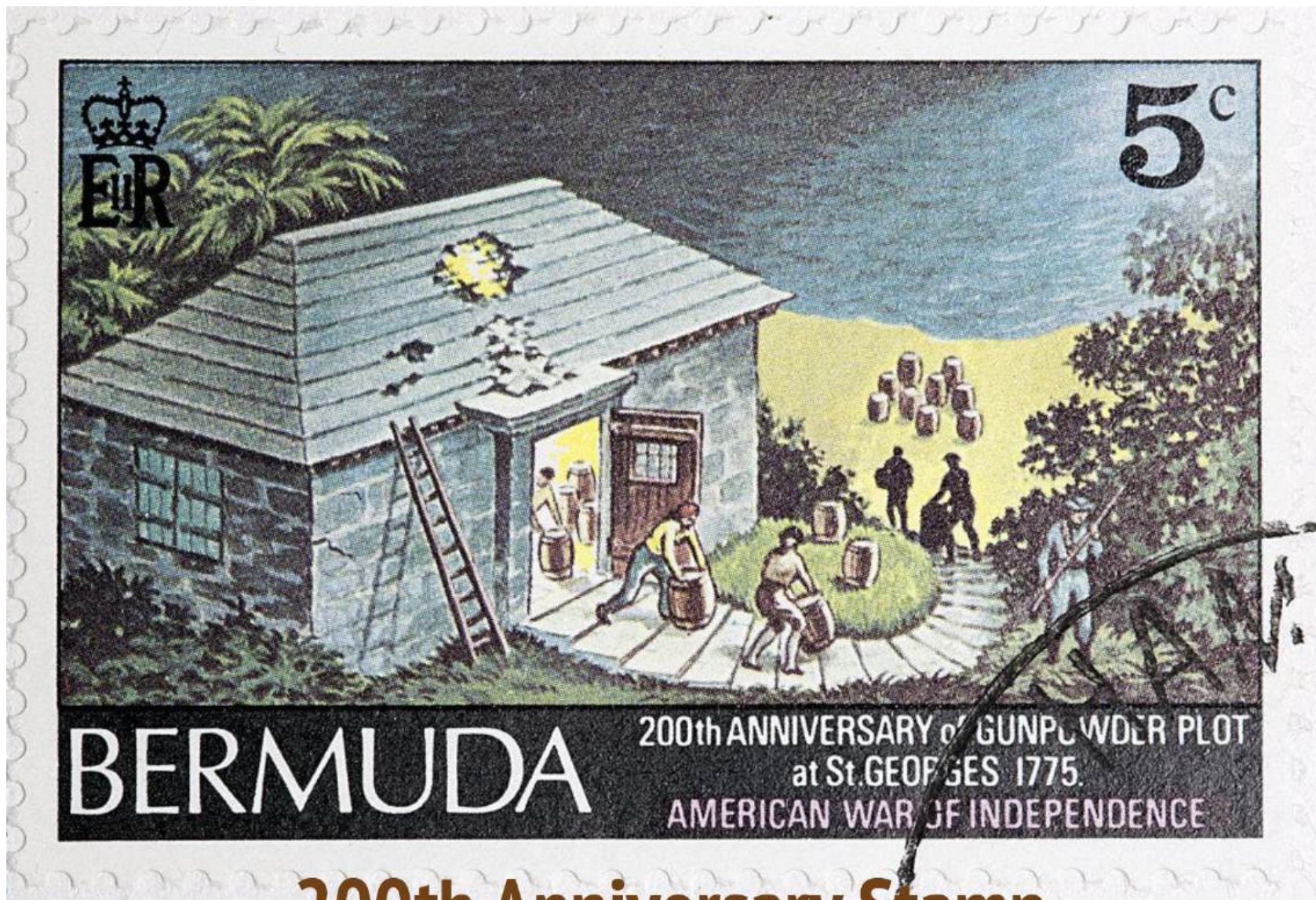


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# Predicting the Main Idea\*

Choose a short text, no more than six paragraphs. From each paragraph, carefully select four or five key words or some short phrases. These should be chosen on the grounds that they allow student to make some key predictions about the content of each paragraph. In groups. The learners predict the information and ideas they think will be in the text, based on the key words they have been given.

After a class discussion about their predictions, they read the text itself. Once all the paragraphs have been discussed in this way, students are likely to read the original text with more engagement and interest. They should have less difficulty in accessing the overall meaning. As one student said, "I feel like I read this before."

Gibbons, pp. 149-150



# Predicting the main idea:

- sympathetic Bermudians
- secretly
- American patriots
- magazine, a building where ammunition was stored
- kegs contained gunpowder

4Ri.07 Identify key words and phrases that establish the main points in a text

# Predicting the Main Idea\*

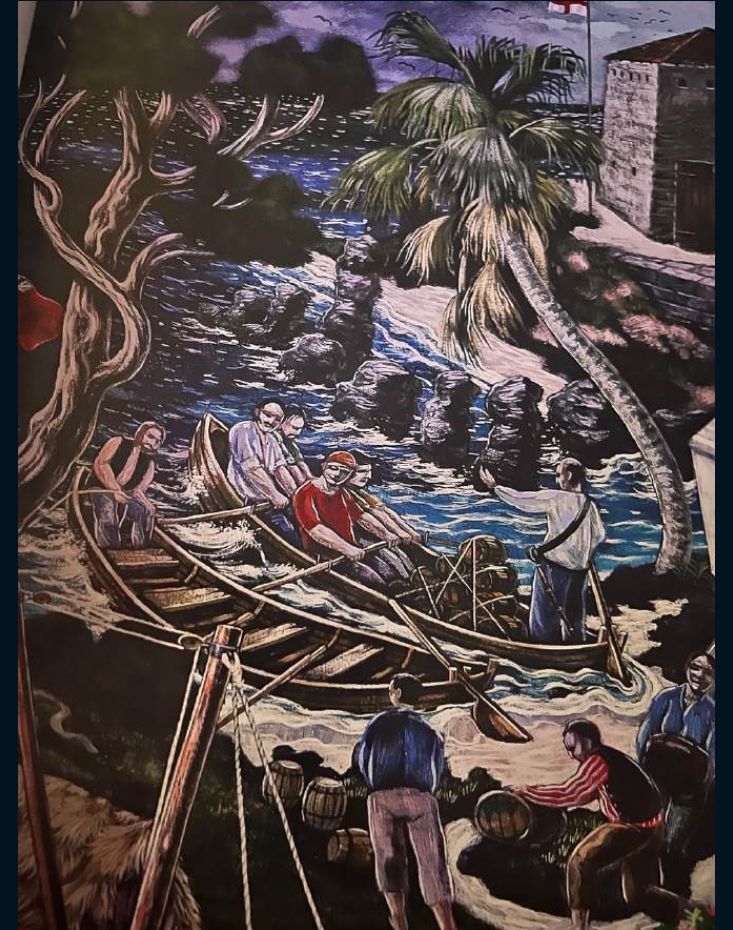
On a dark night, 250 years ago, two ships from the American colonies, the *Lady Catherine* and the *Charleston and Savannah Packet* arrived and anchored off Tobacco Bay near St. George's Town at Bermuda. Sailors from the boats rowed to the mainland. Sympathetic Bermudians were waiting there. Secretly, the Bermudians led the American patriots up a nearby hill to a magazine, a building where ammunition was stored. When the group arrived at the top of the hill, they pried off the lock on the magazine's metal door, forcing it open. Inside, the light from their lanterns illuminated kegs stacked on each other. The kegs contained gunpowder, a lot of it! 1,350 pounds of gunpowder was waiting behind that door. Gunpowder was what the American patriots had come for.

## Reader Questions\*

Give children the title of the book or a key illustration and encourage them to pose questions they would like answered. Before they read about The Gunpowder Plot for example, show the picture of the smugglers at night walking the kegs to the shore. Record all the questions and post them. Children look for answers as they read the text later.

\*Gibbons pp. 151

5Ri.15 Support answers to questions with reference to, or quotations from, one or more points in a text.







Break Time!





# “During Reading” Strategies

Students often find grade level texts impenetrable due to:

- challenging academic vocabulary,
- complex syntax,
- unfamiliar grammatical features,
- dense information.



# “During Reading” Strategies

Collaborative conversation during learning – two-way street.  
Unpacking dense text with active conversation.

- Vocabulary – “Action to Thing”
- Multiple Clauses – “Juicy Sentences”

# Vocabulary – “Action to Thing”

Vocabulary becomes information heavy.\*

**Table 1**  
**Features of Complex Syntax**

Term and definition	Example
<i>noun phrase</i> : A phrase with a noun at its head	Those six leatherback turtles...
<i>attributive clause</i> : A clause that classifies objects and is nonreversible; changing the order of the clause would change the meaning	A square is a rectangle.
<i>identifying clause</i> : A clause that defines a technical term by creating a bridge to a less technical term	Informational books are books that give facts about real life.
<i>nominalization</i> : A verb changed into a noun	The destruction of the rainforest... ( <i>destroy</i> becomes <i>destruction</i> )

\*Barnes et al. (2016)



# Vocabulary – “Action to Thing”

Nominalizations appear – verbs or adjectives turned into nouns.\*

Look for:

"-tion, "-sion, "-ty, "-ness, "-ment, "-ance, "-ence, "-ism, and "-ury

Example:

*Negotiate* becomes *Negotiation*

Current example:

The students *negotiated* with their teacher to add more time to recess.

*The students' negotiation* was successful.



# Vocabulary – “Action to Thing”

Nominalizations appear – verbs or adjectives turned into nouns.\*

Look for:

"-tion, "-sion, "-ty, "-ness, "-ment, "-ance, "-ence, "-ism, and "-ury

Perfect examples:

Rebellion

Revolution

Negotiation

Independence

Patriotism

The Bermudians *rebelled* against King George in order to obtain food shipments.

The *rebellion* against King George involved stealing gunpower in exchange for food *shipments*.

# Vocabulary – “Action to Thing”\*

## "Action to Thing"

- **Instructions:** Match the action word in the left column to the "thing" word. Charades, card games, etc.

## “Identify and Rewrite”

**Original with Nominalization:** The *rebellion* against King George involved stealing gunpower in exchange for food *shipments*.

- **Step #1: Identify the Nominalization:** **rebellion** (noun) --> rebel (verb), **shipment** (noun) [?] ship (verb)
- **Step #2: Rewrite the Sentence:** The Bermudians rebelled again King George in order to obtain food shipments.

Action Word	Thing Word
Ship	Shipment
Rebel	Rebellion
Revolt	Revolution
Depend	Dependence
[not to depend]	Independence
Negotiate	Negotiation
Patriotic	Patriotism

# Lifted Sentences -- Juicy Sentences\*

## What is a juicy sentence?

A challenging sentence from any text that has complex vocabulary and multiple clauses packed with information.

Usually from a text related to a SS, Science, other content unit.

## What is the juicy sentence activity?

Conversations about individual sentences.

“Chunk” each sentence into parts (clauses is one way but for simple sentences/younger readers word groups work too).

Teachers and learners deconstruct and reconstruct sentences understanding how different language features contribute to meaning.

Regular guided practice in this gives students tools to make meaning to future sentences – helps them access even the most challenging texts.





# Juicy Sentences

**Why** engage students in juicy sentence work?

Students who struggle are often given simplified texts “at their level” instead of rich, interesting, age appropriate texts.

They often never get opportunities to see complex **language** and complex **ideas** – what we want them to learn about.

They need to see reading and writing as enjoyable, interesting, something they care about “doing.”

This DOES NOT MEAN they are unable or unready to read and comprehend complex texts.



# Juicy Sentences

On a dark night, 250 years ago, two ships from the American colonies, the *Lady Catherine* and the *Charleston and Savannah Packet* arrived and anchored off of Tobacco Bay near St. George's Town at Bermuda. Sailors from the boats rowed to the mainland. Sympathetic Bermudians were waiting there. Secretly, the Bermudians led the American patriots up a nearby hill to a magazine, a building where ammunition was stored. When the group arrived at the top of the hill, they pried off the lock on the magazine's metal door, forcing it open. Inside, the light from their lanterns illuminated kegs stacked on each other. The kegs contained gunpowder, a lot of it! 1,350 pounds of gunpowder was waiting behind that door. Gunpowder was what the American colonists had come for.

# Chunking sentences into meaningful parts:

Sailors from the boats// **rowed**// to the mainland.

Who?

Where from?

What did they do?

Where did they go?

4Ri.09 Explore implicit meanings in a range of texts.

# Let's try a juicy sentence...

Secretly, // the Bermudians **led** // the American patriots // up a nearby hill // to a magazine, // a building // where ammunition was stored.

Sentence Chunk	Discussion/Meaning Questions
Secretly	Secretly is an adverb that describes how something happened... <u>What</u> does it mean to do something <i>secretly</i> ?
the Bermudians <b>led</b>	<u>Who</u> was acting secretly? <u>What</u> did they do secretly?
the American patriots	<u>Who</u> did they lead?
up a nearby hill	<u>Where</u> did they go?
to a magazine	<u>Where</u> did they go next?
a building	<u>What</u> is a magazine?
where ammunition was stored	A magazine is a building that has <u>what</u> ? <u>Why</u> is ammunition there?



# Your turn...

Silently **moving** the kegs **without waking** the whole population of St. George's was a challenge.

[illegible]

# Language Dives\*

- Deconstruct – cut up sentences physically
- Reconstruct – put them back like a puzzle while talking, joyfully acting out, or creating sketches about meaning
- Practice – using some of the language structures in their own writing

# Language Detective Resources

- Achieve the Core – Juicy Sentences Guide

<https://achievethecore.org/page/3160/juicy-sentence-guidance>

- Expeditionary Learning – Language Dives

[https://curriculum.lededucation.org/sites/default/files/curriculumtools\\_languagedives\\_072017.pdf](https://curriculum.lededucation.org/sites/default/files/curriculumtools_languagedives_072017.pdf)

# *Extra: The Gunpowder Plot*

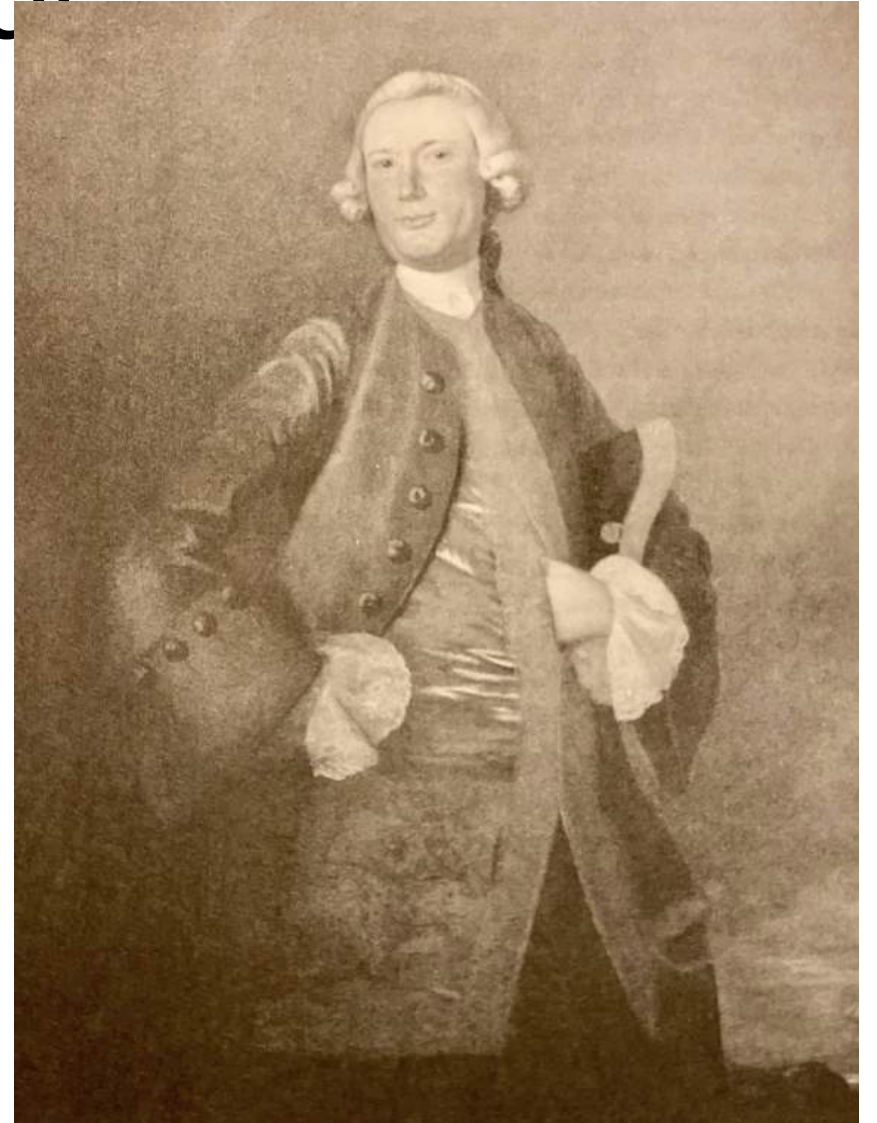
5.SS.C2b.Evaluate the importance of Bermuda's historic personalities' deeds in their time period and Bermuda's development.

Historic Personalities:

Bermuda: Henry Tucker and the smugglers

American Colonies: George Washington and the patriots

Britain: King George III and his subjects





# All about economics...

Create a text: The Gunpowder Plot

## Vocabulary:

Merchant

Trade

Negotiate

Supplies

Famine

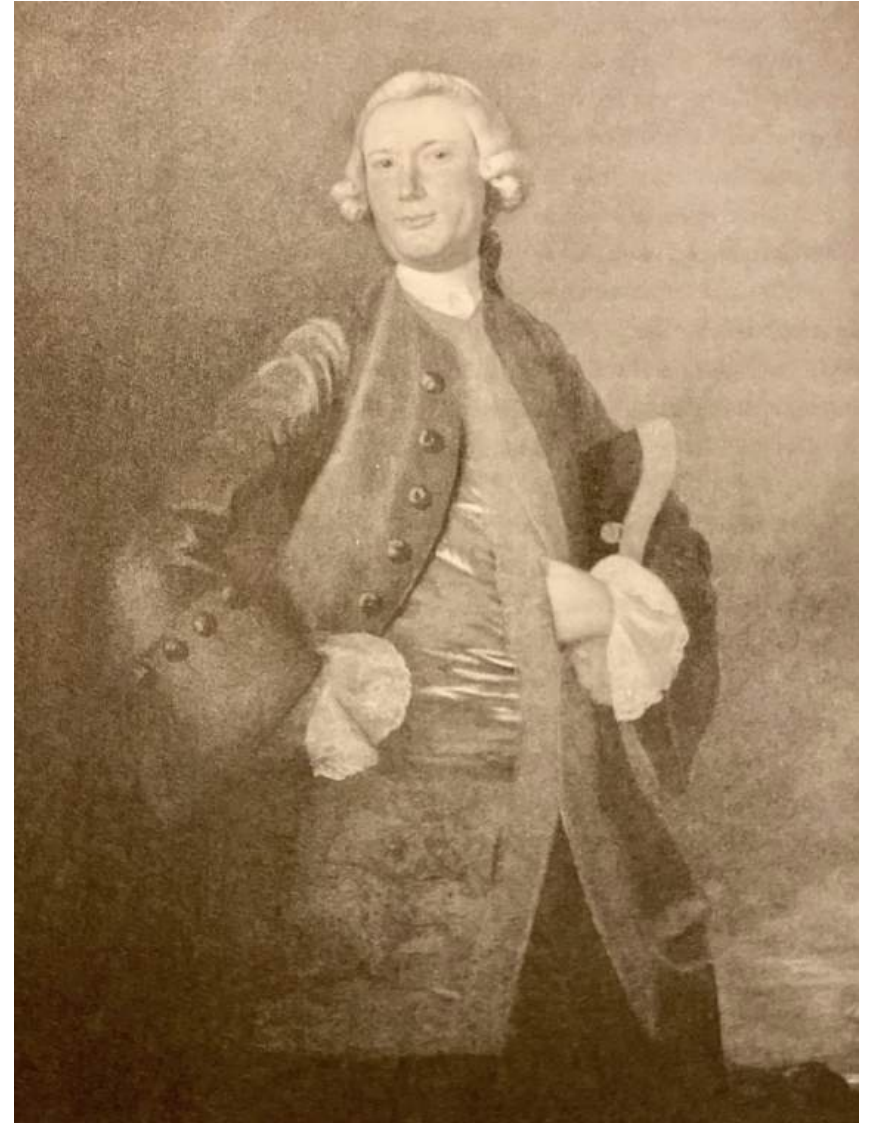
## Sources:

Smithsonian Magazine:

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/raid-bermuda-saved-american-revolution-180970375/>

Bernews:

<https://bernews.com/bermuda-profiles/colonel-henry-tucker/>



# All about economics...

Historical Fiction: Can't You Make Them Behave, King George? Author: Jean Fritz, Illustrator, Tomi dePaola

## Vocabulary:

Taxes

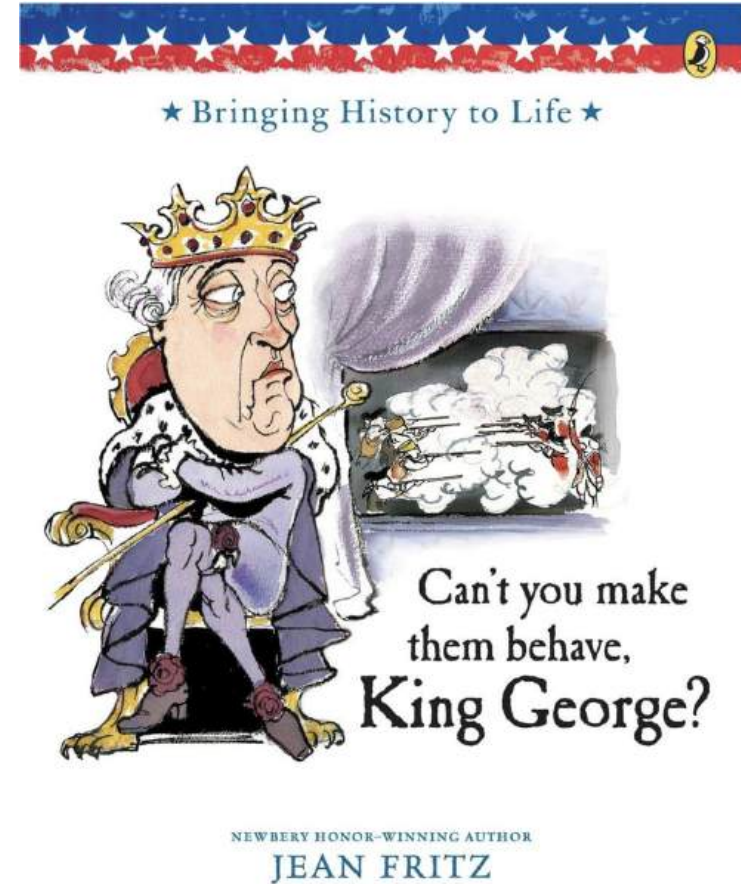
Rights

Loyalty

Royal Governor

Embargo

Focus: pages 29-35 – lots of juicy sentences to be found!



# All about economics..

Primary Source (modified): George Washington's Letter to Bermuda Merchants

## Vocabulary:

Embargo

Sanctions

Revolution

Patriot

Supplies

Provisions

Source: BEN Horizons Lesson Plans:  
<https://www.bermudaeducationnetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Gunpowder-Plot-Scheme-of-Work.pdf>



Gentlemen,

I think that you support our fight for freedom. Like you, we are descendants of settlers who left England in search of a better life and we expect that even though we are not in the same place, you may be on our side.

People from all different countries love virtue and liberty. You probably know that the violence of the British tyrants has forced the citizens of America, your brother colonists into arms. Our battles against the British have gone quite well, but the one thing we need is gunpowder. We are told that there is a large magazine on your island under a very feeble guard. We don't like to ask you to take risks when we can't protect you, but we hope that because we are friends, you can help us to steal this supply. I promise that if you help us, your island will not only be supplied with provisions, but will in future receive every kind of support that a free country can provide to its friends and family.

George Washington

Can we teach complex language and complex ideas?





# Additional References:

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- Fillmore, L. W., & Fillmore, C. J. (2012). What does text complexity mean for English learners and language minority students. *Understanding language: Language, literacy, and learning in the content areas*, 64-74
- National Research Council (2000). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school*. Expanded Edition. The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/9853>.

*thank  
you*

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